

The Argentine *Revista* and the Uriburu Revolution, 1930-1932

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Introduction

In this article I discuss aspects of the popular theatre of Buenos Aires during the dictatorship of General José Félix Uruburu (1930-1932) with special focus on the winter theatre season of 1931. As a cultural historian, I use popular theatre productions as insights and conduits into the re-construction of the historical past that is not as possible by more traditional sources. The Argentine popular theatre, here defined to include only the *sainete* and the *revista*, is an excellent mirror of society and class values in the changing social and demographic structure of Argentina's capital city, Buenos Aires. Since the popular theatre was the vehicle for the "here and the now" and mirrored on stage the reality of daily life, these plays are excellent sources for the internal contradictions, political aspirations, and class conflicts within the society of the time under study.¹ While it is true that the authors of the plays wrote with a clear understanding of what their audiences appreciated and to meet the tastes of the paying customers, these factors may also have conditioned the authors' responses to, and prejudiced their views of, the social and political reality about them.

In an earlier time and place, Nemesio Trejo used the popular theatre as a vehicle to express his political views on the rent strike of 1907 by presenting the *sainete* *Los inquilinos* at the same time the strike was in full force.² The Uruburu Revolution of 1930 presents a similar situation where an event occurring in the real world is paralleled on the stage. Reality and fiction become blurred and what is real is contrasted with the unreal. Nevertheless, the direct involvement of the authors in molding popular opinion was not the same as when Trejo projected himself into the event. The authors of the early 1930s appeared to be more cautious and careful in their involvement in the events and far more fearful the government's punitive reaction to their actions.

Hipólito Yrigoyen, the people's hero in 1916, now in 1930, Argentines called him "El Peludo." In the second year of his second presidential

administration, this leader of the middle class party, The Radical Civic Union (UCR), failed to meet the crisis produced by the world-wide depression's impacts on Argentina. Both the working and middle classes felt betrayed as they saw their political and economic gains disappear due to the regime's inability to deal with the crisis of the world-wide economic crash of 1929. Critics, emboldened by the moral and intellectual bankruptcy of the regime, the apparent senility of the aged president, and the venality of the politicians, plotted revolution. The traditional political forces of the land-owning elites, the Catholic Church, and the military found solutions to the problem of Argentina in the Primo de Rivera and Benito Mussolini movements in Spain and in Italy. Using terms such as family values, religion, and nationalism, they rallied behind conservative Lieutenant General José Félix Uriburu when he called out the troops to "save" the nation from the continued failures of the Yrigoyen regime on September 6, 1930. The military ruled the nation until February 20, 1932. The revolution broke the political tradition of civilian rule that characterized Argentine political history since 1862 and was the first revolution since 1890. As in many nations in the early 1930s, Argentines, disillusioned by democracy, were subject to the facile solutions of military rule. They soon learned, however, that the military had no better solutions to the problems of unemployment, economic failure, and inflation than did the unseated politicians. The military brought only the added burdens of political repression, censorship, and intimidation. Soon the military faced growing popular pressure to return to civilian rule and finally relinquished power to Augustín P. Justo, elected to power in scandal-laced elections held under military supervision on November 8, 1931. Justo took power in February 1932.³

Uriburu impacted three seasons of the Argentine theatre. Given the date of the revolution, it came after the opening of the theatre season of 1930, which started February-March, 1930; it fully covered the season of 1931, and the end of the regime in February 1932 came just as the new theatre season started. Therefore, the season of 1931 was really the only one situated chronologically to take advantage of the regime as a theme for theatrical productions. A number of plays, *sainetes* and *revistas* were produced during this season that specifically dealt with the regime. Several stand out from all others produced subsequent to the revolution of September 6, 1930. These openly focused on the foibles of politicians both in and out of power and by doing so broke silence on what had been apparently a taboo topic – the Uriburu regime. The most daring critiques of the government came in the form of the

satirical vignettes of the *teatro de revistas*, or on the Argentine vaudeville-musical theatre stage. The most significant revistas of this nature during the 1931 season were: *El Gran Manicomio Nacional*, *El pueblo quiere saber de lo que se trata*, and *El Gran Circo Político*. The first two, written by the same author, in fact by the well-known Luis Bayón Herrera, carry the evocative description written by “Juan Pueblo.” Only the last play identifies the authors by name, Julio Escobar and Alfredo Le Pera.

The genre of *teatro de revistas* was gaining popularity over the fading *sainete porteño* and was one of the best sources for gauging the sentiments of the *porteño* audiences (Gallo 217-224). Given the shortness of the vignettes, and their simple presentation, authors could write them rapidly and easily, thus quickly capturing the issues of the day. Unlike the *sainetes* of the same period, the *revistas* initially did not seem to conform to any formula of presentation and had a freshness to them that the by then formula-driven *sainetes* lost. The *teatro de revista* catered to the interests of the middle class, being too expensive for the progressively more economically insecure working class, and far too vulgar to suit the tastes of the upper class.

The Uriburu Revolution, while not unexpected, did catch people unprepared for the new political and social reality of the fascist inspired revolution. The theatre magazines give mixed messages regarding the impact of the revolution on the theatre seasons of 1930 and 1931. In an unsigned article published in *Comoedia*, “La revolucion y cierta gente de teatro” (V.66:13), the author was almost gleeful that the old corrupt theatre managers, agents, and ministers of the Yrigoyen regime, described as “parásitos del género de la fauna farandulero,” were now swept aside. Gone was the problem of having talentless actresses forced upon theatre companies to advance the amorous adventures of corrupt politicians. Furthermore, to add insult, these “showgirls” did not even show up to work and only collected their inordinately generous paychecks. In an article “Irigoyen y su obra nefasta en el Colón,” signed with the obvious pseudonym, Elma Lorenzo Dalevuelta wrote on the same theme, in this case discussing the impact on the Teatro Colón (*Comoedia*, V.66: 17).

The almost universal complaint on the lack of good theatre in Buenos Aires mitigated these grateful comments. In one editorial, “Los seudónimos de los autores,” *Comoedia's* editor lamented the growth of the use of pseudonyms to disguise the fact that theatre production companies were using foreign authored works and disguising them as Argentine by the use of pseudonyms. Theatres were receiving only three to five new works each season from Argentine authors and, clearly, this was not enough to build a theatre

season (*Comoedia*, V.67:3). Theatre critics, in the period of the late 1920s, universally commented on the deterioration of the quality of the productions and described the theatre seasons as deserts. For example, *Bambalinas*, the well-known theatre magazine, began to print productions of earlier theatre seasons with the apology that “cuando la temporada teatral afloja, *Bambalinas* como siempre, está empeñada en mantener la cualidad de sus obras” (XIII.667:12-13).⁴ What theatre critics lamented in the late 1920s was the failure of the *sainete* and the emerging new genre of the musical theatre to break from the mold of “copycatism,” with their hackneyed themes and play formulas, for something new. A number of critics thought the new genre of the *teatro de revistas* might achieve a freshness not seen on the *porteño* stage for some time. The revista *Judía* by Ivo Pelay (1928) seemed to break new ground but its imitators soon made this new genre just as hackneyed as the *sainete* so that, by the season of 1930, the *porteño* stage was largely a wasteland of artistic creativity.⁵

The type of theatre described by the editor of *Comoedia* was what we might call the “legitimate” theatre. The type of theatre most often reproduced in *Bambalinas* and in *La Escena* focused on the *sainete* and on the *teatro de revistas*. While the editors of both *Comoedia* and *Bambalinas* equally complained of the lack of “good” theatre, they were describing different kinds of theatre. Even so, their joined lament covered the entire theatre scene in Buenos Aires so that the lament pointed to the dismal state of all theatre in the city. Significantly neither editor made mention of censorship as a factor. However, there was something that seemed to freeze production of new works in both the theatre worlds of these magazines. This was censorship. While, it was largely self-imposed by the theatre production companies, it also represented a fear that the new regime would shut theatres down and exacerbate the already tenuous financial status of some companies. Inroads from the film industry also complicated the overall health of the theatre industry.⁶

State of the *Porteño* Theatre in 1930s

The basically irreverent popular theatre authors seemed to pause and reflect on how to deal with the new Urriburu regime. However, since Argentina had no real experience with this type of supposedly ideologically based revolution, authors were not sure what to do.⁷ Some authors pondered, seemingly, could the revolution be their salvation from the doldrums of the earlier seasons? Timidly they entered the new post “September 6 Revolution” season. Some issued disclaimers and others used pseudonyms to hide their

identity (as it would turn out with little success). For example, Julio Escobar and Alfredo Le Pera, authors of *El Gran Circo Político: Revista en doce viñetas de palpitante actualidad*, issued a disclaimer when it first opened that they were not in favor of any party or group. Nor did they wish that the play be seen in support of, or as an attack against, the government or favor of any particular group. What they wrote was in fun and done as a simple “farsa política” (*Bambalinas*, XIII.682:4). “Juan Pueblo,” as noted, was the pen name used by the well-know *revistero* Luis Bayón Herrera (*Comoedia* VI.75:10). When one *sainete* was a success, when one *revista* was a success, when the censors did not close the theatres down, and the theatre owners made money, as had happened in the past, a triumph for one was a signal for all to do the same thing. A trickle became a flood, so much so that one major theatre canceled its announced program and replaced it with the new politically motivated *revistas* and *sainetes*. This was the Teatro Buenos Aires, which issued the following announcement: “. . . suspendido los espectáculos por unos días para dedicarse a ensayar exclusivamente una pieza política en que cifra grandes esperanzas” (*Comoedia* VI.75:10).

While some *sainetes* and *revistas* were clever, most were dreadful, so much so that some critics called on the censors to come and close the theatres down to save the public from these productions. For example, this was the plea published in *Comoedia* by the reviewer of the *revista* at the Teatro Apollo *La gran milonga política* (VI.75:7). Even so, the theme of political satire came upon the *porteño* stage as a “tabla de salvación” (*Comoedia* VI.75: 10) to save it from sinking. In an article published in *Comoedia* by Jesús J. Urbani, “El auge de la revista política,” the rise of the political *revista* is described again as a life jacket for companies whose “naufragio era inevitable.” These companies discovered a panoply of new politically-based characters to add to those of the *conventillos* [slum tenement-house] so often used in the *sainete*: General Uriburu, Alvear, Yrigoyen, Gallo, de Tomaso, Pico, etc. The theatre promoters found that these new characters led to success at the box office. Therefore, they demanded more plays and *revistas* with such casts of characters. And, according to Urbani, the hackneyed authors of the boring *revistas* added the list of political figures to “el compadrito cuchillero, el tano cocoliche, y la ramera vulgar” all used for the “fin subalterno: el de ganar dinero.” Before, the critic continued, we criticized only the vulgarity of the *bataclana* [chorus-girl] or the *sainete*, and now we can add to these the theme of “actualidad política.” The number of these so-motivated *sainetes* and *revistas* is a torrent and Urbani suggested that the public was now drowning (VI.76:49).⁸

Notwithstanding these harsh critical judgments, some of the politically motivated *revistas* and *sainetes* were well received by the critics. For example, in the review of *El pueblo quiere saber de lo que se trata* by Luis Bayón Herrera, the critic clearly states that, while he detests the *revista política*, he found this one to have “gracia, ingenio y picardia” (*Comoedia*, VI.78:15). The reviewer, however, did mention an incident that took place prior to opening night, while the play was still in rehearsal. Evidently the neo-fascist paramilitary “Legión de Mayo,” more often called simply the “Legionnaires,” and the Radical Party youth battled each other in front of the theatre over one of the vignettes of the *revista*.⁹ The theatre production company decided, due to the incident, to delete that part of the *revista* to avoid problems on opening night. The part of the *revista*, entitled “Llegó el 8 de noviembre,” they deleted because “. . . se esboza irónicamente la parcialidad de los oficialista al realizar las tan ansiadas elecciones.” Yet just a few weeks later the Teatro Apollo opened the *revista 8 de noviembre, ≤Ay!, ≤Ay!, ≤Ay!, ≤Ay!* *Revista Partidaria* which did not merit any demonstrations because it was so bad (*Comoedia* VI.80: 14). Therefore, it seems that the quality of the theatre production increased its threat to the government so that bad ones could be ignored while well-written and well-produced *revistas* had the potential of producing riots and possible government censorship.

El Gran Manicomio Nacional

This study will focus on one such well-produced *revista* *El Gran Manicomio Nacional*. While the shortness of the study precludes a discussion of all of the *revistas* noted above, there are sufficient purposes that can be served with the discussion of this one play alone. It is chronologically the first of the theatrical productions of the *revistas* noted that appeared in the theatrical season of the winter of 1931 and thus served as the model for other *revistas*. For example, the themes, or topics, covered in the other *revistas* are very similar to those first presented in *El Gran Manicomio Nacional*. Additionally, the play’s author, Luis Bayón Hererra, wrote the *revista* *El pueblo quiere saber de lo que se trata* as well as others noted above. The respected production company of Luis Arata produced *El Gran Manicomio Nacional* for the Teatro Sarmiento, one of the leading vaudeville and *sainete* houses in Buenos Aires. It opened in June and by July the theatre ads in *Comoedia* for the *revista* described it as “El primer y mayor éxito de la temporada. La obra que está dando que hablar a todo Buenos Aires.” Also, the theatre promoters claimed that more than 1,000,000 spectators had seen and enthusiastically applauded the *revista* (VI:75: back page ad for the Teatro

Sarmiento). The *revista* had an official run of 640 presentations (*Comoedia*, VII.82:3). This theatre had the seating capacity of 710 persons so that, during the course of the run of the *revista*, the theatre had the potential of serving over 450,000 customers. Thus, the ad announcing over one million spectators is a bit of hyperbole. Even so, the attendance for this *revista* was very impressive.

The press recognized the significance of the *revista* theatre in the revival of political activity in Buenos Aires early in the 1931 theatre season. The *porteño* daily afternoon newspaper *La Razón* noted the unusual political boldness of playwrights with the theatrical commentary entitled “La política en el teatro” (June 8, 1931) and focused on the *revista* *El Gran Manicomio Nacional* as an example of political daring when it opened on June 4, 1931, to a sold-out crowd. The author of the editorial, Mariano de Vedia, wrote “La malicia es una forma nuestra del ‘espíritu’ y da grandes resultados cuando se la cultiva sin encono. Surge de ella una forma de alegría espontánea, sana y gratamente sonora.”¹⁰ The editorial went on to suggest that General Uriburu should attend the play and show the Argentine nation his sense of humor and give the people a significant sign of his tolerance and understanding. General José Félix Uriburu did not attend this play or, as far as is known, any other play critical of his regime. It is more likely that agents of his government attended this play and many others of similar vein to ensure that the government was well informed of potential critics and enemies of the regime.

The respected theatre magazine, *La Escena*, published *El Gran Manicomio Nacional* in its entirety as part of its fourteenth anniversary edition in June 25, 1931. The editors of the magazine published it with the following foreword:

Desde que, hace catorce años, apareció esta revista teatral, ha sido constante preocupación de su dirección, brindar a sus lectores las obras de mayor éxito de la escena nacional. . . . Se nos permitirá por lo tanto, no silenciemos la gran satisfacción que hoy sentimos al lanzar a la circulación una obra recientemente estrenada y que ha constituido uno de los más grandes éxitos de público que hayan registrado las temporadas teatrales de estos últimos años (XIV.692:n.p.)

The *revista*, composed of ten vignettes, takes place in the city of Buenos Aires and environs, including Martín García Island in the Rio de la Plata estuary, the place of exile for the deposed president Hipólito Yrigoyen. The themes covered in the vignettes of the *revista* range from the rampant rumors about the regime’s plans for the future, the often-promised but

postponed elections to return the government to civilian rule, to the corruption of civilian politicians and the standard humor of the vaudeville theatre with plays on words and other humoresque devices. The *revista* is even daring enough to include the banned Argentine Communist party and have it call for world revolution as the only solution to the crisis of the depression. The topics used in this *revista* set the precedent for the other *revistas* cited.

The first topic presented in *El Gran Manicomio Nacional* is the issue of rumors. The lack of objective news and political activity, common enough traits of military regimes and managed news, led to the rumor mills of Buenos Aires. Rumors can originate even with the government. For example, the government's allegation that rumors caused inflation and, that it was not due to any other factor, is satirized by the character "El desorientado" in the first vignette:

Entra usted a cambiar un peso . . .
 Le dan ochenta centavos, y peor . . . desde que circula
 por las calles este dato,
 usted le da un peso a un pato
 Y el pato ni dismula:
 se lo agrarra, se lo tire
 y al mismo tiempo lo mire
 como a quien mete una mula. . . .
 Los rumores alarmantes
 Tienen la culpa de todo.

Also in a satirical vein, the play deals with the rumor that the government had no political base of support. This rumor originated with the political factions opposed to the government. The character "desorientado" states the rumor "El gobierno no tiene ninguna de base . . ." and answers:

¿cuál ha tenido mejores bases, que el gobierno actual?
 Si este es gobierno de bases:
 Vase Hermelo, Pérez vase,
 vase Varela al final y como base de fondo,
 vase al final Sánchez Soronondo.

The play on words *vase* versus *base* is clever and refers to the major cabinet reshuffle that took place in mid-April 1931. For example, Pérez was Enrique Pérez, Minister of the Exchequer from September 7, 1930, until his resignation in April 16, 1931. Varela refers to Heracio Beccar Varela, Minister of Agriculture, until his resignation on April 17, 1931, and Sánchez de Soronondo refers to the Minister of the Interior, the rabid anti-Yrigoyenist Matías G. Sánchez de Soronondo who resigned on April 16, 1931. This cabinet reshuffle

replaced all of the original ministers of the government. Uriburu renamed only Varela to his post.

The next scene takes place in the presidential office and includes as one of the characters the “presidential office,” La presidencia, who carries on a conversation with Marcelo de Alvear, president from 1922 to 1928, and leader of the anti-Yrigoyen faction of the UCR.⁽⁹⁾ The topic introduced at this point in the *revista* deals primarily with the issue of the persistent rumors of the calling of presidential elections and the return to civilian government. Marcelo de Alvear had pretensions that, with the restoration of civilian rule, he would sit again on the presidential chair. La presidencia asks Alvear why is he at the Presidential Palace (La Casa Rosada) and he replies to her “a reconquistar tu mano.” She rebuffs him and blames him for giving her to the “peludo” and how she suffered. Now she is under the tutelage of the General who has warned her not to talk to anyone. She expresses doubt about Alvear’s success and says all will not come out well. He retorts, he always comes out well, all you have to do is look at his photographs. The author here is highlighting the vanity of Marcelo de Alvear who thought his profile was equivalent, if not to Rudolph Valentino, at least to Carlos Gardel.

General Uriburu enters the presidential salon and, while disturbed to find Alvear in the room, and close to the presidential chair, acts cordially enough and asks Alvear to take a seat – except of course in the presidential chair – and inquires why is he there? Alvear replies, among other things, to inquire about the elections “tan ofrecidas.” The General retorts ““Eh? “Quién ha llamado a elecciones?”” As the dialog progresses, the maid constantly interrupts the General regarding one matter or another. Alvear complains that “en todas las ocasiones, que hablo aquí de elecciones, hay aquí una interrupción.” Alvear insists on pressing the issue of elections ““Cuándo seremos llamados a los comicios sagrados, tantas veces prometidos como veces postergados?”” At last the General replies, “-Cuando no anden los honrados misturados con los bandidos! -Cuando haya más patriotismo! -Y cuando, leal a sus ideas, cada paladín de civismo, patriota, limpio, decente, inteligente y capaz!” Alvear asks, is there anything more? The General replies that he does not want to be too exacting. Implicit in the dialog is the General’s belief that within the Radical Party there are no honest politicians and in fact all politicians are by definition thieves. Alvear asks, are there no “politicians” within the General’s government? The General answers, “-Lo que no hay aquí es ladrones!” Alvear departs and according to La presidencia, he left “decepcionado.” She sighs that her future seems to be tied with the General. Along with her sense of frustration, the audience clearly understood that no

one met the definition of the General to stand for elections, especially Alvear. Thus, how could there be presidential elections?

The next scene takes place on Martín García Island and focuses on a monologue by Hipolito Yrigoyen who muses dejectedly about his misfortune. He asks what he has done wrong? He only can be blamed for his age, and not for his dreams. All the thieves of his regime are free and he got all the blame. He muses that life is a dream and thinks that all have the right to dream, great and small, even Alvear dreams, “pobre pelado, que presidente sería y con votar algún día, sueña el pueblo, ilusionado. . . ¿Y el gobierno? Un sueño ideal, una sombra, un sueño loco que siempre dura muy poco. . . cuando no es provisional.”

Perhaps the most evocative of all the scenes of the *revista* is the one between two brothers Ricardo, a pro-Yrigoyen Radical, and Pancho, a conservative and a supporter of the revolution. He is as well a member of the neo-fascist Legion de Mayo. In this vignette, the two brothers argue about the government. Pancho maintains that the revolution was necessary because of the corruption of the government and the lack of honesty in the politicians. The army intervened to save the nation's and the Argentine people's honor. Ricardo asks what about the Constitution, liberty, and the rights of the people? The other brother retorts with the refrain of the military “¡Cuando olvida de sus deberes no tiene derecho de nada!” Both men are about to come to blows when their mother intervenes and pleads that they resolve their differences for the good of the family and for the nation. They agree to a reconciliation “como argentinos.” The message is clear; both the Radicals and the Military need to come to a reconciliation for the good of the nation. This motif of the *revista* greatly impressed one reviewer of the play who wrote in the evening edition of *La Razón* on June 5, 1931, “La madre se presenta y los reconcilia. Habla en nombre de la patria. Es la patria misma. Y el pueblo comprende y aplaude ruidosamente.”

The last vignette that takes place in the year 2000 in the Presidential Palace and it deals with the dominant topic of the play, the promise of presidential elections. General Uriburu is still there, as are all of his ministers and military advisors, now close to seventy years older. One of the president's secretaries comes in and announces that there is a demonstration outside calling for elections and he asks “¿Cree usted que por fin llamará a elecciones este año?” The General answers “¡Claro! Elecciones provisionales. . . como las que hicimos en la provincia de Buenos Aires. . .” Alvear enters and demands that the presidential chair be given up, “el pueblo la reclama.” General Uriburu answers, “Y antes de entregarla así tendrán que sacarme a

mí de aquí pa la Recolecta.”(FN12) Alvear leaves complaining that the General has pulled his leg (tomar el pelo) enough so that he has no more hair to give. As the *revista* ends, Juan Pueblo appears and explains why he wrote the *revista*: he had no argument to make; he wrote some parts as funny and others as serious; his only aim was to entertain and to make people think. He hopes he was successful.

Conclusions

The political implications and the significance of the *revista El Gran Manicomio Nacional* are clear. In the scene that took place in the year 2000, Urriburu refers to the provisional elections held in the province of Buenos Aires in April 1931. These elections served the purpose of testing whether or not the nation was ready for a return to civilian rule and presidential elections. While the voters soundly affirmed their repudiation of the military government, they did not affirm their support for the deposed president. The results of the election gave heart to Alvear who thought, if presidential elections were held, he would win. The results of the election were not what the General expected. Popular support for his regime was not there.

This election result provided another context to the monologue on *base* versus *vase* and clearly the author of the *revista* was playfully tweaking the lion's tail. Even so, the issue of elections did not die with the Buenos Aires fiasco. The General kept taunting Alvear with the promise of presidential elections, and kept putting them off. As suggested in the vignettes, and as well in the other two *revistas* cited, the public kept the pressure on the General demanding presidential elections and the restoration of civilian rule. Such elections were finally held on November 8, 1931 and were as corrupt as any held under Alvear. The conservative General Augustín P. Justo won with support from the landed elite, the anti-personalist wing of the Radical party, and the military. Justo took office in February 1932. The Radicals were all banned from participating in the 1931 election, including Alvear. As noted in the scene on Martín García Island, Yrigoyen was right. Alvear could dream as hard as he could but all for naught. He would never again be president. General Urriburu died from cancer shortly after in exile and in all likelihood disillusioned by his failure to make Argentina into a corporate state like Italy. The play takes place between the confusion provoked by the crisis of the Urriburu defeat in the April 5, 1931 Buenos Aires provincial elections and the projected presidential elections of November 8, 1931. The historical moment between these elections, and the speculation of who would run and who would win, are the real-world settings of the *revista*.

As the *revista's* title suggests, Argentina is a giant insane asylum. The problem is, who are the keepers and who are the insane? This is almost a theme reminiscent of *Don Quijote* where the *loco* is *cuerto* and the *cuertos* are *locos*. Are the Argentines crazy to think that they will have civilian rule or is the General crazy to think he can perpetuate the military regime; who is more crazy, or more sane? The *revista* makes some implied suggestions, but provides the audience with the opportunity to come to its own conclusions. The General may have huffed and puffed, but he took no action against the theatres, the production companies, nor against the authors. By the theatre season of 1931, it was clear General José Félix Uriburu had lost; but alas, as time would show, civilian rule was restored but democracy was not. Argentina was sliding into the arms of an even more efficient and ruthless political tutor, another general and into another time. ¡Pobre presidencia!

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Notes

1. For a history of the *sainete* see Blas Raul Gallo, *Historia del sainete nacional* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Quetzal, 1955). While there are many definitions to what exactly "popular" means in the broad context of culture, the ideas expressed in the debates contained in the journal *Studies in Latin American Popular Culture*, especially in the special edition devoted to the debate (15:1996) and in the Ray Browne *Journal of Popular Culture* are useful in formatting the discussion.

2. For a discussion of Trejo and the rent strike of 1907, see Donald S. Castro, "The *sainete porteño* and Argentine Reality: The Rent Strike of 1907," *Rocky Mountain Review of Language Literature*. 44:1-2 (1990).

3. For a discussion of the politics of the 1920s and 1930s see Peter H. Smith, *Argentina and the Failure of Democracy* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1974) and Sandra McGee Deusch and Ronald H. Dolkart, eds. *The Argentine Right. Its History and Intellectual Origins, 1910 to the Present* (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources, 1993). While a number of authors write Hipólito Yrigoyen with a "Y," which is the preferred spelling, some use the letter "I." The controversy provoked by the provincial elections held in April 1931-30 the proscription of the Radical Party's participation in the presidential elections held on November 8, 1931 in which Justo won. For a discussion of these elections and the political consequences see Jorge Abelardo Ramos, *Revolución y contrarrevolución en la Argentina*, 2 vols. (Buenos Aires: Editorial Plus Ultra, 1965), II: 376-379.

4. Theatre such as *Bambalinas* and *La Escena* published complete plays even as they were being presented on stage. These magazines were inexpensively published and often had errors in orthography and grammar. Since these will be the sources for the stage plays cited, the plays when quoted will be as directly printed in the magazine.

5. This does not mean that there were not any sparks of creativity on the *porteño* stage. A number of dramatists, actors, and writers sought new and creative ways to make theatre more responsive to the needs of the people. As a result, the Boedo School of writers developed, which sought to break

away from the stilted stylistics of Argentine literature, and, equally important was the formation of the Boedo counterpart, the Florida School of Borges and others. In the area of theatre, the formation of what became the Teatro del Pueblo in November 1930, or the creation of the Teatro Libre of Octavio Palazzolo, clearly reflected a desire to initiate theatre involving the actor and the dramatist in new ways that dignified their roles. For a brief discussion of these issues see Sergio Pujol. *Valentino en Buenos Aires: Los años veinte en el espectáculo* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Emece, 1994), 46-50. For a discussion on the Boedo-Florida "schools" see Juan José Hernández Arregui, *Imperio y cultura* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Plus Ultra, 1973. 3ed Edition.), 86 ff. and Héctor René Itafleur, et. al., *Las revistas literarias argentinas, 1893-1960* (Buenos Aires: Ministerio de Educación y Justicia, Publicación Oficial, 1962), 59 ff.

6. This is based on a review of the fearful comments in *Comoedia, Anuario Teatral, La Escena* and in *Bambalinas*. A review of the entertainment sections of daily newspapers such as *La Prensa* and *La Razón* clearly shows the growth of the number of theatres devoted to the exclusive showing of films and the increase in the number of legitimate theatres forced to show film along with their theatre productions. The cartoon in *Comoedia* on May 16, 1927, (II.24:s.n.) showing a steam roller labeled "cinematografía" chasing down a jester figure labeled "el teatro" is an example of the impact of the film industry on the legitimate theatre. The cartoon is entitled "El peligro avanza." In some instances, censorship was a real threat. This came primarily from the municipal authorities, appointed by the federal government, who shut some productions down because of nudity and obscenity. Political censorship closed down the Teatro Buenos Aires at the end of August 1931. Commentators in *Comoedia* blamed the closure more on bad taste and poor productions than on political problems. The production on stage at that time was the panned revista *Hay bronca en Martín García*. See *Comoedia* "El espejo indiscreto" (VI.77:54). Because of the financial crisis, problems in theatre productions, and censorship, the Teatro Apollo finished the 1931 season showing movies (*Comoedia* VI.79:6).

7. Historically, the popular theatre authors, starting with Onrubia in 1889, were not afraid to take on the elite controlled governments prior to the entrance of the middle-class politicians of the Hipólito Yrigoyen Era (1916-1930). Several *saineteros*, such as Florencio Sánchez and José González Castillo were recognized anarchists or, as in the case of Nemesio Trejo, champions of the poor.

8. Gallo was Vicente Gallo, a member of the anti-Yrigoyen faction of the Radical Party, who was promoted as the compromise candidate for the 1931 presidential elections prior to the complete banning of Radical participation in the elections. Antonio de Tomaso was a former member of the Socialist Party who first served as a participant in the Buenos Aires city government as a member of a reconciliation municipal government and later participated in the same capacity in the Justo government. Octavio S. Pico was Minister of Public Works in the Uriburu government.

9. For example in the theatre section of *La Prensa* "Diversiones públicas" for Thursday, July 2, 1931, the following programs were listed: Teatro Smart: *Gran Circo Político, Fieras amaestradas*; Teatro Sarmiento: *Gran Manicomio Nacional*; Teatro Cómico: title not given but the show was described as being given "con permiso de Uriburu. Dos obras que son dos horas de risa"; Teatro Apollo: *La gran milonga política* and *¡Se acabó la dictadura!*; and at the Teatro Comedia: *Gran Pericón Política* described as "pieza satírica, política, original . . ." The new revista *Uriburu quiere largar* by "Juan Pueblo" opened at the Teatro Cómico on July 25, 1931 (*La Prensa*, July 26, 1931). The revista *Gran Pericón Político* folded after a run of less than two weeks (*La Prensa*, July, 17, 1931).

10. The "Legión de Mayo" was a right-wing paramilitary group organized by Alberto de Villas from mainly upper-class youth to intimidate and brow-beat the opposition to Uriburu's regime. As part of the celebration of the national holiday of 25 de Mayo, the legion held an impressive march in

support of the regime just three weeks prior to the revista's presentation (May 25, 1931). See Deutsch and Dolkart (56).

11. The focus of this vignette was the merry-go-round of potential candidates for the presidency representing the various factions of the Radical Party and the machinations of the Uriburu government to find reasons to ban all potential candidates from the Radicals for fear they might win the election as they did earlier in the annulled provincial elections of April 1931. See Jorge Abelardo Ramos (II:373 ff.).

12. The play opened with four sold-out functions on Sunday, June 4, 1931. The editorial appeared in the Monday, June 5, 1931, edition of the newspaper.

13. The Radical Party divided into two factions, one pro-Yrigoyen called the "Personalista" and the other anti-Yrigoyen called the "Anti Personalista" wing.

14. The elite cemetery of Buenos Aires.

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