Toward a New Order of Law: Adultery and Sovereignty in Eugenio Cambaceres' Pot Pourri: Whistlings of an Idler

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ABSTRACT: This article examines the productive relation between law and literature in late 19th-century Argentina through a reading of *Pot Pourri: Whistlings of an Idler*, the first—and highly controversial—work of novelist and legislator Eugenio Cambaceres. Placing the novel in relation to the debates regarding civil marriage throughout the 1880s, I read the themes of adultery and transgression in *Pot Pourri* as a literary intervention on the question of sovereignty over marital life, thus foreshadowing the emergence of a new order of law in the form of a consolidated liberal state.

INTRODUCTION

On the morning of October 8, 1882, Argentine lawyer, legislator, and writer Eugenio Cambaceres (1843–1889) embarked on a journey from Buenos Aires to Paris that would extend for a period of almost two years. Being the son of a French chemist who had made a small fortune in Argentina, Cambaceres was not unfamiliar with this route, having traveled to Europe on multiple occasions like most members of the Argentine bourgeoisie at the time, and was even well-known for his appreciable predilection for French literature and culture. What sets this journey apart from his previous ones, however, relates very little to the destination itself, but rather, to a beautifully printed book published by Martín Biedma's press just the day before Cambaceres' departure, and which began to circulate that very same day.[1] The book in ques-

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Unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine.

tion, titled *Potpourri: silbidos de un vago* (*Pot Pourri*: *Whistlings of an Idler)*, lacked a proper name to which the text could be credited; although such a name may have indeed been unnecessary, for the anonymity of the author was promptly dispelled by readers who found no challenge in uncovering the unmistakable trace of Cambaceres' pen throughout the narration.[2] In departing from Buenos Aires, Cambaceres would not only leave behind what has properly been described as "the first editorial success that a novel has ever had in Buenos Aires,"[3] but also one of the greatest controversies of late nineteenth-century Argentinian society, one that involved some of the most important political and cultural figures of the time and was played out through a constellation of editorial pieces, articles, prologues, and letters.[4]

In this article, my aim is to read the controversial adultery that inspires *Pot Pourri's* plot against the backdrop of the fundamental role that marriage played in the public debates and legislative discussions that defined the years of state consolidation in Argentina during the 1880s.This process formally began with the enactment of the *Leyes laicas* (Secular Laws), starting with the *Ley de educación común* (Law of common education) and the *Ley de registro civil* (Law of civil registry) in 1884 and ended in 1888 with the *Ley de matrimonio civil* (Law of civil marriage), thereby asserting the authority of state jurisdiction and sovereignty over all matters relating to the body politic. Understanding the Law of civil marriage as central to the cultural imaginaries of state consolidation in nineteenth-century Argentina, my article builds upon the work of Josefina Ludmer—whose seminal essay *The Corpus Delicti* names Cambaceres' novel as the first "fiction for the state"[5]—through a close reading of *Pot Pourri's* literary portrayal of adultery, which, as I will argue, exposes the internal contradictions of bourgeois marriage by gesturing

1 Although founded merely ten years before the publication of Cambaceres' first novel, Martín Biedma's press was already renowned for the quality of its printings, having received a first-place award in the category of "printing" at the second exhibition of the Argentine Scientific Society in 1876, against much older publishing houses. For further information on this press see Josefina Cabo, "La imprenta de Martín Biedma (1872–1910)," *Orbis Tertius* 19, no. 20 (2014): 141–147.

2 An editorial piece written on October 10—just three days after the publication of *Pot Pourri*—claims to have discovered the identity of its author "with no other information than his keen observations, his wealth of *humour* with a touch of *esprit*, brimming with delicacy." See Fabio Espósito et al., *El naturalismo en la prensa porteña* (Buenos Aires: Biblioteca Orbis Tertius, 2011), 96. In the myriad of articles that appeared between 1882 and 1883 in view of *Pot Pourri*'s publication—both favorable and unfavorable—there is a general agreement that Cambaceres' authorship is easily identifiable throughout the text, and even more so, that this may have been the exact purpose behind his writing style. As Juan Albin and Emiliano Sued argue, Cambaceres "knows that his work emerges in a community small enough for all its members to recognize the writing of a man who is known well enough not to need to identify himself." See Albin and Sued, "Cambaceres, lector de *Potpourri*. 1882–1883," *Orbis Tertius* 19, no. 20 (2014): 134–140.

3 Ricardo Rojas, "Eugenio Cambaceres," prologue to the 6th edition of Eugenio Cambaceres' *Sin rumbo* (Buenos Aires: Minerva, 1924), 7.

4 During the years that followed its publication, Cambaceres' first novel was extensively discussed in some of the most important literary journals and newspapers of the time, staging a controversy that involved major political and cultural figures such as Miguel Cané, Pedro Goyena, Martín García Mérou, and Ernesto Quesada, among others. For a broader account on the extent and content of these discussions see Phyllis Powers Beck, "Eugenio Cambaceres: The Vortex of Controversy," *Hispania* 46, no. 4 (1963): 755–759; Claude Cymerman, *La obra política y literaria de Eugenio Cambaceres* (Buenos Aires: Corregidor, 2007). For a comprehensive analysis of *Pot Pourri* in relation to the controversies regarding naturalism in late nineteenth-century Argentina see Alejandra Laera, "La polémica sobre el naturalismo en la literatura argentina," *Revista Iberoamericana* 66, no. 190 (2000): 139–146.

5 In *The Corpus Delicti*, Josefina Ludmer famously coins the term "fiction for the state" to denote the body of works written throughout the 1880s that served as the fictional counterpart for the secular laws of the liberal state: "As literature, these stories would become the fiction or the reverse of these state laws, because they singularize the legal universalities (they gave them 'I's' and persons).... The literature of the coalition thus shows *the intimate*

toward the development of modern conceptions of state sovereignty. More specifically, my reading will center the question of sovereignty in the figure of *Pot Pourri's* narrator, a former lawyer and self-described "*vago*" (idler) who, faced with the task of saving his best friend's marriage from double adultery, must act "sovereignly," that is, beyond the jurisdiction of the legal order, in order to ensure the preservation of the marital contract—an end for which his knowledge of the law becomes as crucial as his ability to transgress it.[6] Thus, my article reads Cambaceres' first novel—written nearly six years before the Law of civil marriage was enacted—as the narrative space where the desire to redefine the marital contract is expressed through an idler-turned-sovereign whose critique of marriage foreshadows the emergence of a plenary sovereign state and thus of a new order of law.

LITERATURE AND POLITICAL FAILURE: *POT POURRI* AND THE QUESTION OF CIVIL MARRIAGE

Despite being only thirty-nine at the time of *Pot Pourri's* publication, Cambaceres was already well versed in the art of polemicizing. As a legislator and a member of the Constitutional Convention of Buenos Aires from 1870 to 1873, almost a decade before the start of his literary career, he had delivered two eloquent speeches that gave rise to heated debates, both in the congress and among the general public.[7] The first, delivered on July 18, 1871, consisted of a syllogistic argument in favor of freedom of religion and, correspondingly, of a radical separation between Church and State, by asserting that "the sphere of religion finds itself outside the boundaries of politics."[8] The second, delivered on July 20, 1874, denounced the irregularities that took place

relationship between hegemonic practices and legal discourses." See Ludmer, *Corpus Delicti: A Manual of Argentine Fictions* (Pittsburgh: The University of Pittsburgh Press, 2004), 12; emphasis in original.

6 Here, my understanding of sovereignty, sovereign power, and sovereign decision, are inspired by what Giorgio Agamben, in the first chapters of his *Homo Sacer I*, defines as "the paradox of sovereignty," reinterpreting Carl Schmitt's canonical definition of the term: "Sovereign is he who decides on the state of exception [Ausnahmezustand]." According to Agamben, the decision over the exception is the outmost expression of sovereign power, because it defines a force of law through which the legal order achieves the internalization of the exceptional case through the suspension of its own validity: "The exception that defines the structure of sovereignty is, however, even more complex. Here what is outside is included not simply by means of an interdiction or an internment, but rather by means of the suspension of the juridical order's validity—by letting the juridical order, that is, withdraw from the exception and abandon it.... *The particular 'force' of law consists in this capacity of law to maintain itself in relation to an exteriority*" (emphasis added). In my reading of *Pot Pourri*, then, the Idler's transition into a "sovereign position" is defined by assuming the prerogative to both speak in the name of the law as well as to act outside the boundaries of the legal order (that is, by "suspending" the law in order to ensure the continuity of marriage as a legal institution). See Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer I* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 18; Carl Schmitt, *Politische Theologie* (Berlin: Duncker & Humboldt, 2015), 13.

7 In his brief inaugural speech for the Constitutional Convention of 1870, Manuel Quintana (lawyer, legislator, and president of Argentina) calls for reform of the aforementioned constitution by invoking the "law of unlimited progress," which demanded a reevaluation and modernization of its political system. Among these modernizing efforts, the most controversial articles discussed in the three years that the convention took place were those aimed at reconfiguring the relation between church and state, an effort in which Cambaceres was an active participant. For a transcription of the debates that took place during the convention (including Quintana's speech), see Luis Varela, *Debates de la convención constituyente de Buenos Aires, 1870–1873* (La Plata: Taller de impresiones oficiales, 1920). For a broader analysis of the conflicts between church and state throughout the convention, see Horacio Juan Cuccorese, "La cuestión religiosa a través de los debates de la Convención Constituyente de Buenos Aires (1870-1873)," in *VI Congreso internacional de historia de América* (Buenos Aires: Academia nacional de la historia, 1982): 63–97.

8 Espósito et al., *El naturalismo en la prensa porteña*, 299.

in the congressional elections of that same year in which his own party had won, and proposed their annulment in order to "keep fraud from transgressing the chambers of the law."[9] Needless to say, not only were these two proposals rejected by the congress, but their radicality constituted a form of political suicide that led to Cambaceres' resignation from his legislative office in 1876, marking the end of his short and failed political career.[10]

And yet, even to someone as used to being at the center of public scrutiny as Cambaceres, the backlash against his first novel was overwhelming. This much can at least be discerned from a letter he wrote on November 22, 1882 to his friend, Argentine writer and prominent politician Miguel Cané, in which he confessed his bewilderment at the commotion generated by *Pot Pourri*, as well as his frustration with what he saw as a misrepresentation of his authorial intentions: "You cannot imagine the *tole-tole* [kerfuffle] that has arisen from the garbage I wrote and published before my departure from Buenos Aires. The respectable public has twisted my intentions and my purposes in a way that revolts and burdens me."[11] While Cambaceres' accusations against the "respectable public" are not without irony, it is hard to imagine that he did not anticipate some opposition to his novel—which, as already mentioned, he conveniently published the day before he left Buenos Aires.

The plot of the novel, while certainly not unprecedented, was itself polemical: In short, *Pot Pourri* narrates the story of an act of adultery through the eyes of a self-described idler, an Argentine *dandy* of sorts whom many have interpreted as an alter ego of Cambaceres in the work.[12] Throughout the novel, the Idler describes the marital stages undergone by his close friend Juan and his young wife María, beginning with their religious wedding, followed by their idyllic honeymoon in Buenos Aires countryside, and ending with María's affair with one of Juan's employees called José (whose nickname, Pepe, completes the religious satire as the implied *Pater Putativus* of Juan and María's son). The Idler, who uncovers the affair but refuses to tell Juan for fear he might kill the adulterers, proceeds to discreetly resolve the problem by reaching a settlement with María and assigning Pepe to a diplomatic mission in Monaco, thereby exculpating the adulterous couple from punishment. The Idler thus succeeds in protecting Juan's honor but does so at the expense of marriage itself, which is preserved only in its legal form as a contract, devoid of any moral content it may have had.[13]

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9 Cymerman, *La obra política y literaria de Eugenio Cambaceres,* 669.

10 While it is true that Cambaceres was forced to step away from public office due to the radicality of his proposals, this in no way means that he renounced his privileged political position as a member of the ruling elite. In fact, he continued to be an active contributor in the sphere of "public representations." This much, at least, can be discerned from his appointment as head of the Argentinian delegation to the 1889 universal exhibition in Paris, which he was only able to preside over partially due to his untimely death. For an exhaustive analysis on the significance of nineteenth-century universal exhibitions in defining and legitimizing the modernizing processes taking place in Latin America, see Alejandra Uslenghi, *Latin America at fin-de-siècle universal exhibitions: modern cultures of visuality* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016). For a more specific account of Cambaceres' role in the Paris exhibition, see 118–122.

11 Cymerman, *La obra política y literaria de Eugenio Cambaceres,* 638.

12 As Cymerman notes, most scholars devoted to Cambaceres' work "unanimously recognize the biographical and autobiographical character of *Pot Pourri*." Rather than merely expressing a stylistic convention, for Ludmer, this autobiographical character—which she ascribes to all novels written by members of the Generation of 1880—sheds light on their status as fictions for the state. See Cymerman, *La obra política y literaria de Eugenio Cambaceres,* 173; Ludmer, *Corpus Delicti*, 12.

13 In her well-known *Foundational Fictions* Doris Sommer reads the ubiquitous recurrence of marriage in the nineteenth-century Latin American literary canon as an attempt to construct allegories of national consolidation

To better understand the controversies stirred by *Pot Pourri*, it is worth noting that, despite declaring their independence in the late 1820s, most emerging nations in the Southern Cone continued to base their marital laws on the canonical precepts of the *Siete partidas*. This statutory code, enforced by the Spanish Empire across its Latin American colonies, granted the Catholic Church authority over all marital affairs.[14] In the specific case of Argentina, Dalmacio Vélez Sarsfield's *Código Civil de la República Argentina* (*Civil Code of the Argentine Republic*), written in 1874, had basically made no modification to this state of affairs, leaving all decisions regarding the celebration of marriage, as well as the determination of its impediments, in the hands of the Catholic Church.[15] Yet, in her thorough analysis of the twenty-two doctoral dissertations on the subject of divorce, written in Argentina between 1874 and 1900, Viviana Kluger asserts that the Catholic Church's jurisdiction on marital issues had become a center of dispute for a number of public intellectuals throughout the end of the nineteenth century, even before *Pot Pourri* was published.[16] By finding itself in the midst of this critical juncture, it is not surprising that *Pot Pourri* would draw the attention of those invested in maintaining the privileged position of the Catholic Church in Argentina's political life.

In an editorial piece that appeared in *La Unión* barely a month after the publication of *Pot Pourri*, law professor, legislator, and public intellectual Pedro Goyena offers a scathing critique of Cambaceres' first novel, pointing to its lack of seriousness and attacking the "pathological" state of its writer: "The *Whistlings* reveal a state of the soul, *a pathological state*, they are a sad book that reflects a sad life."[17] A devoted advocate of the Catholic Church, Goyena's reasons for writing his scathing critique may have been as much personal as doctrinal, since his was one of the few real names that Cambaceres unambiguously mentioned in his novel, in rather unflattering terms. For his part, Cambaceres most certainly had personal reasons to address Goyena harshly, since the latter was one of the members of the Constitutional Convention of Buenos Aires that had rejected his reform in favor of freedom of religion in 1871.[18] And yet, while Goyena certainly

through the marital consecration of heterosexual love and fertility. In her words, "national romances" in Latin America employed the literary motif of marriage as an allegory to "bridge regional, economic, and party differences during the years of national consolidation." Following Nathalie Bouzaglo, my reading of Cambaceres' first novel takes exception to Sommer's approach. The tale of adultery and marriage that takes place in *Pot Pourri* is not concerned with the construction of a national identity, but rather aimed at destabilizing the national project by exposing the inner contradictions of those institutions upon which it is founded. See Doris Sommer, *Foundational Fictions: The National Romances of Latin America* (California: University of California Press, 1991), 18; Nathalie Bouzaglo, *Ficción adulterada* (Buenos Aires: Beatriz Viterbo Editora, 2016).

14 For a comprehensive account of the role of the *Siete partidas* in shaping marital law in colonial Latin America, see Arlene J. Díaz, *Female citizens, patriarchs, and the law in Venezuela* (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), esp. 21–104.

15 As noted in article 168 of Vélez Sarsfield's *Código Civil*, "The law acknowledges the impediments to marriage as those established by canon law, reserving to the ecclesiastical authority the right to determine these impediments and to grant dispensations."

16 Viviana Kruger, "Cuando se acaba el amor: Una visión del divorcio según las tesis doctorales de la Universidad de Buenos Aires (1874–1900)," *Revista de historia del derecho* 35, (2007): 227–268.

17 Espósito et al., *El naturalismo en la prensa porteña,* 15; emphasis added.

18 Cambaceres and Goyena's relationship extends farther back than their time as legislators, as they had been classmates both at the law school of the Universidad de Buenos Aires and at the Colegio Nacional. For a broader account of the Goyena-Cambaceres dispute on the issue of the separation of church and state, see Sandra Gasparini, "Liberales y católicos en la Argentina moderna: la polémica Cambaceres-Goyena (1882–1883)," *Sensibilidades conservadoras: el debate cultural sobre la civilización en América Latina y España durante el siglo XIX*, ed. Kari Soriano Salkjelsvik (Madrid: Iberoamericana, 2021), 337–352.

stands as the spokesperson for the Catholic faction among Cambaceres' critics, it would be misleading to assume that his position on *Pot Pourri* was not shared by members of their more liberal counterpart. In his review of Cambaceres' literary work, published in *Sud América* on October 30, 1885, Miguel Cané—who is also one of the few whose name appears in *Pot Pourri*—revendicates Goyena's assessment on the pathological character of the plot by claiming that Cambaceres' novel "is not only a sick book, but the book of a sick man."[19]

Cambaceres' relentless exposure of bourgeois marital life should not, therefore, be read purely as a literary translation of partisan politics. Rather, the controversy stirred by *Pot Pourri* foregrounds how marriage in the late nineteenth century traversed beyond categorical distinctions such as "liberal" and "conservative"— which thereby shows the shortcomings of these terms when describing a governing elite at a time when the limits between liberalism and conservatism were malleable and in constant negotiation. As argued by Héctor Recalde in *Matrimonio civil y divorcio*, the discussions surrounding the promulgation of civil marriage—which took place as early as 1883—went beyond mere partisan disputes between liberal and Catholic factions; rather, what was truly at stake here was the more fundamentally political question of state sovereignty:

> The discussions that took place in 1883 concerned some of the issues that would be debated again in 1888 in relation to the Bill of Civil Marriage, beginning with the most pressing of all: *the conception of sovereignty*. On this issue a confrontation ensued between those who upheld the exclusive faculties of the State to legislate on all aspects relevant to the governance of the body politic, and those who defined two separate spheres of power—the political and the religious—with similar attributions on certain subjects, therefore being obliged to come to an agreement regarding their administration. *In other words, a confrontation between a sovereign State, whose decisions were conditioned by no other power, and a confessional state, which delegated certain essential decisions pertinent to social life to the Catholic Church*.[20]

As the immediate legislative precedent that gave rise to the Secular Laws, which would define the process of state consolidation in nineteenth-century Argentina, the political debates that took place in the early 1880s were directly concerned with the question of sovereignty, that is, the plenary and undivided authority of the state over the birth, education, and conjugal life of its citizens. In the sections that follow, I will address how the question of marriage, on the one hand, and sovereignty, on the other, are expressed in *Pot Pourri*: the former in the form of an act of adultery that exposes the hypocrisies of the ruling elites, and the latter in the figure of a protagonist who, understood as a wayward lawyer, takes on the task of preserving the marital contract by acting "sovereignly;" that is, beyond the limits of the law.

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19 Espósito et al., *El naturalismo en la prensa porteña*, 299. This seemingly improbable agreement between the liberal Cané and the Catholic Goyena can be clarified by none other than Cané himself, who describes Goyena as his first "philosophy master." In a brief paragraph of his essay *A la distancia*, Cané recounts searching for Goyena's intellectual guidance some years before, in relation to a particularly unsettling reading that had a "vertiginous" effect on him; the work in question suggestively being Emanuel Swedenborg's *De Caelo et de Inferno* (*Heaven and Hell*), and more precisely, his polemical chapter titled "Marriage in Heaven." In his 1885 review, as he did in his younger years, Cané relies on the teachings of his first professor of philosophy when it comes to discourses that disrupt the doctrinal conception of marriage. See Miguel Cané, *A la distancia* (Buenos Aires: El Diario, 1882), 7–8.

20 Héctor Recalde, *Matrimonio civil y divorcio* (Buenos Aires: Centro editor de América Latina, 1986), 111; emphasis added.

WAYWARD LAWYERS: IDLENESS AND THE ADULTERATION OF LEGAL KNOWLEDGE

As a preliminary remark, my argument is grounded on the conjecture that all adultery novels are intrinsically concerned with the law, insofar as they metaphorically deal with the adulteration (*adulterare*) of a legal document—that is, of the marital contract. While this may certainly be said of Cambaceres' first novel, the adultery that takes place in *Pot Pourri* goes beyond asserting this implicit intersection between law and literature by intentionally focalizing the plot through the narrative voice of a wayward lawyer of sorts; a self-described "idler" who, having abandoned his once successful career as a lawyer, has now found solace in a praxis of writing that is, ironically, defined by idleness: "I live off my riches and have no obligations. I cast my eyes about to kill time and I write.... The most trifling of intellectual endeavors exhausts me. I live for the sake of living, or better yet: I germinate."[21] "Killing time" thus defines the temporality of literature conceived through the eyes of the Idler, whose departure from the law places him outside the sphere of labor—a position reserved only for those who are socially and economically free to engage in it. Almost as if foreseeing the criticism of those—like Goyena—who would later accuse *Pot Pourri* of lacking the qualities of "serious" works, Cambaceres thus begins his adultery novel by staging a parody of the perceived self-importance of writers, through the voice of an idler who happens to be a former legal practitioner; someone whose knowledge of the law is residual at best, and who can barely stand to be faced with it.[22] Idleness, then, articulates the mood of a protagonist who departs from the archetypical man of letters, a wayward lawyer whose adulteration of legal knowledge runs parallel to the adulteries and transgressions that unfold in the narration.[23]

Among the many traits that define the Idler as a wayward lawyer, perhaps the most explicit refers to his open disdain for all things related to marriage—an attitude appropriate to a decadent dandy in a context in which the legal and political status of marriage was beginning to be extensively debated in Argentine society. Utterly unconcerned with the pressing political issues of the time, and upon learning from Juan about his engagement with María, the Idler immediately assumes a critical distance from marriage, a position from which he can both attest to its social necessity and acknowledge the "danger" it poses:

> You know that getting married has never crossed my mind...but you also know that I accept and justify marriage *as a social necessity*, and I am the first to applaud when others are wed. Allow me, nevertheless, given that it is you we speak of and given my fondness for you, to

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21 Eugenio Cambaceres, *Pot Pourri: Whistlings of an Idler* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 6–7.

22 When he inadvertently comes across descriptions of trials in a popular newspaper, the Idler cannot help but to avert his eyes in disgust and utter the following claim against the editor: "Is he trying, perchance, to prove himself a connoisseur of tedium and start demanding payment in exchange for the narcotics he supplies?" Ibid., 61.

23 In his canonical posthumous work titled *The Lettered City*, literary critic Ángel Rama proposes a critical genealogy of Latin American "men of letters" (*letrados*) from colonial times to the present, foregrounding the institutional imbrication of these public intellectuals—mostly lawyers and "other wielders of pen and paper"—in the administration and enforcement of the legal order. In doing so, Rama hampers any attempt to explore the roles played by these men of letters beyond their complicity with state power (a critique that Carlos J. Alonso has later referred to as the "demonization of writing"). In describing the Idler as a "wayward lawyer," I am reading Cambaceres' protagonist as a subversion of the archetype of the Latin American *letrado*: In abandoning the legal profession, the Idler—much like Cambaceres himself—is a lawyer who has resigned to his privileged position in the administration of the state, and who, on the contrary, employs his legal knowledge to transgress the law by operating on its margins. See Ángel Rama, *The Lettered City* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 18; Carlos J. Alonso, *The Burden of Modernity: The rhetoric of cultural discourse in Spanish America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 40.

> maintain that I am not in love, do not share in the enthusiasm, nor do I wish to make a snap judgment, nor try to force the issue. *He who marries sets sail aboard a ship, and he who sets sail courts danger.*[24]

As the one tasked with both witnessing the breach of the marital contract and with assuring its continuity, the Idler's open distrust of marriage suggestively foreshadows the adultery that would occur only a few months later, when he discovers that both Juan and María had simultaneously broken their marital vows under the cover of the same social event: a carnival that gathered some of the most prominent members of Buenos Aires' high life. Cambaceres' decision to place *Pot Pourri*'s adultery in the context of a carnival is allegorical for a number of reasons, not the least of which is the reference to the dislocation of inner content and outer form implied in the play of masquerades, which thereby embodies the Idler's satirical view of the elites' private life. Yet perhaps a more concrete reason for choosing this setting may be the connotation that carnivals had recently assumed by the time of *Pot Pourri*'s publication: As Héctor Recalde remarks, one of the late nineteenth-century public practices that most clearly expressed the secularizing processes taking place in Argentina was none other than the carnival, which was legally incorporated into the *Digesto municipal de la ciudad de Buenos Aires* (Code of Municipal Regulations of the City of Buenos Aires) in 1872. By the end of the decade, carnivals had been subjected to numerous regulations regarding public decency, partially due to the fact that many of its attendants mockingly chose to dress up as priests and other religious figures.[25] Even before Cambaceres began to write his first novel, masquerades were regarded as an opportunity to explore the transgressive performances of an incipiently secularized ruling class, and it is therefore not surprising that he chose them as the proper stage for his satirical exposure of the underlying hypocrisies of bourgeois marriage.

Upon discovering the adulterous relationships in which both Juan and María had engaged, and in a gesture uncharacteristic of someone who avoids taking part in serious matters, the Idler confronts his friend directly. Reminding Juan of the indissolubility of the marital contract, the Idler revises his previous remarks on the dangers of marriage, now choosing to describe it as a "horse harness" whose legality ought to be respected. In keeping with the same metaphor, Juan replies:

> JUAN. Man is like a horse: from time to time he needs to take to the fields, twitch his tail, frolic, and roll around in the mud, if there's no sand around.
>
> IDLER. If man is like a horse, then of course woman must be like a mare, who twitches her tail, frolics, and rolls around as well. What would you say if your wife used your logic?
>
> JUAN. Stop right there! Man is man and woman is woman; she dons skirts and he wears the trousers.
>
> IDLER. Oh, how we men, made in the image and likeness of our Lord, mete out justice in this vale of tears![26]

In *Corpus Delicti*, Josefina Ludmer observes that the Idler's strategies to preserve Juan and María's marriage oscillate between embodying the law and transgressing it. This transgression, according to Ludmer, is most evident in the Idler's denunciation of gender inequality, where he adopts the

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24 Cambaceres, *Pot Pourri*, 16; emphasis added.

25 Recalde, *Matrimonio civil y divorcio*, 34.

26 Cambaceres, *Pot Pourri*, 102.

position of "the feminine" in opposition to his unrepentant friend.[27] In this sense, rather than ascribing the failure of marriage solely to María, the Idler puts equal—if not more—blame on Juan. Instead of an admission of guilt, however, Juan unapologetically advocates not only his perceived natural right to adultery but, even more so, he claims that no crime has in fact been committed since, as far as women are concerned, the harm caused by adultery is only of social nature and can be mitigated as long as the wife's honor is not publicly affected: "In short, my dear friend, he who loves his woman well should have many—or at least two—*as long as he keeps up appearances, of course, which is what society demands and what I shall comply with*; unless some inopportune soul surprises me *in flagranti delicto* and, tapping me from behind, presents my lawful wife, *ex abrupto*, before me."[28]

In *Ficción adulterada,* Nathalie Bouzaglo approaches the question of adultery in late nineteenth-century Venezuelan fiction as a "gender offense" in terms of how this crime is construed by the civil code—in stark contrast to how the law was applied to women, men could be legally accused of adultery only in those cases where a negligent lack of discretion turned the crime into a scandal, resulting in substantial social injury for the wife in question. While Vélez Sarsfield's *Código Civil* does not include a similar provision in its sections on adultery, Juan spares no effort in defending the validity of its heteropatriarchal principles, and with them, his own innocence.[29] Yet, the question of public honor and discretion, which otherwise justifies Juan's so-called "rightful" claim to adultery, is subjected to a slight alteration at the hands of the Idler, who finds himself forced into action by the same imperative for discretion:

> Naturally, he who thinks—like Aristotle—that friendship is a soul with two bodies or believes—like Voltaire—that it is a marriage of two souls must admit that a married soul cannot remain indifferent to the miseries afflicting its companion.... The quid is in how exactly to go about it. In the first place, it must be done well. When it comes to resolving the issue, one must tread very lightly, *proceed by the letter of the law, avail oneself of endless legally founded reasons, a body of evidence—so to speak—of the sort that barristers deem foolproof.*... The jury, respectable institution though it may be, is as befitting in these cases as a fish out of water.[30]

As someone who has shown nothing but disdain for anything related to the rule of law, the somewhat unexpected decision taken by the Idler in the above quoted paragraph reflects a suggestive disruption that prefigures the direction in which the novel's resolution will ultimately move: *toward the juridical*. And what lies at the core of this transformation is not only a concern for upholding the legality of marriage, but also influenced by a social demand that carries a lawfulness of its own: the imperative to uphold the primacy of homosociality, a demand by which male-to-male friendship goes as far as to adopt—and even supersede—the legal expression of the

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27 "When among equals (in the company of his friends) the narrator/dandy tells 'the truth' about sex: he shows natural equality and social inequality (he 'transgresses,' putting himself 'in female')." Ludmer, *Corpus Delicti*, 40.

28 Cambaceres, *Pot Pourri*, 103; emphasis added.

29 In this sense, María's adultery involves a double transgression: Not only does she break her marital vows, but she does so during carnival—a social institution where the discretion and secrecy afforded by masquerades were designed to facilitate adultery only by men, who were free to commit such acts as long as the public honor of their wives remained intact. María, then, appropriates the privileges of a cultural space explicitly not meant for her— a contradiction that the Idler implicitly denounces in his exchanges with Juan.

30 Cambaceres, *Pot Pourri*, 113; emphasis added.

marital bond.[31] The Idler, who recognizes himself as married to Juan "in spirit," cannot remain indifferent to the conflict and is therefore socially obliged to resolve it, not in order to rectify moral injuries, but purely to safeguard the public honor of his "spouse"—an end for which he is allowed to act "discreetly," that is, through discretionary means, outside the order of the law and the "respectable institution of the Jury." In this oblique movement toward the juridical, embodied by both staging a trial and delivering a sentence, the Idler simultaneously begins his own transition into a wayward sovereign: first, by assuming the prerogative to speak in the name of the law, and second, by seizing the authority to act outside the limits of the legal order.

JURIS DICTIO: SPEAKING TO THE ABSENCE OF SOVEREIGNTY

Cambaceres' articulation of the Idler as a wayward lawyer falls under a textual strategy that responds to the somewhat paradoxical legal challenge that he undertakes: In order to ensure the preservation of his friend's marital contract, he must act outside the boundaries of the law—a role the Idler can assume precisely because of his ambivalent relation with a legal order to which he obliquely belongs, no longer as a practitioner of the law but as someone who possesses the knowledge necessary to transgress it discreetly. For the Idler, then, bringing a resolution to the adultery that motivates the plot has as much to do with protecting Juan's public honor as it does with defining his own transgressive stance towards the law, which he will now begin to embody. Thus, upon assuming the responsibility of preserving the dignity of his "spouse," the Idler stages a parody of the legal process: Even if the sentence will not be institutionally sanctioned, it must nonetheless conform to a juridical form before it can be lawfully enforced. The Idler must thus proceed according to the letter of the law ("*jus juris*") by "availing" himself of "endless legally founded reasons, a body of evidence of the sort that barristers deem foolproof." In so doing, the Idler is not only performing a satire of a juridical sentence, he is also taking his first steps toward becoming a wayward sovereign. This transformation begins by claiming the authority to stage a trial, and then follows by assuming a prerogative to speak in the name of the law.

What comes immediately after staging this parody of the juridical process is, however, not particularly entertaining: After assembling the pertinent evidence that unequivocally proves María's infidelity, the Idler simply hands her a private letter in which he threatens to expose her crime unless she puts an end to her affair with Pepe—a demand she reluctantly accepts, but not before replying with a brief letter addressed to the Idler, including the following spiteful remark: "Between the despicable woman who neglects her duties and the wretched man who threatens to denounce her, one is more vile than the other: you tell me which."[32] In lieu of a response against

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31 Following Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's analysis in her well-known *Between Men*, one might even say that the Idler's decision to assume his "marital" responsibilities with respect to his friend/spouse is not incongruent with the heteronormative logics that underlie Juan and María's relationship, and that it is precisely this kind of homosociality that grounds the patriarchal logics of the legal institution of marriage. In Sedgwick's words, "Heidi Hartmann's definition of patriarchy in terms of 'relationships between Men,' in making the power relationships between men and women appear to be dependent on the power relationships between men and men, suggests that large-scale social structures are congruent with the male-male-female erotic triangles described most forcefully by Girard and articulated most thoughtfully by others. *We can go farther than that, to say that in any male-dominated society, there is a special relationship between male homosocial (including homosexual) desire and the structures for maintaining and transmitting patriarchal power.*" See Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 25; emphasis added.

32 Cambaceres, *Pot Pourri*, 132.

this accusation, the Idler articulates his defense by way of an inner monologue; a purely imaginary conversation in which the question of jurisdiction—implied in María's allegation against the prerogatives of the "snitcher"—is rebutted precisely by a strictly jurisdictive act, namely, by becoming the enunciator of marital law:

> Do you know what you have done by getting married? *You have transferred the use of your person, you have signed a rental agreement*; that is exactly what you have done, as if you were a dwelling; it is a contract in which you cannot be occupied by any objects aside from those your tenant chooses.... *In a word, you are not your own but another's chattel,* and having usufructed yourself clandestinely by a third party you fall—*under the precepts of the aforementioned Astete Code*—into mortal sin, committing the offence of robbery; and therefore you are naught but a thieving sinner who deserves no pardon from our Lord.[33]

Having written a doctoral thesis on the subject of "Utilidad, valor y precio" ("Utility, Value, and Price"), Cambaceres must surely have been familiar with property law summarily understood as the jural relationships among subjects with respect to objects.[34] This raises the question as to why the Idler would choose to describe marriage in terms of property law, and even more so, as a kind of lifelong "rental contract." As it happens, and despite how peculiar this gesture may seem, the Idler's equation between marital bond and economic transaction is doubtlessly not without precedent. At the beginning of his section on the right of "domestic societies" in *Die Metaphysik der Sitten* (*The Metaphysics of Morals*), Immanuel Kant offers a somewhat controversial definition of marriage, which he considers under the rubric of "sexual community" (*commercium sexuale*), that is, as the "the reciprocal use that one human makes of the sexual

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33 Ibid., 135; emphasis added.

34 Before beginning his inner monologue in response to María's letter, the Idler had already addressed the question of the woman-object, although in quite different terms: "What do we care if in other places—in the United States, for example, which we are proud to plagiarize—they award her the dignity of worrying about her political rights and allowing her to be a lofty public servant, doctor, lawyer, etc.? *It suits us to have her reduced to a thing!* And that is the way we want to keep it, by god" (emphasis added). Doubling down on his self-assigned role as a polemicist and class traitor, the Idler relies on the use of the passive voice when pejoratively speaking about women, which thereby depersonalizes these value judgments by attributing them as a socially held position—and not, or at least not necessarily, his own opinion. Additionally, in foregrounding sexual difference, the Idler establishes a dialogue that deliberately speaks to the debates about women's rights and education that were becoming increasingly prominent at the time. For instance, only a few months before *Pot Pourri* began to circulate, journalist and novelist Eduarda Mansilla had published a recollection of her journeys across the United States under the title *Recuerdos de viaje*, in which she emphasizes the social and political agency enjoyed by American women as a result of their progressive insertion into the labor force: "[American] women have an honest and intellectual means of earning their living; and they are thus emancipated from the cruel servitude of the needle, a terrible servitude since the invention of sewing machines." Furthermore, years before the publication of Mansilla's recollections, the writer and educator Juana Manso had already made substantial contributions to denouncing the conservative and heteropatriarchal legal frameworks that restricted the educational and political rights of women, reducing them to objects: "That living-room (or kitchen) junk, that procreative machine, that golden zero, that frivolous toy, that fashion doll." Embedded in a context of public debates on women's rights and state secularization, Cambaceres' remarks on women as things can thus be interpreted beyond a purely misogynistic approach. Rather, as Mariana Rosetti argues, Cambaceres' representation of women should be read as "a metaphor for the changes that have taken place in society, *and as a crisis of the anachronistic and melancholic representation of the nation*." See Cambaceres, *Pot Pourri*, 22; Eduarda Mansilla, *Recuerdos de viaje* (Buenos Aires: Imprenta de Juan A. Alsina, 1882),114; Juana Manso, "Emancipación de la mujer" (*Álbum de Señoritas*, 1854), 5; Mariana Rosetti, "La mujer collage: Perspectivas críticas sobre el cuerpo femenino en las novelas de Cambaceres," *Acta literaria* 47 (2013): 69–84.

organs and faculties of another."[35] And as one of the forms that this sexual community takes "in accordance to the law [*nach dem Gesetz*]," marriage, for Kant, consists of "the association between two persons of different sexes for the lifelong reciprocal ownership of their sexual properties [*Geschlechtseigenschaften*]."[36] Interestingly enough, in his well-known essay on Goethe's *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* (*Elective Affinities*)—a novel that is also thoroughly concerned with the question of bourgeois marriage—Walter Benjamin refers to the same passages in Kant's work in an unflattering manner, to say the least. According to Benjamin, Kant's "most tremendous mistake was to believe that, through deduction from this definition of the nature of marriage, he could expound its moral possibility, indeed its necessity and, in so doing, confirm its legal reality. *The only thing deducible from the factual nature* [*sachlichen Natur*] *of marriage is its depravity*."[37] In a gesture that points in a direction not altogether different from Kant's definition, the Idler's decision to describe marriage as a property contract of sexual transactions, thereby nullifying any of its sentimental undertones, reveals an intuition regarding the "factual nature" of the marital bond in which the means of its exposition become indistinguishable from those of its critique. To expose marriage as such, to exhibit its real nature beyond the mediation of sentimental education, means to confront its objective existence as a mere economic transaction. At a time when the sacramental status of marriage is being contested by an increasingly secularized society, the Idler's defense of marital law conceals a subversive assault on its alleged sanctity, desacralizing it into a contract that may later be assimilated by a sovereign state.

In assuming the jurisdictional prerogative to speak in the name of the law, then, the Idler exposes the underlying contradictions of marriage in the very gesture by which he pretends to defend it. And if his exposure of marital law as a lifelong sexual transaction aims to strip marriage of the sentimental veneer associated with the sacrament of marriage, then his account of the penalties associated with its transgression are directly aimed at questioning its very lawfulness. In effect, as noted in the second half of the quote, the Idler's final judgement on the penalties associated with adultery is not based strictly on law, but rather, on the doctrinal work of the Spanish Jesuit priest Gaspar Astete, and more specifically, on his highly influential *Catecismo de la doctrina Cristiana* (*Catechism of Christian doctrine*), a foundational text published in 1599 that played a pivotal role in the spread of Catholicism in Spanish America. As it happens, in its discussion of the interpretation and enforceability of the Ten Commandments, Astete's canonical work places a disproportionate emphasis on the reprehensibility of transgressions against the sixth commandment, the crime of adultery: "This commandment is such that it does not admit slight matter; *all sins committed against it are, by their nature, mortal*, and can only be venial due to either insufficient awareness on the part of the intellect or a lack of deliberate consent on the part of the will."[38] The Idler's explicit paraphrasing of Astete's doctrine, and more specifically, of

35 Immanuel Kant, *Die Metaphysik der Sitten, Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 6 (Berlin: Königlich Preußische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1907), 277. For a discussion on the controversies around Kant's description of marriage, the ridicule it solicited by some of his contemporaries, Kant's responses to the controversy, and Benjamin's approach to Kant in his "Goethes Die Wahlverwandtschaften" essay, see Peter Fenves, "Marital, Martial, Maritime Law: Toward Some Controversial Passages in Kant's Doctrine of Right," *Diacritics* 35, no. 4 (2005): 101–120.

36 Kant, *Die Metaphysik der Sitten*, 277.

37 Walter Benjamin, "*Goethes Die Wahlverwandtschaften," Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 1 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974), 127–128; emphasis added.

38 Gaspar Astete, *Catecismo de la doctrina cristiana* (Bogotá: Imprenta de José Antonio Cualla, 1845), 212; emphasis added.

his classification of adultery as a "mortal sin" worthy of capital punishment, is far from accidental, and so is the reference to Astete's work as a *legal code* enforceable by means of state violence. As he further says in his inner monologue directed at María: "Recall if you will that our Lord does not come running to comfort us when we violate the blessed sacraments, and that Police General Regulation 6, known as the 'Commandment of God's Law,' prohibits the rupture of the matrimonial contract under the harshest of punishments."[39] If marriage is described in terms of a purely economic transaction, and if the gravity of its transgression is determined according to the rulings of Christian doctrine, then we are faced with a uniquely paradoxical scenario: In the Idler's remarkably methodical staging of the legal process and in his subsequent enactment of a juridical verdict, there lies an absence that seemingly undermines the claim to lawfulness of his own performance, namely, the omission of the actual code of law that should have governed both the process and the verdict—Vélez Sarsfield's *Código Civil,* whose articles on the subject of marriage and adultery are surprisingly missing in the Idler's monologue and from the book as a whole.

The Idler's decision to stage a judicial process—and later deliver his own verdict—by making no reference to the pertinent body of laws included in the civil code is revealing for several reasons, not least because this negligent omission is made by none other than a lawyer. How can we interpret the Idler's reluctance to rely on the civil code's rulings on marriage, opting instead to reference Astete's canonical book? Here, my argument is that, in this critical omission, the Idler foregrounds marriage as a site that testifies to an absence of state sovereignty, most pressingly at a time when the state is actively contesting the authority of the Church over marital law. As noted earlier in this article, the debates that surrounded the promulgation of civil marriage in 1888—and which began to take place around the time of *Pot Pourri*'s publication—ultimately pointed to the foundations of legal power; namely, of the plenary, undivided sovereignty of the state over the citizens who comprise the body politic. As a novel that speaks to these debates, Cambaceres' *Pot Pourri* advances the imperative of state authority over marital law precisely by depicting marriage as the site of a sovereign absence that is unveiled in the same gesture that would seemingly seek to defend it. In his dramatic yet insincere attempt to uphold marital law by condemning María, the Idler reveals marriage's subordination to a different order of law—that is, to canon law. By reaffirming marriage as a contract governed solely by Catholic authority and subject only to the penalties outlined in Astete's *Catechism*, the Idler implicitly highlights the erosion of state sovereignty and the rulings of its existing body of laws, which are conspicuously excluded from the novel, not even warranting a mention.

Ultimately, the highest expression of this sovereign absence takes place at the end of the novel, which abruptly arrives at what can ironically be described as a "diplomatic solution" in the most literal sense. Shortly after settling things with María, the Idler promptly proceeds to summon Pepe, her lover, in order to lay out the terms of the agreement: He can either choose to remain as María's lover and, correspondingly, run the risk of being murdered at the hands of Juan, or he can choose to leave the country as an honorary consul at the Argentine embassy in Monaco—an enviable position the Idler has already secured for Pepe through his own personal contacts, along with a new passport, a respectable sum of money, and the ironic mandate to honorably serve the nation: "Go, my young friend, go and join the ranks of those who, with a few honorable exceptions, nobly and worthily represent the republic abroad."[40] In resolving the conflict

39 Cambaceres, *Pot Pourri*, 134; emphasis added.

40 Ibid., 143.

by exonerating both accused—a gesture that Julio Schvartzman reads as simultaneously directed against republican and bourgeois respectability[41]—the Idler finally completes the oscillation between embodiment and transgression previously described by Ludmer, since the solution to his friend's dilemma requires him to act as "the law embodied in the head of state."[42] The Idler, who had once severely criticized Juan's hypocrisy—and with it, the structural gender injustice of marriage as such—has now taken on the task of ensuring the continuity of his friend's marital contract, a task that forces him to assume a sovereign position that defines him as the new subject for the emerging liberal state:

> The representation of the liberal head of state by the actor-dandy founds and closes the novel of the coalition. This new subject is perhaps the most powerful, the only one who dares to "represent" the head of state who names consuls and ambassadors because the position of the dandy (the physical distance and the gaze that separates him from the world) assures his domination.[43]

In a gesture that touches upon the sovereign absence prefigured in his aforementioned monologue on marital law, the Idler puts an end to the novel by paradoxically assuming a sovereign position where there is none; a position that no one else even "dares to represent," as Ludmer claims. To some degree, this can be read as recognition of the problematic nature of the gesture itself, grounded on a transgressive detachment that allows the Idler to make a radical decision in the absence of a legal order that would legitimize his actions—a detachment expressed in "the physical distance and the gaze that separates him from the world." And yet, the decision in question, namely, the exculpation of the adulterers, is also problematic for the entirely predictable reason that, in 1882, when secularizing discourses on issues of conjugal life had yet to officially make their way into congress, marriage could only be enunciated from the discursive position of Christian morality; not because marriage was not nominally addressed in the pertinent articles of Vélez Sarsfield's civil code, but because these articles had, by all practical effects, conceded their own authority to the Catholic Church. Thus, despite his exaggerated attempts to morally condemn the transgressors, the Idler's final decision is remarkably unconcerned with moral punishment. Indeed, far from the capital punishment that Astete's doctrine prescribes for those who break the sixth commandment, one could even say that the adulterers are rewarded. Marriage is effectively preserved, although only in its legal existence, that is, as a contract of lifelong sexual communities, whose continuity is guaranteed at the expense of whatever moral content it may have previously possessed—desacralized and exposed to the bare eye, undisguised by the veils of Christian morality, and thus made available for its assimilation by a secular state. The sovereign position assumed by the Idler, and the decision that ensues from this gesture, is therefore not so much law-positing as it is law-foreshadowing: In reducing marriage to a paradoxical form of law without lawfulness, to a contract whose legitimacy could not be grounded in the existing legal

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41 "As for the Idler's decisive intervention to solve the conflict (in which he combines threat, extortion and bribery), it is remarkable that the 'decorous' solution consisting of removing the intruder and erasing the traces of the crime without his main victim knowing about it. . . . *There is no greater republican farce than this, fused with that of bourgeois respectability*." See "La música colosal del mundo: entre el nihilismo y la higiene de estado," *Orbis Tertius* 19, no. 20 (2014): 131; emphasis added.

42 Ludmer, *Corpus Delicti*, 34.

43 Ibid., 43.

system subordinated to religious doctrine, the Idler prefigures the coming of a new order of law, and thus, of a plenary sovereign state.

CONCLUSION

In this article, my aim has been to advance a reading of Eugenio Cambaceres' *Pot Pourri* that constellates marriage, adultery, and sovereignty in relation to the process of state consolidation that begins in the early 1880s in Argentina and concludes with the promulgation of civil marriage in 1888. At the core of this constellation lies a profound interplay between different normative orders, from civil law to religious morality to patriarchal hierarchies, all of which are intricately intertwined and subverted by the Idler. In traversing these orders rather than allowing for their independence, the Idler exposes their inherent contradictions and limitations, while also illuminating a path toward their reorganization. This gesture unfolds at a pivotal moment, when the narratives of state consolidation begin to coalesce around a dominant normative principle, one that aims to subordinate values to the authority of the emerging modern secular state, thus reshaping the very foundations of societal order. In staging an interplay between these systems of value, *Pot Pourri* foregrounds literature's potential for imagining and contesting the boundaries of sovereignty and the normative structures that sustain it.

My article, in short, has attempted to show the ways in which Cambaceres' novel performs this reorganization. By presenting adultery as a moral transgression whose punishment is condoned so that the marital contract may be legally preserved, I argue that Cambaceres' novel foregrounds a conception of marriage whose desacralization lays the groundwork for its assimilation by the state, foreshadowing the emergence of a new order of law. In ensuring the legal continuity of marriage through a sovereign decision, the Idler not only ensures that Juan's public honor remains intact, but also, and perhaps more importantly, he triumphs where a young Cambaceres had previously failed, even if only through fiction: In prefiguring a marital contract fully assimilated by a secular state, Cambaceres' unsuccessful legislative attempt to ground the superiority of the state over the Church comes back with a vengeance. By embracing the conflicting nature of his subjective position as a wayward lawyer, no longer a practitioner of the law yet in possession of legal knowledge, the Idler succeeds there where no man of letters could have succeeded, that is, in making a sovereign decision that demands an intimate familiarity with the law as well as the ability to transgress it. Ultimately, in writing *Pot Pourri*, Cambaceres not only becomes the "founder of the contemporary national novel," as Martín García Mérou claimed in 1885,[44] but also, and in the same gesture, sheds light on the intimate relationship between law and literature at the turn of the century in Latin America; one defined by literature's progressive confrontation with the law, assuming the prerogative of both transgressing it and rewriting it discretely from the margins of state authority. A

44 Espósito et al., *El naturalismo en la prensa porteña,* 154.