A CARCERAL ECOLOGY:
PENOLOGY, FORESTRY, EXPLORATION, AND CONSERVATION IN SOUTHERNMOST ARGENTINA

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Ryan Christopher Edwards

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Ryan Christopher Edwards, Ph. D.

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This dissertation explores how a supposed natural prison became a national park in Tierra del Fuego, Argentina. Combining methods and literatures from history, geography, political ecology, comparative literature, and science and technology studies, it tells the story of prison and place at "the end of the world." The Ushuaia Penal Colony, referred to as the "Argentine Siberia," operated from roughly 1902-1947. Using this austral prison as a case study, this work offers an environmental history of incarceration, what I call a "carceral ecology." Ushuaia was a hybrid modern penitentiary-penal colony that was not confined to its stone walls, and bridged institutions such as modern and pre-modern carceral forms. Prison engineers spoke back from Latin America to foreign experts by offering an "open-door" incarceration method in response to failed penitentiary systems throughout Europe and the United States. This method brought together forestry and incarceration sciences, and also brought foreign experts to this distant outpost. Inmate labor and rehabilitation was centered on a sub-Antarctic timber industry, and therefore the prison and forestry department were co-constitutive through resource management and a transatlantic economy. When a military coup took the Argentine capital in 1930, political prisoners were exiled to Ushuaia where they refashioned their nationalist visions based on their confinement to incorporate Patagonia into a modern Argentina. Finally, this project follows the transition from the closing of the prison in 1947 to creation of sites of national memory. In 1960, the forests once labored by inmates were conserved as a national park, and various parties placed Argentine national history within a longer natural history. This work ends by exploring how national memory is shaped in order to preserve or elide socio-environmental relationships.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Ryan C. Edwards was born and raised in southern California. He received his bachelor's degree in geography from the University of California, Berkeley in 2009. After graduating he taught outdoor education in Los Angeles and traveled throughout Latin America. After hiking, farming, and pondering in Patagonia, he began graduate work at Cornell University, where he earned his master's degree in History and Latin American Studies in 2013, and his doctorate in history in 2016. While at Cornell he was a Gradate Resident Fellow at the Carl Becker House, where he worked closely with undergraduates on community activities and local exploration. He has extended his scholarship and work on prisons to teach history in correctional facilities in upstate New York. When he is not teaching or researching, Ryan is hiking, playing soccer or music.

To my family, for their unending patience and support.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAA	Archivo de la Armada Argentina, Buenos Aires, Argentina
AGN	Archivo General de la Nación, Buenos Aires, Argentina
AGN-I	Archivo General de la Nación Intermedio, Buenos Aires, Argentina
AHC	Archivo Histórico de la Cancillería, Buenos Aires, Argentina
APN	Archivo de los Parques Nacionales, Buenos Aires, Argentina
BNA	Biblioteca Nacional Argentina, Buenos Aires, Argentina
CeDInCI	Centro de Documentación e Investigación de la Cultura de Izquierdas, Buenos Aires, Argentina
D-RSC	Rauner Special Collection, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire
IIHS	International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam, Netherlands
MCRR	Museo Cultural Ricardo Rojas, Buenos Aires, Argentina
MFM	Museo del Fin del Mundo, Ushuaia, Argentina
MMP	Museo Marítimo y Penal de Ushuaia, Argentina
MPA	Museo Penitenciaría Argentina Antonio Ballvé , Buenos Aires, Argentina

INTRODUCTION:

RETHINKING PATAGONIA AND PENITENTIARIES

A modern prison—the Spanish more openly call it Cárcel Modelo*, or model prison—successfully resolves the problem of economy in space, labor, and surveillance. Housing a crowd, it effects the total isolation of each individual in that crowd. Busier than a beehive, it is able to accomplish, silently and systematically, as many different tasks as there are lives tossed into its grinding cogs. The chance of escape is reduced to infinitesimal proportions. They used to escape from the Bastille. They used to escape from Noumea, in spite of the ocean fraught with squalls. They still escape from Guiana, across the virgin forest. No one escapes from the model jail.*
Victor Serge
Men in Prison, 1931

Tired of staring at the sunset
With my sad beggar's eyes
I resign myself to death, like a traveler,
Exhausted by the pain of his failures
Juan Octavio Fernández Pico (Prisoner 91)
Resignation, 1931

What follows is an examination of prison and place. It is as much about incarceration and enclosure as it is about open spaces and wilderness. The prison in question is the Ushuaia penal colony and penitentiary, which operated from roughly 1902 to 1947. The place is the south side of the island of Tierra del Fuego, the southernmost province of contemporary Argentine Patagonia [Figure 1]. Tierra del Fuego is an island divided between Argentina and Chile. While the Argentine portion of the territory had limited federal representation during this period, its distance from the national capital, Buenos Aires, provided a kind of autonomy for the penal administration. The prison was nestled beyond the Strait of Magellan that divided continental South America and the Isla Grande, and was situated between the Martial Mountains to the north and the infamous Beagle Channel to the south. Ushuaia was considered the farthest corner (*el último rincón*) of the Argentine nation, which at the time was one of the wealthiest countries in the world, a leader in criminal sciences, and was forging an influential agricultural school. This is a story, therefore, about juxtaposition—a boundless wilderness and the most bounded of human institutions, a capital in the periphery, a penitentiary in the forest.

Figure 1. Map of Modern Argentina
Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection

By investigating the social world of the penal colony and the complex infrastructure constructed to sustain its operation, I show how Patagonia's southern terminus was intimately linked to, engaged by, and co-productive of Argentine state institutions, modern technologies, international economies, and ecological change.[1] The southernmost corner of the Americas, in

[1] Patagonia was not a frontier that grew simply southward from Buenos Aires, and therefore complicates the somewhat linear spatiality in, Donna J. Guy and Thomas E. Sheridan ed., *Contested Ground: Comparative Frontiers on the Northern and Southern Edges of the Spanish Empire* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1998).

other words, was globally connected and demographically cosmopolitan despite its location at "the end of the world."[2]

Isolation and geography are at the center of discussions on Ushuaia—it was a "natural prison" [Figure 2]. This phrase defined multiple penal institutions during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, including Devil's Island, Alcatraz, and other evocative sites of incarceration.[3] Such spaces—remote islands or barren wastelands—seemed to offer no chance of escape. Their location and physical surroundings were enough to hold prisoners captive. "Natural prison," therefore, fairly recognizes the role of the environment (physical geography and climate as punishment) in incarceration (confinement and inability to escape). However, the phrase places too much emphasis on environment, such that inmates, even guards, become passive in the penal process as the natural world does all of the work. Not only was this a simplistic understanding of the worlds created in these spaces, but such an understanding ignores the ways in which engineers and penologists thought holistically about these spaces and institutions. The isolation, and at times placeless-ness, evoked by this category is the result of erasures—of social connections, intellectual projects, economic networks, and built environments. Uncovering such erasures can reveal how these situated spaces, distant as they may have been, were also transnational spaces and part of a global scientific dialogue.

[2] Anne Chapman argues that for the Yamana people, Ushuaia Bay was Paris and the Beagle Channel was Les Champs Élysées. See chapter eleven in, Anne Chapman, *European Encounters with the Yamana People of Cape Horn, Before and After Darwin* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

[3] "Natural prison" is a phrase that is regularly used in various mediums, including major motion pictures based on memoirs. See, Henri Charriere, *Papillon*, and the film by the same name (1973), and Slawomir Rawicz, *The Long Walk* turned *The Way Back* (2010). As a lead guard proclaims in the latter film, "Siberia is your prison."

Figure 2. Beagle Channel in Tierra del Fuego, 1901
AGN 559

A Carceral Ecology

Moving beyond the "natural prison," I explore a "carceral ecology." Here, ecology, rather than environment or geography, is important in order to emphasize the dynamic, various, intentional and unintentional scales involved in the operation.[4] These scales ranged from the microbial transmission of disease to the transatlantic exchange of goods and ideas.[5] It expands the spatial analysis of the modern penitentiary to include its ecological relationships and

[4] For discussions on the integration of human and ecological systems and differences in scales, see the introduction in, Karl S. Zimmerer and Thomas J. Bassett ed., *Political Ecology: An Integrative Approach to Geography and Environment-Development Studies* (New York: Guilford, 2003); and, Haripriya Rangan and Christian Kull, "What Makes Ecology 'Political?' Rethinking 'Scale' in Political Ecology," *Progress in Human Geography* 33, no. 1 (2009): 28-45.

[5] Adam Moore has rightly pointed to the problem of scalar vocabulary in recent scholarship, as the difference practice and analytic often get conflated or become problematic. See, "Rethinking Scale as a Geographical Category: From Analysis to Practice," *Progress in Human Geography* 32, no. 2 (2008): 203-225.

environmental transformations.[6] The initial vision for the Ushuaia penitentiary was one of ecological and community harmony, not a hermetically sealed prison—inmates and the forest would help the other to grow, and in return, this farthest corner of Argentina would be developed. Inmate labor would build the town's grid and infrastructure, while the prison and its large expanse would loom to the east, stretching into the mountains [Figure 3]. This was a hybrid penitentiary-penal colony built into a particular environment, but one constructed to contribute to that environment.

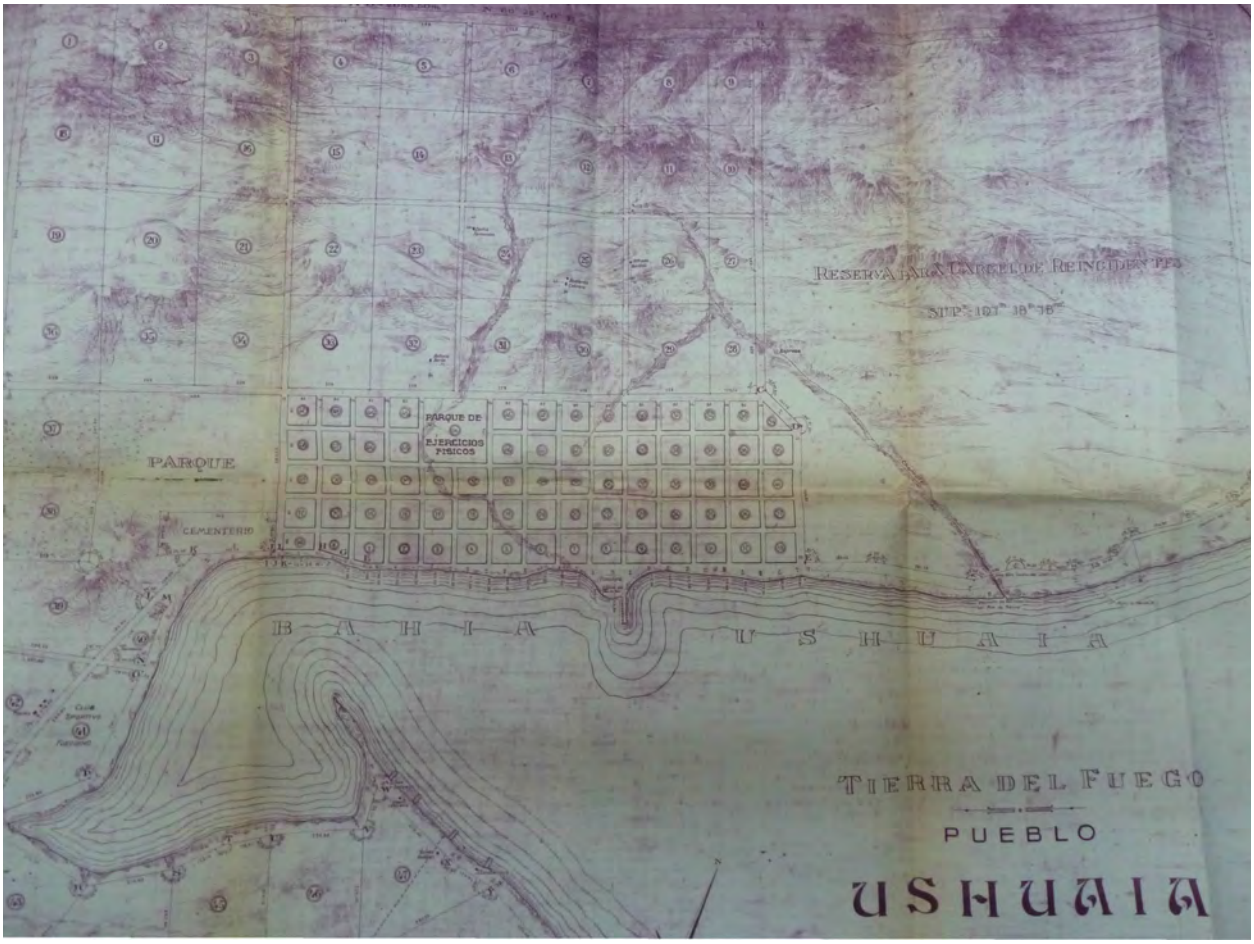

Figure 3: Tierra del Fuego, Pueblo, 1941
MFM, Fondo MAN, 4, n. 107

[6] Scale is useful in that it moves beyond the assumptions of what prison space is or can be. While recent scholarship has engaged carceral space, it has nevertheless limited that space to a fixed architecture, as is the case in, Dominque Moran, *Carceral Geography: Spaces and Practices of Incarceration* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2015).

The Ushuaia prison, after all, was not simply a distant outpost or penal colony. It was the second national penitentiary in Argentina. It was a two-story cellular prison, built of steel and stone, with an infirmary, workshops, and other modern amenities. These scientific institutions were constructed in Philadelphia, Paris, and beyond, following similar radial models, with individual cells and modern amenities. They were consumed by audiences turned amateur criminologists, and have been theorized in recent decades as both models for society and factories that produce model citizens.[7] Michel Foucault, the most famous of the these scholars, focuses on Europe, though his abstract prison model, based on Jeremy Bentham's panopticon, is inherently placeless and its omnipresent power can be exercised within the hermetically sealed walls of any penitentiary.[8] They were, in theory, worlds unto themselves.

Prison studies and projects that seek to go beyond Foucault's "birth of the prison" have exploded in the last two decades.[9] Scholars have focused on the penal colony to disrupt the neatness of Foucault's analysis of modernity by "displacing" the panopticon through attention paid to geographic distance and the limits of European laws in peripheral settings.[10] Attention to the location of the prison however is often limited to describing an environmental setting, rather

[7] The modern penitentiary has been a topic of interest for quite some time, including in Latin America. See, Negley K. Teeters, *Penology from Panama to Cape Horn* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press for Temple University Publications, 1946). On the early consumption of criminology see, Ryan C. Edwards, "CSI Buenos Aires: The Crime on Prudan Street," *The Appendix* (April 2014): 53-59.

[8] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1977). In Spanish these prisons were called *panópticos*, and were constructed in Mexico City, Lima, Buenos Aires, Ushuaia, and elsewhere. Very few of these prisons, within or outside of Latin America, exactly replicated Bentham's vision, though they did incorporate a significant number of its qualities, and they all followed a strikingly similar design.

[9] See the excellent review essay, Mary Gibson, "Global Perspectives on the Birth of the Prison," *American Historical Review* (October 2011). Twenty years ago this year saw the first major collection of essays on penitentiaries in Latin America. Ricardo D. Salvatore and Carlos Aguirre ed., *The Birth of the Penitentiary in Latin America: Essays on Criminology, Prison Reform, and Social Control, 1830-1940* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996).

[10] See the edited volume, Frank Dikötter and Ian Brown ed., *Cultures of Confinement: A History of the Prison in Africa, Asia, and Latin America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007).

than examining the interactive potential of prison and place.[11] Moreover, these complications should not be marginalized as anomalies hidden away in the corners of the world. Rather than discussing Ushuaia as an alternative modernity or an alternative to modernity, Ushuaia cannot be separated from Buenos Aires—both were entrenched in co-constitutive projects and institutions that should not be dichotomized into modern and un-modern.[12] The individuals exiled to Ushuaia helped the national penitentiary in Buenos Aires to appear ordered; it was a safety-valve that released the tensions and contradictions of urban modernity.

There must be, therefore, more attention paid to the environmental relations of prisons, not simply in the present, but in the past. In this regard, an increasing number of studies engaging the relationship between neoliberalism and mass-incarceration have begun to tackle the question of "greening" prisons.[13] These studies are welcome and often innovative, as they explore prison gardens and environmental building certifications. But they too can lack an ecological depth. Inherent to the Ushuaia prison's mission were elements of self-sustainability and questions of de-forestation and conservation, not solely as consequences, but conscious collaborations. The increasingly interdisciplinary work between the humanities and social sciences, specifically with regard to environmental history and science and technology studies, provides insight.[14] In Ushuaia, two burgeoning scientific fields collided: penology and forestry. This brought together an international grouping of experts from Italy, Germany, the United States, and elsewhere. It

[11] Two impressive works that hint at such potentials are: Alice Bullard, *Exile to Paradise: Savagery and Civilization in Paris and the South Pacific, 1790-1900* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2000); and, Peter Redfield, *Space in the Tropics: From Convicts to Rockets in French Guiana* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).
[12] On the problematic proliferation of definitions for "modernity" and its alternatives, see chapter five in, Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory Knowledge, History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).
[13] Yvonne Jewkes and Dominique Moran, "The Paradox of the 'Green' Prison: Sustaining the Environment or Sustaining the Penal Complex?" *Theoretical Criminology* (2015) 1-19.
[14] See the excellent historiographical introduction in, Dolly Jørgensen, Finn Arne Jørgensen, and Sara B. Pritchard ed., *New Natures: Joining Environmental History with Science and Technology Studies* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2013).

was not, however, a simple story of diffusion and the dissemination of ideas. Rather, this cosmopolitan group, transformations in Argentine society, and the location of Ushuaia, created a unique confluence of visions for transforming the modern penitentiary and its relation to the surrounding environment.[15]

Argentina, after all, was already known the world over as a capital from criminology. Its prison system, especially the national penitentiary in Buenos Aires rivaled modern radial penitentiaries around the world. However, as Ushuaia Prison Director Catello Muratgia would argue, the Argentine prison system had been bound until that point by its imitation of European models. The Italian-born engineer would pay homage to these models, but also move beyond them to create an "open-door" penitentiary in southernmost Argentina.[16] It was modern and fortified, yet interactive in its surroundings. Diets and building materials would be locally sourced, the polar climate would be curative, and as inmates rehabilitated, they would develop the region's economy, energy, and natural resources. Ushuaia, therefore, was not merely an adoption or adaptation of European and North American incarceration models. This is not a story of importation and imitation alone; Ushuaia offered a new way forward.

Beyond "Landscapes of the Imagination"

"Landscapes of the imagination," from Siberia and the Sahara to Patagonia, are created through images and words on the page, by stories and desires, and more recently, by GoPros and Google Earth.[17] Upon first glance of a tropical forest, barren desert or snow-covered mountain-

[15] For more on breaking from Eurocentric expertise and science in Latin America, see, Stuart McCook, *States of Nature: Science, Agriculture, and Environment in Spanish Caribbean, 1760-1940* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002).

[16] "Open-door" prisons were similarly introduced in India around this time. These institutions have grown in the mid-twentieth century, though they more closely reflect agricultural communities than penitentiary-penal colony hybrids. See the recent collection of essays in, *Prison Service Journal* 217 (January 2015).

[17] The Oxford University Press book series, "Landscapes of the Imagination," includes, Chris Moss, *Patagonia: A Cultural History*, 2008. This kind of imagery, which has circulated for over a century, is how I came upon this

range, a visual lexicon emerges that has been latent, telling travelers what they are seeing. Patagonia is particularly intriguing as it is the name of one of the world's largest adventure sports brands. Posters and advertisements of thrill seekers and globetrotters clad in gortex and other magic fabrics tell readers that they are about to enter the unknown, the untamed, the far corners, peaks, and crevasses of the world. These mediums speak to humans as outside of nature, compelling them to explore, conquer, record, edit, and repeat. People do not belong in these spaces anymore, the sensation screams, hence the need for "gear." It is about engineering to re-adapt and re-enter. It is time travel. But it is also none of these mystifying things; landscapes of the imagination can be mundane, and cripplingly so. There are gaps between expectation and experience.

Thus, while the penitentiary has been narrowly cast as a closed-off institution, Patagonia has itself been confined by a limited, even myopic, understanding of place. This lexicon portrays a vast, monotonous, windswept, and prehistoric landscape. Literary scholars have cogently deconstructed the many representations of Patagonia produced by European, North American, and South American nationalist explorers and travelers.[18] However, these scholars' tendency to focus on (and through) the "imperial eyes" of renowned explorers rarely offer alternative visions of the region.[19] Travelers sought Patagonia, envisioning the region before their arrival, then

project. I was the quintessential *yanqui mochilero*, backing-packing through Patagonia, hoping to consume one of the world's last supposed wild spaces.

[18] See, Ernesto Livon-Grosman, *Geografícas imaginarios: El relato de viaje y la construcción del espacio patagónico* (Rosario: Beatriz Viterbo Editora, 2003); Susana Mabel López, *Representaciones de la Patagonia: Colonos, científicos y políticos, 1870-1914* (La Plata: Ediciones al Margen, 2003); and, Eva-Lynn Jagoe, *The End of the World as They Knew It: Writing Experiences of the Argentine South* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2007).

[19] Mary Louis Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, (New York: Routledge, 2008), has been influential in the literary and traveler studies of Patagonia. Pratt's work is also influential here. For a critique of Pratt and the "always already exploitative relationship" between Euro-American travelers and the lands/peoples they explore, see, Aaron Sachs, "The Ultimate 'Other:' Post-Colonialism and Alexander von Humboldt's Ecological Relationship with Nature," *History and Theory* 42, no. 4 (2003).

enclosing and constructing the landscape for their return home.[20] They sold tales of adventure, encounters with giants, and other-worldly environments.

To un-think Patagonia as a landscape of the imagination, therefore, it must be thought of in the plural—both regarding its sub-regions and human undertakings.[21] It requires re-thinking environmental accounts of the region.[22] Environmental works in Latin America have been innovative in recent years and scholars in the global north have noted that a great deal could be learned from the approaches, questions, and case studies of non-western environmental scholarship.[23] A recent "natural history," for example, has sought to complicate any single or smooth image of a place such as *the* Amazon, which Hugh Raffles argues, resists abstraction.[24] Rather, a disjointed natural history shows the many scales and lives of this enormous and heterogeneous region.

Patagonia is the seeming opposite of Amazonia. Locals describe a different and transformed Amazonian landscape on the very spot where they sit—a shifting and sinuous world of rivers and advancing foliage. Amazonian nature is so dense, and its creatures and peoples so

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[20] See, Gabriela Nouzeilles, "Desert Dreams: Nomadic Tourists and Cultural Discontent," in *Images of Power: Iconography, Culture, and State in Latin America*, ed. Jens Andermann and William Rowe (New York: Berghahn, 2005).

[21] K. Sivaramakrishnan, "highlights the ecological and social peculiarities of regions, but, more importantly, shows how the manner in which culture, nature, and power are spatially constituted and expressed, influences processes of state-making." *Modern Forests: Statemaking and Environmental Change in Colonial Eastern India* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1999).

[22] Scholars of Latin America have recently produced a wealth of environmental histories—a field that had been scant as other regions of the world received much attention. For a historiographical review, see, Mark Carey, "The Nature of Place: Recent Research on Environment and Society in Latin America," *Latin American Research Review* 42, no. 3 (Oct., 2007): 251-264; A text that attempts to provide a general overview of the field, is, Shawn W. Miller, *An Environmental History of Latin America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Guillermo Castro Herrera, "The Environmental Crisis and the Tasks of History in Latin America" *Environment and History* 3 (1997): 1-18.

[23] Paul Sutter "What Can U.S. Environmental Historians Learn from Non-U.S. Environmental Historiography?" *Environmental History*, 8, no. 1 (2003): 109-129; Peter Coates, "Emerging from the Wilderness (or, from Redwoods to Bananas): Recent Environmental History in the United States and the Rest of the Americas," *Environment and History* 10 (2004). See also, Ramachandra Guha, "Writing Environmental History in India," *Studies in History* 9, no. 1 (1993).

[24] Hugh Raffles, *In Amazonia: A Natural History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

active in constant modification, that the landscape changes seasonal and annually. Patagonia, on the other hand, is characterized as a nearly homogenous, monotonous, windswept landscape in which few creatures live, and nothing ever changes. There is a splendid mountainous west and an arid desert east, but both are seemingly timeless, and lifeless. Charles Darwin, when comparing the dense woods of Tierra del Fuego to the lush tropics claimed that "Death, instead of life, seemed the predominant spirit."[25] Rather than trying to capture all of Patagonia, therefore, this study is largely limited to the farthest corner of the region—the southern side of the Martial Mountains in central Tierra del Fuego. In no way can this region stand in for the whole. In fact, it has generally stood as somewhat outside of the rest of Patagonia. It is where the east and west converge, and where penal colony and penitentiary converge. It was the Argentine Siberia.

By studying the conflation of institution and geography, this work disrupts understandings of Argentine space. It is common to say that studying outside of Buenos Aires in Argentina is to study the "interior." There is cursory use to such a labeling, but it reaffirms and reifies a problematic argument that Buenos Aires *is* Argentina, and everyone beyond the capital, not to mention every*thing*, is somehow backward and other. Here there is a cognitive foreclosure of connection. This landscape has a complicated history with the rich tradition of philosophizing Argentine national identity through a relationship between the people and the land. This symbiotic relationship is at the heart of "civilization versus barbarism," and scholars have paid a great deal of attention to these theories and the peoples under discussion.[26] My work shows that explorers, travelers, locals, and array of other actors spoke to and through each other, marshalling certain claims while eschewing others to speak a supposed truth about Patagonia or

[25] Charles Darwin, *The Voyage of the Beagle* (1839; New York: Modern Library, 2001): 187.
[26] Archaeological work has revealed the contradictions in Sarmiento's rhetoric. Ana Igareta, "Civilization and Barbarism: When Barbarism Builds Cities," *International journal of Historical Archaeology* 9, no. 3 (September 2005).

Ushuaia. These competing truths purport to tell histories enacted on stubborn lands.[27] I pay close attention to transformations in the landscape and ecological relationships, as well as shifts in perceptions of the land. Indeed, while nineteenth century writers lamented how southern spaces cultivated barbarism, prisoners in Ushuaia were supposed to be positively transformed by southernmost Patagonia.[28] Moreover, this moves beyond the immediate periphery of Buenos Aires to the far south; it is an exploration of a sub-Antarctic Argentina and a polar Latino world. Rather than center and periphery, therefore, this is an exploration of angles and triangulations.

This work unpacks not only how explorers and scientists sought to explain this land often based on their subject position, but also how inmates were forcibly exiled and therefore grappled with an unwanted world. Prisoners, simply put, did not seek Patagonia. They were sometimes denied a return home, and many assumed that exile would be their death. And yet, this too was a journey. Inmate writings are analyzed and translated here for the first time, thus expanding understandings of Tierra del Fuego, the Ushuaia penal colony, and a prison experience that was in many ways common with regard to modern penitentiaries, but also particular with regard to location and the interaction between prison and place.[29] They became experts of a landscape and ecological relationships that expands the repetitive recountings of explorers. Their many years in the region developed a "situated-knowledge" that not only warrants exploration, but challenges

[27] Patagonia was once a space beyond the state, where indigenous peoples evaded conquest, and Argentine roots failed to take hold in arid soil. Regions like the Pampas and Patagonia are taken for granted as uniform and static, often categorized simply by a rural-urban dichotomy. Here it is also useful to think through John Agnew, "The Territorial Trap: The Geographical Assumptions of International Relations Theory," *Review of International Political Economy* 1, no. 1 (1994): 53-80.

[28] See the seminal text, Domingo F. Sarmiento, *Facundo: or, Civilization and Barbarism*, 1845. Complicating narratives of Argentine modernization and the classic question of civilization versus barbarism, it is not a stretch to say that a new class of criminal "barbarians" were identified and exiled to Ushuaia following the extermination of southern indigenous peoples.

[29] On the importance of prison memoirs as broader historical sources, see the introduction in, Peter Zinoman, *The Colonial Bastille: A History of Imprisonment in Vietnam, 1862-1940* (Berkeley: University of California, 2001).

the authority so frequently read into explorers who often spent very little time in Tierra del Fuego, yet were all too ready to tell its "truths."[30]

Entanglement, Ecological History, and Method

There is a strange kind of recognition that infiltrates the descriptions of the end of the world. Each time explorers tried to separate Tierra del Fuego from the contemporaneous world, they brought it back by relating the land and climate to another region on earth. This was an inability to describe the indescribable, but also a willingness to admit that the end of the world was indeed part of that world. In these narratives, the windswept plains of Patagonia were a frictionless plain upon which history did not stick. Gabriela Nouzeilles has argued that these winds eroded not just the landscape, but the very constructions of the state, such that amongst grains of sand was the debris of statecraft. But more than this spatial and material argument, there is a different kind of historical claim. It is one that collapses space and time—geography as eternal, and geological time rendered visible, as confessed by Darwin. Much of what is at stake in this study, therefore, is geographical terminology, which is inherently political, social, cultural, and economic.

How can we scale down from something so large in space and time? From borderlands to transnational studies, the amplification of our objects of study has, unsurprisingly, revealed many entangled worlds. Empires and mobile actors can no longer be easily compartmentalized or located. As Timothy Morton has noted, it is frighteningly easy to connect the dots and see that everything is interconnected.[31] Moreover, the rise of object-oriented ontology, and questions of

[30] A work that addresses indigenous knowledge and participation in surveying and agrarian change is, Raymond B. Craib, *Cartographic Mexico: A History of State-Fixations and Fugitive Landscapes* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004). For an example of indigenous knowledge and climate, see, Mark Carey, *In the Shadow of Melting Glaciers: Climate Change and Andean Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).
[31] Timothy Morton, *The Ecological Thought* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010).

vibrancy and politics beyond the human, as well as beyond the organic, have similarly meant that we are ensnared by things that have long been assumed to be dormant and dominated.[32] And yet, "entangled" and "interconnected," at least in some cases, have become catchalls for the messiness of history.[33]

Ecology, in many ways, already implies the complexity and interaction that entanglement strives to describe. And, while scholars provocatively have moved away from nature metaphors such as "rootedness" in favor of neologisms, such theory can themselves be stilted by a reductive reading of the natural processes that required their resuscitation in ecological-thought—indeed the breathing of new life into them; to see a politics and animation in nature.[34] Ecology's emphasis on competing scales, growth, death, cycles, and velocity become important all over again. The speed at which things overlap, intersect, encounter, and decay, often get lost in the finished product of entanglement.[35] Exploring the ecological knot, therefore, requires repetition. It is monotonous, circular, and returning. Each loop is different than the last, yet touches and derives from something familiar. It works toward and away from the center. There is compression, friction, fraying, and relief. Cutting the knot reveals the sedimentation of

[32] Bruno Latour, *Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences into Democracy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004); Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).
[33] For more on this, see the AHR forum, and in particular, Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, "Entangled Histories: Borderland Historiographies in New Clothes?" *The American Historical Review* 112, no. 3 (June 2007): 787-799. Regarding social-natures, an ambitious attempt to break some of these epistemological limitations is, Arturo Escobar, *Territories of Difference: Place, Movements, Life,* Redes (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).
[34] See for example, Liisa Malkki, "National Geographic: The Rooting of Peoples and the Territorialization of National Identity among Scholars and Refugees" *Cultural Anthropology* 7, no. 1 (1992): 24-44. My goal here is a not simple return to nature metaphors. There is a very real danger in such a move, perhaps most clearly would be a neo-determinism seen in Ricardo Haussmann, "Prisoners of Bad Geography," *Foreign Policy* 122 (2001): 44-54.
[35] A work that captures well the need to understand velocity and transience in our analyses is, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987). Though, the creation of "rhizome" to capture the morphing and nomadic quality of life and history similarly deadened what was always living.

relations.[36] It is a geologic profile. What is seen in the cross section reveals multiple layers and connections, but not necessarily the processes behind them.

Can ecology or entanglement be method? To uncover these multiple relations of the Ushuaia penitentiary—its carceral ecology—I draw from an array of source materials collected in regional and national archives during 18 months of fieldwork in the southern cone. I collected materials ranging from government documents and periodicals, to scientific field-notes, police logs, prisoner letters and poems, and tango songs and playbills. Rather than seek some kind of synthesis, I allow these varied perspectives and mediums to reveal how prison and place came to be entwined, and underscore the multiple ways the southern region was incorporated into the nation as well as popular imaginations abroad. Actors, claims, landscapes, and imaginations appear and reappear. Discourses of degeneration and regrowth were central, for example, to criminology and penology, as well as forestry. So too were questions of nationalism, development, tourism, and transatlantic economies. The picture looks different depending on who is speaking for what. Place is about perception.

These perspectives are collected in six chapters to show competing, and at times, complementary understandings and desires of and for the prison and region. The first two chapters unpack the administrative side of the prison through penology and forestry. Chapter one examines the intellectual origins of the prison and Director Catello Muratgia's vision for a modern architectural prison that embraced outdoor labor and rehabilitation methods, through an "open-door" institution. I reveal that even more than an "open-door" institution, he created a living body in which prisoners and the prison were integrated into the local ecology through a modern penitentiary/penal colony hybrid that spoke back to US and European systems that had

[36] Here it is helpful to think through the amassing of "time-space envelops." Doreen B. Massy, *For Space* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2005).

failed to live up to their scientific promise. Chapter two focuses on the relationship between the prison and forestry department. I show that the two institutions, created in the 1890s, were co-constitutive. I focus on Forestry Director Antonio Snaider and his vision for the region, but also focus on Argentine understandings of forests and nature more generally. Resources, energy, and deforestation, were elements tackled by both institutions together. The felling of trees and fighting of forest fires force us to think critically about the limits of the penitentiary.

Chapter three views the prison from the outside—mainly Buenos Aires and the global north—to show how various publics portrayed and understood the institution. Indeed, while very few Argentines visited Tierra del Fuego, it was a fetishized region, especially following the construction of the prison. I use playbills, tango songs, poems, and journalist exposés to unpack various mediums of representation, to show how a narrative was constructed to render the region as the "Argentine Siberia." This chapter also speaks more broadly about exploration and global geography at the turn-of-the-century through what I call "analogue geographies." At the end of the age of exploration, I argue, the world was understood through recycled references to other spaces, which in turn, recorded new geographies from old narratives and desires for *terra incognita*.

Chapters four and five explore two very different experiences of exile in Tierra del Fuego. Chapter four theorizes the "common" prisoner experience, and how the language used by explorers to describe the region (death, decay, lifelessness) was exacerbated by prison operations. By unpacking inmate writings that engaged the prison and environment, I show how prisoners felt that they too were decaying, similar they argued to what they saw in the surrounding ecology. This was not an inevitable death, transition, or passing. Rather, prisoners actively fought to make their lives in the prison, pacing rather than passing time in their

precarious situation. Chapter five unpacks the experience of the more than 40 members of the Unión Cívica Radical exiled in 1934. Rather than being incarcerated, these well-known statesmen lived in modest housing or with prominent locals in Ushuaia. The relationship with these locals reveals the networks of the town, including particular power dynamics and prison clientalism. Most histories of the UCR end with the military coup of 1930, but I argue that the exile of the UCR members refashioned their narrative for an Argentine Tierra del Fuego, defined by beauty and potential rather than oppression and despair. The cultural influence of the party continued after the coup through a narrative of nationalism, not solely for southern settlers, but for an "othered" landscape to be incorporated into the modern nation.

The last chapter looks at the creation of Parque Nacional Tierra del Fuego in 1960, which occupies the same forests once felled by inmates. I show that the closure of the prison was not inevitable, and that the reorientation of Tierra del Fuego was strategic in its transformation and rebranded through a selective memory. The prison was rendered a "parenthesis" in a much richer and deeper Argentine natural history. This chapter shows a new orientation in development in the region, as well as a change in Argentina more generally with the rise of President Juan Perón, who closed the prison in 1947. Thus, the national park, and the later conversion of the defunct penitentiary into a museum in 1996, created too competing visions of history and the nation. These visions placed green and dark tourism side-by-side.

What this narrative and methodological approach explores and explains, therefore, could be described as a micro history of ecology. Rather than an in-depth study of an individual or event, this work tackles the long history of a small region and institution that meant many things to many groups over time. There is a dialectic to socio-natural ecology—the way we understand a place's past informs how we perceive it in the present, and hope to change or

conserve it in the future. In other words, ecological history, in certain ways, is a claim about future natures that are themselves entangled in something larger and something older, something that continues to live and breathe and change.[37] Thus, the detritus of history is organic matter that is consumed and transformed through time, despite the discursive attempt to petrify the past in safe and immutable ways. Ecological histories, therefore, can show how "past" political ecologies are *inner*active with contemporary and future ecologies, and through this living relationship, are transformed in powerful ways.[38] The transition from natural prison to natural park is as much about perception as it is physical transformation.

[37] Bruce Braun argues, "There is no room for nostalgia here." We must delve deeper into the culture or nature, rather than try to demystify it, for such a search for origins is itself a masking of humancentrism. See, *The Intemperate Rain Forest: Nature, Culture, and Power on Canada's West Coast* (University of Minnesota Press, 2002).
[38] See the still important, Michael Watts, "On the Poverty of Theory: Natural Hazards Research in Context," in *Interpretations of Calamity*, ed. Kenneth Hewitt (Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1983): 231-262.

CHAPTER ONE

THE OPEN-DOOR PENITENTIARY: ENGINEERING THE ELEMENTS IN THE FAR SOUTH

In the outskirts of the territorial capital [Ushuaia, Tierra del Fuego], lays the Recidivists Prison, a thinly constructed establishment in which a pair of guards, one in front and the other in back, is enough to watch the prisoners… It is the first prison that I have seen in my life that does not have external walls. Here, everyone comes and goes as they please.[39]

"Every penal institution is an organic entity that possesses its own edification, rules, personality, and spirit." As such, each prison has "its spirt," its ambiance, its morals that are dictated by innumerous factors.[40]

The First Stone

On 15 September 1903, the small town of Ushuaia, Argentina celebrated an anniversary. That same day one year prior, the first stone (*la piedra fundamental*) had been laid for the Ushuaia Prison (*cárcel de Ushuaia*).[41] Townspeople gathered dressed in formal wear and military regalia and stood amid an equally adorned and intricate overhead pulley-lever system [Figure 4]. Flags waved above the local band that provided music as townspeople watched the lowering of a precious block of earth. Beneath the rock officials buried an urn, inside which they placed a glass bottle filled with various documents from that year. Among the memoriam was a signed sheet of paper from all present to mark for future generations those involved in the momentous occasion. The signatories lauded the prison's director, Italian-born engineer Catello Muratgia, and noted that they were participants in the colonization and settlement of Argentina's southernmost frontier, the island-territory of Tierra del Fuego. The stone and urn marked both permanence and progress for Ushuaia, as the prison would play an integral role in the local economy, as well as in Argentine carceral sciences and southern sovereignty.

[39] Eduardo A. Holmberg, *Viaje al interior de Tierra del Fuego* (Buenos Aires: Oficina Meterológica, 1906), 51.
[40] *Informe de la Cárcel de Tierra del Fuego (1943).*
[41] "Aniversario," *El Eco Fueguino* 1, no. 1 (27 Sept. 1903), p. 1-2.

Figure 4. Placing the First Stone, 1907
Muratgia, *Presidio y cárcel de reincidentes*

Preparation had begun a few years earlier, and intensified in July 1902 with the excavation of a basalt quarry on the shores of the Beagle Channel where the prison would be erected. Director Muratgia noted the make-up of the earth materials beneath their feet: black pyroxene and feldspar. An exceptional snowfall that year made operations difficult, adding ice to the list of materials to be broken in order to extract the needed raw materials. Prisoners excavated roughly 7,000 cubic meters of stone that year. They would later construct a dock to aid in the loading and unloading of building materials and supplies brought by steamships, which were arriving and departing with greater frequency. The town's population still barely surpassed one thousand inhabitants, and on the island's roughly 2,150,000 hectares, sheep outnumbered human inhabitants about 330 to 1.[42] Given these conditions, those present at the anniversary of

[42] AGN, *Memoria del Ministerio del Interior*, 1910, p. 96. By 1910 the island's population grew to 2,500, though people were then out-numbered 540 to 1 by the explosion of the wool industry.

the first stone considered themselves to be Argentine pioneers, but they were quick to note that they were not the same as Australia's first white settlers. Those celebrating on the shore of the Beagle Chanel were not transportees or inmates, but rather, they were settlers who would live off of the government financing of the prison and inmate labor within the town and surrounding forest. The growth of the town and prison, therefore, were deeply intertwined through penology, resource extraction, and development. This was Muratgia's "open-door" penitentiary.

Navigating the Global Prison Archipelago

This chapter examines lead prison engineer and architect, Catello Muratgia, and the intellectual origins of the Ushuaia penal colony. Muratgia's holistic vision for the relationship between prison and place cannot be reduced to an isolated penitentiary and penal colony at "the end of the world." Rather, Muratgia situated his project within modern penology during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Ushuaia was a penal colony entering the world of prison sciences, offering an alternative vision for what the modern penitentiary could be. This vision was rooted in an early environmental consciousness and engagement with its surroundings, but also an awareness and integration with the nation's penal and crime sciences. The goal was, on the one hand, to centralize and regularize the nation's prison system, while on the other, to create locally oriented institutions to meet the various needs of geographic and social variations across the large republic. Ushuaia, therefore, would meet both local and national needs as a recidivist penitentiary in a still fledgling region of the south.

The result was a living hybrid, a penitentiary and penal colony. Administrators calculated and monitored an interactive ecology, from the minerals of the onsite quarry that sourced prison stone, and the felling and burning of timber from surrounding forests, to the consumption of vitamins and nutrients from the prison garden. By integrating diet regimens and environmental

elements with criminal sciences and regulated labor, Muratgia promised to combine the best aspects of established rehabilitation systems from around the world. The result brought together discipline and deforestation, penology and silviculture, as the inmates in Ushuaia transformed and were transformed by the landscape in a process of penal colonization. Labor operations blurred the spatial boundaries of the penitentiary, reaching beyond the prison grounds to the waters of Ushuaia Bay and the glacier-topped Martial Mountains. To understand these relationships is to unpack the multiple scales of a designed carceral ecology, which can illuminate how other penitentiaries, both rural and urban, were more porous, dynamic, and place-based than previously theorized.

It is easy, even seemingly necessary, to begin with Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* for the context of any modern prison history. Ushuaia is no exception; it was a late birth in the modern prison epoch. Foucault's work on the parallels between the penitentiary and the self-disciplining society have become commonplace across many disciplines, and scholars have built upon but also constructively criticized the "birth of the prison." Anthropologist Peter Redfield has done well to bring the structure back into view by contrasting the Devil's Island penal colony in French Guiana with contemporaneous urban penitentiaries. His goal is to *displace* the Eurocentric panopticon through an emphasis on the geographic distance between colonies and centers of law, noting that the "penal colony requires location."[43] Countering the dominant narrative of a rather clean transition from transport incarceration to penitentiaries, Redfield highlights that penal colonies are many things at once, not merely non-modern holdovers or anomalies within modern incarceration practices.[44] A deeper look at the question of

[43] Peter Redfield, "Foucault in the Tropics: Displacing the Panopticon," in *Anthropologies of Modernity: Foucault, Governmentality, and Life Politics*, ed. Xavier Inda (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 50-79.
[44] Geographers have unpacked the relationship between law and confinement, especially in island spaces. See, Derek Gregory, "The Black Flag: Guantánamo Bay and the Space of Exception," *Geogr. Ann.,* 88 B, no. 4 (2006), 405-

location reveals the tensions of Foucault's claim that the panopticon is a "particular institution, closed in upon itself," and therefore indifferent to its location.[45]

And yet, there is still much to be gained from Foucault. In the interview that became "Questions of Geography," Foucault clarified the inevitable spatial and empirical limitations to his study of modern European (French) prison systems in *Discipline and Punish*. Moreover, he offered thoughtful engagement with geography and its terminology—two themes that are strikingly absent in his lengthier study. Foucault notes that of the terms "territory, field, displacement, domain, soil, region, horizon, and archipelago," only the last of this list is strictly geographical.[46] But this term too has entered the prison lexicon, as he notes, "archipelago," is generally associated with the well-known account of Soviet prisons in Alexandr Solzhenitsyn's *The Gulag Archipelago* (1973). While Solzhenitsyn was not discussing the austere modern penitentiary analyzed by Foucault, he did portray a similarly isolated and insular set of institutions—a series of terrestrial prison islands in Siberia. As with Foucault, recent scholarship has argued that the Gulag archipelago was not quite the closed off universe so vividly described by Solzhenitsyn, especially those camps located near urban areas.[47] De-convoyed prisoners could engage, if only temporarily, in a variety of activities such as going to the store or foraging for extra food, proving that security and fences were porous and Soviet power, though extensive,

427; Alison Mountz, "The Enforcement Archipelago: Detention, Haunting, and Asylum on Islands," *Political Geography* 30 (2011), 118-128.

[45] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), 205.

[46] Michel Foucault, "Questions on Geography" in, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon, 1980) 63–77.

[47] Wilson T. Bell, "Was the Gulag an Archipelago? De-convoyed Prisoners and Porous Borders in the Camps of Western Siberia," *The Russian Review* 72 (January 2013), 116-141. See also, Alan Barenberg, *Gulag Town, Company Town: Forced Labor and Its Legacy in Vorkuta* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014). In a broader context, scholarship on oceans has shown that islands and archipelagos are often spaces of connection rather than isolation. See, Epeli Hau'ofa, *We are the Ocean: Selected Works* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008).

was not absolute. Therefore, understanding a modern carceral system adds, at the very least, understudied gradations to what Foucault called the "carceral continuum."

Neither the archipelago nor the panopticon were hermetically sealed. Nor were they necessarily opposing institutions—not all modern urban penitentiaries were closed-off hospital-like spaces, nor were all penal colonies non-modern and non-scientific.[48] Moreover, there were inherent tensions and contradictions to modern prisons, such that officials sought to obscure what happened within their walls but understood that such institutions needed to be seen and recognized as modern and effective. Thus, the modern penitentiary was put on display but not to reveal its inner workings, while penal colonies seemed to be hidden away yet rather transparent in their operations.[49] The relationship between Buenos Aires and Ushuaia in this context collapses the distance between colony and capital—the Ushuaia penal colony was supposed to be a bright beacon of modernity, not a backward, distant and hidden form of transport incarceration.[50] Ushuaia, after all, was both a penal colony and a modern radial penitentiary.[51] This seeming paradox suggests that rather than focus on distance alone, we must also *emplace* the penal colony by exploring its geographic and environmental networks and elements to reconstruct the interactive relationship between penitentiary and place.

Envisioning Ushuaia

[48] Carlos Aguirre's work on Lima, for example, shows the very situated dynamics of urban carceral systems, *The Criminals of Lima and their Worlds: The Prison Experience, 1850-1935* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005); Peter Zinoman shows the multiple and interconnected institutions of incarceration in Vietnam, *The Colonial Bastille: A History of Imprisonment in Vietnam, 1862-1940* (Berkeley: University of California, 2001).
[49] Clare Anderson and David Arnold, "Envisioning the Colonial Prison," in *Cultures of Confinement: A History of the Prison in Africa, Asia, and Latin America*, ed. Frank Dikötter and Ian Brown (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007).
[50] Lila Caimari, *Apenas un Delincuente: Crimen, Castigo y Cultura en la Argentina, 1880-1955* (Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 2004).
[51] Ushuaia, while somewhat unique in this regard, was not the only penal colony/radial penitentiary hybrid. Constructed during the same time, for example, was the Black Water prison in India's Andaman Island. See, Clare Anderson, Madhumita Mazumdar, and Vishvajit Pandya, ed. *New Histories of the Andaman Islands: Landscape, Place and Identity in the Bay of Bengal, 1790-2012* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

Officially known as the *presidio y cárcel de reincidentes*, Ushuaia was the Second National Penitentiary built in Argentina. The first was the National Penitentiary in Buenos Aires, completed in 1877 under the direction of architect Ernesto Bunge and engineer Valentín Balbín [Figure 5]. Its layout was based on the famous radial architectural design of Pentonville in London and Philadelphia's Eastern State Penitentiary. This form was adopted in many sites around the world, including multiple Latin American cities.[52] At the center of the building was a rotunda, from which stretched upwards of eight pavilions. From above, the design looked like the spokes and axel of a wagon wheel. While authorities could not look directly into each cell from the rotunda, they could gain a cursory view down each pavilion, and orders, mass, and other audible commands could resound from the center throughout the building.

Figure 5. National Penitentiary in Buenos Aires, 1900
MPA

[52] For an overview of the creation of modern radial penitentiaries in Latin America, see, Carlos Aguirre, "Prisons and Prisoners in Modernising Latin America (1800-1940)" in *Cultures of Confinement: A History of the Prison in Africa, Asia, and Latin America*, ed. Frank Dikötter and Ian Brown (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007).

Prior to this first penitentiary, penal reform in Argentina began with broader social reforms and the constitution of 1853.[53] There were two distinct institutions at this time: the *cárcel*, or jail, which was generally an urban edifice used as a holding space while individuals awaited booking or trail; and the *presidio*, or prison, which was an institution located in communities around the country and where individuals served their sentences.[54] Many of these buildings were former Jesuit convents, as the spatialities from monastic life and prison life were quite similar. In addition to these reforms and the creation of a national penitentiary, the Sisters of the Good Shepard began operating female correctional facilities in Buenos Aires in 1880, the Sierra Chica agricultural penal colony was established outside of the capital, and minors began to receive separate attention and sentencing.[55] There was similarly a rise in mental health facilities at this time, which often blurred the line between madness, degeneration, and criminality.[56] Ushuaia, therefore, was to serve a specific function within this growing specialized prison and rehabilitation network. Its specific role was to house male recidivists and dangerous offenders.

Nicasio Oroño, a prominent politician from Rosario, had first proposed the creation of a penal colony in Patagonia as part of this larger reform to the nation's penal code, as well as part of a much larger plan for colonization in the nation's southern regions.[57] After all, some of the

[53] Robert Buffington argues that penal reform was integral to modern constitutions, including the 1917 constitution that followed the Mexican Revolution. Penal reform, as integral to modern nation-states, has often been marginalized by studies focusing on education, land, and other social questions. See, "Revolutionary Reform: Capitalist Development, Prison Reform, and Executive Power in Mexico," in *The Birth of the Penitentiary in Latin America: Essays on Criminology, Prison Reform, and Social Control, 1830-1940*, ed. Ricardo D. Salvatore and Carlos Aguirre (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996).
[54] Abelardo Levaggi, *Las cárceles argentinas de antaño: Siglos XVIII y XIX: Teoría y realidad* (Buenos Aires: Ad-Hoc Villela Editor, 2002).
[55] Lila Caimari, "Whose Criminals are These? Church, State, and Patronatos and the Rehabilitation of Female Convicts (Buenos Aires, 1890-1940)," *The Americas* 54 no. 2 (October 1997).
[56] Jonathan Ablard, *Madness in Buenos Aires: Patients, Psychiatrists, and the Argentine State* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2008). See also, Mariano Ben Plotkin, *Freud in the Pampas: The Emergence and Development of a Psychoanalytic Culture in Argentina* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2001).
[57] Nicasio Oroño, *La verdadera organización del país o la realización legal de la maxima gobernar es poblar* (Buenos Aires: Imprenta y Fundición de Tipos de Vapor, 1871).

promises of the 1853 constitution had yet to be fulfilled. While the constitution was supposed to mark a departure from frontier justice of the Juan Manuel de Rosas era, capital punishment, for example, continued to be used as a deterrent for crime, especially with regard to the lower classes.[58] Oroño was part of a growing global movement to abolish capital punish when he addressed congress in 1868.[59] He proposed that individuals not be executed, and instead be sentenced to a domestic location in the far south, where they would work and be instilled with Argentine morals. Given that most of Patagonia during this time consisted of territories rather than provinces, the proposal implied something between deportation and internal exile. The process of creating these national territories began a few years earlier in 1862 when there were debates on consolidating the government in Buenos Aires. The government was federalized in 1879, and in 1884, the Argentine government established the National Territories (*las tierras nacionales*). Lands placed under this title were effectively beyond the political and social control of the central government and were secondary to provinces. These regions, which included Tierra del Fuego, had low population densities and minimal governmental representation in their incipient years.[60]

Prisons were seen as effective means therefore of establishing state operations in the peripheral regions. By establishing penal colonies at the southern extremes of the continental

[58] Ricardo D. Salvatore, "Death and Liberalism: Capital Punishment after the Fall of Rosas," in *Crime and Punishment in Latin America: Law and Society Since Late Colonial Times*, ed. Ricardo D. Salvatore, Carlos Aguirre, and Gilbert M. Joseph (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001). Rates of execution had fallen, and were generally limited to very violent crimes. They also required higher levels of approval from the courts, but nevertheless carried on in less than transparent processes.

[59] The abolition movement had been growing since the early 1800s. Benjamin Rush helped lead this movement in Philadelphia, while reformers such as John Howard and Frederic Hill led the Society for the Abolition of Capital Punishment in London. See Hill, "The Substitute for Capital Punishment" (1866). The death penalty would be applied sporadically up through the present. See, Par Engstrom, "Transitional justice, democratization and the politics of the death penalty in Argentina," in *The Politics of the Death Penalty in Countries in Transition*, ed. Madoka Futamura and Nadia Bernaz (New York: Routledge, 2014).

[60] See chapter one in, Martha Ruffini, *La pervivencia de la República possible en los territorios nacionales: Poder y ciudadanía en Río Negro* (Buenos Aires: Universidad de Quilmes, 2007).

landmass, the governments of Chile and Argentina outlined their perceived national territories.[61] By first outlining the limits of the geo-body, statesmen could then proceeds with shading to add depth and complexity to the nation, as the Argentine and Chilean governments constructed political and juridical markers that outlined their state-territories. The questions of population, infrastructure, administration, and economy in Patagonia would come in due time. The penal colonies established at the southern extremes of the continent, therefore, were *on* the fringes of the territory, but they were not necessarily *the* fringes. Rather, they were constellations of power, while the spaces between—the vast tracks of land stretching from Punta Arenas to Santiago or Ushuaia to Buenos Aires—were the borderlands.[62]

With these boundaries established, the internal colonization of in-between spaces in Argentina and Chile were justified in advance, as the territories between the capital and the extreme edge were already perceived to be Argentine and Chilean, respectively. Therefore, unlike the earlier military outposts established by the Spanish Empire, penal colonies carried a different valence in the frontier discourse of power and territorialization. Military outposts symbolized the attempt to colonize; yet the presence of a handful of military personal in a wooden structure implied a transient existence and purpose. These were not points of sovereignty, they were mobile and ephemeral state strategies. Penitentiaries, on the other hand, were permanent. Their stone-walls and relatively fixed populations of guards, wardens, and staff created local economies and established material and symbolic legitimacies over the right to exercise violence, criminalize, administer punishment, and confine.

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[61] See, Ernesto Bohoslavsky, "Sobre los límites del control social. Estado, historia y política en la periferia argentina (1890-1930)," in *Instituciones y formas de control social en América Latina, 1840-1940*, ed. María Silvia Di Liscia and Ernesto Bohoslavsky (Buenos Aires: Prometeo Libros, 2005).

[62] James Scott uses the analogy of a light-bulb of power, one that shines brightest at the core, but emits in increasingly dimmed light, power beyond the center. See, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

Penal colony proponents pointed to the French colony of New Caledonia and the English colony of Australia to justify such projects. Ushuaia, however, was not the first location of a distant penal colony in Argentina. The state installed a military prison on the Islas de los Estados at this time, located about 30 kilometers east of Tierra del Fuego's eastern tip. Building upon Oroño's suggestions, Dr. D. Eduardo Wilde suggested in 1883 a multi-class system in which non-violent criminals would be "deported" but not incarcerated.[63] Instead, they would be under minimal supervision and have the right to buy property and colonize these territories. The plan resonated with journalists for multiple reasons. First and foremost, they believed that the project was necessary to secure the border with Chile, but also to prevent the ongoing influence of the British in the archipelago. In hindsight, a scholar in the 1920's would argue that the Chilean penal colony at Fort Bulnes—established in 1843, later moved to Punta Arenas in 1849—prevented the French from taking the Strait of Magellan. Reflectively, Argentine politicians argued that had a penal colony been established in the region prior to 1832, the English would not have been able to take the *Islas Malvinas* (Falklands) from Argentina.[64] Pointing to the history of the Malvinas Islands, they believed that the need for security was urgent.[65] Journalists similarly supported the plan as a way to relieve the overcrowding in urban prisons. Finally, they highlighted that wood and ore were abundant in Tierra del Fuego, and therefore it could be a self-sufficient undertaking.[66]

Tierra del Fuego's inaugural Governor, Pedro T. Godoy, took office in 1893 and similarly saw potential in a self-sustaining operation. As governor, he believed that his role was to be the facilitator of a colonizing enterprise. Writing to the Ministry of the Interior, he argued

[63] See discussions in the Congreso Nacional in, *Memoria, Ministro de Justicia, Culto é Instrucción Pública*, 1883.
[64] *La Libertad*, August 3, 1883.
[65] See, *La Nación*, July 7, 1883; *La Libertad*, August 8, 1883.
[66] Manuel Láinez, "Las cárceles argentinas: Proyecto de colonia penal," *El Diario*, August, 4 1900, 2.

that "a penal colony is a complete organism" that required careful integration of local government oversight. Godoy was granted approval for the project in 1896, and the Ushuaia prison operation commenced with two separate facilities in 1897 under inaugural Director Pedro Della Valle. There was first a military prison constructed in Lapataia, a few kilometers west of Ushuaia near the Chilean border. This site offered excellent timber resources but was isolated from the Beagle Channel, and therefore limited transportation to and from the prison. The second site was the civilian recidivist prison in Ushuaia. Director Della Valle and Governor Pedro Godoy worked together to coordinate timber operations and prison construction. However, timber operations did not run as smoothly as expected, and a sawmill fire raised major concerns about resources and continuous operations. Moreover, some locals, including subsequent Governor Félix Carrié, feared that the prison located in Ushuaia was a danger to the town and fledgling capital. In 1898 Carrié and Della Valle proposed that the civilian prison be moved to Lapataia. This move would join the civilian and military prisons, improve timber operations, and create an ample colony of nearly 24 square miles (two square league kilometers). The broader vision of this plan was to create a separate penal colony from the town.[67]

Authorities, nevertheless, were pleased by the signs of rehabilitation that he saw in the first inmates. This group included six female convicts, three of which were married to fellow prisoners and three others to locals, and thus also proved good prospects as a colonizing class. But this would not be enough. Various authorities suggested that inmates have their families move with them at the expense of the government to help populate the region, which would fulfill the vision of making Tierra del Fuego similar to other settler penal colonies around the world. Indeed, there was an on-going concern regarding how to populate the region if the

[67] Della Valle's 69 article proposal can be found in, *Memoria Ministro de Justicia é Instrucción Pública*, 1900, Tomo I: 264-273.

prisoner population was predominantly male. Minors would be incarcerated in a separate wing and employed in the prison's workshops, but more importantly, Della Valle's proposal included the continued incarceration of women. Female inmates, like juveniles, would occupy a separate wing of the prison from adult males, but more importantly, they would be allowed to marry, including to other inmates, in the hopes that female inmates would stay after their release.

Other observers looked to the indigenous population for female suiters for male inmates. While Darwin had claimed that the Fuegians were the most wretch humans on the planet, in subsequent decades, British missionaries forged close connections with various groups. Now, Argentine journalist like Roberto Payró were impressed by the strength and skill of natives, especially female caravans that marched through the snow and forests in the region.[68] When naturalist Eduardo Holmberg visited in the early 1900s he was shocked by the "extraordinary lack" of women, and also suggested that settlers take indigenous brides to ensure the growth of the region.[69] This is not to say that authorities saw indigenous groups as equals, but they were deemed suitable to have relations with inmates. Such cases of intermarriage, however, seem to be rare, and for decades men would outnumber women roughly five to one. Thus, the few female inmates praised in these early years, would not be enough to establish family households.

While Della Valle's plan to move the prison and allow inmates to bring their female partners was considered, authorities fielded alternative proposals for the community. Amid the debate came engineer Catello Muratgia, who had emigrated from Italy, worked in various industries in France, and arrived in Argentina in 1883. He traveled to Tierra del Fuego in 1900, and upon returning to Buenos Aires he proposed to transform the project in the territorial capital of Ushuaia, rather than relocating it to Lapataia. Doctor Osvaldo Magnasco of the Ministry of

[68] Roberto Payró, *La Australia Argentina* (Buenos Aires, 1898), 208.
[69] Holmberg, *Viaje al interior de Tierra del Fuego*, 48-51.

Justice and Public Instruction was impressed, and put his faith in Muratgia, granting him control of the prison.[70] There were just 47 inmates at the time, and Muratgia received five-thousand pesos to break ground on the new prison.

Ushuaia in the Global Carceral Archipelago

Just two years later Muratgia proudly proclaimed, "The date, September 15, 1902, shall be remembered for many years in the minds of the townspeople of the world's southernmost settlement."[71] Many of his goals were similar to Della Valle's, such as education for inmates, separate pavilions and work details, and a professional guard staff. Muratgia applauded Della Valle's work, noting how difficult it must have been to forge the project from scratch in a distant land, but he ultimately believed that the operation could be more scientific, particularly regarding penology. Indeed, in almost every area, Muratgia pushed further to construct an integrated prison-colony-environment. And, with the growing popular interest in criminology and broader social questions, the prison received a great deal of attention as a national project.

From the outset, residents in Buenos Aires (*porteños*) read about the new developments in Ushuaia with excitement. The same year of Muratgia's proclamation, *Caras y Caretas*, the nation's most popular magazine, published the first telegraph cable sent from the southern town as well as the first pressing from the print shop.[72] Pictured in the center of the group was Director Muratgia, who was lauded by the magazine for his innovative vision. Readers learned that while

[70] See, J. Carlos García Basalo, *La Colonización Penal de la Tierra del Fuego* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Servicio Penitenciario Federal, 1981). This work provides an impressive history of these early years of colonization and flux, and ends with the appointment of Muratgia.

[71] *Tribuna* (Buenos Aires) November 1, 1902, 2. That same year, 1902, the military prison on Islas de los Estados was closed. With no other community on the island, and too exposed to extreme weather, the military prisoners were transferred to Ushuaia in December, which was considered more hospitable and humane. Just a few years later, the military prison outside of Ushuaia would house those arrested in the radical revolution of 1905 waged against President Manuel Quintana.

[72] "Ushuaia," *Caras y Caretas* 170 (1902). The publication, *Constancia*, similarly claimed that Muratgia was poised to rectify the ills of the prison system. "Noticias," *Constancia* 29 no. 969 (Buenos Aires) January 21, 1906, 46.

the winter was indeed harsh and long in Tierra del Fuego, summers days in Ushuaia were spectacular and superior to those in Buenos Aires. In a serene image from such a day, prisoners stood in a courtyard for mass under snow-capped mountains, seemingly on the path to rehabilitation. Indeed, success stories were reported back to the capital by prominent locals and the interim governor, Captain Esteban Loqui, attesting to the intellectual and skillful gains displayed by recently released inmates.

By 1906 Ushuaia had a small rail-line to transport timber from the forest, electricity generated by the prison, and carriages constructed in the workshop to carry residents through the town's snowy streets.[73] Each inmate worked happily, one author observed, contrasting this labor in the cold arctic south with that of the humid north. The journalist noted that, with robust chests and strong arms, inmates swung large hammers and sawed timber, building the town and their healthy bodies. They smiled unlike those prisoners in the extreme north of Argentina in Humahuaca, where inmates sweated in the humid heat, chained and crying for freedom from their blistered and bloodied lips.[74] Things were going so well between the prison, town, and local government, by 1908 *Caras y Caretas* claimed that new Governor Manuel Fernández Valdés, from La Rioja, was the only popular governor left in the Argentine republic.[75] While the north faced its own problems, the goal of internal deportation coupled with development in the south, represented in the raising of stone and steel, was appeasing the presses [Figure 6].

[73] "Los últimos progresos de Ushuaia," *Caras y Caretas* 403 (1906).
[74] L. Ombroso "El presidio de Ushuaia," *Caras y Caretas* 381 (1906). Authors were not always listed in *Caras y Caretas*, though here we see a creative pen name referencing famous criminologist, Cesare Lombroso.
[75] "Un gobernador popular," *Caras y Caretas* 534 (1908). Indeed, Valdés became governor in 1905 and would be reelected four times, serving from 1905-1917.

Figure 6. Prisoners Working on the Edifice, 1907
Muratgia, *Presidio y cárcel de reincidentes*

Officials at the turn of the century believed that beyond the National Penitentiary in Buenos Aires, prisons in the interior, such as Humahuaca in the poor indigenous region of Jujuy, were backward colonial holdovers. Ushuaia, they hoped, could lead the way out of the past. Muratgia's vision was national in that he saw not an archipelago of isolated prisons, but instead an interconnected network of rehabilitation institutions that catered to different types of criminals and communities. Each penitentiary, and the greater prison system, was inherently protean despite rhetoric that proffered a "model" and therefore perfect and complete institution. With continued immigration, changes in political control, and industrial transformations and labor relations, society and its criminals were constantly changing and required an equally flexible carceral system. As such, the role of penology was also about tracking recidivism and therefore contributed to criminology, rather than merely being the subsequent phase of the justice system.

Historian Lila Caimari argues that, for Buenos Aires, Ushuaia would enact a "double purification," for on the one hand, the prisoner's souls would be purified during exile, and simultaneously, by sending them to the southern wilderness, the capital would be purified through a purging of its delinquents.[76] This was not a one-way sending, but rather, a positive feedback loop.

Muratgia thus operated not simply within an expanding national prison system, but also a broader confluence of science and politics. Criminology and penology were to work together through anthropometry facilities in the penitentiaries, as the two sciences were reaching an apogee together. The Buenos Aires police department had created the first anthropometric office in Latin America in 1889, modeled on the system created by French criminologist Alphonse Bertillon. Juan Vucetich also established an anthropometric system just south of the capital in La Plata in 1891 under orders of the local police chief, though Vucetich is most famous for critiquing the system and becoming one of the founders of finger-printing.[77] The Bertillon system, he believed, was a negative system in that it used body measurements and markers to eliminate suspects, while fingerprinting was positive because it directly and singularly identified individuals.[78] At the 1905 International Police Convention, the year after Vucetich's work on finger-printing, *Dactiloscopía comparativa* was published, police departments in Buenos Aires,

[76] Caimari, *Apenas un Delincuente*, 64.
[77] See, Mercedes García Ferrari, *Ladrones conocidos, sospechosos reservados: Identificación policial en Buenos Aires, 1880-1905* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Prometeo, 2010). This debate was not limited to Buenos Aires. On its consequences across the border see, Cristián Palacios Laval, "Entre Bertillon y Vucetich: Las tecnologías de identificación policial, Santiago de Chile, 1893-1924" in *Industria del delito: Historias de las ciencias criminologías en Chile*, Cristián Palacios y César Leyton ed (Santiago: Ocho Libros, 2014).
[78] Vucetich claimed that anthropometry was invasive, especially regarding women. Moreover, it required fully formed adults, unlike fingerprints, which were permanent. "Prejudice is dead, because the system is *egalitarian*: all are equal before the law and all are different before Nature…. There are not two leaves alike in the forest; there are not two men alike in the world." Vucetich, *Proyecto de Ley de Registro General de Identificación* (La Plata: Taller de Impresiones Oficiales, 1929), 127. Also, see, Julia Rodriguez, "South Atlantic Crossings: Fingerprints, Science, and the State in Turn-of-the-Century Argentina," *The American Historical Review* 109 no. 2 (April 2004), 387-416.

Rio de Janeiro, Montevideo, and Santiago also approved the use of identity cards that used dactyloscopy. Prisons and policing were increasingly connected transnational undertakings.

During this time, Buenos Aires had become one of the world's centers for criminology. While the Italian school under Cesare Lombroso promoted born criminality, the French school led by Alexandre Lacassagne took a mesological approach to understanding crime and criminals as existing and acting within a greater and dynamic system—Lacassagne famously said, "societies get the criminals they deserve." These social factors and mesological theories influenced José Ingenieros, who founded the Institute of Criminology in Buenos Aires in 1907. Ingenieros created a third camp of criminology by blending the theories of Lacassagne and Lombroso, creating a hybrid theory in which biology and environment played equal roles in creating criminals, what historian Ricardo Salvatore has called a "moral-social-psychological pathology."[79] With an expansion of theory came an expansion of infrastructure, including an Office of Identification proposed in 1908 and a General Register of Prostitutes proposed in 1909.[80] These registry systems complemented the recidivist law that had been passed in 1895, thus enabling the creation of the Ushuaia prison.[81] Together, these laws sought to identify, label, and track individuals who were deemed dangerous by authorities, both before and after, as well as during their incarceration.

[79] Ricardo Salvatore, "Criminology, Prison Reform, and the Buenos Aires Working Class," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 23, no. 2 (Autumn 1992).
[80] Donna Guy, *Sex and Danger in Buenos Aires: Prostitution, Family, and Nation in Argentina* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1991). The general identification registry in Buenos Aires was destroyed in 1916 after being declared unconstitutional. The files in 1916 had over 619,000 prints for a city of about 1.5 million. Julia Rodriguez, *Civilizing Argentina: Science, Medicine, and the Modern State* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006): 238-239.
[81] Law 3335, under penal code 11.179, was passed in December 1895. The law stated that recidivists would complete their sentences in the southern territories (*en los territorios del Sur*). The law also stated that those recidivists who re-entered would not receive the benefits of Article 49 of the penal code.

The science of body measurement continued as the use of fingerprinting gained momentum, and both would be implemented in the far south.[82] Muratgia requested that all repeat offenders have placed in their file two to three photographs (at least one profile and one frontal), as well as fingerprints, to be evaluated. In addition, there was to be a room in Ushuaia in which a photo of each prisoner would be on display at all times, with the prisoner's history of arrests listed. Muratgia also proposed the construction of an anthropometry wing, similar to that in the National Penitentiary, to serve not only the needs of the prison but also those of the nation.[83] The port of Ushuaia was a particular point of concern regarding unwanted immigration, especially given the nearby connection with Punta Arenas, Chile—the largest city in the southern trans-Andean region.[84]

A proposal in 1913 demanded that anyone entering Argentina through Ushuaia be finger-printed by police, as communication between Punta Arenas and Ushuaia showed a particular concern for "dangerous individuals" entering and leaving the ports.[85] Inmates generally topped this list of dangerous individuals, and monitoring in the region created a large surveillance network.[86] Southern communications looked intently on the international police conferences that brought together forces from Rio de Janeiro to Santiago de Chile, thus further strengthening intellectual ties between the north and south. Indeed, rather than a colony that hid away the

[82] On the mixed use of finger-printing and anthropometry, see, Simon Cole, *Suspect Identities: A History of Fingerprinting and Criminal Identification* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 2001).
[83] Muratgia, *Presidio y cárcel de reincidentes*, 1907, 36.
[84] Archivo Histórico de la Cancillería (AHC), Sección: 8-Tratados y conferencias, Caja Ah/0111, Legajo 44; 4121. Like criminology and penology, border enforcement looked to European examples, including methods practiced in Spain and Portugal (1823) and the United States and Mexico (1882).
[85] Museo del Fin del Mundo (MFM), Libros policiales 1910-1912, p. 107-109.
[86] MFM, Libros policiales 1910-1912, p. 629-631. When Ushuaia inmate Manuel Perez escaped in September 1912, for example, police in Chubut, Rio Negro, and Santa Cruz were all notified, receiving specific descriptions of Perez's physical measurements and characteristics

nation's "incorrigibles," the Ushuaia penitentiary and its operation were interactive and dialogic with the capital, identifying, categorizing, and building the nation and its citizens.

The Open-Door Penitentiary

Ushuaia was an open-door prison. And, within the first years of the penitentiary's operation it gained a mystique in popular imaginations.[87] Indeed, while scientific methods and techniques were one half of Muratgia's approach to penology, it was the other half—his emphasis on the environment—that took center stage. Located at the southern fifty-fifth parallel, between the famous Beagle Channel to the south charted by Charles Darwin aboard the HMS Beagle, and the glacier-topped Martial Mountains to the north, the region seemed to be a different world entirely from the bustling streets of Buenos Aires, the temperate plains of the pampas, or the warm regions of the north. Ushuaia seemed a clear choice for the location of a "natural prison," after all, it did not have exterior walls and instead inmates looked out onto the mountains, bay, or town. However, Muratgia was not satisfied by the negative and punitive connotation of an environmental prison. Rather, Ushuaia presented a different approach to such projects by creating an intentional open-door penitentiary that was dynamic and productive in its geographical setting, rather than walled-off and isolated. He saw potential in the Antarctic climate, and wrote extensively on why his vision was part of a broader penal evolution.

Once Muratgia had established himself as director, he elaborated this vision in two publications, each of which helped to demystify the endeavor. The first, *A Brief Study on the Rehabilitation of Criminals*, published in 1905, was an overview of previous prison designs, work systems, and carceral sciences from around the world. The second, *Recidivists Prison and Jail*, published in 1907, explicitly addressed the penitentiary's construction and Ushuaia's

[87] Ryan Edwards, "From the Depths of Patagonia: The Ushuaia Penal Colony and 'The Nature of the End of the World,'" *Hispanic American Historical Review* 94, no. 2 (May 2014): 271-302.

environmental qualities to situate the prison in that global history, and show the progress of the institution to make its own mark on history.

A Brief Study argued that not long ago it was the prison director's job to punish, seemingly tyrannically, in order to reduce crime. Scholars of crime had since turned to science and human progress to more adequately treat criminals. At its core, Muratgia claimed, this modern prison was to have a righteous and humanitarian spirit.[88] This narrative was commonplace at the time. For nearly a century, reformers in many parts of the world, especially the United States and Europe, had made such claims, and Argentine penologists were part of the conversation. At the International Penitentiary Congress of 1878 in Stockholm, for example, the Argentine delegation noted, "The approved resolutions will be like the treatment prescribed by a medical doctor to combat illness. If we are sicker than other countries, we should try to demonstrate it and indicate the symptoms of our social ills so that we may find a remedy."[89]

While Argentina had led Latin America in modernizing efforts of the carceral system, until that point most prison systems in Latin America had been adaptations or imitations of Europe and the United States.[90] And, while the modern penitentiaries of the global north had proven to be inventive and impressive, they had yet to fully deliver on their promises. Indeed, other penologists were similarly noting that there was no silver bullet for penal systems. In 1900 penologists from around the world, including Argentine representative Marcos M. Avellaneda, met in Brussels for the Sixth International Prison Conference. The conference showed an overall desire to modernize and render scientific the practice of incarceration, and yet, there was no

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[88] Catello Muratgia, *Breve estudio sobre la regeneración de los delincuentes: precedido por datos históricos generales sobre sistemas penitenciarios* (Buenos Aires: Imprenta Tragant, 1905): 7-11.
[89] Quoted in Rodriguez, *Civilizing Argentina*, 37.
[90] This understanding of "Western" incarceration systems continues today. For example, one of the most ambitious collections of western prison history does not include any systems from Latin America until the rise of political prisoners under dictatorships in the 1970s. See, Norval Morris and David J. Rothman ed., *The Oxford History of the Prison: The Practice of Punishment in Western Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

definitive consensus among the participants as how exactly to achieve these ends. For example, representatives revealed conflicting results regarding recidivism. Some demanded the most "severe [treatment] within the limits of common humanity" for first time offenders so as to detour them from repeat offending, while others denied the efficacy of increased severity for first timers or recidivists. A few delegates argued that the spatial aspects of a penitentiary were less important than the tenure of one's sentence, noting that the longer the incarceration the less likely a return.[91] Thus, even the elements of time and space—sentencing and cells—had yet to be resolved.

Cells were nevertheless the favored form of confinement, creating a system defined by partition and separation. They denied the opportunity to engage in inappropriate and promiscuous behavior during sleeping hours, but also provided time for individual reflection after communal activities during the day. Muratgia was critical of carceral regimens around the world, but still believed that the cellular design was the best option. Therefore, the architectural design of the Ushuaia radial penitentiary followed the model of Philadelphia's Eastern State Penitentiary, as had the national penitentiary in Buenos Aires. Ushuaia had five pavilions and a central rotunda, from which a guard could view each wing of the building. In later years there would be proposals to add more pavilions, though such expansions were never realized [Figure 7].

[91] Samuel J. Barrows, *The Sixth International Prison Congress held at Brussels, Belgium, August 1900: Report of its Proceedings and Conclusions* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1903).

Figure 7. Blueprints for Expansion, 1922
AGN-I, Ex. 7876, C

Eastern State was arguably the world's most famous penitentiary at this time, and it is not surprising that the administrators in Argentina followed its architectural model. Throughout the nineteenth century the institution attracted famous observers from around the world, including Charles Dickens and Alexis de Tocqueville. Historian Paul Kahan has argued that Eastern State Penitentiary was "the architectural embodiment of environmentalism," meaning, reformers believed in removing inmates from their criminal environs, and placing them in a fully monitored and controlled institution.[92] Eastern State had a high surrounding wall, and the

[92] Paul Kahan, *Seminary of Virtue: The Ideology and Practice of Inmate Reform at Eastern State* Penitentiary (New York: Peter Lang, 2012), 30. See also, Paul Kahan, *Eastern State Penitentiary: A History* (Charleston: History Press, 2008). Philadelphia was infamous for its attempt at near complete sensory deprivation of inmates, wherein they worked in complete silence and isolation in their cells. Soft booties were worn by individuals who walked through the hallways so that prisoners could not hear others, and were generally unaware of how many inmates were housed at any given time.

individual in an isolated cell had an overhead skylight said to be the "eye of God." Inmates could literally not see the outside world and were therefore said to be watched by their creator at all times. And yet, practices in the model penitentiary were hardly ideal. While Eastern State was the archetype to be followed around the world in the in late nineteenth century, Muratgia was not alone in critiquing the penitentiary's failings, such as overcrowding and mismanagement.[93] Moreover, inward looking "environmentalism" was never complete in practice, as many of the prisons that followed Eastern State's architecture, for example, did not mimic the skylights, and instead had horizontal windows that could see out onto the prison yard.

Given the limitations in such a design, regimen was equally important. And, just as Muratgia was impressed by Philadelphia's architectural design, he was inspired by the methods of Auburn Penitentiary in upstate New York.[94] Whereas inmates were perpetually isolated in Philadelphia (at least in theory), in Auburn inmates worked together in large groups, often outside, before returning to their individual cells at night. However, Auburn, like Philadelphia, practiced a strict silence policy during group work. To speak, for Muratgia, was nothing short of human nature, and at its most basic level, the word was a human compulsion; to not speak was to no longer be human. The goal, after all, was to rehabilitate and create industrious citizens for society through therapeutic institutions. Rather than socialize, prisons that embraced strict silence weakened one's intellectual capacity and spirit. Modifying the Auburn system, therefore, by allowing for speech and conversation during the day, promised an exemplary model.

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[93] Charles Richard Henderson, *Report of the Proceedings of the Eight International Prison Congress, Washington D.C., 1910* (Washington, 1913). Dr. Armando Claros, director of the National Penitentiary in Buenos Aires, represented Argentina.

[94] Muratgia, *Breve estudio*, 32-36. Other prisons Muratgia singled out were Jeremy Bentham's panopticon, which he argued was among the great advances in European prisons. Conversely, Russia, where the panopticon was proposed, continued severe abuses of human rights in their Siberian prisons. See, Janet Semple, *Bentham's Prison: A Study of the Panopticon Penitentiary*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

Thus, the two models, Philadelphia and Auburn, would be combined and augmented in Ushuaia.[95] Interaction, work, and exercise during the day would inculcate morals and ethics. Education was integral to prisoner labor, Muratgia highlighted, such that physical work was coupled with intellectual engagement to destroy ignorance, rather than the employment of simple mechanical functions. In this sense, Ushuaia was quite different than city penitentiaries that were intended to be sanitary spaces, like hospitals, where all elements of the environment were controlled and all contaminations monitored and resolved. On the one hand, the penitentiary had modern facilities, however, there was a far more fluid and organic quality to Ushuaia. The weather and resources outside could not be changed, at least not completely, and instead were to be embraced. Rather than being limited to sanitized white-rooms, prisoners put their hands in soil and consumed particular foods that they cultivated, such that their pH changed through engagement with and consumption of southern Patagonia elements. In other words, the hospital-like penitentiary was too controlled, too synthetic, and too fabricated. If the goal was to rehabilitate for a fluid and living society, prisoners needed a monitored version of that, not a hermetically sealed space with little to no relation to the "outside."

Buildings, in this sense, have long been designed with bodies in mind. They become a prosthesis of the body, extending the functions of both through a building-body assemblage.[96] This fluidity, and its emphasis on chemistry and biology spoke to Argentine scientists' obsession with flesh (*carne*) and transmission at this time. The body, as historian Kristen Ruggiero argues, suggested a complete entity, whereas the flesh was vulnerable and connected with others, and

[95] For more on the Auburn-Philadelphia debate, see, David J. Rothman, "The Invention of the Penitentiary," in *The Discovery of the Asylum: Social Order and Disorder in the New Republic* (Boston: Little Brown, 1971).
[96] Michelle Murphy, *Sick Building Syndrome and the Problem of Uncertainty: Environmental Politics, Technoscience, and Women Workers* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006): 11-13.

therefore was in need of monitoring and manipulating.[97] Criminologists leveled criminality to contagion that could be spread like germs, and influences like alcohol could awaken latent tendencies and criminality.[98] In Ushuaia, alcohol conjured such fears that the entire population was policed. Various fines were established, including selling alcohol to minors or to those already intoxicated, though the largest fines were charged to anyone who sold alcohol to the police, prison personnel, or smuggled alcohol into the prison.[99] Alcohol, however, was just one of the many vices that revealed a preoccupation on the part of criminologists regarding influence and latent criminality. The crowd was their greatest fear, as intoxications of all kinds collided under the protection of anonymity. One Argentine criminologist wrote in 1899,

> "Anonymous heterogeneous groups… are in all ways morally and intellectually inferior to the individuals that compose them. It is likely that the principal factor of this degeneration is the sentiment of irresponsibility that surges in the breast of all crowds with extraordinary force of action, and that explains its crimes and abuses."[100]

This was about controlling spaces, interactions, and potential contaminations; social and spatial control began well outside of the prison. Worse still, urban prisons remained tied to their criminal environments. The National Penitentiary's director, Antonio Ballvé, claimed in 1907 that certain hardened criminals were not being rehabilitated by the methods in Buenos Aires and he specifically pointed to Ushuaia as a place where a more rigorous confinement and work

[97] Kristin Ruggiero, *Modernity in the Flesh: Medicine, Law, and Society in Turn-of-the-Century Argentina* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2004): 102-109.
[98] Eusebio Gómez, *Estudios penitenciarios* (Buenos Aires: Talleres Gráficos Penitenciaría Nacional, 1906).
[99] AGN, *Memoria del Ministerio del Interior*, 1915-1916 p. 224-225.
[100] Juan Agustín García. Such arguments were common across criminology. Jean-Gabriel Tarde, a French criminologist disturbed by the Paris Commune wrote, "A mob is a strange phenomenon. It is a gathering of heterogeneous elements, unknown to one another; but as soon as a spark of passion, having flashed out from one of these elements, electrifies this confused mass, there takes place a sort of sudden organization, a spontaneous generation." See, Piers Beirne, "Between God and Statistics: Gabriel Tarde and Neoclassical Criminology" in *Inventing Criminology: Essays on the Rise of 'Homo Criminalis'* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993.

regimen could prove fruitful.[101] Under Article 52 of the penal code, prisoners would be sent *al sur* for *un tiempo indeterminado*. Here, "south" is significant, because being sent to the prison in Ushuaia meant far more than confinement to a penitentiary. This was relocation, exile, and integration into an unfamiliar region for most Argentines as well as foreign inmates.

Urban prisons were for Muratgia intermediate designs that would always be limited in breadth and scope—they were caught between the transition from barbarism to civilization.[102] Their location in crammed cities limited the space of the structure, preventing ventilation and light. Worse still, the giant surrounding walls were not enough to break the connections between inmates and their neighborhoods. The countryside was where the prison belonged. There, amid the rain and fauna, men could be rehabilitated and reinvigorated, cultivating themselves and nature simultaneously.[103] This kind of region-appropriate work had the support of renowned penologists such as José Ingenieros.[104] Thus, while criminologists often focused on the city, they also saw potential in the countryside and interior.

But the interior had to be built, and inmates would do that work. Being outside in the polar world therefore was the largest component of one's incarceration. By 1906, the prison contained 76 cells, four rooms and a central block, in a roughly 1,000 square meter building. The larger facility sat on 30 hectares and was serviced by 48 employees and housed 155 inmates.[105] Large-scale public projects, however, required collaboration between the prison and other

[101] Antonio Ballvé, *La Penitenciaría Nacional de Buenos Aires: Conferencia leída en el Ateneo de Montevideo* (Buenos Aires: Talleres Gráficos de la Penitenciaría Nacional, 1907): 123.
[102] Muratgia, *Breve estudio*, 190-93.
[103] Thinking through the relationship between inmates and ecology, and how to create mutually beneficial practices continues today. See, Thomas Kaye et al., "Conservation Projects in Prison: The Case for Engaging Incarcerated Populations in Conservation and Science," *Natural Areas Journal* 35, no. 1 (2015): 90-97.
[104] José Ingenieros, *Criminología* (Madrid: Daniel Jorro, 1913): 256.
[105] Antonio Ballvé, *Resultados generales de primer censo carcelario de la república Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Talleres gráficos de la penitenciaría nacional, 1906): 96-100. These early projects costs roughly $150,000 pesos.

institutions, which were similarly navigating unfamiliar terrain.[106] Domestic and international transportation relied on the Argentine navy and transatlantic shipping companies such as Hamburgo-Sudamericana, not solely for importing non-local goods and information, but for exporting timber felled by inmates.[107] Indeed, the timber industry was growing quickly, as inmates, under the direction of the nascent forestry department, lined the channel shores with lumber.

This collaboration with the forestry department was crucial because Muratgia did not want to suffer the shortcomings of other agricultural colonies. He noted that labor camps were often violent and abusive and did very little to rehabilitate or educate inmates. Or, equally as ineffective, they were run by religious operations more concerned with proselytizing, than with work ethic and criminal relations to society. The emphasis was spiritual and mental, and therefore failed to understand the material needs of inmates as human beings. Muratgia also criticized prisons headed by teachers or industry men, because, despite the positive impacts of these professions, their focus was not on justice, anthropology, or the sciences. These three categories coalesced in penology and had to be the central focus of prison directors. Personnel needed to specialize in their particular field, especially the warden, and guards were to be morally and functionally trained to be considered specialists and professionals.[108]

Ushuaia was not an agriculture colony, nor was it a company town; it was an open-door prison.[109] The "open-door" concept was not entirely new, however, nor was it limited to prisons.

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[106] "Aniversario," *El Eco Fueguino* 1 no. 1, September 27, 1903, 1-2.
[107] Catello Muratgia, *Memoria de Justicia e Instrucciones Públicas*, 1904-1905, p. 500-506.
[108] Muratgia, *Breve estudio*, 109, 266-289. The English example of Pentonville showed that a transition from private contractors to state employees was necessary to quell punishment and manipulation, as, inmates argued that guards too were supposed to follow prison rules. Michael Ignatieff, *A Just Measure of Pain: The Penitentiary in the Industrial Revolution* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).
[109] See, María Laura Piva, "El aislo rural como utopia terapéutica: La fundación de la colonia nacional de alienados 'open door' en el partido de Luján (1899)" *Saber y Tiempo* 1 (1996): 55-70. Moreover, this is not to be confused with the concept of an "open prison," meaning closed and re-functionalized for public use, discussed in, Susana

Luján, an Argentine town outside of Buenos Aires, was established in 1899 as an "open-door" psychiatric community. Neither enabled patients or inmates to simply come or go at their leisure. Rather, the idea was to more fluidly integrate the institution with its surroundings. The psychiatric community focused more on social relations, while Ushuaia focused more on environment and the building of the town. Community and support systems were integral to the rehabilitation of inmates, since recidivists were rarely seen as born criminals, but instead were highly impressionable creatures.[110] A diverse and engaging work program, coupled with education and community support, was their best chance for recovery. The prison therefore transformed the landscape that it was influenced by and built into, and townspeople and other government institutions worked with and benefitted from these operations. The terms Ushuaia, recidivist prison, and Fuegian forest, became nearly synonymous at this time because they were largely inseparable entities and endeavors.

From an economic point of view, it was cheaper for the state to construct such an institution outside of already developed and bloated real estate markets, and agricultural work would recover the costs of the prison. However, agricultural work as a means of rehabilitation did not always speak to the inmate population and its needs once released. Prisoners in Ushuaia, unlike those in other regional prisons, were rarely locals to the area. They were a learned group, with only about twenty percent of the population being illiterate (second only to Buenos Aires prisons), while regional prisons often had illiteracy rates above forty percent. Similarly, only about seven percent of inmates were characterized as agricultural workers, while other regional

Draper, *Afterlives of Confinement: Spatial Transitions in Postdictatorship Latin America* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012).
[110] Muratgia, *Presidio y cárcel*, 130.

prisons had rates anywhere from fifteen to sixty seven percent in that profession.[111] Thus, the skills they acquired in Ushuaia might not always translate to city life if they returned.[112] The challenge, therefore, was to convince inmates that their new skills were best put to use by settling in the region after their release.

These operations, however, revealed the tension between prison produced goods and products from free industry. Muratgia was emphatic that the two industries did not clash, and stressed that prisoners were able men and their separation from society was not the elimination of their existence from that society.[113] European nations, he argued, faced problems because prisons sold goods at a cheaper rate than free enterprise, and they built penitentiaries with large populations near small communities that survived by producing local goods, and could no longer compete. A prison built in a town should be considered a factory built in that town and free laborers and prisoners should be considered equals, he concluded. Their labor should pay for their rehabilitation and expenses, and should generate a small purse upon their release. Inmate labor should also provide the means to pay penance to victims. In this respect, Muratgia was adamant that prisons should not be seen as parasites on public funds. The open-door penitentiary would be modern and fortified, but built into a rural area to take advantage of natural elements, salubrious conditions, and economic opportunities in order to serve the nation. "Except for the sick, all have worked with great will, each one producing at the very least, the work of a free

[111] Dr. Juan J. O'Connor, *Censo de las carceles nacionales* (Macros Paz: Talleres Gráficos de la Colonia Hogar, 1931): 24-25. The report covered 1930.
[112] Lila M. Caimari, "Remembering Freedom: Life as Seen From the Prison Cell (Buenos Aires Province, 1930–1950)," in *Crime and Punishment in Latin America: Law and Society Since Late Colonial Times*, ed. Ricardo D. Salvatore, Carlos Aguirre, and Gilbert M. Joseph (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001). Caimari notes the irony of particular prison labor practices in places like Sierra Chica outside of Buenos Aires, where prisoners learned skills for urban factory work, when in fact many provincial prisoners were itinerate laborers that performed mostly rural labor.
[113] Muratgia, *Breve estudio*, 213-217.

man."[114] In Ushuaia, the timber industry and public works had been nil prior to the prison, and therefore it did not prove problematic.

This regimen was influenced by Muratgia's belief that criminal activity derived from organic abnormalities, both in one's surroundings, but also what was put into one's body. Thus, in addition to an infirmary and medical care, benefits from fresh air and other environmental factors were key. He argued that prisoners sent to Ushuaia would be, for the first time, thousands of miles from the criminal atmosphere in which they were raised. Prisoners would receive the comforts and modern services of the city, as well as the natural benefits of the countryside. Oxygen in the blood would be enriched, which helped to assimilate carbon and nitrogen in the body, building strong muscles. A proper diet, therefore, was also essential.[115]

The geographical expanse of the open-door penitentiary reached both inward and outward, beyond the fortified walls as well as into the bodies of the inmates. This is not merely an exploration of the interior of the prison, but also the interior of inmates. The question of prisoner diets, for example, was a regular conversation among criminologists and penologists. Dr. Guillermo Aubone of the National Prison in Buenos Aires calculated the food rations of prisoners across Argentina, distinguishing between those who worked, and those who did not.[116] Prisoners, he argued, were over fed, and yet, they did not receive the proper balance of nutrients and vitamins. Regardless, prison rations were not considered an isolated issue, but rather, one linked to the nation.[117] Dr. Angel F. Ortiz argued that inmates engaged in "intense" or "very

[114] Muratgia, *Presidio y cárcel*, 149.
[115] Muratgia, *Breve estudio*, 237-251, 268.
[116] Guillermo Aubone, *Alimentación actual de nuestros presos: Cífras para su crítica* (Buenos Aires: Archivos de Higiene, 1911).
[117] Ricardo D. Salvatore, "Stature Decline and Recovery in a Food-Rich Export Economy: Argentina 1900-1934" *Explorations in Economic History* 41 (2004): 233-255. This study uses height as a measure of human nutrition, and uses comparative examples to show an inverse relationship between economic growth and biological welfare—there was a net nutrition decrease among the general population during Argentina's export booms (1900-1913).

intense" labor required upward of 4,800 calories per day, while those at rest or engaged in office type work required as little as 2,303.[118] In Ushuaia, a balanced diet was key, as inmates were expected to labor outdoors, felling timber in very cold conditions. They labored seven hours a day in the winter and ten in the summer, while those with severe ailments or physical impairments performed tasks in their cells or light labor in the prison workshops. This meant not only an abundant diet, but one "apropos" of the climate.[119] Whenever possible, therefore, the regimen was locally sourced. Water was sourced from a nearby river where prisoners also bathed, and planting operations were undertaken on the prison grounds. By 1917 the prison garden contained nearly 70,000 plants and produced more than 2,700 kilograms food, ranging from potatoes and garlic to oats and cabbage.[120]

Here, Foucault's notion of capillary control is not merely a micro-mechanics—biopower extends materially into the organic relationship between prisoner, nation, and environment. Beyond choreography and the organization of "docile bodies" at the micro level, this meant altering and manipulating the very make up of one's chemistry. To monitor and improve a prisoner's diet was to monitor and improve their strength, virility, ability, and ultimately, their recovery. Improving the land and improving the body, Muratgia argued, functioned at the same elemental level, such that oxygen, nitrogen, carbon, and phosphorous had to be balanced in man and nature.[121] The ecological expanse of the prison therefore, reached from the felling of timber to the relationship between morals and metabolisms.

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[118] Dr. Angel F. Ortiz, "Hospital de la Penitenciaría Nacional: Alimentación racional de nuestros presos," *Revista Criminología, Psiquiatría y Medicina-Legal* 1 (1914). The study used a standard male, weighing 65.5 kilos, in a temperate climate, as its model. Ortiz was most concerned with gastro-intestinal issues, such as constipation, which he argued was rampant among inmates because of excessive red meat consumption. Ortiz suggested only serving meat on Sundays, for scientific as well as economic reasons.
[119] Muratgia, *Presidio y cárcel*, 36.
[120] AGN, *Memoria de Justicia e Instrucciones Públicas*, 1918, p. 260. The following year the garden produced more than 100,000 plants. *Memoria de Justicia e Instrucciones Públicas*, 1919, p. 414.
[121] Muratgia, *Presidio y cárcel*, 95.

From Theory to Critique

In 1909 Muratgia was named the director of the Escuela Industrial in Santa Fe, located to the northwest of Buenos Aires. He would be the only Ushuaia prison director who served for close to ten years. Muratgia's replacement was Ushuaia's former chief of police, Ramón L Cortés, who would serve just three years. In one of his first reports, Cortés was quick to remind administrators in the capital that Ushuaia received the worst criminals serving the longest sentences in the nation, and it would therefore always be an unruly space.[122] The prison was understaffed and without walls, and from his perspective as a police chief, required greater resources and vigilance.

Already in 1911 Corté found himself under scrutiny for the workings of the prison. He tried to manage an institution that he did not create, and it seemed, did not believe in and therefore had to manage a difficult tension. Cortés wrote to officials in Buenos Aires admitting that the prison appeared at first glance to be an open, distant, and rigorous institution.[123] He came to reiterate some of Muratgia's claims, assuring the government that this was not a torturous place. Rather, this change in environment for the condemned, one so seemingly foreign, was to be the first component of their rehabilitation as they were removed from all of the people, elements, and influences connected to their crimes and criminal ways. Support for the institution began to wane with the departure of its visionary, and authorities would seek increasingly authoritarian means for controlling the institution and the individuals it housed. The prison capacity had expanded to 320 inmates, and would require $50,000 pesos each year to insure regular and effective practices and methods. Cortés noted that the salaries of the personnel

[122] Ramón L. Cortés, *Memoria de Justicia e Instrucción Pública*, 1908-1909, p. 772-777.
[123] Ramón L. Cortés, *Memoria de Justicia e Instrucción Pública*, 1910, p. 302-303. "Retratos de actualidad," *Caras y Caretas* 586 (1909).

should be increased, since they had not significantly increased in fourteen years and were far below commensurate industry rates. Later that year a decree was passed to merge the civilian and military prisons, citing that most of the prisoners in the military prison were civilian anyway. There seemed to be no justifiable reason to have separate regimens for these inmates. Few elements were serving their purpose, and with each subsequent director and warden, the problem of distance and authority proved problematic.

Attempts, or at least appearances, to guarantee protocol were made between Ushuaia and Buenos Aires. For example, in 1914 a transport of one hundred inmates from throughout northern Argentina was to leave the port of Buenos Aires. A doctor commissioned by the Ministry of Justice and Public Instruction inspected the steamship "Asturiano" to ensure the humane treatment of the prisoners during the transfer.[124] Such scenes were common, as the public could read about transfers in popular publications and comb through images of inmates before they were sent south.[125] Increasingly, however, one's departure was not accompanied by a known return date. "Settlement" was no longer a common phrase used for prisoners who might potentially stay in the region. Instead, indefinite confinement became the expectation.

More trouble persisted inside the penitentiary, as officials noted in 1917 that 580 inmates were housed in just 370 cells. This meant that prisoners had to double up at night, or sleep communally in the central rotunda.[126] The prisons' infrastructure was also failing, and made worse by a fire in 1921 that destroyed portions of the prison's workshops.[127] Workshop director Fernando Molteni insisted the following year that a turbine be constructed in the Río Grande to

[124] "Traslado de cien penados al presidio de Ushuaia," *Caras y Caretas* 827 (1914).
[125] See Pedro Espada's *despedida*, in "Cómo se va á presidio," *Caras y Caretas* (Buenos Aires) April 17, 1909.
[126] Diario de sesiones de diputados, "Regimen carcelario," Museo Penitenciaría Argentina Antonio Ballvé (MPA) Archivo Histórico Penitenciaría, Tomo 11, August 5, 1918.
[127] "Destrucción por un incendio de los talleres del presidio de Ushuaia," *La Razón*, November 11, 1921.

produce light and heat for the factories, which would improve the prison economy and working conditions.[128] With the proposed improvements, it was believed prisoners could live in better conditions than they knew in their own homes back in Buenos Aires and other northern towns. Such improvements required an expansion to the train system to bring more resources into the prison. During this period, prisoners also worked with a local carpenter to build a motorized ship to navigate the channel so that they would no longer be dependent on private or naval ships.[129] During 1924 and 1925, over $300,000 pesos were invested to renovate pavilion number two, and minor repairs were made to pavilions three, four and five.[130] Sanitation projects, including work on toilets and showers, the bakery and kitchen, also added to the bill. The largest single expense, however, was more than $75,000 pesos spent on heating for pavilions two through five. As a living institution, the prison itself was in need of care.

These increases in funds, projects, and inmates, brought an increase in attention and inspections, often producing less than favorable results. Dr. Alfredo Spinetto, a socialist politician, testified in August 1924 before the Ministry of Justice and Public Instruction. Spinetto, like many Argentines, had believed that criminality was caused by a combination of biological and social factors, which he outlined in his 1912 medical thesis.[131] Spinetto drew on the work of Charles Darwin to show that excessively high temperatures were detrimental to the functions of un-adapted plant species. He transferred such ideas to humans, arguing that colder

[128] AGN, *Memoria de Justicia e Instrucciones Públicas*, 1922, p. 368-372.
[129] See the recounting by Severo Pomenich, regarding his father. Arnoldo Canclini, *Ushuaia 1884-1984: Cien años de una ciudad Argentina* (Ushuaia: Asociación Hanis, 1984), 397-398.
[130] AGN, *Memoria del Ministerio de Obras Públicas*, 1924-25, p. 169-71. In November 1926 the prison began production on 200,000 bricks to construct a school in Ushuaia using their new kiln, which utilized nineteen to twenty workers. AGN, *Memoria de Justicia e Instrucciones Públicas*, 1927, Tomo 1-2, p. 346.
[131] Alfredo L. Spinetto, *Delito y delincuencia: Su profilaxia y terapéutica* (Buenos Aires: Tesis presentada al Facultad de Ciencias Médicas, 1912), 56-66. Spinetto highlighted genetics, alcoholism, race, epilepsy, age, temperament, and mental alterations, as biological and internal factors, while external factors were rotted in civilization's battle against barbarism exhibited in a group's ability to educate and instruct its people.

temperatures could healthily diminish one's irritability by moderating the central nervous system. While Darwin did not see such benefits in the peoples of Tierra del Fuego, it would seem that the young Spinetto supported the conditions of the Ushuaia penal colony in its mission to rehabilitate individuals through environmental factors.

However, his inspection twelve years later in 1924 produced an emotional testimony. Spinetto stressed that more than facts and figures concerning the prison, he had a lasting memory of vivid images from his two-day stay in Ushuaia—inmates were starving, and that their hearts were often paralyzed by their stomachs.[132] The reason for these conditions were simple, Spinetto told the committee, pointing to Warden Gregorio Palacios, who had become a local "cacique" that ruled with impunity. Isolation, not of the inmates but of the institution, he concluded, had facilitated unfettered power for high ranking employees. While Muratgia had stressed the need for local and situated authorities to direct prison operations, Secretary of Tierra del Fuego, Petit de Murat, spent eighty percent of the year in Buenos Aires, rather than in Ushuaia. Only the highest posts were to be named by officials in Buenos Aires, while all other roles fell under the purview of the warden (*alcaide*), who was in a position to make informed and immediate decisions, and would be in close contact with prison personnel. But the plan ultimately led to a system of unchecked power. Moreover, as the Director of National Territories Isidoro Ruiz Moreno had mentioned years earlier, the lack of infrastructure coupled with inclement weather made regular payments of compliance with the Ley de Contabilidad impossible for the southern provinces.[133] Officials took advantage of how the central government slackened the accountability and oversight of the nation's southernmost bureaucrats.

[132] Alfredo L. Spinetto, *Las Cárceles Argentinas: El Régimen de Ushuaia* (Buenos Aires, 1924), 81.
[133] AGN-Intermedio (AGN-I), Ministerio del Interior, Legajo 1, N. 109, 1916.

This included a lack of regular inspections. Delegates at the international prison conference had agreed a decade earlier that frequent, and preferably informal (unannounced), inspections were the best way to prevent abuses and rule breaking on the part of officials. "A penal institution not only furnished great opportunities for tyrannical conduct on the part of prison officials, but renders it peculiarly difficult for a prisoner with just cause of complaint to obtain redress or even a hearing of his complaint."[134] Representatives from Tierra del Fuego often did not attend national events and meetings in Buenos Aires because of travel difficulties, and it is impossible to say just how many prisoner petitions went unheard.[135] Reporters increasingly highlighted the active silencing of prisoner voices. A reporter from the anarchist press *La Protesta*, for example, critiqued the prison personnel for denying him access to inmates and particular areas of the prison, which were supposed to be available for inspection. Rather than focusing on the interior of the prison, personnel instead directed media attention to the expanses of the institution, "As you can see, I don't have high walls. All I have at my disposable are two groups of sentinels and barbed-wire fencing. Beyond that awaits the ocean and mountains."[136] The austral environment, the writers concluded, had become a prison in its own right, rather than a positive and therapeutic space. Prison personnel therefore could deflect their duties to the surrounding geography.

Some inmates, such Simón Radowitzky, successfully smuggled letters out the prison, citing the unwarranted and unspecified uses of solitary confinement and limiting one's rations to

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[134] Henderson, *Eight International Prison Congress*, 22. Earlier still, the conference showed fears of doctors abusing their power in prisons, "It is not difficult to imagine how the physician of a penal institution, with an extensive array of medicines at his command, might add in no small degree to the physical punishment of the prisoners under his charge were he so disposed. It is interesting and reassuring to note that with great unanimity prison physicians regard their work as curative and regenerative. The penal system has for its basis only the deprivation of liberty." Barrows, *Sixth International Prison Congress*, 42.

[135] AGN, *Memorias del Ministerio del Interior*, 1934-1935, p. 222.

[136] "El presidio de Ushuaia: La administración del establecimiento oculta a Radowitzki a los ojos de los visitantes? Por qué?" *La Protesta* 30, no. 5605 (Buenos Aires) April 1, 1927, 2.

bread and water, as well as confiscating writing and reading materials. However, when reporters did receive access to frightened inmates, their interviewees often requested anonymity. One inmate wrote a letter in confidence to Spinetto to avoid repercussions, and claimed that violence and pain in the Ushuaia penal colony could only be compared to the practices in Russian prisons.[137] While Spinetto's report captures many of the realities scrubbed out of sanitized officials reports, such visceral reactions also inflected his recounting. Spinetto claimed that ninety percent of prisoners in *aislamiento* (isolation) had tuberculosis, eighty percent of the cases went without treatment, and the death rate had reached sixty percent.[138] Malaria, Spinetto noted, was even a problem, not because Ushuaia was a source for the illness, but because prisoners transferred from the north brought the disease with them to the southern stretches of the nation—such claims show that prisoner transport was a means of disease transport across the entire expanse of the nation. Official illness numbers, of which we must also be skeptical, were nowhere near Spinetto's figures, often being between 10 and 25% for consumption, and the truth likely lies somewhere in between. Nevertheless, while the climate had seemed promising to help cure prisoners of tuberculosis, which was often contracted in the packed conventillos of Buenos Aires, many inmates contracted the illness because of poor sanitary and medical conditions in the penitentiary.[139]

Hospital construction was slow and insufficient, and increasingly, the prison facilities could not treat the number of inmate illnesses. Spinetto added that, one simply could not expect quality and caring doctors in Ushuaia when they were paid such paltry salaries, just 600 pesos

[137] Spinetto, *Las Cárceles Argentinas*, 13-18.
[138] Spinetto, *Las Cárceles Argentinas*, 43-48. Tierra del Fuego had the highest mortality rate for tuberculosis and infant mortality in the nation.
[139] Barrows, *Sixth International Prison Congress*, 50-54. There was some agreement that individual cells improved the physical and mental health of inmates. In some cases, respiratory diseases had decreased by twenty-five percent, and identifying contagions in individuals early and precisely was increasingly possible. This, however, does not seem to be the case in Ushuaia, though numbers are inconsistent.

per month, while on the other hand, high ranking prison authorities continued to paid one another, even after they retired from their post. By the end of the testimony, the committee concurred with the report, noting that prisons in the United States with comparable budgets to Ushuaia were modern, hygienic, and effective, and that the climate in Ushuaia would always prevent a humane penitentiary from functioning. Regardless, the committee concluded that no doctor was willing to work in Ushuaia, regardless of the salary.

What was increasingly clear, however, was that some authorities had always envisioned and supported this kind of hardened prison environment in Ushuaia. Francisco de Veyga, one of the more conservative criminologists in Argentina, had showed little faith in the rehabilitation of recidivists and habitual criminals. He argued in 1910 that there needed to be a form of "definitive sequestration" for these individuals, which is what Ushuaia increasingly proved to be.[140] As recidivists and violent offenders, inmates in Ushuaia were simultaneously those most in need of rehabilitation and lost causes incapable of such reform. At best, Ushuaia could be a productive open-door penitentiary, but if it failed, many authorities believed that it still served the effective role of a distant penal colony that removed society's most hardened criminals from the streets "in perpetuity."

Conclusion

A generous reading of Muratgia's vision reveals a thoughtful, thorough, and above all else, hopeful outlook on the potential relationship between prison and place. However, in execution, the penitentiary almost always fell short of this vision, as so many "model" penitentiaries had before. The reason for Muratgia's departure in 1909 is not entirely clear, though it could in part be rooted in the recognition of limitations that would be faced perennially.

[140] Francisco de Veyga, *Los lunfardos* (Buenos Aires: Taller de la Penitenciaría Nacional, 1910), 29.

With each subsequent warden, conditions seemed to worsen. National Deputy Manuel Ramírez inspected the prison in 1934 and said that rather than being a scientific institution, it was a factory that produced men who were sick, alien, and wholly unprepared to reenter society. A pessimistic reading of Muratgia, therefore, might suggest that he was nothing more than a careerist who knew the profitable slogan of reform.

Indeed, Foucault concludes *Discipline and Punish* by arguing that the discourse of prison reform has been revived repeatedly over the past two centuries. The birth of the modern prison, in other words, is a re-birth, lived and professed over and over again. This continued discourse is made possible because the theory and rhetoric behind these institutions, despite claims to the contrary, is never perfect and most certainly is never carried out as well as it is proposed.[141] Foucault had been theorizing similar institutions for years. In a 1967 lecture entitled "On Other Spaces," he remarked on the hierarchy of such places.[142] Utopias, he suggested, have no real place. They are mirrors, or placeless places, such that we see ourselves and things in them, but they exist in places that we are not. But in seeing ourselves in these places—the reflection in the mirror—we believe ourselves to be there. The mirror, Foucault continues, is therefore also a heterotopia, for it makes the place that we occupy in that moment real and fantastical. Our epoch's central heterotopia is that of deviation—rest homes, psychiatric wards, and most obvious, prisons. These spaces are purposed to make utopias possible, to make them reality for those outside of confinement, admission, and retirement.

[141] The year before Foucault published the original French version of, *Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison* (1975), a watershed paper was published that countered the continued narrative of reform by arguing that nothing about modern incarceration works. Robert Martinson, "What works? Questions and Answers about Prison Reform," *The Public Interest* 35 (Spring 1974), 22-54.

[142] "Of Other Spaces: Heterotopias." This text, entitled "Des Espace Autres," was published by the French journal, Architecture /Mouvement/ Continuité in October, 1984, and translated by Jay Miskowiec.

The hybrid panopticon-penal colony in Ushuaia, like the mirror, seemed to be at once a utopia and heterotopia, acting as a safety valve for Buenos Aires but also the perfect institution for the correction of inmates and the establishment of a southern settlement—in it one could look for perceived truths, but also see the failings of cosmopolitan society. Thus, the open-door penitentiary complicates where the utopia/heterotopia mirror might stand, as one's position of power, or lack thereof, inflected what one saw, or even what one hoped to see—Muratgia's positive vision versus Veyga's punitive pessimism, for example. The relationship between Buenos Aires and Ushuaia therefore was not binary, but rather, one of multiplicity of and through positionality and locationality, where light and shadows elided inside and out.

Put more directly, the open-door penitentiary was inherently emplaced, but its borders were ill-defined, and one was often unsure when or where they entered or exited. The carceral ecology that the open-door penitentiary tied institutions, geographies, and peoples to it, creating unexpected bedfellows and various forms of dependence. This was not, however, a paradigmatic departure from other penitentiaries that were seemingly more closed-off from the worlds around them. Rather, the differences in these institutions were of degree rather than kind. They were never hermetically sealed, and this is perhaps what Muratgia understood best. He sought to expose and better these relationships, rather than build walls around them, which always proved to be porous anyway. Society and its criminals could never be separated, nor could the environments that bound them.

CHAPTER TWO

FIRELAND: INMATE LABOR, FORESTRY, SOCIETY AND THE LIMITS OF THE PENITENTIARY

In the life of trees, as in that of man, three distinct epochs or stages can be distinguished... This is, then, the forest society or forest masses that we will address and that is in certain modes very similar to human society with its children, adolescents, and the mature adults, grandparents and great grandparents.
Lucas Tortorelli, *La lucha por la vida en los bosques Argentinos*, 1954

On the first Sunday of September 1916, locals gathered in Ushuaia to celebrate the nation's first Tree Festival (*fiesta del árbol*).[143] School children sang the national anthem and other patriotic hymns as members of the Forestry Inspection (*Inspección de Bosques*) ushered in six trees to be planted on the grounds. As the roots took hold beneath mounds of softened spring soil, Director Antonio Snaider welcomed the townspeople to the festival, which had special significance in southern Tierra del Fuego. The festival was dedicated to the life of the forest as well as the town, and celebrated both industry and preservation of the region's most prized natural resource.

Modest timber operations had been under way for at least two decades. Naval transports were crucial in these early years for establishing government functions in the still fledgling region, including the transportation of lumber.[144] A fire destroyed the region's first sawmill in 1899, though operations continued, and by the second half of 1902, 1,700,000 square feet of wood was exported out of the public lands through the transnational group, Compañía Hamburgo Americana.[145] Thus, in 1916, the Tree Festival under Director Snaider was a festival of life and national sovereignty for Ushuaia.[146] However, Snaider's role was not simply to coordinate

[143] MFM, Fondo MAN BEF, Notas Recibidas, 1916 Folio 5, N. 156. Again on 3 Sept. 1917: MFM, Fondo MAN BEF, Notas Recibidas, 1917 Folio 3, N. 177.
[144] Archivo General de la Armada (AGA), C-473, Transporte 1 de Mayo.
[145] Catello Muratgia, *Presidio y cárcel de reincidentes: Tierra del Fuego* (Buenos Aires, 1907) 35-41; Memoria del Ministerio del Interior, 1904-05, p. 129.
[146] MFM, Fondo MAN BEF, Notas Recibidas, 1905 Folio 6, N. 3864; "Ganaderia y Agricultura" *La Nación* (Buenos Aires) July 14, 1908, p. 9.

between the forestry department and navy or national government, but more importantly, with the Ushuaia penal colony. Land claims and extraction rights would pass through the forestry office, and, because the primary economic enterprise for the prison was timber extraction, this institutionalized an intimate and deeply intertwined relationship between incarceration and forestry that would play an integral role in the town and region's future.[147] It would also lead to ecological devastation through forest fires that increased with expanding timber extraction. These practices and their consequences bring into question the radius and reach of the Ushuaia penitentiary. They also reveal the complicated origins of forestry in the Argentine south.

By bringing together prison and environmental studies, this chapter explores forms of occupation and development in southernmost Argentina.[148] It uses environmental and ecological lenses to re-examine long-standing questions, and recuperate a situated social history.[149] There was an intimate relationship between penology and forestry that brought together multiple state actors (both foreign and domestic), as well as tensions with locals, and the labor of inmates.[150]

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[147] In 1914 the Ministry of Agriculture demanded that the prison and forestry office draft a decree defining the relationship of exploitation practices. MFM, Fondo MAN BEF, Notas Recibidas, 1914 N. 5.

[148] Environmental histories of Argentina however are still lacking, and while travel narratives of Patagonia have been thoughtfully unpacked, social histories attentive to ecological and geographic relations are few. Some exceptions are, Gabriela Nouzeilles, "Patagonia as Borderland: Nature, Culture, and the Idea of the State," *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies* 8, no. 1 (1999); Thomas Klubock, "The Politics of Forests and Forestry on Chile's Southern Frontier, 1880s–1940s," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 86, no. 3 (August 2006); John Soluri, "Something Fishy: Chile's Blue Revolution, Commodity Diseases, and the Problem Of Sustainability," *Latin American Research Review*, Special Issue (2011).

[149] See, Simon Naylor, "Discovering Nature, Rediscovering the Self: Natural Historians and the Landscapes of Argentina," *Environment and Planning D Society and Space* 19 (2001) 227-247; Gabriela Nouzeilles, "The Iconography of Desolation: Patagonia and the Ruins of Nature," *Review: Literature and Arts of the Americas* 40, n. 2 (2007): 252-262.

[150] Forestry has become an important component of environmental history and political ecology for Latin America. See, Gabriela Olivera, "Forestry in the Llanos of La Rioja (1900-1960)," in *Region and nation: Politics, Economics, and Society in Twentieth-Century Argentina*, ed. James P. Brennan and Ofelia Pianetto (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000). Warren Dean, *With Broadax and Firebrand: The Destruction of the Brazilian Atlantic Forest* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Emily Wakild, *Revolutionary Parks: Conservation, Social Justice, and Mexico's National Parks, 1910-1940*, (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2011); Thomas M. Klubock, *La Frontera: Forests and Ecological Conflict in Chile's Frontier Territory* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014); Christopher R. Boyer, *Political Landscapes: Forests, Conservation, and Community in Mexico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015).

Placing the reports of penologists and foresters in dialogue with local discussions of land-use change and access to resources, this work accentuates a historical human element to a critical physical geography of the region.[151] This regional history moves beyond a teleology of the birth of the Argentine forestry department and the creation of national parks. Instead, it shows the multiple trajectories that existed in these preliminary years of a new ecological vision for one corner of Patagonia in relation to the larger national eco-system.[152] Forestry was, in part, rooted in human violence, not simply in the expropriation of territory, but also in the systematic use of unfree labor and punishment.[153] The outbreak of forest-fires and the use of inmates to quell the flames complicates positivistic narratives of this burgeoning branch of agronomy.[154] While lands were put aside for a national park as early as 1910, the role of the forestry department was dedicated to prison operations through the 1940s. The first half of the twentieth century, therefore, was defined by the relationship between penology and silviculture, and the relationship between disease and degeneration on the one hand, and rehabilitation and regrowth on the other.

From the Desert to the Forest

Political and intellectual debates in Argentina have long stood on questions of a country-city and center-periphery divide, from Domingo Sarmiento's seminal 1845 work, *Civilization*

[151] For contemporary debates, see, Christopher B. Anderson et. al., "¿Estamos avanzando hacía una socio-ecología? Reflexiones sobre la integración de las dimensiones 'humanas' en la ecología en el sur de América," *Ecología Austral* 25 (Diciembre 2015) 263-272. See also, Peter Klepeis and Paul Larin, "Contesting Sustainable Development in Tierra del Fuego," *Geoforum* 37 (2006): 505-518. On the broader discussion of critical physical geography, see, Rebecca Lave et al., "Intervention: Critical Physical Geography," *The Canadian Geographer* 58, no. 1 (2014): 1-10.

[152] With regard to an emphasis on region and the micro to move beyond an underlying structural determinism in many environmental histories, see, Sivaramakrishnan, *Modern Forests*, 1999.

[153] Many histories of national parks highlight the expropriation of indigenous lands. See, Mark D. Spence, *Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999). Violence has been explored in relation to war. See the edited volume, Richard P. Tucker and Edmund Russell, *Natural Enemy, Natural Ally: Toward an Environmental History of War* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2004).

[154] Sweeping histories of forestry have a long history, dating back to the time of this study. See, Bernhard E. Fernow, *A Brief History of Forestry in Europe, the United States and Other Countries* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1909).

and Barbarism, to more recent studies.[155] Regions like the Pampas and Patagonia, which feature so prominently in these studies, have stood as seemingly self-evident spaces—evocative, even mythic, yet static and timeless. The city was a vibrant cosmopolitan center, while the "interior" produced nomadic peoples who, were connected to the land and inherently backward. By the turn-of-the-century these essentializations were nuanced, or at least newly celebrated, with the rise of *gauchesco* literature and broader folklore movements, which romanticized and mourned the decline of the independent Gaucho (Argentine cowboy) who roamed the interior of the nation.[156] While the positive/negative binary was de-charged, the center-periphery divide remained.

El sur, for example, was an all-encompassing term. Argentine Patagonia, however, is a geographic region and not a political boundary. It contains five provinces south of the Río Negro, the southernmost of which is the island province (then territory) of Tierra del Fuego. Taking into account Chilean Patagonia on the western side of the Andes, this roughly one million square kilometer "landscape of the imagination" contains social and physical geographies that vary significantly. Moreover, prior to the late 1870s, the majority of the region was controlled by various indigenous groups. For example, in 1876, the Argentine government conceded more than 43,000 horses to southern indigenous groups and paid them more than 220,000 pesos, a sum comparable to that allotted to the Argentine navy.

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[155] Sarmiento, 1845; Larry Sawyers, *The Other Argentina: The Interior and National Development* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996); James Scobie, *Argentina: A Country and a Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964).

[156] See, Josefina Ludmer, *The Gaucho Genre: A Treatise on the Motherland* (Durham: Duke University Press 2002); Oscar Chamosa, *The Argentine Folklore Movement: Sugar Elites, Criollo Workers, and the Politics of Cultural Nationalism, 1900-1950* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2010); Melanie Plesch, "Demonizing and Redeeming the Gaucho: Social Conflict, Xenophobia, and the Invention of Argentine National Music," *Patterns of Prejudice* 47, no. 4-5 (2013): 337-358.

Histories of Patagonia have, therefore, focused on the "Conquest of the Desert" as an "internal-colonization" during the 1870s-80s that established a new era in Argentina history.[157] Led by soon-to-be president, General Julio Roca, the Argentine military largely eradicated indigenous groups from the Pampas and northern Patagonia, paving the way for a "civilized" nation. This southward push has been compared to western expansion in the United States, and indeed, "Remington Roca" made reference to the United States to inspire his troops in their war against indigenous peoples. The campaign was financed by investors who would receive large tracts of land following the invasion—roughly 400 individuals, many of whom were British, invested and roughly 8.5 million hectares were parceled out.[158]

Acquiring land was accompanied by the technologies of conquest, ranging from telegraph lines and railroads to the Remington rifles used to attack indigenous groups.[159] As the expedition pushed southward, engineers moved *la zanja* to mark the newly acquired territory. *La zanja* was a wall and trench combination that ran east to west, physically marking the line between southern "barbarous" Amerindians and the northern "civilized" Argentines. Accreting new territory each time it was moved, *la zanja* was often described as a mobile "Great Wall."[160] Chilean forces simultaneously pushed south, and in 1881 the two nations signed a border treaty to divide the east (Argentina) and west (Chile) of the Andes. In Tierra del Fuego, where the Andes reorient

[157] George V. Rauch, *Conflict in the Southern Cone: The Argentine Military and the Boundary Dispute with Chile, 1870-1902* (Westport: Praeger, 1999); Miguel A. de Marco, *La Guerra de la frontera: Luchas entre indios y blancos 1536-1917* (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 2010).
[158] Claudia N. Briones and Walter Delrio, "The 'Conquest of the Desert' as a Trope and Enactment of Argentina's Manifest Destiny," in *Manifest Destinies and Indigenous Peoples*, ed. David Maybury-Lewis, Theodore MacDonald, and Biorn Maybury-Lewis (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009).
[159] Claudio Canaparo, "Marconi and Other Artifices: Long-Range Technology and the Conquest of the Desert," in *Images of Power: Iconography, Culture and State in Latin America*, ed. Jens Andermann and William Rowe (New York: Berghahn, 2005); John Hodge, "The role of the telegraph in the consolidation and expansion of the Argentine Republic," *The Americas* 41, no. 1 (1984) 59-80.
[160] Vanni Blengino, *La Zanja de la Patagonia: Los nuevos conquistadores* (Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2005). Blengino is citing the reports from Adolfo Alsina, *La Nueva Línea de Fronteras* (1877).

east-west, a line was drawn north-south to divide the island. The majority of the island was granted to Chile, but the defined border was significant in that it granted both nations access to the Pacific and Atlantic oceans through the straits [Figure 8].

Figure 8. Tierra del Fuego and Malvinas Islands Government, 1888
Mariano Felipe Paz Soldan, "Gobernación del la Tierra del Fuego y las Islas Malvina"
David Rumsey Map Collection

While General Roca's army had pushed from the province of Buenos Aires into the Pampas and northern Patagonia, this was not a continuous or linear move south. Moreover, beyond this political boundary formation, few scholars have discussed what was done after these military campaigns to settle the region.[161] Tierra del Fuego was ultimately reached via steamships that bypassed most of the central Patagonian lands that were parceled out to investors. By 1900 the island was still sparsely populated by British missionaries and surviving indigenous groups, and English was the *lengua franca* of the region. Ninety-one percent of the island was government-owned land, yet it was not clear how that land would be used. Indeed, while traveling in these southern stretches in 1898, journalist Roberto Payró wrote, "Argentina inherited from Spain its ineptitude of colonization."[162]

But should we be so quick to label the flaws or inconsistencies of the state as inept failures? After all, did technocrats ever truly expect these projects to be so complete, whether it be forestry, mapping, or other state projects?[163] Even so, judging theory against practice produces new structures of power, that, once inverted, still require further work.[164] If we focus instead on the execution of state planning, rather than on its theory alone, we can also see "beyond" the state.[165] It is here that the messiness of planning and simplification is revealed.

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[161] Recent scholarship has begun to answer these questions. See, Ernesto Bohoslavsky and Orellana ed., *Construcción Estatal: Orden Oligárquico y Respuestas Sociales, Argentina y Chile, 1840-1930* (Buenos Aires: Prometeo, 2010). Alberto Harambour-Ross, "Borderland Sovereignties: Postcolonial Colonialism and State-Making in Patagonia, Argentina and Chile, 1840s-1922" (PhD diss., Stony Brook University, 2012).

[162] Payró, *Australia Argentina*, 320.

[163] The now classic text on this subject is, James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1998).

[164] Reading against the grain and between the lines of archival material is by now the norm, or at least expected to some degree. Yet there are still tensions between colonial and subaltern narratives, especially regarding science and technology studies. Put another way, what about the state actors in-between these two extremes? A helpful essay in this regard, while focused on the history of cartography, is, Raymond B. Craib, "Relocating Cartography," *Postcolonial Studies* 12, no. 4 (December 2009): 481-490.

[165] Tania Murray Li, "Beyond 'the State' and Failed Schemes," *American Anthropologist* 107, no. 3 (2005): 383-394. This work does well to show that "the state" rarely has a monopoly on planning and simplification, and even when it does, the projects and processes are rarely carried out solely by state-actors.

State actors, for example, were rarely as perfect as state rhetoric, and perhaps more importantly, such schemes were rarely limited to bureaucrats or experts.[166] Therefore, planning and strategizing, indeed, rendering nature and the world legible, was a practice used by many parties to different ends.

Tierra del Fuego exhibited the intersection of a growing forestry department, an expanding penology and criminology infrastructure, and the demands of locals, each of which influenced changes in the far south. While the island was not immediately populated by Argentines, a number of projects were undertaken as part of a larger movement to connect the growing nation, both socially and environmentally. In particular, the Argentine Austral Expedition was sent south in 1882 to find the ideal location for a penal colony. Southern Tierra del Fuego was selected for its timber resources and social isolation, though accessibility for oceanic shipping.

That same year, 1882, the budding agronomist Juan de Cominges gave a lecture to the Sociedad Geográfica Argentina concerning forests, territory, and society. Cominges was and his introducer, by Dr. Julio Victorica, set the tone. Argentina's forests should be considered social plants that live in relation to all elements of the nation, from its climate to its inhabitants. Death, he proclaimed, gives new life, opening space for light and air, and depositing nutrients for future generations. "Trees can, without doubt," Cominges argued, "prosper on their own. But they are exposed to many destructive forces and therefore need to be cared for."[167] It was human intervention, he proclaimed, that could help them most in their fight for life. Victorica and

[166] Scholars elsewhere have highlighted the limits of scientific knowledge in the face of ecological complexity. See, for example, Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno Politics, Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002). For a decidedly anti-state actor, see, Greg Grandin, *Fordlandia: The Rise of Fall of Henry Ford's Forgotten Jungle City* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2009).
[167] Dr. Julio Victorica in, Juan de Cominges, *Sobre la necesidad de reglamentar los aprovechamientos forestales* (Buenos Aires, 1882), 3.

Cominges highlighted that the most recent geological studies showed that man was not present in earth's first days, but came later once transformations had made the proper conditions to receive him. Cominges referenced Genesis, and while he did not speak directly of Charles Darwin, or the work of Charles Lyell, both had already made a large impact on Argentine thought concerning geological time, as *The Origin of Species* had been translated to Spanish in 1877.[168] It was therefore in the epoch of human existence, Cominges concluded, that harmony with nature must exist, because it was precisely these conditions that breathed life into man. However, man had repeatedly abused his resources, and now springs were coming later, civilizations the world over had fallen, and everywhere, from Sweden to the United States, lands were increasingly sterile.

Cominges' comments show an acute awareness that an era of ecological transformation had begun.[169] All things came from the same organisms, they borrowed from the atmosphere and the most microscopic of particles, providing "mutual aid" (*mútuo apoyo*).[170] And, while the world was an interconnected system, change had to begin at home. The destruction of a nation's forests, was nothing less than the destruction of society itself, "Oh, tree! Inseparable friend of human existence, from the dawn of life to twilight of death."[171] Cominges sought, therefore, a structured and long-term plan for forestry studies and operations across Argentina, from the tropical north to the Antarctic south. "Come!" he exclaimed, "Let the figures come…"[172]

Exhibition and Exploitation

[168] Adriana Novoa and Alex Levine, *From Man to Ape: Darwinism in Argentina, 1870-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).
[169] It has been argued that 1850-1950 was the first era of global ecological transformation. See, S. Ravi Rajan, *Modernizing Nature: Forestry and Imperial Eco-Development 1800-1950* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006). This is a more conscious and intentional transformation than the kind discussed in Alfred W. Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).
[170] Peter Kropotkin's writings on mutual aid would not be published until the early 1890s, and then translated into Spanish a decade later.
[171] Cominges, *Aprovechamientos forestales*, 15.
[172] Cominges, *Aprovechamientos forestales*, 20.

Some modest timber operations around Ushuaia were privately undertaken at the turn-of-the-century, but it was a short-lived gold rush that first piqued economic and frontiersman interest in Tierra del Fuego. The prospects of economic ventures and broader regional development attracted some of the nation's more powerful figures, each of which had their own vision for settlement. Ramón Lista, founder of the *Sociedad Geográfica Argentina* (SGA), envisioned an Argentine south that worked with the indigenous communities. Lista however faced Julius (Julio) Popper and his scientific expedition, who represented the more aggressive *Instituto Geográfico Argentino* (IGA). Both men had desires to name, settle, and exploit the island, though they represented two competing geographic societies divided by generational, political, and ideological lines. The IGA was an institutional extension of the state's interests that promoted railway expansion, cattle *latifundios*, and general privatization, while the SGA emphasized the dissemination of knowledge, and humane responses to the Indian question. Lista, SGA's president, denounced the economic interests that drove the extermination campaigns of the Tehuelche Indians. He argued that "State-protected 'agrarian reserves'" like those in the United States should be established to protect their cultures and heritage, although, even Lista described the Araucanians from Chile as "savage" and "dangerous."[173] It was Popper's IGA, however, that won out over Lista and Cominges' SGA. Subsequently, Popper and his men made war with indigenous communities in southern Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego, while at the same time, conducting studies of the region.

In an address given to the IGA, Popper described the physical differences and hunting customs within the indigenous groups he encountered, including the Onas, Tehuelches, and Selknam, and he praised many of their skills and attributes. Popper even stressed that he

[173] Pedro Navarro Floria, "Landscapes of Uncertain Progress: Northern Patagonia in Argentine Scientific Journals, 1876-1909," *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies* 16, no. 3 (2007), 264-273.

attempted to make peace with the peoples he encountered, but without fail, each group sought to make war with him and his party. The expedition was photographed in all of its activities to be shared with a northern audience [Figure 9].[174] Compounding the violence enacted by the expedition, in the decades that followed a period of "unending epidemics" nearly decimated the indigenous population.[175]

Figure 9. Julius Popper Expedition, 1887
AGN 304158

As the gold rush fizzled and indigenous groups were killed, Popper's representations of the region refocused on geography and the environment as the long-term obstacles to regional

[174] Popper concluded that such animosity toward white men began a few years earlier with the enclosure of sheep pastures in Gente Grande Bay under the direction of the British Counsel in Punta Arenas, Chile. Unable to shift such relations, Popper's crew, equipped with rifles and survey equipment, took stock of the land and initiated a near genocide of the indigenous groups. For an analysis of the images produced by the Popper expedition, see, Jens Andermann, "Disappearing Acts: Photography and Primitive Accumulation," in *The Optic of the State: Visuality and Power in Argentina and Brazil,* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2007),
[175] Chapman, *European Encounters with the Yamana People of Cape Horn*, 2010.

development. His report desired to synthesize as well as dispel misconceptions of the region, suggesting that the range of climates and ecologies spanning the island had led to unreliable representations of Tierra del Fuego. As Popper's team crossed from the northern plains over the southern Martial Mountain range he noted, "at every step the vegetation became more and more luxuriant, increasing in height and density, until we were obliged to come to a standstill. Before us was the forest, a solid wall, without outlet or opening, surrounding us on all sides so that at certain times we could neither advance nor go back."[176] While this landscape was lush, like many explorers before him, Popper noted the "gloomy" and "melancholy aspect" of Tierra del Fuego's coast, concluding that the island's southern regions were the stormiest in the world due to the confluence of local glaciers, tropical ocean currents from the north, and polar influences from the south.

This formidable outpost attracted some pioneering figures who would enjoy the lack of regulations across the island in these early years. On the other side of the border, Chilean ranchers and sealers had long enjoyed the natural resources of Tierra del Fuego. By the 1880s, Governor Francisco Sampaio of Chilean Magallanes had to implement some minor regulations to generate profits for the government from sheep ranches, and prevent the extinction of the sea lion population.[177] On the Argentine side, the scale of fishing and whaling was similarly cause for concern. While locals sought to build these industries, over-fishing put into question the longevity of such endeavors.[178] Locals were frustrated by this kind of increasing governmental

[176] Julius Popper, *Exploration of Tierra del Fuego* (Buenos Aires, 1887): 10.
[177] Harambour-Ross, "Borderland Sovereignties." See also, John Soluri, "On Edge: Fur Seals and Hunters along the Patagonian Littoral, 1860-1930," in *Centering Animals in Latin American History*, ed. Martha Few and Zeb Tortorici (Durham: Duke University, 2013).
[178] "Pesca y caza," *El Eco Fueguino* 1, no. 1 (1903).

oversight given how infrequently naval ships came to the port with goods and resources from *el norte*.

Local representation, however, would soon come, strengthening governmental ties to the north. Pedro Godoy, the optimistic inaugural governor of Argentine Patagonia's southernmost territory, was anxious to develop a forest industry. In a letter to the Ministry of the Interior in 1894, he noted that extensive studies published in London had already captured the resource value of southern Argentina, and the nation would be foolish to wait to exploit *el monte* (the forested mountains). The local government commissioned their own study that year that included the opinions of three different experts. They sent laminate samples to the capital to show species types, colors, and grains qualities. Godoy stressed in his salutations to the central government that the forest resources were "truly fabulous," and deserved the attention of industry and scientists.[179] Multiple verities of *fagus* or *ñire* trees averaged 12 meters in height and 40 centimeters in diameter, and provided upwards of 10,000 feet of lumber per league. Also of note were the *coigue* and *roble* species, which ranged from 20 to 25 meters in height, and one half to a full meter in diameter. This timber area ran across the Beagle Channel, and stretched from the coastline to roughly 400 meters above sea-level. The region, they concluded would be easily accessible through the deployment of prisoner labor, boats, and a small rail system.

These ambitions caught the eye of leaders from the north. In 1899, while traveling south to Ushuaia, President Roca noted, "We cannot forget that just yesterday Patagonia was a type of *res nullius*; abandoned and deserted lands exposed to be taken by the first occupant."[180] The first occupants, in Roca's vision, had arrived, and Governor Godoy was poised to be their leader. A

[179] Gobernación de Tierra del Fuego, *Sus bosques: Estudio y opinions sobre las condiciones é importancia de sus maderas* (Buenos Aires: Compañía Sud-Americana de Billetes de Banco, 1894).
[180] *Tribuna*, February 23, 1899.

champion of the potential collaboration between the penal colony and timber extraction, in 1900 Godoy visited Switzerland to study both their carceral and forestry methods. Just as Godoy would travel across the world to study these methods, the fruits of the endeavor would reach well beyond the shores of the Beagle Channel. Argentina was one of the world's ten largest economies at this time, but its urban centers had long suffered timber problems because of their great distance from the nation's forested areas.[181] The capital, in need of resources, looked to each corner of the nation. By 1898 and 1899, growing operations in the warm, temperate, and heavily forested north of the country were yielding nearly 400 million kilos of *Quebracho Colorado* for export to Germany, Brazil, and the United States.[182] These woods were also used for railroad ties and fencing the Pampas in the early twentieth century.

At the other end of the nation, the Fuegian groves of southern beech and oak could add to the growing timber economy and help to create a powerful and lasting link between the newly established territory of Tierra del Fuego and the nation's capital, Buenos Aires, located over 2,300 kilometers to the north. To further promote this budding timber economy, Argentina put its various wood species on display for the world at venues such as the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition in Saint Louis [Figure 10]. Highlighting their "potentiality" for global investors, they noted that economic development in the United States began with forest exploitation, and since both Argentina and the United States had roughly 760,000 square kilometers of forested areas, Argentina could yield a market similar to the United States.[183]

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[181] Antonio Elio Brailovsky and Dina Foguelman, *Memoria verde: Historia ecológica de la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1991), 193-206.
[182] Department of Agriculture: Division of Forestry, *Quebracho Colorado: The Hard Wood of the Argentine Republic*, Buenos Aires, 1904.
[183] José Vicente Fernández, "Notes on Argentine Flora," in *República Argentina: Recuerdo de la exposición universal de St. Louis, Mo. (U.S.A.)* (New York, 1904). Comparisons with the United States were not accidental. Both countries were geographically large and diverse, and sought to be American leaders for the northern and southern hemispheres, respectively. Moreover, New York City and Buenos Aires received more immigrants during

Figure 10. Argentine Republic Exhibit on Forestry. Louisiana Purchase Exposition, St. Louis, MO, 1904
Wellcome Library, London

These exhibitions were not just about attracting foreign capital, but also, foreign expertise. Like neighboring Chile, the Argentine government began commissioning new research expeditions in their forests, often led by foreign scientists.[184] At the request of the government, Antonio Snaider, a German-born forester, visited Tierra del Fuego in 1905 to prepare all of the necessary elements to establish the Ushuaia Forestry Inspection Office (Oficina de Inspección de

this period than any other cities in the Americas. See, Jose C. Moya, *Cousins and Strangers: Spanish Immigrants in Buenos Aires, 1850-1930* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

[184] In Chilean Patagonia, the Congressional Colonization Commission surveyed the forests in 1911, and German-born forester Federico Albert played in integral role in the newly established Forest Department. See chapter two in, Klubock, *La Frontera*, 2014.

Bosques en Ushuaia). By 1908 the office had planting operations of all kinds, including species such as alfalfa which could prosper in the region since their natural enemies were not native to the far south.

Forestry Director Snaider worked closely with Prison Director Muratgia, the Italian-born engineer, who shared a similar ecological vision with Cominges. Improving the land and improving the body functioned at the same elemental level—oxygen, nitrogen, carbon, phosphorous. More than interconnected material projects, penology and forestry shared perspectives on the rhetoric of rehabilitation, growth, and nationalism. Thus, Directors Snaider and Muratgia embarked on a holistic approach to the development of Tierra del Fuego, its forests, and its inmates. The rhetoric of *regenerar* was at the center of both penology and forestry discourses, referring to both regrowth and rehabilitation.

From the outset, however, the expanding forestry and prison operations led to local struggles. Wanting to keep profits high and retain the best woods for export, prison authorities sought to have locals collect and use dead and poor felled wood rather than harvest their own live timber. This, authorities argued, would also serve to remove fuel for forest fires. Following Muratgia's departure in 1909 to become the director of the Escuela Industrial in Santa Fe, these tensions were exacerbated. In 1911 the civilian and military prisons merged, and the prison infrastructure expanded quickly in land concessions and felling. By the early 1910s observers noted that deforestation was becoming a problem. Naturalist for the Ministry of Agriculture, E. H. Holmberg, wrote in 1912 to Snaider and argued that photographic evidence over the years showed unequivocally that forests around Ushuaia were being cleared yet there was no sign of reforestation and therefore little hope of sustained industry [Figure 11]. In a letter to Snaider the following year, Holmberg discussed the need to compensate locals for such exploitation,

especially when large quantities of timber were being sent to Buenos Aires rather than servicing Ushuaia.[185] Indeed, timber would be used for a number of services beyond Ushuaia, from construction in the capital to providing oak barrels for the growing wine industry in central Argentina.[186] Beyond hasty felling, prison personnel were also purchasing property throughout the island, often in 20,000 hectare plots. Surviving indigenous groups were further displaced in these expanses, and long-time locals with close relations to native groups noted that Ushuaia had been completely overrun by prisoners, ex-prisoners, and those who policed them.[187] The prison and forestry office, and their entangled networks, were quickly reaching far beyond the town of Ushuaia.

Figure 11: Transporting Logs to the Sawmill, 1906
Holmberg, *Viaje al interior de Tierra del Fuego*

[185] MFM, Fondo MAN BEF, Notas Recibidas,1912 N. 590; 1913 N. 11.
[186] "La fabricación de cascos en el país" *Boletín Argentino Forestal* 4, no. 32, June 4, 1936.
[187] See accounts from Lucas Bridges (1912) and John Lawrence (1913) in the *South America Missionary Magazine*.

Felling was not the only practice in the region. In addition to forest exploitation, locals filed for the rights to extract ice from the Martial Glacier, and more popularly, to graze sheep and to a lesser degree, cattle. The latter practice was primarily oriented toward foreign wool markets, but it also helped address inmate diets by adding meat to their rations. This had become a major concern across Argentina, as inmates were under or ill-fed.[188] Imported foods were often of such low quality that they could not be served. In part, this was a problem of distance and the delivery process, as shipments from Buenos Aires often came behind schedule, and by the time they arrived their quality was too poor for consumption and had to be discarded.[189]

Merchants in Ushuaia therefore provided rations for the prison through contract bids and by 1914 this was a lucrative business, as the prison population consumed 3,500 kilos of meat each month, plus another 3,000 kilos of bread and tens to hundreds more kilos in goods ranging from vinegar to coffee.[190] Some business owners increasingly used their leverage and the town's isolation to artificially inflate prices or sequester rations.[191] These ration issues would continue over the years, though they were often offset by the prison garden, which yielded a wide variety of vegetables, ranging from potatoes to cabbage, and by 1918 the number of plants exceeded 100,000.[192] However, food production in comparison to other land-use was lacking, as just under 300 hectares in Tierra del Fuego were tilled for cultivating produce.

In contrast, it was estimated that ranchers grazed over 900,000 sheep, 12,000 cattle and 3,750 horses throughout the island that year, which proved to be a far more profitable venture.[193]

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[188] Aubone, *Alimentación actual de nuestros presos*, 1911.
[189] Memoria de Justicia e Instrucciones Públicas, 1922, p. 368-369. See also issues like vitamin deficiencies, "Las vitaminas en el racionamiento de los penados," *Revista Penal y Penitenciaría* 4, no. 11 (April-June 1939).
[190] AGN-I, Ministerio del Interior, 1915, Legajo 2, N. 355.
[191] MFM, Libros Policiales (24 de Marzo de 1922 – 23 de Junio de 1923): 154, 364. In such instances, the government sometimes looked to Chile to supply meat rations, AGN, Fondo: MI, Legajo 10, Año 1930. October 1, 1929.
[192] AGN, Memoria de Justicia e Instrucciones Públicas, 1918, p. 260; 1919, p. 414.
[193] AGN, Ministerio del Interior, *Memoria*, Tomo II, 1915-1916.

Around the time of the military campaigns in Patagonia, reciprocal trade between Europe—primarily England and to a lesser degree France—and Argentina boomed, as Argentina shipped beef and cattle hide, along with wool and mutton, while England sent, among other finished goods, metal wiring for fences that facilitated tighter control over herding and grazing.[194] Similarly, demands in England encouraged controlled breeding practices to produce larger sheep to compete with exports out of Australia and New Zealand, which helped professionalize the industry.[195] The sheep and wool industry had been pushed southward by the cattle industry that invaded the pampas after the desert campaigns.[196] Nevertheless, the industry was flourishing in the desert plains of Patagonia. By 1901, Argentine Patagonia had become one of the world's largest wool producing regions, exporting over 225,000 tons per year from a population of 75 million heads of sheep. However, while Ushuaia served as the southern Argentine capital, Punta Arenas to the northwest in neighboring Chile was regularly considered the "golden" city of the Magallanes region, and was the hub for profits from the wool industry.[197]

Thus, while expanding the wool industry in Argentina was important, it also presented a preoccupation with national allegiance in the south. In other words, ensuring forestry operations also meant preventing a further encroachment of foreign capital and control of the region. Herders and the wool industry therefore, had to justify their operations. In the winter of 1916, for example, following the public Tree Festival, two letters came across the desk of Director Snaider. Each was signed by more than ten prominent locals assuring that their ventures into

[194] Fencing and control, therefore, was no minor practice. Plots could utilize over 30,000 meters of barbed wire to enclose. See the example of Serafino Bianco. MFM, Fondo MAN BEF, Notas Recibidas, Folio 4, January 1916.
[195] Rauch, *Conflict in the Southern Cone,* 58-59.
[196] See, Richard W. Slatta, *Gauchos and the Vanishing Frontier* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983).
[197] It was a common refrain that Punta Arenas outgrew Ushuaia and became the metropolis of Cape Horn. See, for example, J. R. Spears, *The Gold Diggings of Cape Horn: A Study of Life in Tierra del Fuego and Patagonia* (New York, 1895); and, H. H. Prichard, *Through the Heart of Patagonia* (New York, 1902).

expanding their pasturelands would have no effect on forest concessions.[198] Many of these landowners were particularly concerned because the winter of 1915 was especially harsh and they were unable to adequately establish their grazing practices.[199] Even small-scale ranchers sought to reserve their right to graze cattle as new borders were marked for felling.[200] Grazing versus felling showed a growing tension, as there were nearly fourteen billion square feet of timber to be harvested in Tierra del Fuego in the coming years.[201]

Despite this pressure from grazing, the lack of transportation infrastructure coupled with harsh weather conditions proved to be the greatest barriers to consistent and high profits in timber extraction.[202] Thus, in 1916 the General Direction of National Territories under the Ministry of the Interior published a report of Tierra del Fuego's natural resources. The author, geologist L. C. Decius, noted that the region's mountains had made studies via horseback nearly impossible, and therefore the surveys were carried out almost entirely on foot. Geography could not be as easily abstracted as experts anticipated, but nevertheless, Decius was hopeful that the study could carry the same success as those produced in northern Patagonia by U.S. born and German-trained geologist, Bailey Willis.[203] The Ministry of Agriculture assured authorities in Tierra del Fuego that in the case of major inconveniences, Willis was available for consultation. This connection with northern Patagonia was not simply rhetorical, as the report concluded that unlike certain social and political distinctions, "the island of Tierra del Fuego is Patagonia, and

[198] MFM, Notas Recibidas, Folio 5 N. 123 and 124 (6 July 1916).
[199] Letters from Martin Lawrence and William Felton, MFM, Fondo MAN BEF, Notas Recibidas, 1915, N. 199; 201.
[200] MFM, Notas Recibidas, Folio 5 N. 152 (8 August 1916).
[201] L. C. Decius, *Los recursos naturales de la Tierra del Fuego* (Buenos Aires: Imprenta y Encuadernación de la Policía, 1916), 87-89.
[202] "Las maderas de Ushuaia," *Caras y Caretas* 552 (1909). Snaider had an interview with a Chilean newspaper that year, discussing the tensions in Tierra del Fuego concerning low timber prices on the island and the desire of ranchers to expand their holdings. Buenos Aires, therefore, was a more desirable market. "Noticias de Magallanes," *El Mercurio* (Valparaiso) Abril 14, 1913.
[203] Bailey Willis, *Northern Patagonia: Character and Resources Volume 1* (New York: Scribner Press, 1914).

therefore, should be considered, geographically, one in the same."[204] Isidoro Ruiz Moreno of the General Direction of National Territories even wrote to the Ministry of Public Works proposing to transport inmates from Ushuaia and the National Penitentiary in Buenos Aires to the northern Patagonian Lake District to build the rails and trails for the tourism sector of Nahuel Huapí.[205] It was an ambitious plan to link the Capital to the Lake District—the Atlantic to the Andes—as well as provide infrastructure throughout continental Patagonia. The plan was never realized with convicts from Ushuaia, though the proposal is revealing of a broader vision to use inmates as a mobile public works gang to improve and make desirable all corners of the nation. As the forests in Northern Patagonia were proving increasingly profitable, there was clearly a desire to connect the two regions.

One of Decius' main concerns, like that of Snaider, was local demand to clear these forests for pasture land. Many forest stands were felled by locals who ran small milling operations, and a considerable number of trees in exposed areas were lost to the strong winds in the micro-climate. Nevertheless, Decius estimated that there was still one billion square feet of timber to be extracted from the 423 square kilometer region, and local sawmills such as Tunel and Harberton seemed concerned only with local construction and fencing, rather than opening to larger markets and a more regular timber economy. Private enterprise, they concluded, was not enough to fully exploit the south's forest resources. Prison operations and its labor pool, therefore, needed to be expanded.

Convict Labor and the Limits of the Penitentiary

[204] Decius, *Los recursos naturales*, 8.
[205] AGN, Memoria del Ministerio del Interior, 1915-1916 Tomo II, 205-09. 500 inmates and 100 guards would be employed, half coming from Ushuaia, the other half from the national penitentiary. The proposal was also published in, "El trabajo de los presos en los territorios" *La Nación*, January 31, 1916, p. 9.

The expansion of the timber industry in Argentine Tierra del Fuego relied on inmate labor. Director Muratgia's vision for an "open-door" penitentiary placed labor at the center of inmate rehabilitation, and it was integrated into a much wider penal network. This approach offered, to some degree, a common ground for opposing factions. Francisco de Veyga, for example, agreed that labor was central to the issue of crime and rehabilitation, noting that crime generally stemmed from "the absolute lack of work discipline."[206] This similarly meant removing criminals from the "auxiliaries" of crime, such as prostitutes, liquor salesmen, and drug dealers—vices often solicited when unemployed. The penitentiary, therefore, did what the private sector only partially achieved by incorporating workers into the labor force, and inculcating them with industriousness. In Ushuaia the goal was to create a self-sustaining operation in which inmates would fell timber and build the town, and in doing say pay for the resources needed to operate the penitentiary.

Prisoner experiences, therefore, were not limited to the 370 cells of the prison or the world within the stone walls and iron bars that stretched across its five pavilions. Rather, it extended well beyond the prison walls. In fact, inmates wrote extensively about their work in the forests, as did journalists who came to observe the venture. Nearly all agreed that Ushuaia was built on the backs of inmates, and, as one political prisoner would note, the prison was the barometer of the community.[207]

Multiple ventures around the world at this time, such as labor camps and agricultural colonies, utilized convicts to develop frontier regions.[208] Many of these ventures concentrated

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[206] Veyga, *Los Lunfardos*, 1910. See also, Salvatore, "Criminology, Prison Reform, and the Buenos Aires Working Class," 1992.
[207] Víctor Guillot, *Paralelo 55˚ (Dietario de un Confinado)* (Buenos Aires: Editorial "Sol," 1936), 78.
[208] See, for example, Jane M. Rausch, Using Convicts to Settle the Frontier: A Comparison of Agricultural Penal Colonies as Tropical Frontier Institutions in Twentieth Century Columbia," *SECOLAS Annals* 34 (2002): 26–48. Judith Pallot, "Forced Labour for Forestry: The Twentieth Century History of Colonisation and Settlement in the North of Perm' Blast, *Europe-Asia Studies* 54, no. 7 (2002): 1055-1083. Benedict Taylor, "Trees of Gold and Men

more on cheap convict labor than reform, and Ushuaia, similarly had some utilitarian supporters. Convict labor, therefore, was not outside of labor markets, but in fact, closely linked to the rise of industrial work.[209] Indeed, convict labor is an integral part of working class history, not solely because the majority of inmates are working class individuals, but because authorities commodify prison work systems and thus complicate any clear distinction between free and un-free labor.[210] Moreover, much to the chagrin of authorities and local enforcers, inmates did not seem to transform into model industrious citizens through outdoor labor projects. In examples elsewhere, disrupted labor practices were often a result of prison revolts, however, such large-scale disruption was uncommon in Ushuaia.[211] While mundane and modest resistance occurred, there was a more systematic set of complications and inefficiencies that reached beyond the inmates and up to the warden and high-ranking officials. The blame for inefficiencies was most often put on natural forces and a lack of infrastructure.

While prison work systems are seemingly more restricting than other labor systems, inmates as coerced laborers, even in the grimmest of conditions, still make choices and negotiate these spaces, such that there is no singular inmate labor experience even within the same penitentiary. Labor in Ushuaia similarly reveals a myriad of experiences, especially given the multiple tasks undertaken by inmates. Inmates often sought to avoid outdoor labor and instead desired to work in the bakery where the physical labor was less strenuous and the ovens made for a warm environment, especially in the winter. A number of other jobs, such as cooking and

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Made Good? Grand Visions and Early Experiments in Penal Forestry in New South Wales, 1913-1938, *Environment and History* 14 (2008): 545-562.

[209] Dario Melossi and Massimo Pavarini, *The Prison and the Factory: Origins of the Penitentiary System* (Totowa: Barnes and Noble Books, 1981).

[210] Marcel Van der Linden, *Workers of the World: Essays Toward a Global Labor History* (Boston: Brill, 2008); Christian G. De Voto and Alex Lichtenstein, "Writing a Global History of Convict Labour," *IRSH* 58 (2013): 285-325.

[211] Taylor C. Sherman, "Tensions of Colonial Punishment: Perspectives on Recent Developments in the Study of Coercive Networks in Asia, Africa and the Caribbean," *History Compass* 7, no. 3 (2009): 659-677.

cleaning duties, similarly offered work opportunities that were protected from the elements, while still providing some degree of mental and physical activity. Many of these positions involved labor in the prison industrial workshops and sheltered mills. Indeed, these were some of the prison's earliest resources. Six steam-boilers, with 180 horse-power, served five motors that produced 118 effective horse power, all of which ran on the fuel provided by timber felled, chopped, and fed by inmates [Figure 12].[212] Thus, outdoor labor and industrial work were closely connected and inmates rotated posts with some frequency to ensure a broad skill set.

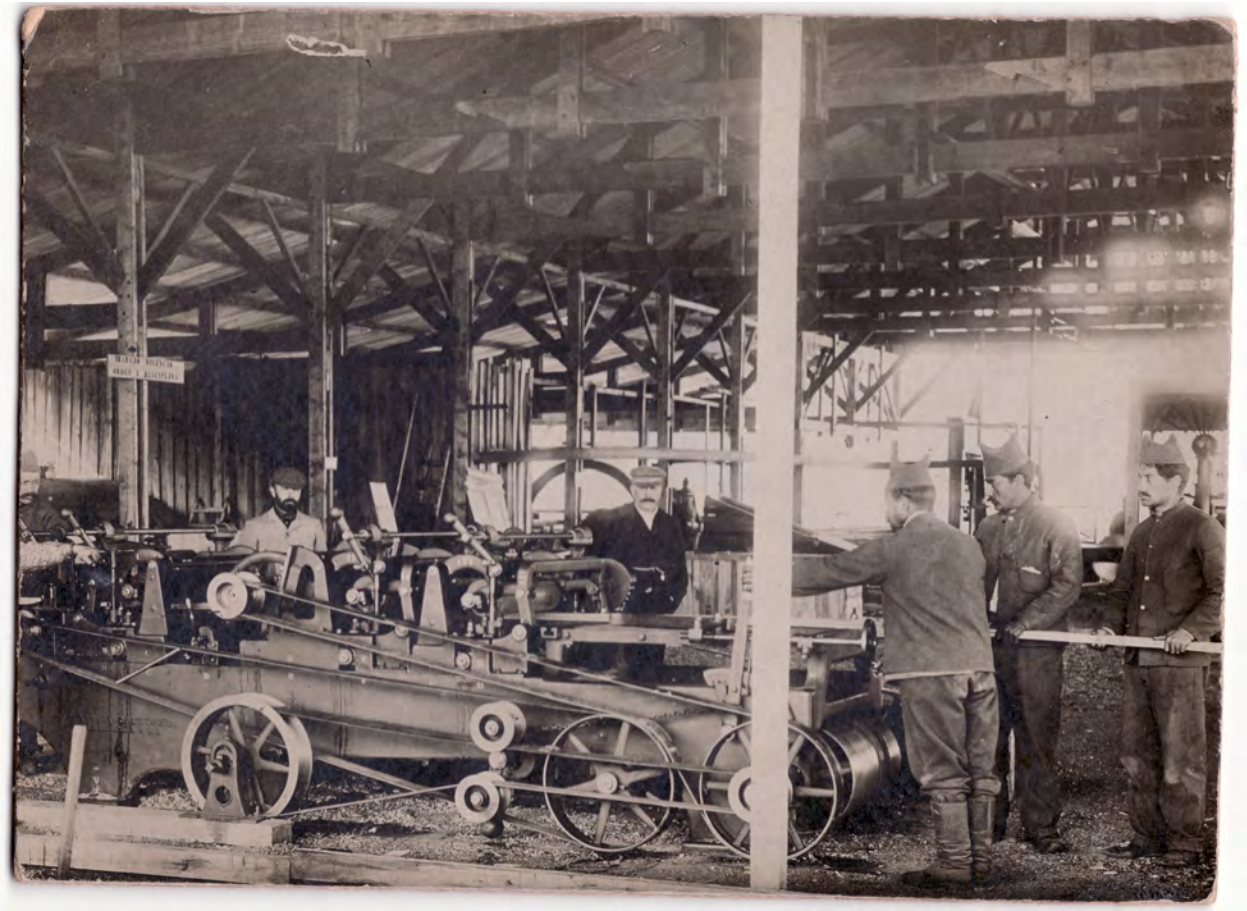

Figure 12. Sawmill, 1906
AGN 18338

[212] Muratgia, *Presidio y cárcel*, 150.

But this industrial infrastructure had its limits. Many would critique the penitentiary's ineffective heating system that required constant fueling, ranging from seven to twelve cubic meters of wood per day. Factoring the needs of the kitchen, bathrooms, bakery, and train, the prison consumed roughly forty cubic meters of wood daily.[213] Thus, timber was not simply an export commodity that provided the capital for prison and government operations. Timber as fuel (*carbón*) was essential to daily life. Chopping wood, therefore, was the prison's second largest work detail.

The largest work detail, however, was labor in the forest. Because outdoor labor was so central to inmate life, prisoners wrote extensively about their experiences in *el monte*. These writings reveal that forest work was viewed as both a privilege and a curse depending on the seasonal and daily changes in weather and daylight hours. One prisoner commented to an inspector, "Working kills the time, it is the only way to overcome the prison… I go about in the forest, breathe a little air and even see a little sun."[214] Here there is a clear distinction between the prison and the forest, though such moments were fleeting and not always so clearly defined. Inmate Juan Octavio Fernández Pico watched from his cell both in awe and disgust, "The loggers pass below my window. I rise to watch them march, four deep. The drum pushes them along, some advance with tortured steps, their legs resisting the imposed order, showing grand displays of strength... almost grotesque… while the best of them, walk natural and confident."[215] For the latter, Muratgia's vision of strong and robust prison laborers could be seen, but the former showed signs that the program was breaking men down. Once in the mountain, such marching continued among the felled forest, with armed guards keeping each prisoner in tow [Figure 13].

[213] Memoria de Justicia e Instrucciones Públicas, 1934, p. 556.
[214] Manuel Ramírez, *El Presidio de Ushuaia: La Ergástula del Sur* (Ushuaia: Editorial Claridad, 1935).
[215] Juan O. Fernández Pico, "De seis a siete," *El Eco* 1, no. 25 (December 1931).

Figure 13. Monte Susana, Km Fourteen, 1933
AGN 18370

During a given month, between 35 and 70 prisoners were assigned to labor as *leñadores* (lumberjacks) in the forest, under the surrounding mountain peaks. The highs and lows were seasonal, as fewer inmates were used in winter, and more in summer. Within this group, about six or seven inmates would stay overnight in makeshift camps. These were coveted posts given the relative freedom to cook one's own meal and possibly enjoy extra rations, as well as sleep outside of one's cell. Other timber jobs included loading and unloading logs on the docks, sawing timber in the mills, and woodshop labor where inmates made a variety of items, from carriages to intricate furniture and trinkets. Prisoners sought these other jobs while calculating the risks and payoffs of outdoor labor. Officials and journalists noted these calculations when they observed prisoners in the infirmary, many of whom were sick, while others, they surmised, were clearly evading outdoor work detail.

By the 1930s, images were circulated to show the positive, even pristine, qualities of inmate labor under the summer sun [Figure 14]. Inmates stripped off their striped coats and labored in white undershirts beneath the austral sun.

Figure 14. Man with Handsaw, 1933
AGN 18366

Journalists however were skeptical of such claims. While the environment could have curative properties, they argued that the dangerous and physical nature of inmate labor, coupled with the abuses of guards and lack of adequate clothing and rations, made any such recovery unlikely. One journalist noted that while the cells of Ushuaia were akin to frozen graves, the forests were the prison's "punishment workshop" where prisoners appeared always filthy and panting.[216] Such claims were borne from the danger associated with timber labor. Many inmates died from

[216] Marcial Belascoain Sayós, *El presidio de Ushuaia: Impresiones de un observador* (Buenos Aires: La Protesta, 1918), 62.

dynamite blasts used to construct the railroad that carried timber out of the hillside, or from lacerations and hemorrhages caused by falling trees. In the winter months their hands went numb as they struggled to chip through frozen soil and rock [Figure 15].

Figure 15. Rail-Workers, 1920s
AGN 119765

The tension between the forest as a space of respite and repose versus an evergreen workshop of punishment is not one to be easily reconciled. There was no simple either/or for the prisoners. Just as the weather and seasons brought constant change and instability, outdoor labor was something to be observed and negotiated based on environmental factors, as well as social ones, such as who was in charge of a labor shift and what specific task the prisoner would undertake. Nevertheless, at any given time a large percentage of prisoners were outside the prison walls, still under surveillance and subjected to punishment, laboring along oxen yoked together in pairs to transport logs. Their pain and injuries, wind-scarred and sunburned skin, blistered and splinter-filled fingers, followed them back to their cells at night.

While inmates were watched and guarded during outdoor labor, escapes were not a grave concern. In fact, it was not until 1926 that a barbed-wire fence was erected around the prison to hinder such attempts, following the escape in broad summer daylight of Horacio Silapovas (n. 457).[217] *Fugos* (escapees) were not expected to survive, and the multiple attempts over the years resulted in inmates returning to the prison rather than successfully establishing maroon communities in the forest. Some even started small fires to be seen and rescued after a few days exposed to the elements. And indeed, harsh winters and extreme winds proved equally dangerous for authorities. In 1932, for example, five prison guards pursuing an escaped convict sought refuge in a sawmill shed when inclement weather proved impassable. They burned timber and part of the shack's wooden structure to ensure their own survival.[218] The case of Guard Domingo Allende, who died while in pursuit of an escapee, was recounted regularly by journalists and fellow employees. It was rumored that next to Allende's frozen body was a matchbook, but no sign that he was able to light a fire to combat the frigid cold. The dangers of the forest, therefore, were not limited to inmates, as everyone affiliated with the prison calculated the risk of *el monte*.

The penitentiary in Ushuaia therefore had a radius that stretched well beyond the hammerheads of its five pavilions, reaching into the mountains, growing farther with each kilometer added to the railroad and each felled tree. And, beyond spectacular examples such as those above, prison personnel, like prisoners, experienced day-to-day estrangement in Ushuaia and had their own methods for negotiating an unsettling occupation of the south. They demanded higher wages to cover the inflated prices of imported foodstuffs and the costs of winter clothing

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[217] *Memoria de Justicia e Instrucciones Públicas*, 1926, Tomo 1-2, p. 310-326. Director Juan J. Piccini, 17 February 1927. While surrounding stone walls were the norm in the nineteenth century, barbed-wire and chain-linked fences now dominate the modern prison. While, perhaps, less imposing, barbed-wire has proven to be cheaper and more effective. For more on the significance of barbed-wire, see Reviel Netz, *Barbed Wire: An Ecology of Modernity* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2004).

[218] MFM, Fondo MAN BEF, Notas Recibidas Antonio Snaider, 30 June 1932, José Musso and the Ministerio de Agricultura.

that they were unaccustomed to purchasing.[219] Already in 1907 Director Muratgia had commented on a correspondence between two inspectors in which they suggested that such conditions deserved greater compensation, "The rigor of the climate, the exile that represents life in those places, the works carried out and the responsibilities performed by the administration of an establishment that can truly be called 'OPEN DOOR,' deserves a reward far superior to the budget assigned to its staff."[220] Moreover, additional compensation was demanded as an acknowledgement that prison personnel felt that they too lived in exile (*destierro*).[221] This problem was compounded by the common late payments of salaries to low ranking officials, and general inconsistencies in transportation and the arrival of goods and supplies.

Such complaints reveal that personnel felt little incentive to improve upon their work given their relatively paltry pay and undesirable living conditions. They were far from their families and lived at the mercy of steamships that came just a few times a year to provide goods and news. State failure and lack of productivity, therefore, were not simply the result of inefficient schemes or the inability for scientific methods to map perfectly onto practice. Rather, frustration and lack of interest on the part of state actors was a very real component of civil laborers in Ushuaia.[222] Moreover, employees were predominantly from neighboring Chile because most Argentines refused to work there, and Ushuaia's population was rarely more than about one-third Argentine, with other nationalities ranging from Spanish to Yugoslav and

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[219] AGN-I, Ministerio del Interior, Legajo 2 Ex. 02180, 1934. In 1934, for example, 60 rubber capes were ordered for policeman in the region. While a general order was placed for police outfits across the nation, the southern offices made special demands. Fred Gilbert Blakeslee, *Police Uniforms of the World* (Norwood: Plimpton Press, 1934).

[220] Muratgia, *Presidio y cárcel*, 23-31, Inspector Viajero Nieto Moreno to Inspector General de Justicia, Doctor Manuel M. Avellaneda, August 2, 1904. Capitalization in original.

[221] Correspondence February 12, 1932, Guarda Bosques José Musso to Jefe de la División de Bosques y Yerbales Ing. Luis E. Fablet. MFM, Fondo MAN (Bosques) 05.5 Explotación Forestal (BEF).

[222] For more on the lack of capitalist and market-driven forces in the conversion of nature, see, Karl Jacoby, *Crimes Against Nature: Squatters, Poachers, Thieves, and the Hidden History of American Conservation* (Berkeley: University of California, 2001).

German. Internal exile and colonization, in other words, went hand in hand, as authorities continued to lament a lack of Argentine-ness in the region, while locals complained of a lack of development and connection relative to Argentine standards.[223] The constant struggle to fell and export timber efficiently, on the one hand, and to construct a community that linked the forest to a broader Argentina on the other hand, exacerbated these social, economic, and national frustrations.

Forest Fires

Ecological control was never perfect. Despite the great transformations to Ushuaia that resulted from prison operations, much of the engagement with the landscape was a practice of adapting rather than designing.[224] Personnel complaints highlight that while the Ushuaia penal colony was built in such a way that authorities were able to wield the southern elements as forms of torment for inmates, mastery over these geographical, ecological, and climatological elements was hardly complete. This was, in part, because geography and the elements rarely served just a single purpose. For instance, the same oxygen-rich air embraced by inmates in el monte was just as effective in reviving fading ashes, re-igniting and flaming the region.[225] Similarly, the desirable weather of the summer was also the most dangerous season for fires.

Forest fires, said more directly, are an integral component of Tierra del Fuego's history.[226] European fires in the region date back to at least the 1840s when missionaries arrived

[223] On the continued need to *argentinizar* the region, see, Juan José de Soiza Reilly, "Nadie se acuerda de los pueblos del sur," *Caras y Caretas* 36, no. 1805, May 6, 1933.
[224] In comparison, see the active attempts by the WRA to combat dust and wind in Japanese internment camps in the United States. Connie Y. Chiang, "Imprisoned Nature: Toward an Environmental History of the World War II Japanese American Incarceration" *Environmental History* 15, no. 2 (April 2010).
[225] MFM, Fondo MAN BEF, Incendios 1919-1937, Folio 4.1, 17 October 1927.
[226] Recent scientific research has found that the *Pilgerodendron uviferum*, the world's southernmost coniferous tree species, provides the best avenue for tree-ring forest dating. They have been able to date fires back to the 1570s—just after the arrival of Europeans in the region. Andrés Holz et al., "*Pilgerodendron uviferum*: The Southernmost Fire Tree-Ring Recorder Species," *Ecoscience* 16, no. 3 (2009): 322-329. The species, though mostly found on the Chilean side of the island in the more temperate forests, does stretch south to the 55th parallel.

and began small timber cutting operations. Recent scientific work has found that, as the Little Ice Age ended, glaciers slowed their advance, bringing warmer temperatures, changes in air-pressures, and increased wind strength, which exacerbated the potential for fires and the rate at which they spread.[227] Earlier still, however, was the use of fire by indigenous groups in the region. After all, the very name Tierra del Fuego (Fireland) comes from what Europeans saw when they first arrived on the island. The common story claims that, when arriving through the channels of the southern archipelago, Europeans saw smoke throughout the island. They first decided on the name, *Tierra del Humo* (Smokeland), but someone said that where there is smoke, there must be fire. While this may be more myth than reality, as early as Magellan in the 1520s, travelers encountered manmade fires throughout the island and were impressed at the speed and ease with which indigenous peoples could spark kindling.[228] The Yamana, or "Canoe People," were infamous for keeping smoldering piles in their canoes as they navigated the channel-ways so as to be capable of starting a fire instantly wherever they went.

This increase in *incendios* (forest fires), therefore mark a new moment in the history of fire in Tierra del Fuego. They provide a marker for understanding the limits and limitations of the prison as well as scientific forestry.[229] The networks of the modern penitentiary, such as transportation or the origins of personnel, reveal the distant linkages of the institution, but do not provide a sense of the day-to-day radius of prison operations. Rather, if felled timber revealed the extension of labor and exploitation beyond the prison walls, then charred forests exposed the space beyond the prison's economic and ecological control [Figure 16].

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[227] See, Torsten Haberzettl et al., "Environmental Change and Fire History of Southern Patagonia (Argentina) During the Last Five Centuries" *Quaternary International* 158 (2006): 72-82.
[228] See Pigafetta's discussion, *The First Voyage Around the World by Magellan*, trans. Lord Stanley Alderley (London, 1874), 64.
[229] Scholars have elsewhere engaged the social and political aspects of fire. See, Christian A. Kull, *Isle of Fire: The Political Ecology of Landscape Burning in Madagascar* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

Figure 16. Forest Fire, 1929
De Agostini, *Mis Viajes a la Tierra del Fuego*

In November 1917, for example, Director Snaider alerted the head of police to recruit all available resources in order to combat a forest fire. He noted that in previous cases, fires quickly spread beyond human control, and hopefully this time such extensive damage could be prevented.[230] Fires did not comply with social or political boundaries, as in March 1919 flames near Lago Roca spread into the Chilean Republic. A letter written to the inspector a month later claimed that the same fire in Argentina's border-town of Lapataia was finally extinguished thanks only to the arrival of persistent rains.[231] While hoping for favorable weather conditions to extinguish fires, administrators were also proactive in using inmates to quell the flames.

[230] MFM, Incendios Forestales, Folio 2.1, no. 128, November 6, 1917,
[231] MFM, Fondo MAN (Bosques) 05.5 Explotación Forestal, Incendio Folio 2.1 N. 38.

Indeed, fire-drills on the prison grounds made up part of the regular regimen so that any inmate could be called upon at any time to combat a spreading fire.[232] In February 1922, these drills were tested. Early that morning Service Boss Manuel González was notified of a fire in el monte. A team of twenty-five prisoners was assembled to combat the incendio, and twenty-five more prisoners joined this initial team around one in the afternoon. The first team was not relieved until seven hours later when a third team of twenty-five inmates arrived. Finally, around five-thirty that evening, directors concluded that the fire was under control and the fifty prisoners still on duty returned to the prison while a guard and soldier remained to suppress any ashes that might reignite. The culprit was never identified, though the damage was relatively limited and therefore the investigation fizzled.[233] Many other cases were less favorable however, as fires did more than obstruct the construction of state spaces. In addition to burning public lands, these fires burned the symbolic old-growth Nothofagus trees, few of which still stand, such that tourists today travel to the Harberton Estancia east of Ushuaia to marvel at some of the few surviving giants.[234]

Sparks and ember exhaust emitted from the train that transported inmates and lumber back and forth between Ushuaia and el monte, often making multiple trips a day, was the main

[232] See, "Sublevación de presos en Ushuaia," *Caras y Caretas* 317 (1904). The relationship between inmates and fires continues elsewhere today. A California report from 1961 concerning the expansion of conservation programs argued that the media should stop focusing on rare escape cases and should instead applaud the heroics of inmates who combatted forest fires and saved the state millions in timber loss. See, Senate Fact Finding Committee on Governmental Administration, "Expanded Use of Prison Inmates in the Conservation Program," (Senate of the State of California, 1961). The passing of Proposition 47 in California in 2014, which reduced the categorization of crimes committed by thousands of inmates from felonies to misdemeanors, raised concerns about firefighting potential with a diminished inmate population, see, James Barragan, "Prop. 47 Leaves Future of California Inmate Fire Crews Uncertain," *Los Angeles Times*, November 12, 2014. Inmate firefighting saved the state roughly $80 million a year.

[233] MFM, Fondo MAN (Bosques) 05.5 Explotación Forestal, Incendio 1922 Folio 3. At least four marines were seen having an *asado* (barbeque) in the ranch where the prisoners worked about one thousand meters from the source of the fire. A man was spotted returning to town the following morning after felling timber, though no one had seen him working nor did when he entered the forest. Two fishermen had also been spotted in the vicinity.

[234] MFM, Fondo MAN (Bosques) 05.5 Explotación Forestal, Incendio 1922 Folio 4 n. 709. Livestock was also at great risk. See, "Incendio en Ushuaia," *La Vanguardia*, January 20, 1937, p. 7.

culprit for incendios.[235] National Deputy Manuel Ramírez, who had visited the prison in 1934 for a government inspection, argued that because of these risks the train was the most pressing danger to the town and region.[236] Nearly ten years later, in December 1943, a report showed just how futile efforts were to suppress train-related fires. When a fire started along kilometer nine of the prison rail, two brothers, Juan and Oliverio Bautista Vargas, attempted to extinguish the flames, but it was clear almost immediately that the persistent winds would carry the fire beyond their control.[237] The fire ultimately spread six kilometers back along the rail line. Two mechanics and a guard confirmed that the fire originated from the train, though they claimed that they had performed all of their safety duties. Nevertheless, while the *matachispas* (flue) could be and were cleaned regularly, there would always be some ember exhaust and hence the chance of fire. In addition to public lands, the fire consumed 320 rajas de leñas owned by the Compañía Argentina de Maderas Industriales (CAMI). The loss, however, was assumed and accounted for in the company's operations, as CAMI well knew that fires were part of the business.

Each forest fire revealed the tension between inmate and forest growth on the one hand, and on the other, state and economic priorities. That CAMI anticipated and accounted for losses due to forest fires shows that the problem was simply part of the practice. However, this was the industry mind-set that Muratgia had warned against. If inmates were not being rehabilitated, but rather used solely for their labor, then the prison project had become just another labor penal colony. In either case, the ecological relationship was proving to be devastating for the Fuegian forests.

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[235] Today in local gift shops tourists can learn about the train in the booklet, Alicia Lazzaroni, *Monte Susana: Historia del tren de los presos de Ushuaia* (Ushuaia: Editorial Utopías, 2007).
[236] Ramírez, *La Ergástula del Sud*, 34. This was later confirmed and elaborated on by the national parks director, see, Lucas A. Tortorelli, *Los incendios de bosques en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Dirección Forestal, 1947).
[237] Investigation in, MFM, Fondo MAN BEF, Notas Recibidas, Sumario Incendio, Cedula de Citación, December 5, 1943.

The Carceral Town and Dependent Communities

In 1936 the Ministry of Agriculture released another study concerning forest fires, which revealed that anxiety stemmed as much from what forest scientists knew, as from the unknown. The report's author, Raúl Madueño, noted that a detailed study on forest cover and fires had not been completed since 1915-16, and that in general the subject presented little more than statistical "anarchy."[238] The figures showed that Tierra del Fuego made up roughly 21,500 square kilometers, of which 8,400 were forested, though the story was the same. Timber used to heat the prison came from up to twelve kilometers beyond the city limits, and projects looked to expand that train-line to fifteen kilometers. Each proposed kilometer reveals that the prison was not a finished project. While the stones had been laid and the walls fortified decades earlier, the institution was a living body that reached out, decayed, and required constant attention, renovation, and reconsideration. Regions in the north were managed relatively easily and dedicated to the wool industry, but the mountainous southern region and its lack of roads made regular felling operations difficult. Locals lamented the false utility presented by the forests.

As forestry had become a global practice, foresters looked around the world for new ideas and proven examples of mixing timber production with other land-use practices. Agronomists like Franco Enrique Devoto looked to Asia and Europe for inspiration. He noted that the Japanese reverence for small trees such as the bonsai was a tangible and impactful way to educate the nation's youth with regard to respecting trees and forests, and learning their maintenance from an early age.[239] Devoto's concerns, however, were not solely with forestry. He was equally motivated by putting land into use and supporting the population growth of

[238] Raúl R. Madueño, *El incendio de los bosques* (Buenos Aires: Ministerio de Agricultura, 1936): 3-4.
[239] Franco Enrique Devoto, *Los bosques y la economía forestal Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Ministerio de Agricultura, 1935).

Argentina. Indeed, Devoto believed forestry and agronomy would finally realize the visions of Juan Alberdi and Domingo Sarmiento—Alberdi argued that "to govern is to populate," and Sarmiento envisioned a nation of 100 million Argentines.[240] Devoto traveled to England and other nations to study foreign techniques. Drawing on methods from the U.S. to Asia, he believed that a balanced approach between forestry and agriculture was possible and that such growth would lead to an economic and demographic boom. Argentina, quite simply, was losing profits to a global timber market and needed to increase, scientifically and systematically, their production and species offerings. "We do not plant trees," Devoto suggested to the Ministry of Agriculture, the time had come to "plant forests."

Madueño supported this latter claim, but was skeptical of arguments for further deforestation to produce more pasturelands or agrarian fields. Also drawing on foreign examples, he noted that practices in Europe and Asia offered alternatives that could preserve and make profitable forested areas, which would enrich the soil, increase carrying capacity, and prevent erosion. Education, therefore, would lead to preservation forests, as had been done in Iguazú and the Lake District, which in turn promised the continued growth of Argentina's tourism industry. To raise awareness, Madueño suggested expanding the "Día de Arbol" (Tree Day) to something like Canada's "Semana Forestal" (Tree Week, originally called Forest Fire Prevention Week and later National Forest Week), which was created in 1920 as a national forest fire prevention campaign. Madueño encouraged collaboration with the public by naming "Honorary Delegates" to help prevent fires and preserve the patrimony in a more personal manner.[241]

[240] Devoto's population concerns were tied to an Argentine national identity. When working in the north he sought to rid the tropical borderlands of foreign *núcleos* to build an Argentine community centered on timber felling. See, Franco E. Devoto and Máximo Rothkugel, *Informe sobre los Bosques del Parque Nacional del Iguazú* (Buenos Aires: Ministerio de Agricultura, 1935).
[241] This request was later decreed, N. 505, in January 1944.

This relationship between citizens and the forest also extended to relations between the community and released inmates. Because most released prisoners desired to return home, the prison faced the problem of idle freed-men rather than reformed settlers. For years released prisoners that did stay in the region desired to enter the timber industry, but lacking resources, they were often limited to clandestine practices.[242] In 1924, Dr. Antonio Sagarna granted permission for authorities to support prisoners after their release until they could board an outgoing steamship, though the results were mixed.[243] Years later, sub-director Engineer Hugo Strasser led the Patrinato de Excarcelados to try to improve these conditions.[244] Its goal was to aid and track released inmates and help them transition back into society. And yet, for decades prisoners were released with a meager purse for their labors, leaving them in a precarious position, such as working for their punishers while waiting weeks for a return passage to Buenos Aires.[245] Strasser organized a public campaign that encouraged a more amicable and trusting relationship between locals and freed prisoners, such as hosting soccer matches to raise money for ex-prisoners who wanted to start small timber operations.[246] Beyond these measures, Strasser wanted to salvage the reputation of the "modern" prison by reminding locals that "God does not abandon men after their fall, and neither should society."[247] He admitted that Argentine prisons were not perfect in the execution of these ideals, but an even greater problem fell upon the

[242] MFM, Fondo MAN BEF, Notas Recibidas Antonio Snaider, 1921, N. 101. This letter concerning ex-prisoners Antonio Mariano and Mario Tesone was sent by the police to Raúl Olave, who replaced Snaider as forestry director.
[243] Memoria de Justicia e Instrucciones Públicas, 1924, Tomo 1-2, p. 180-181.
[244] MFM, Agrupación, "Patronato de Excarcelados del Territorio de Tierra del Fuego," June 25, 1936. The project had been effective for decades in Buenos Aires, but only came to Ushuaia in the 1930s. Eusebio Gómez, *Patronato de Excarcelados* (Buenos Aires: Talleres Gráficos de la Penitenciaría Nacional, 1910).
[245] Belascoain Sayós, *El Presidio de Ushuaia*.
[246] "Patronato de Excarcelados," *Suplemento Ushuaiense* 1, no. 12 (May 1936): 2. Soccer and rugby against local clubs and the naval base were regular activities for prisoners. See, Memoria, Departamento de Justicia, 1945, p. 338.
[247] "Invitación a una Reunión," *Suplemento Ushuaiense* 2, no. 15 (August 1936): 1.

circumstances constructed by townspeople who did not foster a community welcoming to those released and therefore extended the experience of confinement.[248]

These tensions were not surprising or unique Faraway prisons created dependent industries and ecologies that relied on the use cheap and subsidized inmate labor to construct or protect these regions and populations. Drops in inmate populations similarly decreased labor pools and could slow public works and projects.[249] Ushuaia authorities, for example, made complaints regarding a decline in the prisoner population in the 1920s and the potential collapse of local services.[250] Thus, keeping the prison filled or over-crowded seemed to take precedent over the improvement of infrastructure and the acquisition of new technologies. Inmate labor was cheaper and easier to maintain for local authorities than importing heavy equipment or answering to a growing cadre of experts in the capital who might demand more central oversight in exchange for resources. Local authorities faced few repercussions for their extra-coercive means of work force productivity, and the price of inefficiency seemed a fair trade off. Reporters and inspectors concurred that the region's isolation was nothing less than impunity for prison officials, and indeed, control over the region switched hands multiple times between the governor and warden. Governor Juan María Gómez (1924-1932) put increasing pressure on Prison Director Adolfo Cernadas and Warden Carlos Faggioli in the early 1930s, a particularly contentious time, to cooperate with investigations into the prison. In response, Director Cernadas

[248] "Patronato de Excarcelados de Ushuaia," *Suplemento Ushuaiense* 2, no. 17 (October 1936): 1.
[249] This was common elsewhere. In Peru's penal system of the late nineteenth century, able-bodied prisoners were often kept on for labor projects rather than be transferred as scheduled to make use of their labor until the last possible moment. See chapter six, Aguirre, *The Criminals of Lima and Their Worlds*.
[250] Correspondence between the Ministro de Interior and the Ministro de Justicia e Instrucción Publica, November 22, 1922, MFM, Caja Molina.

reduced the electrical power transmitted to the governor's home, since the city's electricity was still produced by the prison.[251]

Conclusion

When the government carried out a new forestry study in 1942, the population of Tierra del Fuego had grown to just 4,000 people, 1,300 of which resided in Ushuaia. The southern capital constituted little more than one-one-hundredth of one percent of the Argentine population. Argentine Tierra del Fuego covered just under one percent of the nation's territory. The island also continued to have the most unequal ratio of men to women, with men outnumbering women nearly three to one.[252] Ushuaia, in short, was still a small corner of Argentina and Patagonia, and while it carried a heavy symbolic weight, the same could not be said for its proportion of the national population or spatial expanse.

In neighboring Chile, they faced similar issues regarding the forest and population, so officials expanded forestry projects to create large timber nurseries. This ambitious expansion was inspired by a utopian vision that intended to put laborers to work, providing them with land, resources, and jobs to create a more cultured and model citizen. In theory, the project facilitated a feedback loop, in which out-of-work urbanites would be given land to clear, which would provide them with the timber to build a home, then subsequently they would work the timberlands in accordance with sustainable forestry practices to harvest wood to be shipped north. This would both clear-out, or at least push to the margins, the remaining transitory Mapuche, and in their place, establish a sedentary population of *obreros* (workers), rather than

[251] See the recounting in, Nestor Aparicio, *Los prisioneros del "Chaco" y la evasión de Tierra del Fuego* (Buenos Aires: M. Gleizer, 1932): 59-61. Such impunity continues in provincial prisons. See, Joane Martel, "To Be, One Has To Be Somewhere: Spatio-temporality in Prison Segregation," *British Journal of Criminology* 46 (2006): 587-612.
[252] Comite Nacional de Geografía, *Anuario geográfico argentino suplemento 1942* (Buenos Aires: 1943): 3-4. This was an improvement from earlier decades, in which men outnumbered women between five and six to one. The nation had a seven-year plan, in which Tierra del Fuego would receive just over 1.6 million pesos, or just over one percent of expenditures from the Consejo Agrario.

campesinos (peasants). Symbolically, these individuals would be linked, or rather, indebted, to the Chilean territory through their own plot of land, which would, in theory, engender positive sentiments towards the Chilean nation and state. In practice, the forestry laws and economic incentives associated with pine cultivation produced a shift in land-ownership toward private investors, as well as the expansion of large estate land-holdings. Subsidies and tax exemptions led to an explosion of timber nurseries and a reduction in the year-round permanent work-force, expelling squatters and tenant farmers who were replaced by seasonal laborers that were sufficient to produce capital for land-owners. In-migration, however, came in the form of non-humans, as the tree species planted for mono-cropping in the timber regions came from the United States, and permanent human populations were not realized.[253]

On the Argentine side, despite the forest being "unbeatable" according to the 1942 report, the industry was still considered rudimentary decades after its inception.[254] Roads were still not maintained and the modern machinery enjoyed elsewhere was absent. Though fires had decreased since 1941, it was clear that the clauses in the 1914 Exploitation Act, which defined the extraction relationship between the prison and forestry department and contained measures intended to protect the forests, had not been achieved. By the 1940s, older prison employees also admitted that they had burned the felled underbrush to clear the forest and make pastureland, which sometimes caused fires.

In 1943 the Dirección Forestal Nacional was formed which included the regional office for the Distrito Forestal Tierra del Fuego. This office replaced the existing Forestry Office in November that year. Under the direction of engineer Osvaldo Cesár Catani, the new department

[253] Klubock, *La Frontera*.
[254] El Ministerio de Agricultura de la Nación, *Exposición forestal: Territorio nacional de Tierra del Fuego* (Ushuaia: Ministerio de Agricultura, 1942). From 1939-1941, the total from public and private lands were just over 20,000,000 kilos.

agreed that little had improved in years. In the final years of the prison (1942-1946), roughly 23,300 tons of timber were felled in Tierra del Fuego—the vast majority came from public lands. This made up little more than two percent of the total timber extracted in Argentina during that five year span.[255] Compare this to the wool industry, which had declined from its peak, but still supported one million sheep across the central and northern stretches of the island.

The report was most concerned, however, with replanting and conservation. It was a call once more to bring experts to the region to establish a thriving timber industry on the one hand, while ensuring the natural beauty that so strongly "aroused the imagination."[256] They called no longer for a police force to watch over inmates, but instead, a body of Forest Police (*policía forestal*) to ensure the regrowth (*regeneración*) of the precious saplings. Once again, the overlap of criminology and forestry discourses was prominent—regrowth and vigilance against degeneration. The prison had yet to close, but for the first time the forestry office was poised to orient away from the carceral institution.

[255] Aquiles D. Ygobone, *Instituto tecnológico del sur* (Buenos Aires: El Ateneo, 1948): 76. The Chaco region produced well over seventy percent of Argentina's total timber at this time, followed by Formosa and Misiones.
[256] El Ministerio de Agricultura de la Nación, *Exposición forestal*, 11-12.

CHAPTER THREE

ANALOGUE GEOGRAPHIES: BETWEEN THE END OF THE WORLD AND THE ARGENTINE SIBERIA

...we dropped anchor in Bahia Ushuaia, opposite the world's southernmost town. Above the little settlement the coastal range rose dark and abrupt, its upper snow reaches tinged with delicate rose by the cold southern sunset, and silhouetted against the ominous slatey blue of the clouds beyond. The skyline of this magnificent bay is accented by the graceful, needle-like peak of Mount Olivia.
Colonel Charles Wellington Furlong, "Exploration in Tierra del Fuego and the Fuegian Archipelago," 1933

Arriving at the Argentine Siberia…we are four kilometers from Ushuaia…an anxious feeling comes over the traveler.
Anibal del Ríe, *El presidio siniestro*, 1933

How was Ushuaia understood from the outside, not by engineers, penologists, or foresters, but by explorers, tourists, and broader public? The region, after all, had long piqued popular imaginations well beyond the shores of the Beagle Channel, and the prison brought a new audience.[257] Incorporating southern Tierra del Fuego into Argentina was both an internal and external process, one that was state-directed on the one hand, but also forced by foreign ventures on the other. At stake, therefore, was not merely how the region was developed, but for whom and what, as well as whether or not development was the goal. It was a question of perception, and how perceptions shaped desires for Tierra del Fuego in a global context.

I therefore take a different approach to the "invention" of Argentina as an intellectual and national project.[258] While scholars have explored the intellectual origins of the nation, less attention has been paid to the geographical imagination that brought the so-called "interior" into a relatable spatial lexicon. As a territory that had a late relationship to Spanish colonialism, much

[257] The list of travel narratives on Patagonia is extensive. As a starting point, see, Antonio Pigafetta, *The Voyage of Magellan*, 1525; Charles Darwin, The *Voyage of the Beagle*, 1839; William Henry Hudson, *Idle Days in Patagonia*, 1893.
[258] See, Nicolas Shumway, *The Invention of Argentina* (Berkeley: University of California, 1991); and Jeremy Adelman, *Republic of Capital: Buenos Aires and the Legal Transformation of the Atlantic World* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1999). See also the recent edited volume, Matthew Karush and Oscar Chamosa ed., *The New Cultural History of Peronism: Power and Identity in Mid-Twentieth Century Argentina* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

of what would become the Argentine Republic south of the Río Negro remained un-known and un-conquered until the turn-of-the-century. Once construction of the penal colony began in the 1890s and 1900s, readers in Argentina and beyond had access to images and exposés that helped to incorporate the southernmost extreme of the nation into global imagined geographies and the national geo-body.[259] The process of geographic conceptualization was an integral component of state-formation, and reveals the tension between a national vision and foreign understandings of southernmost Patagonia. On the one hand, Argentines would increasingly refer to the south as the "Argentine Siberia." This was an ominous space, one counter to Argentine ideas of modernity, but an Argentine problem nonetheless. On the other, explorers used the "end of the world" to evoke an open and in many ways non-national space rather than the southern extreme of Argentina (or Chile).[260] Both terms were spoken with an authority that implied a self-evident understanding of this pocket of the world. And yet, neither term was neutral. Each spoke to economies of vision. Each engaged in acts of erasure and estrangement.

The End of the World

Colonel Charles Wellington Furlong was an explorer, professor, and artist. Born in Massachusetts in 1874, at just twenty-one years of age he became a painting instructor at Cornell University. Before his thirtieth birthday he embarked on a trip to northern Africa where he helped to identify the wreckage of the U.S. frigate *Philadelphia* off the coast of Tripoli. Furlong would spend most of his life seeking more adventures and the mysteries of the unknown. Three

[259] On "imagined geographies," see Part One in, Edward Said, *Orientalism* (1978; New York: Vintage Books, 1994). See also Timothy Mitchell, *Colonizing Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991). On the "geo-body," see Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997).

[260] Such subversions of national and indigenous sovereignty exist today in region's such as the Amazon, where the forests are considered to be the "lungs of the earth" first and foremost. See, Alcida Rita Ramos, "Pulp Fictions of Indigenism," in *Race, Nature, and Politics of Difference*, ed. Donald Moore, Jake Kosek, and Anand Pandian (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003). See also the review essay, Candace Slater, "Visions of the Amazon: What Has Shifted, What Persists, and Why This Matters" *Latin American Research Review* 50, no. 3 (2015): 3-23.

years after traveling to Africa, this lust for *terra incognita* took him to southern South America. Furlong's goal was to hunt and travel with the natives of Tierra del Fuego, the same peoples Charles Darwin had called the most abject of all human beings.

In 1906 he wrote to Moritz Braun, the head of one of the most prominent families in the region, to inquire about transportation possibilities and the relative safety of traveling through the region. Braun informed Furlong that horseback was the only way to navigate the southern mountains, and that his guide would surely not travel beyond the hooves of his horse. The following year, 1907, Furlong departed New York City for Punta Arenas, Chile, where he would connect to Ushuaia. He noted that the seemingly short leg between the bustling city of Punta Arenas to the recently established Argentine town of Ushuaia offered a particular departure from civilization, "Over the seven thousand miles which separate Punta Arenas from New York, and you feel you are somewhat out of the world; but wind your way three hundred miles farther south and east through the intricate channel-ways of the Fuegian Archipelago, be dropped ashore at a lone penal colony of murderers and felons, and you are in truth at the very ends of the earth" [Figure 17].[261]

[261] Rauner Special Collection (D-RSC), Dartmouth College, MSS-197, Box 3, Folder 30.

Figure 17. Colonel Furlong's routes through the Fuegian Archipelago, 1909
Furlong, "Amid the Islands of the Land of Fire"

The "ends of the earth," were precisely what Furlong sought in Tierra del Fuego, as he endeavored to bring this far-flung region home through a number of paintings that captured his adventure. While the majority of these paintings focused on the local natives, he could not help but portray the chilling and lonely qualities of the penal colony erected in 1902 [Figure 18].

Figure 18. Charles Wellington Furlong, "Argentine Convict with Ox Team," 1908
Smithsonian American Art Museum, Renwick Gallery

The image shows a single discernable inmate leading a cart and two oxen on a desolate shore under leaden skies. In his field journal Furlong noted that inmate labor was employed to build the town's roads and the faintly pictured telegraph lines that seemingly led to nowhere. With few guards to watch over them, inmates often roamed the shores with relative freedom. From these notes he would write many years later, "Without man's agencies, Ushuaia itself is imprisoned: behind, the impassable barrier of jagged peaks with their perpetual snows; in front, the limitless gale-swept channelways; beyond, to the south, the Antarctic Ocean."[262] Furlong's painting, which complemented his written accounts quite well, came from a photograph he had taken in 1907 [Figure 19].

[262] Charles Wellington Furlong, "Amid the Islands of the Land of Fire," *Harper's Monthly Magazine* 18, no. 705 (February 1909): 338-39.

Figure 19. Charles Wellington Furlong, "Convict at Work for the Government Prison, Ushuaia" 1907
Baker Library, Dartmouth College, MSS 197 VIII-47

Comparing the two images, it is clear that Furlong painted out one of the most powerful of "man's agencies" in the photograph: a steamship. This alteration gave the impression that Ushuaia was more desolate and remote than the photograph captured, therefore giving credence to Furlong's claim that Ushuaia was at the very ends of the earth. Indeed, visible in the photograph is the Argentine flag waving on the vessel. Aware of these implications, Furlong would write in his notes years later that two human endeavors had the greatest effect on Fuegia: first the positive economic impact of the steamship; then the sapping of the economy wrought by the Panama Canal which redirected transatlantic shipping. The images predate the Central American route that circumvented travel away from Cape Horn, but nevertheless sought to erase the creeping advance of a "civilized" world on a "native" and "wild" corner of the globe.

Furlong, of course, was not alone. Travel and exploration photos and images are often less about what was seen and more about what was hoped to be seen, that which was desirable, proprietary, and exploitable.[263] Within this framework, a durable traveler lexicon built upon Charles Darwin's work had reduced Patagonia to a prehistoric, windswept, and people-less place. The HMS Beagle had come, and just as importantly, sailed away [Figure 20]. The ephemeral nature of exploration and contact in Tierra del Fuego perpetuated what literary scholar Gabriela Nouzeilles calls the "imperial geographical imagination" fixated on how "Patagonia's lack of limits connects it to the myth of vanishing into the end of the world."[264] Furlong's photo-turned-painting reveals the vanishing act behind this marketed myth.

Figure 20. Conrad Martens, "The HMS Beagle at Tierra del Fuego," Sketches 1831-1836
Royal Museums Greenwich, National Maritime Museum

[263] D. Graham Burnett, *Masters of all they Surveyed: Exploration, Geography, and a British El Dorado* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).
[264] Nouzeilles, "Patagonia as Borderland," 36.

In early December 1932, twenty-five years after his first visit, Furlong stuck to his story and opened an address to the Royal Geographical Society with the enticing claim, "Few sections of the globe are less generally known or intrigue the imagination more than the cold Land of Fire."[265] Even Jules Verne's *Nautilus* had traversed the region, he noted, folding fiction into the fever. The address was published in March 1933 and emphasized the Land of Fire's (Tierra del Fuego) place within the "globe" rather than Argentina. This was no subtle claim, as the Argentine government and nationalist explorers had striven to incorporate the region for more than half-a-century prior to this high-profile address.

Analogue Geographies

What was produced at the turn-of-the-century can be called "analogue geographies." These were often a series of analogies used to place regions within a set of cultural referents. As Paul Carter writes, when nature does not do what we expect it to, the logic of association breaks down and reveals the traveler's expectations.[266] Whereas Carter's work on Botany Bay tackles the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the case study here reveals a much larger geographic lexicon created in the subsequent century. Thus, Carpenter could say, "The Tierra del Fuego of the geographies and encyclopedias is a dreary land of snow and ice, of glaciers and rocky wastes. Let me tell the reader what the real Tierra del Fuego is." Carpenter continued by offering a relatable set of references to an audience in the United States, "The archipelago of Tierra del Fuego contains as much land as Kansas. It is wider from west to east than from

[265] Charles Wellington Furlong, "Exploration in Tierra del Fuego and the Fuegian Archipelago: A paper read at the Evening Meeting of the Society on 5 December 1932," *The Geographical Journal* 81, no. 3 (March 1933): 211. This report is based on multiple expeditions during 1907-08, 1910, and 1926.
[266] Paul Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay: An Exploration of Landscape and History* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1987).

Cleveland to Chicago, and from north to south it is longer than from New York to Boston."[267] This expanded set of referents meant that comparisons and relations—this as that—were increasingly effective ways of conveying what something was, or was not. But, it was also built on assumptions about what these place-names evoked for diverse audiences, which could result in spatial slippage.

Such analogies were often copies of copies, in which the origins or authenticity gets lost in re-recordings. This is not to say that some original or authentic representation can be found, or even that such an understanding would be more persuasive. Furlong's image has had a much larger and lasting impact on how Tierra del Fuego is viewed than has Carpenter's because, at least in part, it repeated the lasting authority of Darwin. Furlong embedded and entrenched an existing narrative of prehistoric wildness. Readers were not passive recipients of these representations, but instead saw in them what they wanted to see. Deborah Poole has shown the "pleasures of empire" experienced through this visual culture displayed in various exhibits, and in the case of Hiram Bingham's photographs from Machu Picchu in the 1930s, she shows the role of the "journey" in conveying "undiscovered" landscapes.[268] With so much of the world now known, readers in the early 1900s wanted this "uttermost part of the earth" to remain out of reach. Furlong stressed the 7,000-mile distance between New York and Punta Arenas, and the still more treacherous 300 miles traveled to reach Ushuaia to convince audiences that he had indeed traveled to the ends of the earth.

In 1900, seven years before Furlong's initial arrival, a scholar and text-book maker from Ohio, Frank G. Carpenter, traveled to Tierra del Fuego and wrote, "Even now the savages I see

[267] Carpenter, *South America*, 278.
[268] Deborah Poole, "Landscape and the Imperial Subject: U.S. Images of the Andes, 1859-1930" in *Close Encounters of Empire: Writing the Cultural History of U.S.-Latin American Relations*, ed. Gilbert M. Joseph, Catherine C. LeGrand, and Ricardo D. Salvatore (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998): 107-38.

here are less known than many tribes of Central Africa, and only the coasts of a few of the islands have been explored. The sheep farmer, the gold digger, and the government vessels, are, however, making headway, and within a few years this great archipelago will be a *terra incognita* no longer."[269] By the time renowned New York state artist Rockwell Kent ventured to the region in 1924, his fantasy of an untouched corner of the world was broken through the most benign of encounters. As he played cards one evening with locals under candlelight, entranced by the "inarticulate immensity" of a landscape where men and mountains met, his trance was "shattered by discovering that after all the picturesque Spanish playing cards were made in Cleveland, Ohio."[270] Thus, even the smallest of human prints infiltrated the island.

The degree to which explorers would admit or betray the developments they saw is often lost in the process of circulation and publication.[271] Explorers dialogued with and learned from locals and indigenous groups during their journeys. However, in their publications such interactions often went undiscussed, or were subsumed by the authority and positionality of the explorer—similar to the contribution of inmates regarding forestry in Tierra del Fuego. Moreover, while discussions with locals may have reflected geographies that existed within a local milieu, explorers filtered and translated these descriptions and understandings through their own geographical lenses.

While such cartographic gaps and uncertainties frustrated statesmen, they also conveyed past adventures through limited but luring place-names such as Useless Bay, Desolation Island, and Hunger Port, or the more optimistic, Future Bay (Bahía del Porvenir). False starts, lost men,

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[269] Frank G. Carpenter, *South America: Social, Industrial, and Political* (New York: Western W. Wilson, 1900): 261.
[270] Rockwell Kent, *Voyaging Southward from the Strait of Magellan* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1924): 127.
[271] Mary Louis Pratt calls this process "transculturation." Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*. See also, Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra's discussion of Alexander von Humboldt in, *Nature, Empire, and Nation: Explorations of the History of Science in the Iberian World* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2006).

and elusive geographical markers taunted explorers. However, by the time Colonel Furlong traveled south in 1907, geographic knowledges had changed a great deal around the world. Many of the perceived far corners and deep interiors of the earth had been discovered by Europeans, surveyed, made legible, and circulated through maps and novels. From geographers such as Élisée Reclus to novelists like Jules Verne whom his works inspired, a popular lexicon had been gathering on paper and in minds.[272] Verne's later work in the early 1900s focused on the Magallanes and Tierra del Fuego region because, as the age of exploration ended, this corner of the world seemed to lack a clear sovereign power and therefore maintained an unknown, end of the world quality.[273]

Nevertheless, the world's frontiers seemed to be closing.[274] Scholar Thomas Richards argues that this period at the close of the nineteenth century marked a shift from imperial knowledge accumulation to an era of knowledge ordering, as, it seemed, there was precious little left to uncover.[275] Literary scholar Rosalind Williams has similarly observed that this period marked the triumph of human empire around the globe. "No matter where you go, there you are," she echoes from a film, and imperial powers could triangulate and describe precisely your coordinates.[276] Exploration and geographic knowledge was tied to other fields, such as natural history, forming a network of sciences in which individuals, their notes, and ideas traveled well-

[272] Reclus' massive *Universal Geography* series covered the world over, including a very detailed history of exploration in Tierra del Fuego. See volume eighteen, *South America: The Andes Region* (1895).
[273] Verne wrote about the region in *Lighthouse at the End* (1905) and *Magellania* published as *The Survivors of the "Jonathan"* (1909). Both works were published posthumously, and the latter was extensively edited by Verne's son. Pierre-Jules Hetzel refused to include a map in an earlier novel by Verne from 1887 because of this controversial frontier.
[274] Frederick Jackson Turner, for example, delivered his frontier thesis from 1893 at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. On theorizing the frontier, see, Kerwin L. Klein, *Frontiers of Historical Imagination: Narrating the European Conquest of Native America, 1890-1990* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).
[275] Thomas Richards, *The Imperial Archive: Knowledge and the Fantasy of Empire* (New York: Verso, 1993).
[276] For more, see Rosalind Williams, *The Triumph of Human Empire: Verne, Morris, and Stevenson at the End of the World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013): x. Williams pulls this quote from the film, *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai Across the Eighth Dimension* (1984).

beyond their expeditions.[277] None of this knowledge was perfect, of course, and many of these discoveries were re-discoveries of indigenous and local knowledge. But, enclosure and imperial knowledge went hand in hand, and the squeeze was felt by peoples around the world—it was becoming harder for explorers to claim encounters with the unknown.

Nations in a Nation

While foreign explorers may have treated Tierra del Fuego as the "end of the world" and a space for exploration open to all, there had long been a collaboration between Argentine statesmen and foreign explorers for nationalist ends. Various international scientific and exploration groups looked toward the Argentine Pampas and Patagonia as a rich laboratory in the field. A growing network of English and French expatriates engaging in commerce resided in Buenos Aires, and provided a familiar intellectual community for scientists coming from Europe, who would stop in the capital before heading south. These travelers, including Darwin, would meet with Argentine political leaders and receive support for their expeditions in the form of horses, food, and other supplies.[278] As scientists ventured beyond the authority of Buenos Aires, they often embraced particular cultural practices of *el sur*. Many Europeans, therefore, tacitly recognized Patagonia as a region within the Argentine territory. Thus, Patagonia was a peripheral space in a peripheral state where Europeans conducted research, and to varying degrees, defined the significance of the region.[279]

By the 1870's, however, it was Argentine nationalist explorers who sought to claim and define Patagonia. Literary scholar Jens Andermann describes this well, "The Argentine state in

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[277] Bruno Latour was pioneering in this analysis. See, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2005). See also, Regina Horta Duarte, "Between the National and the Universal: Natural History Networks in Latin America in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," *ISIS* 104 (2013): 777-787.

[278] For example, Darwin highlighted in his notes the ways in which travelers acculturated themselves into the Patagonian lifestyle; he personally felt like a *gaucho* drinking mate. Novoa and Levine, *From Man to Ape*, 25-26.

[279] Nouzeilles, "Patagonia as Borderland," 36.

its expansion southward had to reclaim Patagonia from the imperial discourses in which it had figured as a global frontier from as early on as Magellan's discovery of a southern passage connecting the oceans."[280] Indeed, Francisco P. Moreno, Argentina's foremost naturalist, considered himself an agent of the state, whose job it was to conduct science in and for *la patria*, while President Julio Roca argued that Patagonia would be transformed from a space of anarchy to a space of science.[281] Thus, the frontier discourse was transformed into a discourse linked with science, progress, and most importantly, nationalism. Ultimately, however, they replicated Darwin's representation after their own travels. Francisco P. Moreno conceded that "everything is the same, monotony is unbearable here… the enthusiasm of [our] first endeavors vanishes in us as we proceed."[282]

Despite these frustrations, the first map of the modern Argentine republic was created in 1875 by Arthur von Seelstrang. The map was presented at the Philadelphia Exposition in 1876, and in subsequent years, various media outlets and government initiatives would seek to visualize and normalize the Argentine geo-body. In this map, completed just before the onset of the Conquest of the Desert that pushed south into regions never under Spanish control, Patagonia was represented as little more than a blank white space—the great fear of empires and nation-states.[283] In subsequent decades, geography texts were used in schools to bring these spaces into the national imagination. The features of Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego were used to explain

[280] Andermann, *The Optic of the State*, 131.
[281] Jagoe, *The End of the World as They Knew It*, 107.
[282] Francisco P. Moreno, *Viaje a la Patagonia Austral* (1879; Buenos Aires: El Elefante Blanco, 1997): 275. For more on these "patriotic fictions of place," see, Nouzeilles, "The Iconography of Desolation," 260-61.
[283] A nuanced work concerning early efforts at abstraction and the supposed neutrality of mapping and science is, Matthew Edney, *Mapping an Empire: The Geographical Construction of British India, 1765-1843* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), while a more thorough social history of mapping and the situated struggles of state-craft is, Craib, *Cartographic Mexico*, 2004.

physical geography, such as providing the definitions of an island, straits, and other features exemplified in the region [Figure 21].

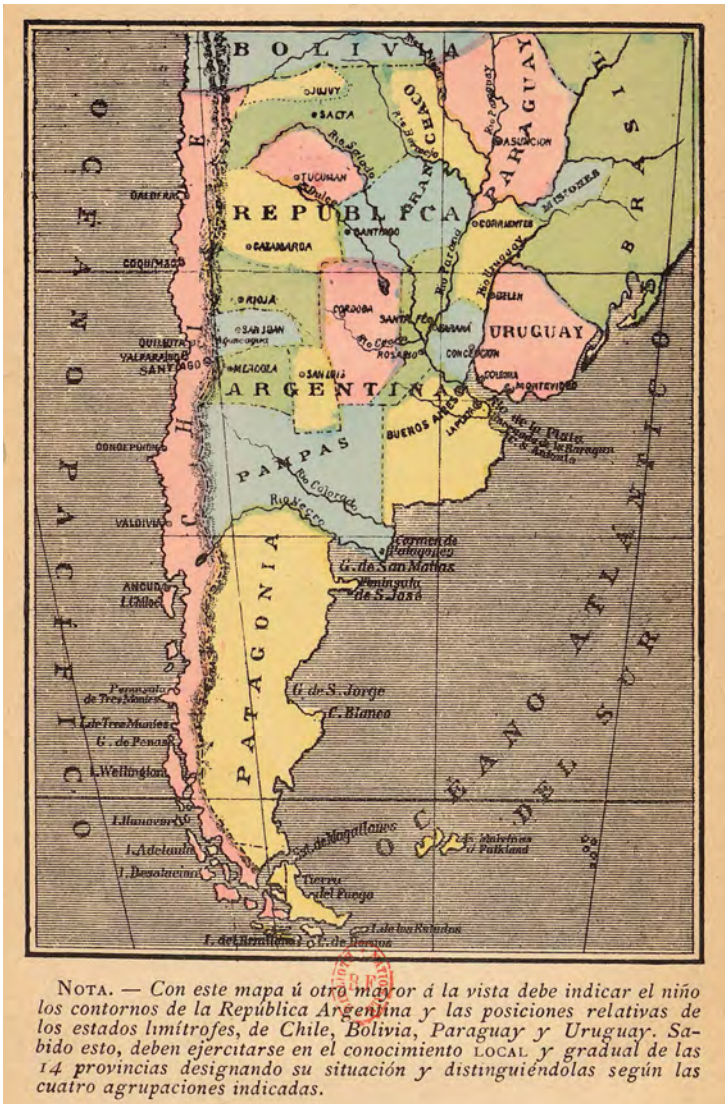

Figure 21. Patagonia, Geography Lessons, 1890
Benigno T. Martínez, *Lecciones de geografía*

President Roca had declared in 1899 that Patagonia was once a *res nullius*, but no longer. Nevertheless, between 1895 and 1902, political tensions were high. Many of the Argentine-Chilean disputes stemmed from continued uncertainty as to what a southern Andean border actually meant. Their 1881 treaty defined the border as the Andean peaks, or, the height of the watershed. The problem was, in the southern Andes, these two physical geographical features do

no always coincide. Therefore, a game of pushing the boundaries, or perceived boundaries, brought the two nations on the brink of war. Both sides claimed innocence of any treaty violations, and once again, arbiters had to settle the dispute.[284] In 1901, at the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, a cartoonist played on the continued fears of Argentina and Chile that Patagonia could not be controlled and border disputes would not be resolved. Patagonia in the image was an autonomous region in the Southern Cone, one that was potentially open to U.S. interests, and non-Western Hemispheric influence [Figure 22].[285]

The great Balancing Act at Buffalo

It takes the Yankee nation
To make equilibration.
But every time you turn around
Pop! goes the Kaiser!
(With apologies to the Weasel)

Figure 22. The Great Balancing Act at Buffalo, 1901
Albert Levering, *Harper's Weekly*

[284] Rauch, *Conflict in the Southern Cone,* 167-192.
[285] Patagonia was a regular territorial anxiety for the Argentine state. They later feared an invasion by Nazi Germany. See, Ernesto Bohoslavsky, *El Complot Patagónico: Nación, Conspiracionismo y Violencia en el Sur de Argentina y Chile (Siglos XIX y XX)* (Buenos Aires: Prometeo Libros, 2009). In 1904, situated on the border of the Andean peaks, the statue of Christ the Redeemer of the Andes was erected to symbolize peace and cooperation. On this resolution, see, Gordon Ireland, *Boundaries, Possessions, and Conflicts in South America* (New York: Octagon Books, 1971).

After Argentine explorers failed to dislodge the narrative of monotony and sterility that characterized Patagonia, and in the face of geopolitical tensions, the Argentine government took another approach. Beyond filling in the blank spaces on the map with place-names and municipal boundaries to exert control and knowledge, statesman and businessmen envisioned a Europe within the Argentine Republic, one that Europeans themselves might bring to fruition.[286] One of the more telling maps capturing this vision was presented at the National Congress on Geography in Rome in 1913 [Figure 23].[287]

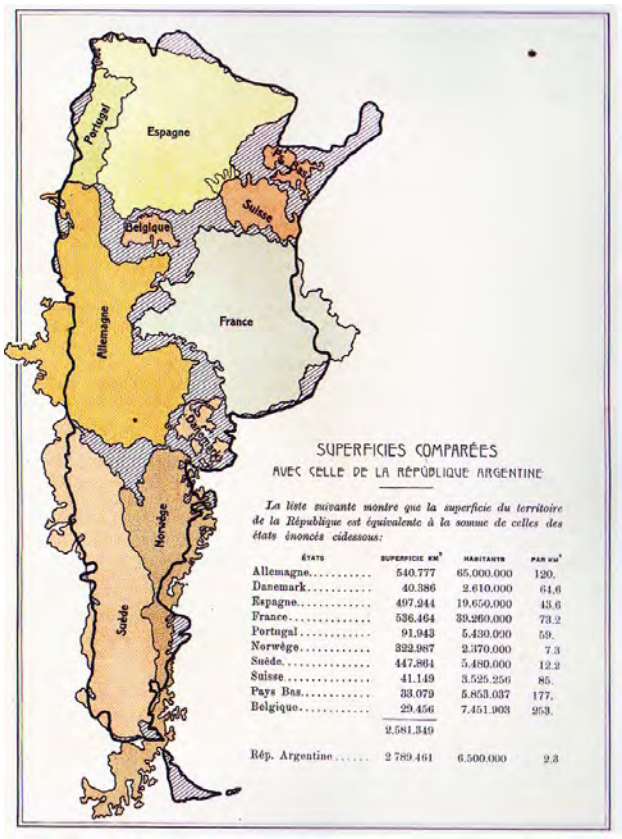

Figure 23. Surface Area Comparisons with the Argentine Republic, 1913
"Superfices compares avec celle de la República Argentine"

[286] By the mid-1870's, the Welsh in Northern Patagonia's Chubut Valley produced enough surplus to exchange with Buenos Aires and the Tehuelche. The reified autonomy of the Welsh threatened the Argentine state, provoking elites to periodically assert their power over the Welsh to remind the community that their autonomy was limited. Glyn Williams, *The Welsh in Patagonia: The State and the Ethnic Community* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1991).
[287] Carla Lois, "Measuring Up and Fitting In," in *Mapping Latin America: A Cartographic Reader*, ed. Jordana Dym and Karl Offen (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011): 163-167.

The map depicts the national boundaries of Argentina, within which are nine European nations and a region, superimposed, to show that Argentine surface area was roughly equal to Spain, Portugal, Switzerland, Belgium, France, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, and the Basque Country, combined. Argentina's population, however, was less than half of these nations' collective populations. The map was meant to entice European immigrants to bring their regional knowledge to till the many soils of the eastern southern cone. While the selection and arrangement of these nations in the map is not entirely explained, there is some geographic logic that presents a mirror image of the northern and southern hemispheres. The Iberian nations occupied the warmer north, continental nations filled the temperate pampas, and the long and slender nations of Sweden and Norway stretched out over the cold plains and mountains of Patagonia.

Switzerland in particular took hold as a way to frame and portray northern Patagonia (though in this map, its boundaries did not quite fit the design and therefore it occupies the semi-tropical north). While Swiss immigrants never took to the land as the government hoped, it still served as a positive promotional image. As historian Pedro Navarro Floria argued that the "representation mutated from a suggestion of agro-industrial development similar to the Swiss to a mere object of visual consumption by tourism also tells us to what extent the Switzerland of Argentina has remained confined to certain discursive practices, which on the material plane have been limited to the production of a tourist resource."[288] This emphasis on tourism came from multiple studies carried out in northern Patagonia. The geologist Bailey Willis noted in 1914 that as Lago Nahuel Huapí in northwestern Patagonia compared with Lake Lucerne, so

[288] Navarro Floria, "Landscapes of an Uncertain Progress."

should the town of Bariloche compare with the city of Lucerne as a tourist resort.[289] Journalist Roberto Payró traveled extensively through austral Argentina in 1898, and was similarly entranced by the sound of the Beagle Channel when in Ushuaia, noting that its echoes created an eccentric music. It reminded him of Switzerland and the avalanches in the Alps.[290]

Today Nahuel Huapí and the Lake District in the central Andes is one of the most celebrated natural regions in Argentina. There, one can travel through Parque Nacional Perito Moreno, named in honor of the explorer who saw the beauty of the Andes (and the monotony of the Patagonian plains—though he never reached the glacier that bears his name further south). Both Nahuel Huapí and Tierra del Fuego offer mountains, forests, lakes, and snow-capped mountains, and indeed, today, both are celebrated for their natural beauty. However, their early trajectories were quite different. Inspired by the United States national park system, as well as by the celebration of Andean beauty extolled by nationalist explorers, Argentine officials began discussing the preservation and conversation of national lands in the mountains. In 1902, the Argentine government ratified the national parks law, which had been, in large part, initiated by Moreno. The next year, lands were donated for Nahuel Huapí National Park, which preserved the Andean picturesque that Moreno had argued would overturn the image of Patagonia as wasteland. Ushuaia too would become a national park, as land were donated in 1910 for that purpose. However, its inauguration would not come until 1960 [Figure 24].

[289] Willis, *Northern Patagonia*, 414-416.
[290] Payró, *La Australia Argentina*, 246. Payró could not be entranced for long. He noted that the mountains were a succession of "anarchy," in which multiple peaks were called "Olivia" while others were unnamed. The island needed to be captured and ordered by man so as to flourish as a tourist destination rather than languish as a nebulous corner of the world.

Figure 24. Tierra del Fuego Territory, 1917
AHC, División de Limites Internacionales, Mapoteca 4; Cajon 4, Orden 2

Argentine Siberia

While some naturalists had praised the beauty of Tierra del Fuego in these early years, at least as early as 1909 Ushuaia was labeled the "Argentine Siberia," which appeared in an exposé published in *Caras y Caretas*. The image showed military inmates laboring outdoors in a section of the country known for its "mists, cold, and storms."[291] The labeling at this time, however, was rather benign—it was merely geographical—as *Caras y Caretas* spoke positively of the institution and its director. [292] In fact, Director Muratgia had published on Siberia a year earlier in 1905 in his sweeping history of global prisons, characterizing the Russian prison system as one of the world's most brutal and backwards carceral schemes.[293] Siberia and Ushuaia, Muratgia

[291] "El presidio militar de Ushuaia," *Caras y Caretas* 547 (1909). *La Vanguardia* also used the term "Siberia argentina" when they covered the sending of men via steamships one morning in late November 1911; "Penitenciaría Nacional," *La Vanguardia*, November 30, 1911
[292] "Los últimos progresos de Ushuaia," *Caras y Caretas* 403 (1906). For more on these reports, see chapter one.
[293] Muratgia, *Breve estudios*, 92-93. It was harsher than the upstate New York Auburn system in which inmates labored communally outdoors, which Muratgia generally supported. However, the working conditions were too rigorous in Russia. Moreover, instead of returning to individual cells at night, inmates were housed in common, which was dangerous for inmates and guards.

could claim, may have been similar geographically, but they functioned very differently from one another as penal colonies.

Ushuaia was hardly the only prison during the turn-of-the-century to be compared with Siberia. It was one of many institutions caught in a global carceral imaginary, a short-hand that could be loaded with a number of significant political, cultural, and geographic claims. Devil's Island in French Guiana, Pentonville in London, Eastern State in Philadelphia, these names resonated with people around much of the world. While the cold climate and physical geography of southernmost Argentina seemed to evoke a natural comparison with northern and eastern Russia, writers often conflated prison regimes with geographical place names to make their comparisons and sell print. Some writers went as far as naming Florida the American Siberia, and comparing the María Islands off the coast of Mexico to Siberia.[294] In these latter two examples, any geographic reference seems scant, and instead, a series of assumptions about carceral regimes is invoked to criticize a local prison system.

For Argentina, where the Siberian comparison carried more weight, the elusive nature of Ushuaia seemed to be rooted in its location south of the Martial Mountains. While mainland Patagonia, stretching from Neuquén to Santa Cruz, was mythologized as windswept, vast and monotonous, it nevertheless shared a horizon with Buenos Aires. Looking southward from the capital, the rolling pampas smoothly transitioned to the desert steppe, going on for what many claimed was eternity. Even further south across the Strait of Magellan, northern Tierra del Fuego continued this flat stretch, and sheep ranchers profited from the terrain of the steppe like their

[294] See, J. C. Powell, *The American Siberia: Or, Fourteen Years' Experience in a Southern Convict Camp* (Philadelphia: H. J. Smith & Co., 1891). Powell references George Kennan, *Siberia and the Exile System*, from the same year as his inspiration. On Mexico, see, Javier Piña y Palacios, *La Colonia Penal de Las Islas Marias: Su historia, organización u regimen* (Mexico City: Ediciones Botas, 1970). See also, Jack Norton, "Little Siberia, Star of the North: The political Economy of Prison Dreams in the Adirondacks" in *Historical Geographies of Prisons: Unlocking the Usable Carceral Past*, ed. Karen Morin and Dominique Moran (New York: Routledge, 2015).

counterparts in Santa Cruz. This landscape finally changed, as Julio Popper noted in his 1887 expedition, when one reached the southern Andean peaks and descended the Martial Mountains through a nearly impassible forest. The melancholy aspect of the region reminded Popper of a map he had seen in the National Library in Paris from the seventeenth century that revealed a "vagary of imagination."[295] The "mournful silence" of the forest region seemed beyond human control. Colonel Furlong similarly noted,

> "Of the rain-forests Darwin writes: 'In the deep ravines the death-like scene of desolation exceeded all description . . . gloomy, cold and wet was every part... the valleys ... were completely barricaded by great mouldering trunks which had fallen down in every direction . . . one's course was often arrested by sinking knee-deep into the rotten wood. At other times, when attempting to lean against a firm tree, one was startled by finding a mass of decayed matter ready to fall at the slightest touch.' It was this rain-forest that presented the greatest obstacle to my journey across Tierra del Fuego."[296]

The forest, and not the plain, was the problem. Therefore, it was a micro-geography on the south-side of the mountains that came to stand for the whole of an ill-defined, yet seemingly understood Argentine Siberia.

Geographic knowledges where stitched together during this time through journalist accounts, traveler books, and through new scientific readings such as the first comprehensive national weather forecast in 1902. This process brought the region into a national imagination (though quite unevenly as will be explored), but it also brought the region into actuality for readers. In a paradoxical way, the Argentine Siberia turned a prehistoric landscape into a contemporary national nightmare. The divide between the dry plains of the north and the wet and disorienting forests of the south, formed what can be called the leaden curtain (*plomizo*

[295] Popper, *Exploration of Tierra del Fuego*, 4.
[296] Quoting Darwin. Furlong, "Exploration in Tierra del Fuego."

Patagonia), a wall of clouds and mist, a land of mystery, a land which journalists and writers explored to further this legend rather than demystify the unknown.

But were Patagonia and Siberia mirror images? While the concept of an Argentine Siberia took hold, a northern counterpart seems less common. Though a Russian Patagonia was not unthinkable. Anton Chekhov, in his famous work on Sakhalin Island from 1895 remarked, "When I was sailing on the Amur, I had the feeling that I was not in Russia, but somewhere in Patagonia, or Texas." A few passages later, his remarks were similar to those of men passing through southern Patagonia, "this is the penal labour island; to the left, losing itself in its own convolutions, the shore disappears in the mist, heading away into the unknown north; it seems as if this place is the end of the world, and there is nowhere any further on to sail to."[297] Peter Kropotkin's descriptions of Sakhalin from nearly ten years prior in 1887 were similarly eerie,

> "There in the Northern Pacific, close by the coasts of Russian Manchuria, a wide island—one of the largest in the world,—but so out of the way of seafarers, so wild and barren, and so difficult of access, that until the last century it was quite ignored and considered as a mere appendix to the continent. Few places in the Russian Empire are worse than this island; therefore, it is to Sakhalin that the Russian Government sends now its hard-labour common-law exiles. A treble aim has always been prosecuted by exile to Siberia: to get rid of criminals in Russia at the lowest expense to the Central Government; to provide the mines which were the private property of the Emperors with cheap labour; and to colonize Siberia."[298]

These descriptions, on the one hand, spoke to similar geographies and landscapes that evoked powerful sensorial reactions and feelings, what Hugh Raffles calls a "visual lexicon" that wells up inside the traveler, knowing already what to see and feel in such spaces.[299] There was a known but indescribable quality, one that tourists today still confess. But these references are, at least in part, learned. While the prison in Ushuaia had not yet been erected at the time of these

[297] Anton Chekhov, *Sakhalin Island* trans. Brian Reeve (1895; Richmond: Alma Classics, 2007): 42; 45.
[298] Peter Kropotkin, *In Russian and French Prisons* (1887; New York: Black Rose, Books 1991): 202.
[299] Raffles, *In Amazonia*, 3.

Russian quotes, anarchists exiled to Ushuaia decades later would have read thoroughly the works of Kropotkin, and possibly Chekov. Siberia, therefore, was a particularly fitting comparison for southernmost Patagonia for this group, not simply for its geography, but later its penal colony, and the relationship between prison and place in both locations. In this regard, Tierra del Fuego while referred to as Siberia, seemed to more specifically resemble Sakhalin Island, Russian Siberia's easternmost point, at the other "end of the world."[300]

Antipodal Geographies

While early references to Siberia were largely geographic and spatial rather than political or social, in subsequent decades such comparisons became a means by which to pointedly critique the prison administration as corrupt and violent. Such critiques were led by anarchists who were in many ways responding to the increased number of their comrades exiled south following the passage of the Social Defense Law in 1910. These references gained new significance in the wake of the Russian Revolution in 1917. As historian José Moya has shown, to be Jewish, Eastern European, or anarchist, all became synonymous at this time.[301] Siberia, in other words, had social and spatial resonance, especially with the imprisonment of Ushuaia's most famous inmate, Simón Radowitzky, a Jewish, Eastern European, anarchist.

The early 1910s more generally were a time of unprecedented immigration and flux in Argentina. More Europeans entered the port of Buenos Aires during this decade than had come to the Americas during the entire span of Spanish colonialism. Thus, mass immigration was met from the very beginning with state opposition, particularly concerning those seen as political

[300] Sharyl Corrado, "A Land Divided: Sakhalin Island and the Amur Expedition of G.I. Nevel'skoi, 1844-1855" *Journal of Historical Geography* 45 (2014): 70-81.
[301] On the relationship between eastern Europe and the conflations of terms such as "Russian," "Jewish," and "Anarchist," see, Jose C. Moya, "The Positive Side of Stereotypes: Jewish Anarchists in Early-Twentieth-Century Buenos Aires," *Jewish History* 18, no. 1 (2004): 19-48.

radicals. Ushuaia, therefore, became a second port, one that was not defined by opportunity, but one rooted in confinement. The anarchist press poignantly reveals the uneven relations felt and experienced by the Left in this regard. They were more likely to know someone who had been exiled, and lived in greater fear than the average person in Argentina of being sent south, not knowing when they might return.

This charge against internal exile was led by journalist Marcial Belascoain Sayós who wrote one of the first detailed accounts of the prison in 1918 for the periodical, *La Protesta.*[302] Belascoain traveled to the region in order to provide first-hand accounts of a place that was still infrequently visited by journalists. His work tried to illuminate who was responsible for what, and possibly identify those who were trying to fulfill the prison's mission of safe and healthy environments in order to rehabilitate inmates. Belascoain began with Prison Director Major Juan Grandón. One year prior to his reports, *La Razón* argued that Director Grandón had won over the hearts of the inmates.[303] Belascoain was sympathetic and argued that Major Juan Grandón, a good and honest man, was the heart of the prison, though hardly the brains. Grandón, who would serve as director from 1915-1922, was malleable, impressionable, and merely a pawn in the hands of Mayor Gregorio Palacios.

Palacios was a prominent figure in the region, having been a resident since 1899. Belascoain painted a dark picture of Palacios as the human embodiment of the leaden surroundings, a reflection of night, black and sinister.[304] Palacios surrounded himself with eager and evil yes-men: Sub-director Victorio Llorente, scheming and violent; Assistant Warden Manuel Rocha, a nauseating drunk, and nothing more than a "chimpanzee" for Palacios; Juan J.

[302] Belascoain Sayós, *Presidio de Ushuaia*.
[303] "La Verdad en su Lugar," *La Protesta* 21, no. 3131 (Buenos Aires) August 2, 1917, p. 2-3.
[304] Alberto del Sar, "Ushuaia, tierra maldita!" *Crítica* (Buenos Aires) May 23, 1924. Del Sar similarly noted the dark character of Palacios and his black blood-stained eyes.

Rocca, a cretin with a cigarette always dangling from his lips. Palacios was the real immigrant problem for Belascoain, for he was the detritus of Europe, who came early to Tierra del Fuego where he found he could live the ideal life of an incapable imbecile. Like all "antiguos habitantes," he had unjustly built his life in the region and earned far more than his title warranted. He used prisoners to do personal work and silenced those who raised questions.

Many anarchists would continue the critique. On Christmas morning, 1920, the Buenos Aires Bakers Union (*obreros panaderos*) wrote in *Crítica* to express solidarity with their incarcerated peers, including those exiled to the "Argentine Siberia."[305] In August 1922, *La Vanguardia* published a front-page article titled, "In the Argentine Siberia: Abandoned in Ushuaia."[306] The article, in frustration, highlighted the multiple times the paper had written about the misery, suffering, and fires that the prison created under the frozen Antarctic skies. The Argentine government could do little more than construct such a tortuous prison in the state's attempt to colonize the region, while Chile, at the same latitude, had risen to the occasion and produced a bustling city. Apart from the Fuegian wood used to construct the town, Ushuaia was nothing more than a "small creole Siberia" overlooked by the regular shipping routes of the nation.

In 1925, Juan Piccini was named the new prison director and charged with improving and regularizing prison conditions after a report filed by inspector Vicente Rodríguez Ribas, which criticized prison operations. Authorities highly recommended Piccini and the public praised him, yet *La Antorcha* was skeptical of Antonio Sagarna, the minister of justice and public works, and his appointing of Piccini.[307] Publications like *La Protesta* similarly doubted such benevolence,

[305] "Movimiento Obrero," *Crítica*, December 25, 1920.
[306] "En la Siberia argentina," *La Vanguardia*, August 22, 1922.
[307] "Por Simón Radowitzki" *La Antorcha*, May, 15 1926.

noting that even if Piccini was enlightened, Mayor Palacios still singularly ran operations in Ushuaia, thus mitigating the potential impact of the new director.[308] Within a few years anarchist papers lumped Piccini in with Palacios as a torturer, and ultimately lambasted him for the tortures of Radowitzky in subsequent years.[309]

A year later, in 1926, the staff of *La Protesta* attacked mainstream reporters for uncritically printing the reports of the national penitentiary director, Eusebio Gómez, and the doctor who accompanied him, Parides Pietranera. Gómez's report claimed that Ushuaia left nothing to be desired beyond its distance from the capital—the prison was quite sanitary for all inmates and the region provided a salubrious environment in which to work and rehabilitate.[310] *La Protesta* editors argued that the Argentine press bought into the lies similarly sold by the Soviets regarding the Solovetzky Islands and their Solovki prisons. And yet, the paper was clear that conditions in Ushuaia were *not* worse than those in the Soviet labor camp on Solovetzky Island in the White Sea. Rather, Argentine authorities were using similar public relation campaigns to shed a positive light on the institution despite horrific conditions. *La Protesta's* goal was to make the world aware of Ushuaia and to put it in dialogue with Solovetzky to garner an international critique.[311] Why they did not fully commit to this critique is not entirely clear.

Analogue geographies relied on assumptions of knowledge and shared understandings of place, real or not. Beyond these limited references, there was rarely detail provided that linked Ushuaia with Siberia or a specific gulag. While mainstream presses would casually reference an

[308] "Una bella persona" *La Protesta*, February 12, 1925.
[309] "Estibadores O. Varios: Huelga general por Simon Radowitzky" *La Protesta*, November 11, 1928; "Hablemos de la Argentina" *La Antorcha*, January 12, 1929.
[310] "En Ushuaia todo va bien," *La Protesta* 5, no. 236 (Buenos Aires) August 16, 1926, 1.
[311] These comparisons were not unwarranted. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn detailed Solovetsky, noting that it was an ideal prison because it was out of contact from the world half of the year. Felling and chopping firewood was a primary chore, and unlike the mainland prisons, inmates could roam with limited freedom. Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago, 1918-1956* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973): 462-466.

"Argentine Siberia," anarchist papers were more persistent and specific in their claims, revealing deeper political struggle and understanding of these parallels. At times they had boots on the ground pamphleting on the streets of Ushuaia like their comrades in Buenos Aires and other northern communities.[312] Association and analogy, therefore, were key forms of understanding. Ushuaia as Siberia, but also, Radowitzky as martyr and Palacios as punisher. Reduction, in other words, was a way to make individuals and summary statements stand in for the whole.[313]

Amid these critiques in the 1920s was Alberto del Sar's running column for *Crítica*, "Ushuaia: The Cursed Land." Its first article opened with competing visions of the region. "Ushuaia is the end of a journey," with its enchanting beauty, sleeping lakes, and snow-capped mountains. One arrives, after twelve days aboard a steamship to encounter the graveyard that is Ushuaia Bay, filled with shipwrecks from decades past, amid a natural setting that no artist could adequately capture.[314] Del Sar, however, did not want to repeat this nature narrative, and instead was interested in Ushuaia' new inhabitants and their social environment. He wanted to know Ushuaia up close, from the other side (*de otro modo*). Over his eight-day visit del Sar welcomed Ushuaia's winds because without them, the stench of the city was overwhelming. Moreover, the city had gone five months without light because of the conflicts between the prison authorities and local government, as the prison was the source of electricity for the town. At night, people

[312] MFM, Libros Policiales, August 9, 1941, 269-309. Leftist groups coordinated their actions, forming important linkages between the north and south through the Federación de Organismos de Ayuda a los Refugiados y Exilados (FOARE).
[313] I thank Ernesto Bassi for pointing me to Ann Stoler's work on "summary statements" in *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002). See also, the introduction in, Ernesto Bassi, *An Aqueous Territory: Sailor Geographies and New Granada's Transimperial Greater Caribbean World* (Durham: Duke University Press, forthcoming 2016).
[314] Alberto del Sar, "Ushuaia: Tierra maldita!" *Crítica*, May 19, 1924, 16. Agronomist Jorge A. Pico, for example, wrote in 1920 that the sunsets and moonlit nights in Ushuaia were spectacularly beautiful, offering artists a limitless wilderness to study. "El territorio de Tierra del Fuego," *Revista de Tierras y Colonización* (October 1920): 8. For more on the publication *Crítica* during this period, see, Sylvia Saítta, "Pasiones privadas, violencias públicas: Representaciones del delito en la prensa popular de los años veinte" in *Violencias, delitos y justicias en la Argentina*, ed. Sandra Gayol and Gabriel Kessler (Buenos Aires: Manantial, 2002).

walked the streets with revolvers and screams of agony could be heard from prisoners inside the penitentiary. After speaking to locals, he concluded that they were so accustomed to the screams that they no longer heard them.[315]

While the prison had been under local government control in the previous years, when del Sar visited in 1924 the purview had transferred the Ministry of Justice. In effect, this meant prison authorities now exercised more power than the local governor. The one million pesos allotted to the prison each year for its operation could be seen throughout the town, but first it passed through a prison sieve. Cronyism, bribes, fees, and kickbacks defined the relationship, del Sar noted, as a prison contract was a guaranteed fortune. Locals confessed that what Ushuaia needed most was inmates, lots of inmates, with long sentences to ensure a sustained local industry.[316]

Retired marine Ramón Herrera had taken the post of Palacios when del Sar began his reporting, but the atrocities continued. He retold stories conveyed in Radowitzky's letters from 1921 that he sent to the FORA to publish, thus giving the work a new audience in *Crítica*—he also published an eponymous pamphlet using collections from his daily column on the prison from mid-May to mid-June 1924.[317] Del Sar was critical of society's "vengeance" taken against the condemned, and while there was no doubt that many of these men committed crimes, these were crimes of passion often made in an instant. Society and the law, however, consciously punished these men for a lifetime.

Del Sar appealed to society's moral compass to end the atrocities. In particular, he built

[315] "Ushuaia! Tierra maldita!" *Crítica*, May 19, 1924, 16.
[316] "Ushuaia! Tierra maldita!" *Crítica*, May 21, 1924, 16
[317] Alberto del Sar, *Ushuaia: La Tierra Maldita Tomo I* (Buenos Aires: Gurkunkel, 1924). The cover caption said, "Vista del presidio de Ushuaia. Esta construida con la misma piedra que se saca de la cantera, por los penados no tiene mura porque no la necesita. La muralla del fondo es la nieve eternal."

up Simón Radowitzky's status as a martyr, which was a major preoccupation for authorities. Indeed, some criminologists included the desire for martyrdom in their analysis of criminal impulses. Francisco de Veyga wrote,

> "Every anarchist today is predisposed to crime. All are equally fanatical and resolute, and do not need an inspiration for crime other than the example of those who have already fallen, whose painful but sublime footsteps they follow to their own sacrifice. To kill and destroy is perhaps an excuse to become a hero…"[318]

Del Sar, however, focused on Radowitzky's continued struggle—he could not stand to see a fellow prisoner sick and would find them tonics and medicine, or if in the forests, he would give up his boots to a fellow inmate in need. This narrative established Radowitzky as a hero and Palacios (and his cronies) as the ultimate villain. He was a caretaker for the poor and the hungry. He was a savior.

It became a simple narrative of good against evil that was rooted in material needs, or the deprivation of those needs; Ushuaia could only be defined as death by hunger.[319] And, while prisoners died of hunger, as well as diseases such as tuberculosis, Palacios and his guards would drink champagne and smoke Cuban cigars, or in the case of Herrera, sip cherry brandy as inmates begged for mercy. Palacios was the only one responsible for the crimes of Ushuaia, for he issued the orders. In fact, Palacios did not actually enter the pavilions, and instead, paced frantically and ordered his minions about to administer punishments. Del Sar tells his readers that when he saw Palacios, it took all of his strength to keep from screaming, "Hangman!... Murderer!"

Constructing Palacios helped to construct Radowitzky. A recent documentary shares the

[318] Veyga assessed Planas Virella, a Spaniard who attempted to assassinate Argentine President Quintana in 1905, by citing Virella's biological and psychological irregularities, which were genetic and could similarly be witnessed in his sister's hysterical and epileptic attacks. See Rodriguez, *Civilizing Argentina*.
[319] *Crítica*, May 22, 1924, 9.

theory that when Radowitzky and his companions were trying to select the individual to assassinate Police Chief Ramón Falcon, Radowitzky was intentionally selected because he was a minor and therefore would not be sentenced to death.[320] If this theory holds true, then Radowitzky was selected for martyrdom not through death, but through imprisonment, sparking a call to arms for the release of all political prisoners. Radowitzky was not a corpse and idea to be mourned, but instead a living body to be fought for, to revive in its fading, and to be freed as a sign of justice.[321] Anarchist papers ran articles regularly on Radowitzky for the twenty years that he was imprisoned, calling him the prisoners' "guardian angel" (*angel tutelar*) who raised the spirits of fellow inmates.[322] Radowitzky was given a Christ-like martyrdom. Bringing him back from Ushuaia was no less than raising the "Jesus of the twentieth century" from the dead.[323] His physical and mental health were consistently defended, confirmed, and elevated, to reassure the flock of his unwavering strength.

The image of an Argentine Siberia and an earthly purgatory, coupled with the battle between martyr and punisher, blurred the lines between the end of the world and spiritual geographies. Fernando Gualtieri, who dedicated his poem, "Ushuaia: Anatema," to the anarchist journalist Belascoain Sayos, portrayed this tensions well.[324] Gualtieri's pamphlet was damning in broad strokes—the prisoners were victims, the guards were torturers, and the island, as the opening lines claimed, was infamous and abject (*Tierra infame, tierra abyecta*). He situated Ushuaia within a global mosaic of punishment, arguing that Ushuaia was more wicked and

[320] *Simón, hijo del pueblo: Historia y legado de Simón Radowitzky* (INCAA, Cine Argentino 2013).
[321] On posthumous martyrs and reputational entrepreneurs see, Michaela DeSoucey et al., "Memory and Sacrifice: An Embodied Theory of Martyrdom" *Cultural Sociology* 2, no. 1 (2008): 99-121.
[322] "Con Simon Radowitzky" *La Protesta* 23, February 21, 1930.
[323] International Institute of Social History (IIHS) Bro 396/21, *Historia del mártir Simón Radowitzky*. It was important for the leftist movement, therefore, to follow Radowitzky even after his release in 1930. They would share stories and provide details of his continued work to show that the prison had not defeated him. Despite these subsequent publications, it seems that Radowitzky lived a somewhat quiet life after his release.
[324] Fernando Gualtieri, *Ushuaia: Anatema* (Buenos Aires: Imprenta Ferrari Hnos, 1918).

savage than Siberia; more infected and bloody than Austria's Spielberg; more barbarous and mournful than Italy's Lípari and France's Cayena; and more perfidious than the stocks of England; a black land whose punishments were more tragic and deplorable than those committed in Spain's Montjuich.

That Gualtieri could reference prisons from around the world spoke to an impressive carceral imagination that had emerged by the early twentieth century built on a longer history of fiction and non-fiction prison literature.[325] And yet, Gualtieri made very few direct comments on the region's geography—everything that he cursed was manmade and state-directed. The prisons he compared to Ushuaia, including those in Siberia, were referenced because of their inhumane practices, not because of geographical isolation or climate. The prison was spiritual and cosmic and Gualtieri's enemies were superhuman—he desired to become the god Jupiter to right all ills and punish the region's wrongdoers. Director Palacios, in the end, was a petty king and hell-bound, while Simón Radowitzky, the anarchist martyr, was a guiding light (*hombre luz*; *padre nuestro*). He was *the* light in a land forgotten by God. As one theorist would note, "The men who inhabit the southern extremity of the globe live in Ushuaia. It is a penitentiary; the heavens are its closest neighbor."[326]

In his battle for life and social justice, Radowitzky received exponentially more media attention, analysis, and biographical publications than common inmates.[327] His signature was even published so that comrades could at once circulate his autograph, but also insure that they

[325] For more on these prisons see the early nineteenth century collection, Arthur Griffiths, *The World's Most Famous Prisons* (London, 1900). For a broad overview of "Literature of Confinement," see, Morris and Rothman, *The Oxford History of the Prison*.
[326] Ezequiel Martínez Estrada, *X-Ray of the Pampa,* 1933, 143.
[327] Biographical works on Radowitzky include, Agustin Souchy, *Una Vida Por un Ideal: Simón Radowitzky* (Mexico: El Grupo, 1956); Osvaldo Bayer, *Los anarquistas expropiadores, Simón Radowitzky y otros ensayos* (Buenos Aires: Editorio Galerna, 1975); Alejandro Martí, *Simón Radowitzky: La biografía del anarquista del atentado a Falcón a la Guerra Civil Española* (La Plata: Da la Campana, 2010).

spelled his name correctly when writing their own stories.[328] It is difficult not to replicate such attention due to source limitations, though one prisoner should not stand in for the whole. The treatment of Radowitzky's fellow prisoners, however, was quite vague. Radowitzky was released on 3 May 1930, and anarchist papers likened his return to Buenos Aires to that of famed Italian anarchist Errico Malatesta upon returning to Italy. The release was part of a larger decree that freed many political prisoners, who were welcomed home and identified for the first time—Cecilio Moreno, Costa, and Barraza.[329] Beyond this mention of fellow inmates, individual anarchists or other common political prisoners were almost never named or discussed in detail. An image of Radowitzky, on the other hand, exiting the prison in a fresh suit and hat provided by his comrades in the capital, signaled an unscathed resurrection. He even enjoyed a pickup game of soccer before his departure [Figure 25].

Figure 25. Radowitzky's First Touch, 1930
Luigi Fabbri, BG A62/732 IISH

[328] E. Barbero Sarzabal, *Radovitzky: Veinte años de Ushuaia* (Buenos Aires: 1930).
[329] "Simon" and "Noticiario de nuestros prisioneros," *La Antorcha*, May 30, 1930.

Staging Tierra del Fuego

While print reached the widest audience with regard to the prison, it was not the only way in which city-dwellers consumed visions of the penal colony. Mass media simultaneously united and divided the Argentine nation in the inter-war period. An Argentine Siberia was brought to life on stage in multiple playhouses throughout Buenos Aires during the 1920s and 1930s and speaks to class conflicts. Theater culture in Buenos Aires at this time had helped the city to earn the reputation as the "Paris of South America," and the famed Colón Theater is today one of the world's best venues for its acoustics to watch opera, concerts, and plays.[330] Beyond this famed theater, scholars have shown that plays reinforced but also constructed images of masculinity, portrayed the life of working class barrios in the south of the city, and romanticized the gaucho as the spirited Argentine frontiersman.[331] These performances and their audiences revealed the diversity of peoples and politics in Argentina. Understanding representations of southern Patagonia in this context helps reveal competing visions of the region, but also why such a mythologized "Argentine Siberia" would sell. Anarchist news outlets were often at the forefront of public opinion on the penitentiary, and similarly, theater productions from the left and working class tackled the prison.

Judith Evans' work on popular theater highlights the ubiquitous scene of *conventillo* (tenement housing) patios in the famous *sainete* (one-act) plays. This working class genre spoke to popular politics and the experiences of everyday life using *lunfardo* slang, and the scenes and their arcs became so well-known, Evans argues that writer Alberto Vacarezza could sum up the

[330] Claudia E. Benzecry, "An Opera House for the 'Paris of South America:' Pathways to the Institutionalization of High Culture" *Theo Soc* 43 (2014): 169-196. This work shows the proliferation of theaters in and around Buenos Aires that served various classes and immigrant populations, and in the context elites sought to use the Colón Theater exclusively for "high art."

[331] For more on masculinity and theater during the turn of the century, see Kristen McCleary, "Afro-Argentines, *Papás, Malevos,* and *Patotas*: Characterizing Masculinity on the Stages and in the Audiences of Buenos Aires, 1880-1920," in *Modern Argentine Masculinities*, ed. Carolina Rocha (Chicago: Intellect, 2013).

standard transition from patio to prison in just a few dramatic lines.[332] Critiques of tenement housing, moreover, often looked quite similar to those critiques of the overcrowded prison, "Few *conventillos* house fewer than 150 persons. All are centers of infection, true hells."[333] While the prison discussed in these acts were generally the neighborhood jail, there were at least three plays that reached beyond Buenos Aires and engaged Tierra del Fuego and its famed penitentiary.

Ivo Pelay was one of the most prolific play writers during this period and his *Ushuaia* struck a deep chord with opponents of the prison in leftist circles.[334] First performed by the Rivera-de Rosas Company at the Teatro de Mayo in Buenos Aires in May 1922, subsequent performances continued for at least a decade and often accompanied a series of performances. For example, later that year the Compañía Ciudad de Rosario performed the play as part of a grand event for the Ferroviarios Unidos (United Rail-Workers) in November.[335] The bill included orchestral performances and poetry, but the main attraction, Pelay's two-act play, sought to reveal the "injustices of 'justice'" that were being committed against fellow comrades in the Ushuaia penal colony. In January 1930, the group Melpómene performed during a night of music, including, like many similar bills, the anarchist hymn, "Hijos del Pueblo".[336] From Boedo to Once, the play and larger gathering struck a chord in working class barrios.

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[332] Judith Evans, "Setting the Stage for Struggle: Popular Theater in Buenos Aires, 1890-1914" *Radical History Review* 41 (Fall 1979): 49-61.
[333] Adrian Patroni, *Los trabajadores en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires, 1897), quoted in Evans, "Setting the Stage for Struggle."
[334] Ivo Pelay, "Ushuaia," *La Escena* 5, no. 62, Buenos Aires, May 22, 1922.
[335] "Ferroviarios Unidos" *Bandera Proletaria*, November 10, 1922, 2. Two years later, the Obreros Ladrilleros (Bricklayer Union) also organized an event, this one in the southern barrio of Boedo in February 1924, performed by the Compañía Zanetta. "Funciones y Conferencias" *La Protesta*, January 11, 1924, 4.
[336] "C. Pro Vittime Politiche D'Italia" *La Protesta*, July 12, 1930, 2. Two years later Two years later the Sindicato de Mozos y Anexos (Waiter Syndicate) performed the play at Salón Garibaldi in the capital's central barrio of Once. "Socorro Rojo Internacional" *La Vanguardia*, March 12, 1932, 5.

Pelay's *Ushuaia* captured what many already knew—Ushuaia followed the condemned after their release. As one of the play's anonymous inmates noted, "Free… nobody leaves free from Ushuaia…Ushuaia continues."[337] Moreover, as had been noted years before by Belascoain, criminal activity in Ushuaia and those considered to be criminals were hardly limited to the prisoner population. The guard Carrero commented that the whole system was based on fraud and payoffs, "The others my friend … the biggest thieves, they aren't on the inside.'"[338] Prisoners, on the other hand, Carrero went on, were paid just twenty cents a day to labor in the forests where one could be smashed by trees or beaten by guards, "There, men drop like flies... from hunger... from the cold... When I was there two hung themselves, another went insane... Beautiful place! And they say that they are rehabilitating the wicked... I think they return worse off." Ushuaia, he ends, is a mark that no one can erase, not even God.

These lines were evocative, but they were all in the past tense for the audience. In Pelay's play the characters were never actually in Ushuaia. Instead, it concerned a man who had returned from Ushuaia and was using an alias to acquire work. His father learns of his return from Ushuaia, and upon speaking to the employer, the boss realizes that he has hired an ex-convict, and that one of the workers was aware of his true identity. When asked why he never told the boss, the worker, Uno, says that just because a man is sent to Ushuaia does not mean he is a criminal—rampant injustices had long blurred that line. Moreover, if one is released one should have a second chance at life, Uno notes, but instead Ushuaia closes all doors. These men were isolated from humanity, then returned stained by the mark of Ushuaia to be further isolated in their old neighborhoods. Society, Uno proclaims, foments recidivism.

[337] Pelay, "Ushuaia," 11.
[338] Pelay, "Ushuaia," 4.

While Pelay's *Ushuaia* showed the after-life of the prison, others attempted to bring the experience to Buenos Aires through the sounds and lights of the theater. Less than a year after Pelay's work debuted, Carlos M. Pacheco's *Tierra del Fuego* opened at the Teatro Avenida in central Buenos Aires in March 1923. Pacheco, born in Montevideo, Uruguay, was another of Buenos Aires' prolific play writers. That early fall night, the character Leonardi stepped center-stage and opened the performance. During recreation hour with two fellow inmates in the penitentiary's patio, Leonardi, also known as Garcia and prisoner 123, remarked, "And there the sun has left the land… the ocean is a single immense thing, impotent… all is arid, all is frigid and dry, like the solitude that freezes one's blood..."[339]

Leonardi was the play's rigidly ideological anarchist. His fellow prisoners respected him for his unwavering devotions, but recognized that pronounced beliefs only furthered one's punishment. Nevertheless, each prisoner needed something to hold on to in order to survive, Leonardi reminded the audience, and under the leaden skies of Ushuaia, "Faith is the prisoner's sun." Each of Lombardi's morals had a nature analogue. Authorities can take away the sun or block out the blue sky, but it is the internal fire that shines light on the noble path; to navigate the crowds that are the virgin forest, each swing of the ax fells a tree and opens a passage of light. And yet, like Pelay's work, Pacheco's story takes place in Buenos Aires in the national penitentiary and the nearby barrio colloquially known as Tierra del Fuego (present day Palermo and Recoleta).[340] Thus, the play references the other (*el otro*) Tierra del Fuego, and the threat of being sent south for more serious crimes.

[339] Ellipsis in original. Carlos M. Pacheco, "'La Tierra del Fuego:' Sainete Porteño en Tres Cuadros," *La Escena* 6, no. 248, Buenos Aires, March 29, 1923, 1-2.
[340] Carlos Alberto Rezzónico, "La Tierra del Fuego" *Revista del Notariado* 881 (2005): 271-272. For more on Pacheco see, Marta Lena Paz, *Bibliografía crítica de Carlos Mauricio Pacheco: Aporte para un estudio* (Buenos Aires: Fondo Nacional de las Artes, 1963).

A decade after Pelay's and Pacheco's plays, a third image of Ushuaia came to the stage through Nicolas Ronga's *El Carcelero*. In September 1933 at the Teatro Vittorio Emanuele II, this three-act's opening scene took place in a Buenos Aires bakery. The protagonist, Nemesio, was constantly belittled by his capitalist boss and fellow coworkers, save for Pedro, the idealistic comrade. Nemesio soon reaches a breaking point and murders his co-workers and is exiled to Ushuaia. The second act opens with a powerful description of the prison's interior, the kind that often eluded journalist accounts. Ronga took the audience through one of the pavilions, painted gray and with blood smudges that have mixed in with the paint. Green wooden doors are in front of each cell, with large locks and small portholes no less than ten centimeters in diameter. Each cell has a square opening in the back wall that looks outside. Iron bars prevent escape while a glass window futilely combats the cold air. The north-facing cells look upon the mountains, forests, and eternal snow and ice, while those looking south see the bay's frigid waters. A handful of cells provide glimpses of the town and the church steeple or radio tower. In the scene there is no sonorous thunder, but instead the more frequent winds that howl through the halls and hiss through the small cracks and openings of the declining building. The curtain rises as the audience hears cries of pain from the prisoners whom receive threats and beatings from the guards. Men are tripping and falling as they walk shackled, giving rise to a cacophony of pleas and orders, "Please sir, have mercy! Move it, stop there! Ask permission, you are in Ushuaia! Mercy! Silence! Your mother, SHHH!" One guard notes to another, "Oh, how the new entries squeal!"[341]

This new group, the other guard observes, is not common prisoners but political exiles consisting of anarchists, communists, and other shades of the left. Nemesio has become a robust

[341] Nicolas Ronga, "El Carcelero" *Teatro Popular* 1 (Buenos Aires), September 1933, 14.

and ruthless man in the prison. In this new group of political prisoners is Pedro, Nemesio's idealistic ex-coworker, who now begs *permiso* for every action after spending the last eight days aboard a ship. They are the first of the political prisoners exiled in 1931 following the coup of General Uriburu.[342] Nemesio finally recognizes Pedro after an impassioned speech about workers and liberation, and in the following scene, he admits remorse to Pedro, claiming that he was driven by powers beyond himself. Pedro, unwilling to concede, tells Nemesio that even more than a murderer, he is a traitor to his neighborhood and fellow man. Nemesio returns to Buenos Aires in the third act and is killed in a local act of street justice. Marta, one of the onlookers whose young son had been killed in the chaos, sees nothing but blood. Too much blood; the violence of Ushuaia had once again returned to the local barrio.

While each of these plays differs to a degree in their focus, they are similar in that none of them is based primarily in Tierra del Fuego. What they reveal instead is how Ushuaia was imbedded in a local *porteño* imagination, one in which the Left and working class feared being sent south, and indeed, many people knew someone who had been exiled.[343] Moreover, these plays showed a heightened awareness of the lasting repercussions of the mark of Ushuaia. Despite rhetoric of rehabilitation and paying one's social debt, there was an understanding that one could not simply re-renter society. Moreover, the moral overtones in these works further the battle of the working-class against the increasing pressures of capitalism, and like the anarchist presses, present a narrative of moral heroes against crooked villains—the criminals in each of these stories are those in power or who betray their comrades.

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[342] Ronga's description captures well the experience described by political prisons following the coup. Salvador de Almenara, *Del Plata a Ushuaia: Memorias de un confinado* (Montevideo: Impresora Uruguaya, 1931).

[343] This ever-present fear is captured well in, Bayer, *Los anarquistas expropiadores y otros ensayos*. Bayer notes in the recent documentary, *Hijo del Pueblo*, that the Ushuaia penal colony was a "church of horror" that was the "creature of… positivist liberalism."

In addition to these plays, *milongas* (tango songs) such as Nicolás Granato's, "Tierra del Fuego," captured a corner of the world via the airwaves. Having traveled to Ushuaia in the mid-1920s, Granato sang, "Your snows stand guard, furious as a hurricane," other worldly and frightening, "Even your skies project a black shadow that covers the ocean in perpetual mourning."[344] Where Granato's song went further than most was in its refusal to pad the language of death, "And there, amidst the wicked glacial climate, more than once the fatal idea of suicide has entered these poor minds." Granato's lyrics forced listeners to recognize suicide as an ever-present component of the prison. Thus, on the stages of local playhouses and across the airwaves, Ushuaia was performed and relived throughout Buenos Aires.

Touring the End of the World

During the time that Argentines built an image of an Argentine Siberia, the tourism industry was expanding in the far south. Take for example, Philip and Helen Wagner. Stuck in the United States, they wished to travel but instead had to live vicariously through the stamped adventures of friends. By 1928 they had postcards from every corner of Europe displaying the great buildings of western civilization and the most picturesque beaches from across the Atlantic. But the Wagner's were tired of Europe. "The novelty has worn off," they claimed in an article for *Harper's Monthly*—their friends were now seeking the hidden nooks of the world in order to avoid tourists and find something unique, to create a story that another couple could not so easily claim.[345] It was here that the Wagner's wondered why American couples would continue to travel to Europe when South America offered so much adventure. To their dismay, "there are no postcards in Patagonia."

[344] Nicolás Granato, "Tierra del Fuego."
[345] Philip Wagner, "There are no postcards in Patagonia," *Harper's Monthly Magazine* 157 (June/November 1928): 388.

While the Wagner's friends may not have voyaged to the southern stretches of the southern cone, many others certainly had, as the famous German steamer "Cap Polonio" brought tours to the region beginning in 1922.[346] A few of the passengers took the opportunity to collect information for the *Patronato Liberados*, which tracked and aided released convicts, though mostly in Buenos Aires.[347] Earlier still, foreigners were asking about Tierra del Fuego, and its Argentine capital, "Is Ushuaia the southernmost town in the world? If so, what can you tell me about it, its history and its inhabitants?"[348] Answers would be proffered by explorers who sought the unknown, including Coronel Furlong, who proudly took on the role of the world's foremost authority on Tierra del Fuego. Through various lecture tours in the United States promoting the region he claimed to have sparked the imaginations of at least 300,000 listeners by 1920.[349]

In 1930, the biggest tourist steam vessel to travel to the region to date, "Monte Cervantes," disembarked Buenos Aires and anchored one week later in Ushuaia Bay on 22 January. The vessel chartered nearly 200 crew members and close to 1,400 passengers from around the world, passing through various ports on the eastern Patagonian coast before reaching the Strait of Magellan and Beagle Channel. As the ship anchored and faced the town of Ushuaia, the bay's human population effectively doubled—Ushuaia, after all, was still quite small. This was not the ship's first major voyage, however, as the German vessel operated by Hamburgo Sud America had already made transatlantic voyages between Europe and Brazil. The ship first sailed to Buenos Aires in 1924, but experienced problems a few years later in 1928 when it hit an

[346] See the advertisement, "Cap Polonio," *La Razón*, November 10, 1922, 6.
[347] Patronato de Liberados, *Memoria, 1922-1923* (Buenos Aires: Tip L. Veggia, 1923): 5. MPA, Tomo 11.
[348] "Ushuaia, the Southernmost Town," *Philadelphia Inquirer* 1, no. 20 (1916): 10.
[349] Letter from Furlong to Don Jose Menendez. D-RSC, MSS-197, Box 1, Folder 9, July 20, 1920. After first traveling south in 1907, he endeavored to return again and again. Contacting his close friends in Chile, Furlong offered to forego $5,000 in lecture fees if the family would cover half that amount for his voyage back to the region. In exchange he guaranteed that his promotion would bring at least that much in industry and tourism to the Magallanes region.

iceberg in Arctic waters.[350] In its 1930 voyage, the ship would sink off the coast of Argentina's southernmost capital after striking rock in shallow water.[351] Tourists and inmates, the Argentine Siberia and the End of the World, converged.

It was a beautiful and clear day, locals would recall. Arturo Angel was painting his home as he looked upon the sinking ship. Soon he would see inmates filing out of the prison as they were summoned to help the shipwrecked passengers. Many of the inmates volunteered, according to tourist accounts, happy to help those in need.[352] Once the passengers were ashore, many had to trek for nearly five hours along the mountainside to the Tunel sawmill where they would pass the night. The shipwreck brought tourists face-to-face with inmates and their home. José Feinmann stared at the prison with bewilderment, there were no walls, no turrets, no look-out posts, "the exterior showed nothing in particular."[353] He dedicated his account of the sinking ship to the prisoners of Ushuaia, offering a conflicted yet compassionate reading of their confinement. Feinmann saw the Ushuaia inmates as men who permanently lost their lives in single moments of passion. These were men who dug their own graves through their actions, but perhaps their punishments went too far. They lost their names, and therefore humanity, becoming nothing more than the black number stitched into their clothing. The irony of the sinking ship in front of the prison troubled Feinmann, as he saw that their aid brought them face-to-face with women and children for the first time in years. Grateful victims smiled and laughed, which

[350] "Cerca de Ushuaia encalló el vapor 'Monte Cervantes'" *La Vanguardia* 36, no. 9152 (Buenos Aires) January 24, 1930, 1.
[351] This was not the first ship to sink in Ushuaia Bay. In April 1912 the "Sarmiento" sank, though all aboard survived. There were roughly 80 passengers on-board, including two released inmates. See, "Naufragio del Vapor 'Sarmiento,'" *La Prensa*, April 8, 1912.
[352] Pedro Pevans, *Una excursión a los Canales Fueguinos: Con hundimiento del "Monte Cervantes"* (Paoletta: Buenos Aires, 1930): 59. Ramírez, *La Ergástula del Sur*, 29, noted that prisoners provided blankets to passengers.
[353] José Feinmann, *El naufragio del "Monte Cervantes" y sus enseñanzas* (Rosario: J. Feinmann, pref., 1930): 104-105.

ultimately reminded the prisoners of their lack of freedom, and of their distance from any such existence.

Writers for the *La Protesta* noted that the sinking of "Monte Cervantes" finally shined a positive light on the prisoners confined to Ushuaia, at least for mainstream audiences.[354] Stories of inmate assistance to passengers and sharing the prison with them overnight portrayed the condemned as compassionate humans rather than damned incorrigibles. They noted that mainstream and popular papers like *El Mundo* mentioned the most famous prisoners—Godino, Sacomano, Banks—and even highlighted that Simón Radowitzky did not show any signs of illness despite earlier claims of his ailing condition. *La Protesta* noted that given the shipwrecked passengers' sincerest gratitude, their exiled comrades and other prisoners might even witness the creation of a bronze plaque thanking them for their efforts. Indeed, locals who aided the shipwrecked were honored with thank you diplomas that highlighted the "altruistic and noble" population of Ushuaia.

While anarchists welcomed the popular press' support for inmates, they were also skeptical of the authenticity of what tourists encountered. Pedro Pevans, another passenger, was impressed by the prison, noting that each condemned man was well taken care of in food and clothing. The prisoners even helped cook food and provide some of their rations to the shipwrecked according to Pevans. This image appears overly optimistic and rather sanitized compared to contemporary reports, and no doubt, the prison directors took this opportunity to be on their best behavior, as would note journalist Anibal del Rié. Later that year in September 1930, Argentina experienced its first modern military coup, and del Rié was part of a proliferation of journalists to travel south to investigate the prison. As noted in the play *El*

[354] T. Monroe "La ralea del periodismo burgués" *La Protesta*, February 14, 1930, 2.

Carcelero, a new wave of political prisoners was exiled to Ushuaia during this period, including prominent figures from the former ruling party, the centrist Radical Civic Union. With this new demographic and increase in tourist vessels came a new wave of popular media coverage. What had been mainly a battle for anarchists and the political left, prominent writers now sought to reveal the horrors of Ushuaia.

As del Ríe's ship passed just meters from the site of the 1930 shipwreck of the "Monte Cervantes" in the Beagle Channel they were surrounded by the silence of death. Del Rié argued that even before the "Monte Cervantes" wreck, the prison administration would prepare the grounds when they knew a ship was coming to port to put on a proper exposition for onlookers. As his ship approached, he could see the Martial Mountains and two kilometers of tree stumps left in the wake of prisoner axes. After watching inmates return from a felling session he would remark, "Beneath the deeply leaden austral daylight, beaten by frozen winds that rise from the deep mountain snowdrifts and shake the trees as if they were straw, hurling against the human bodies, moved, swayed, dwarfed, and overwhelmed, the gang of prisoners looks like a succession of phantoms, terrifying silhouettes, emerging from the abyss" [Figure 26].[355]

[355] Anibal del Rié, *Ushuaia: El presidio siniestro* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Boston, 1933): 11.

Figure 26. Between Snow and Ice, 1933
Del Rié, *El presidio siniestro*

Amid the dark green forests, deep blue bay, and leaden sky, inmates offered some of the only colors to break up these dark hues—black and yellow striped shirts and the red caps worn by those convicted of homicide. *Caras y Caretas* even changed its tone. Juan José de Soiza Reilly, one of the nation's most well-known writers, provided a lengthy exposé that likely reached a much broader audience. While Soiza Reilly claimed to offer an in-depth view of the prison, one that shed light on the lives of otherwise unknown or forgotten prisoners, there was a perpetuation of their dehumanization. Perhaps for dramatic effect, he repeatedly used prisoner numbers to identify inmates. Highlighting the significance and role of these numbers could offer a pointed critique of the prison system, but to repeat this language and succumb to this coding, was to replicate the power structures that Soiza Reilly claimed be to deconstructing. It is clear that he saw his role as paternal above all else [Figure 27].

Figure 27. Soiza Reilly and Inmate Sacomano, 1932
AGN 18336

Soiza Reilly's work looked beyond inmates however, as he was mesmerized by Tierra del Fuego. The moon and stars illuminated the night skies like a painting commissioned by a millionaire to be found on Buenos Aires' famed shopping street, *calle Florida.* Snippets, articles, and exposés of the penal colony, very often including photos of inmates and their surroundings, increasingly complicated the rhetoric that Ushuaia was located in the "farthest corner" of the nation. These images however rarely captured or portrayed hunger-strikes, protests, or violence in the prison.[356] Instead, inmates were passive subjects beaten down by an austral nature and

[356] Michelle Brown has argued that in the more contemporary moment of neoliberalism and mass incarceration, such inundation of images captures the visual iconography of social suffering. In particular, acts of (embodied) resistance or protest such as hunger-strikes, lip-sewing, and self-mutilation, demand and attract heightened visibility, and counter the more common images of aggregate masses or individuals without context. On the other yet explicitly connected side, are those who stage protests and refuse to photograph inmates, and instead highlight the human-ness of inmates and call for their release. See, "Visual Criminology and Carceral Studies: Counter-Images in the Carceral

military guards, just like prisoners in Siberia.

Conclusion

The End of the World and the Argentine Siberia occupied the same geographical space, but very different geographical imaginations and temporalities. Today, tourists travel to this region and hear both narratives. The former is prehistoric while the latter describes a moment within Argentine history. Both were built. Geographer John Wylie speaks of the *Terra Nova* whaling ship and its Antarctic expedition as a "stitching," a practicing of colonial space that brought together the dialectic of "home" and "abroad."[357] Explorer and journalist narratives were similarly stitchings. At the same time that journalists visited Ushuaia and wrote on the prison's operations and inmate experiences, they heightened the narrative of an impenetrable leaden curtain, one of mystery cloaked in an austral fog. This narrative incorporated the southern stretches of the nation not as a discovery or legible space, but as a tumor, a black mass on the geo-body understood through references to Siberia. It was first a "natural prison," then a brutal human institution, one of "man's agencies" to use Furlong's term.

While Siberia had a parallel narrative with "the end of the world," this was rarely a comparison invoked by explorers. What they sought was a *sui generis* space in a well-catalogued world, only to discover a corner of the earth filled with international locals and goods as foreign as themselves. In each case, the Argentine Siberia and the End of the World were analogue geographies, selectively spliced together to be understood, to be reinforced, and to be

Age," *Theoretical Criminology* 18, no. 2 (2014). Brown's claim that "the incarcerated are visible *as disappeared subjects*" is a particularly potent claim in the Argentine context during the Dirty War (emphasis in original).

[357] John Wylie, "The Ends of the Earth: Narrating Scott, Amundsen and Antarctica," in *High Places: Cultural Geographies of Mountains, Ice and Science*, ed. Denis Cosgrove and Veronica della Dora (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2009).

naturalized. Tierra del Fuego did not exist in a vacuum, and it could not be discussed on its own terms.

Analogue geographies gained a new purchase in the 1930s with the exile of prominent political prisoners who proffered new nationalist visions. While the 1913 map displayed in Rome sought to attract particular groups of immigrants, in the wake of the world wars, it became clear that it was up to the Argentine state and its population to improve the land. Various regions in the nation would continue to be compared to other countries of the globe, usually with the intention of pursuing economic ventures.[358] Analogue geographies, therefore, became a selling point through which to gain funds and resources; they were a refrain for national development. Tierra del Fuego was the End of the World, but its mirror image would shift from Siberia to Northern-Western Europe. This was a reflection of a temperate north that produced industrious citizens, rather than a land of tortured souls under leaden skies.

[358] See, for example, Franco Enrique Devoto, *La valorización de las regiones áridas argentinas (132,000,000 de hectáres)* (Buenos Aires: Julio A. Dordoni, 1944).

CHAPTER FOUR

"I TOO AM USHUAIA:" DECAY AND VITALITY IN PRISONER EXPERIENCES

By all forgot, we rot and rot.
Inmate refrain

What does it mean to rot in prison? Why is the refrain so common, and is it really self-evident? Rot requires space and time, and the modern penitentiary was designed to manage both in rigid ways. In an institution founded on hospital-like spaces and the promise of rehabilitation, rot it is a particularly striking claim. Indeed, *regenerar*, the Spanish word for rehabilitate, literally translates to regenerate. Why, then, is the common claim of inmates not one of regeneration or recovery, but in fact the opposite, one of decomposition and rot as a slow death?

The "living dead," in this regard, has been used to describe a wide variety of captives, from common criminals to prisoners of war. It becomes particularly powerful for death row cases, as a prisoner there becomes a "dead man walking." Various scholars have acutely addressed the emergence of a modern prison lexicon that captures the transition from the world of the living to something else.[359] In the nineteenth century, observers such as Charles Dickens and William Roscoe looked upon the modern penitentiary and its cells and "imagined that the penitentiary was producing cadaverous men and women buried alive, dead to the world."[360] Beatrice Trefalt shows that this logic spills outside of the modern prison as well. Japanese prisoners of war were to commit suicide rather than be captured by the enemy—if captured, they

[359] Foucault also noted, "The soul is the effect and instrument of political anatomy; the soul is the prison of the body." *Discipline and Punish*, 30. Foucault does not talk about the living dead, but nevertheless emphasizes the soul as that which must be incarcerated. Prisoner bodies, on the other hand, learn mechanically, rather than cognitively—a standard distinction made in zombie literature—to perform new, productive, and industrial functions. See the section, "Docile Bodies."

[360] Caleb Smith, "Detention without Subject: Prisons and the Poetics of Living Death," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 50, no. 3 (Fall 2008): 255.

were considered dead by the Japanese government.[361] This trope however, and its multiple iterations, is not limited to prison literature or inmate writings. In recent years the "living dead" has also evoked references to zombies, which have their roots in slavery, but has become a standard genre in contemporary pop-culture.[362]

It is important therefore to think critically through these multiple and often conflated terms: living dead; walking dead; dead man walking; civil death; and zombie.[363] Each of these phrases refers to a living body of flesh, but suggests that the body is no longer human in the rights-bearing sense, or in the cognitive abilities that separate humans from other species. Moreover, they often enter a permanent state as the "undead." These peoples are therefore de-humanized, but not equally and not for the same reason. This is particularly important when talking about violent inmates versus political prisoners, or, say, slaves versus zombies of capital (after all, if prisoners, slaves, and consumers all fall under the category of the "living dead," who is actually excluded from this category?).[364]

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[361] Beatrice Trefalt, "Living Dead: The Experiences of Japanese Prisoners of War, South West Pacific, 1943-1945," *New Zealand Journal of East Asian Studies* 3, no. 2 (Dec. 1995): 113-123. Trefalt notes that captured prisoners often gave false names and refused to write home because of the shame that they had not fulfilled their duty to die in battle.

[362] This literature is vast, as are the references to contemporary television and cinema, ranging from *Dawn of the Dead* to *The Walking Dead*. On the explosion of zombie pop-culture in the United States, see, Gerry Canavan, "We *Are* the Walking Dead: Race, Time, and Survival in Zombie Narrative," *Extrapolation* 51, no. 3 (2010): 431-453. On the origins of zombie (*zombi*) in colonial Haiti, see, Sarah Juliet Lauro, *The Transatlantic Zombie: Slavery, Rebellion, and Living Death* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2015).

[363] Here we can also think through what theorist Giorgio Agamben calls "bare-life." Agamben's term is powerful, but like "civil death," it is concerned with the juridical and not the material existence of these individuals. See, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1995). Nevertheless, it has become a standard reference for contemporary prisons, especially concerning American detention centers such as Abu Ghraib and Guantánamo Bay, in which "bare-life" is coupled with Agamben's theorization of the "state of exception." See, Andrew Norris, "Giorgio Agamben and the Politics of the 'Living Dead,'" *Diacritics* 30, no. 4 (Winter 2000): 38-54; and, Judith Butler, "Indefinite Detention" in *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (New York: Verso, 2004).

[364] The multiple scholars who have engaged contemporary consumer zombie narratives reach back to Karl Marx, who argued in *The Eighteenth Brumaire* that the bourgeois had become "a vampire sucking out its blood and brains and throwing them into the alchemist's cauldron of capital." Eugene Kamenka ed., *The Portable Karl Marx* (New York: Penguin Books, 1983): 316. Zombie, it should be noted, seems to be the outlier in the terms mentioned above. While the term is used at this time to refer to capital, especially vampire capitalists which are mention with regard to Ushuaia by at least one journalist, it rarely seems to be used in the prison literature.

Moreover, there are material components to these categories. Attention to the body of a flesh-eating zombie reveals a deformed and mangled corpse, while focus on inmates generally points to mental death, in which inmates fight time and boredom, more than, it would seem, material or physical rot. How do we recover the relationship between these mental and material transformations? What kind of environment is needed, and indeed, built, that would initiate the process of rot? In Ushuaia—and presumably other prison settings—exposure to extreme elements and physical beatings wore down the individual, mentally and physically. Rather than "rotting," therefore, which is perhaps too closely associated with zombies and dead corpses, I suggest that we rethink a term that has long been associated with Tierra del Fuego: decay.

Charles Darwin argued in the 1830s that in Tierra del Fuego, "Death and Decay prevail."[365] Unlike the Patagonia plains to the north, which had mesmerized Darwin (despite their seeming "wretchedness"), the peoples and lands of southern Tierra del Fuego were for Darwin the most abject in the world. This was not death by the survival of the fittest, but rather, an ecology in which life failed to take hold in the first place. Indeed, this emphasis on "death" has received some attention. Francisco P. Moreno, according to one scholar, envisioned in the late nineteenth century the "emergence of national being from a space of death" through expeditions to unearth the large dinosaur fossils and indigenous skeletal remains throughout Patagonia for his Museo de La Plata, the nation's natural history museum.[366] But even Darwin's conception of death brought to mind "living death." In addition to the great collections of petrified dinosaur fossils located within the Patagonian soil, when Darwin refers to "living

[365] Darwin, *Voyages of the Beagle*, 450. The Argentine south is often referred to as Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego, distinguishing the continent from and the island. Nevertheless, Tierra del Fuego is understood as part of Patagonia. On these geographical definitions see, Jaime Said H., *Patagonia* (Santiago de Chile: Editorial Patagonia Media, 2011): 23-26.
[366] Andermann, *The Optic of the State*, 55.

fossils," he is talking about native groups that appear to be holdovers from a previous epoch, a concept that is further elaborated in *The Origin of Species* (1859) and more explicitly in *The Descent of Man* (1871).

Darwin's understanding of the region is clearly in tension with that of Director Muratgia, who saw in Tierra del Fuego a salubrious and curative space for inmates. Muratgia spent many years in Tierra del Fuego; Darwin, just a few months. Certainly time, seasons, and objectives inflected these representations. But in both cases, these were experts in their fields serving larger national goals—for Muratgia, penology and the improvement of the Argentine social fabric; for Darwin, an imperial voyage concerned with mapping and natural history.[367] Both were outsiders to varying degrees, observing and at times engineering, how these processes affect others.

But what about the inmates themselves? Subjected to this land and held captive in a penitentiary, how did they understand and represent their "open-door" confinement? Inmates in Ushuaia experienced many standard prison processes, such as receiving an inmate number, life in a cell or solitary confinement, diet regimens and food restrictions, and a general homogenization of life and the concomitant struggle to make lives against such imposed order. However, their writings also reveal how deeply integrated the Ushuaia prison experience was in Tierra del Fuego and its geographical and climatological elements. As part of an integrated institution and ecosystem, they did not exercise control over nature or their routines in ways they were accustomed, and certainly not in the way that an explorer might have proceeded across the land. This was a major component in their dehumanization—it meant relegation from a perceived superior species status as a human, and entering a community of beings subjected to an

[367] For more on Darwin's role in a broader British imperial mission, see, James Moore, "Revolution of the Space Invaders: Darwin and Wallace on the Geography of Life," in *Geography and Revolution*, ed. David Livingstone and Charles Withers (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2005).

austral environment. To be treated like animals, as was often the claim—"we are less than dogs"—was a recognition of the animal in the human, and indeed, human as animal. In other words, some inmates would highlight that it was not just themselves who suffered in this environment, but the very ecosystem was defined by death and decay.

This chapter, then, argues that we must rethink the binary established in the terminology of prisoners as "the living dead." I do not propose to do away with the term completely, as inmates themselves use this phrase quite often. However, these writings are almost always accompanied by signs of resignation and a desire for death to end the pain. This suggests that while they may have felt dead to the world, they were hyper aware of the process of death—modern prison regulations, Victor Serge argued, could be summed up in the phrase, "*Living is forbidden!*"[368] And yet, Serge confessed, life continued, often in productive ways in a fight against resignation and thoughts of suicide. As one Ushuaia inmate etched into his cell wall, "it is easier to resign oneself to death than to pain."[369] Death would have been easier. But instead of instant relief through death, prison life was a process rooted in material and mental decay, one in which inmates felt they were increasingly less than human and more aware of themselves as living beings within an unfamiliar world. To remain vital, therefore, was the challenge. This was a fight against the prison and the elements of Tierra del Fuego.

Decay, therefore, captures the on-going struggle of prison processes. Rather than a bifurcation of "outside" (the world of old, of normality, of the present unfolding) and "inside" (separation from one's family, friends, neighborhood, work, a feeling of stasis in which reality continues without you), it highlights that this was not a simple binary, at least not one that was

[368] Serge, *Men in Prison*, 56. Emphasis in original. While Serge was not imprisoned in Ushuaia, he had experience in prisons across Europe that shared similar designs.
[369] del Rié, *Ushuaia*, 98.

given or static—one is rarely completely disconnected from whence one came. Moreover, decay acknowledges the multiple trajectories and temporalities of prison lives. Such an approach emphasizes the gradual and rarely complete transformation and transition from the world of the living to the world of the dead. It was a flickering—both on and off, in and out, visible and invisible. [370] Throughout the process, therefore, one could feel the negative effects of rot (perceived or real), while at other times, embrace moments of strength and vitality in the battle against withering. Decay, then, captures the constantly changing relationship between materiality and time in the prisoner experience.

Counting Cells

On 10 February 1909, Pedro Espada prepared to disembark Buenos Aires for the penal colony in Ushuaia. He had lost all hope and said "farewell to the world" in an interview with *Caras y Caretas*, "I will not return, the prison is my grave, I have no doubt about it."[371] When asked his feelings on leaving home (*tierra*), Espada said he was going to miss most his friends from the Córdoba prison he was leaving behind. They had become close, he and his fellow inmates. Espada was an older man and his feeling that Ushuaia would be his grave stemmed from an awareness of his own mortality, and perhaps an inability to make new companions in the southern penitentiary. He may have equally feared an unforgiving austral environment and violent penitentiary system, but it is clear that his sentiments were more complex than what the phrase "Argentine Siberia" sought to capture.

[370] Indeed, recent work on the scientific discovery of radioactive decay and half-life was one in which radium was anthropomorphized and vitalized. Scientists were fascinated by the seemingly living element. Therefore, even decay was seen not as linear and stable, but rather, vibrant, even invigorating. See, Luis Campos, "The Birth of Living Radium," *Representations* 97 (Winter 2007).

[371] See Espada's *despedida*, dated February 10, 1909, in "Cómo se va á Ushuaia," *Caras y Caretas* 12, no. 551, April 17, 1909.

While Espada seemed to have made peace with his fate, others were less willing to concede. Over the following years Ushuaia would be seen as a torturous and deadly fate for young and old alike. Residency and Social Defense laws passed in the 1910s empowered the government to deport and exile immigrants and leftists, while Article 52 of the penal code introduced sentencing of "perpetual" or "indeterminate" durations. Put together, inmates feared that they would never return from southern exile. References to their cells as graves became commonplace, even among reporters: "They are sent for the rest of their lives to rot in the sinister catacombs of Ushuaia."[372] This kind of earthly purgatory was not unique to Ushuaia, and it was nothing new in prison literature. Even so, Ushuaia did make for a particular kind of prisoner experience.

In 1910, the year after Espada bid his solemn farewell on the docks of Buenos Aires, Enrique V. Arnold was condemned to 25 years in Ushuaia. Arnold had murdered his mistress, Ester Naddeo, in January that year, though he was able to evade capture by authorities until April. The case, which took place in the working class neighborhood of Boedo, was covered by multiple media outlets as "The Crime on Prudan Street."[373] When questioned by authorities, Arnold, like many inmates, said that he was terrified about the prospects of being sent to Ushuaia. He confessed that he was contemplating suicide to avoid southern incarceration. Arnold's account shows that, at the moment of arrest, a personal clock starts to tick—it is a countdown with an unknown ending. One knows in that moment only that everything will be different. One's trajectory and temporality has been altered, and one might take drastic measures

[372] Eugenio Minvielli Alvarado, "Culpas Ajenas," *Carácter* (Corrientes), June, 26, 1930.
[373] See, Edwards, "CSI Buenos Aires." So-called crimes of passion, such as Arnold's, were favorites of the public beyond Buenos Aires. See further examples in Mexico City in, Pablo Piccato, *City of Suspects: Crime in Mexico City, 1900-1931* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001).

to change their fate.[374] Would-be inmates feared Ushuaia to such a degree that suicide was a common contemplation, as was the case with Arnold. Mateo Banks, arrested in 1922 for murdering eight family members, was told he would be transferred to Ushuaia in 1924. Upon hearing the news he began a hunger strike to protest his transfer, arguing that he would sooner die than be exiled south.[375] Alberto Reigné was told that he would be sent back to Ushuaia in 1930 after being arrested again upon his release. Unlike Arnold and Banks, who both ultimately landed in Ushuaia, Reigné did take his life before his second transfer.[376] Reigné however, was the exception. Examples such as Arnold and Banks show that, while the very thought of Ushuaia prompted extreme emotions, and sometimes actions, suicide was rare.

What is perhaps more telling, then, is that the fear of exile and incarceration was, for some groups, something that began before they were arrested. Criminology, after all, was rooted in dehumanizing language that targeted certain groups and attached physical traits to illegality.[377] Categorizations of hysteria and feeble-mindedness, for example, emasculated male subjects and rendered women child-like, as doctors gave speech to and spoke for patients who legally and metaphorically could not speak for themselves.[378] But one did not need to speak, or be silenced, to feel these effects. One's look or label was enough to render an individual less than human.

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[374] Serge, *Men in Prison*, 35. "There is a moment when those whose lives it will crush suddenly grasp, with awful clarity, that all reality, all present time, all activity—everything real in their lives—is fading away, while before them opens a new road onto which they tread with the trembling step of fear. That icy moment is the moment of arrest."

[375] *Crítica*, June 16, 1924.

[376] "Notas varias," *Caras y Caretas* 1662 (1930).

[377] Beyond questions of criminality, this period was also the height of eugenics in Latin America, where Argentina was one of the continent's most prominent practitioners. Nancy Leys Stepan, *"The Hour of Eugenics:" Race, Gender, and Nation in Latin America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991).

[378] See, Gabriela Nouzeilles, "An Imaginary Plague in Turn-of-the-Century Buenos Aires: Hysteria, Discipline, and Languages of the Body," in *Disease in the History of Modern Latin America from Malaria to Aids*, ed. Diego Armus (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003): 51-75. Nevertheless, historian Lila Caimari argues that prisoners showed an impressive understanding of and ability to placate state institutions. In interviews with social workers, for example, inmates shaped their responses in ways that could accelerate their release or improve their treatment. Caimari, "Remembering Freedom."

Anarchists and foreigners in particular were categorized as threats to the social body and would ultimately make up a significant demographic of the prison population, though a violent crime was typically necessary to warrant sending an inmate to Ushuaia.

Argentina was known for its criminology school that blended theories of born-criminality and attention to social factors. However, trials reveal that the prosecution relied heavily on the former. As part of prison reform, Ushuaia became the institution to house the most violent and repeat offenders in the nation—those considered to be born-criminals.[379] Prosecutors used anthropometry and craniometry in conjunction with theories of born-criminality to render those charged less than human. Criminologist, Dr. José Belbey, described the connection between anarchists, feeble-mindedness, and criminality in these terms:

> "It is their mode of conduct that announces the existence of a problem. The environment acts strongly upon them; they oscillate in accord with the spiritual and moral climate that surrounds them. They are suggestible to a high degree, like weather vanes moved by the wind. They do not think much or deeply about that which comes before them and as a result make foolish decisions."[380]

Simón Radowitzky, a Russian anarchist who murdered the Buenos Aires Chief of Police in 1909, became a case in point. Beyond these suggestable traits, he was born with a visible and latent criminality; during his trial the prosecution argued,

> "The physical appearance of the assassin has morphological characteristics that demonstrate with pronounced accents all the infamous marks of the criminal. Excessive development of the lower jaw, prominence of the zygomatic arch in his skull and his eyebrows, his receding forehead, his stormy look, the slight asymmetry of his face, these all make up the physical features that give him away as a delinquency type of person."[381]

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[379] On the relationship between criminology and prison reform, see, Ricardo D. Salvatore, "Penitentiaries, Visions of Class, and Export Economies: Brazil and Argentina Compared," in *The Birth of the Penitentiary in Latin America: Essays on Criminology, Prison Reform, and Social Control, 1830-1940*, ed. Ricardo D. Salvatore and Carlos Aguirre (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996).

[380] For more on the relationship between anarchism and biological "degree of dangerousness," see Ablard, *Madness in Buenos Aires*, 15.

[381] For a brief overview of Radowitzky's trial, see, Osvaldo Bayer, "Simón Radowitzky" in *The Argentina Reader*, ed. Gabriela Nouzeilles and Graciela Montalvo (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002).

In this way, as Lisa Guenther has argued, "dehumanizing" can be problematic as a prison trope. Beyond establishing a human/non-human binary and hierarchy, it obscures prior acts of dehumanization experienced by racialized and gendered groups.[382] These biological arguments concerning criminality, the anarchist paper *La Protesta* argued, justified a heightened and intensified penal regime through violence and torture against supposedly inferior beings.[383]

Once prosecuted and sentenced, most criminals were incarcerated in Buenos Aires or other northern prisons for anywhere from a few weeks to years before being transferred to Ushuaia. This transfer marked a significant shift in one's incarceration for multiple reasons, the most obvious of which was geographic distance from home. In Ushuaia, visitation rights were, at best, limited. The town was so far from Buenos Aires (nearly 1,500 kilometers) and most other large Argentine communities that it was financially and logistically impossible for most families to see their loved ones. And, while Espada was afforded a fairly memorable send-off through *Caras y Caretas* in 1909, other newspapers painted a much bleaker picture of these departures. Writers at *La Vanguardia* critiqued the humiliating break up of families caused by the southern transfer. Prisoners were shackled at their ankles and marched out of the prison to be shuttled to the port. The wives, mothers, and sisters who made it to the docks not only had to watch their loved ones loaded and sent away like cargo, but they themselves were mocked and ridiculed by guards during the process as tears ran down their faces.[384] Inmates were then transported aboard naval steamships to the island territory of Tierra del Fuego. The trip could be as short as ten days, or upwards of a few weeks, and the number of inmates transferred could range from one or

[382] Lisa Guenther, "Beyond Dehumanization: A Post-Humanist Critique of Solitary Confinement," *Journal of Critical Animal Studies* 10, no. 2 (2012): 46-68. See, Moya, "The Positive Side of Stereotypes."
[383] "De núestra Redacción en la Cárcel," *La Protesta* 18, no. 2305, August 8, 1914, 1.
[384] "Penitenciaría Nacional," *La Vanguardia*, November 30, 1911.

two to nearly one hundred. They were held in the hull of the ship and therefore unable to witness most of their journey.[385] Upon anchoring in Ushuaia Bay on the Beagle Channel, they would emerge from the hull, be placed on small transport boats and taken ashore. If they survived the prison, they would repeat the process upon their release [Figure 28].

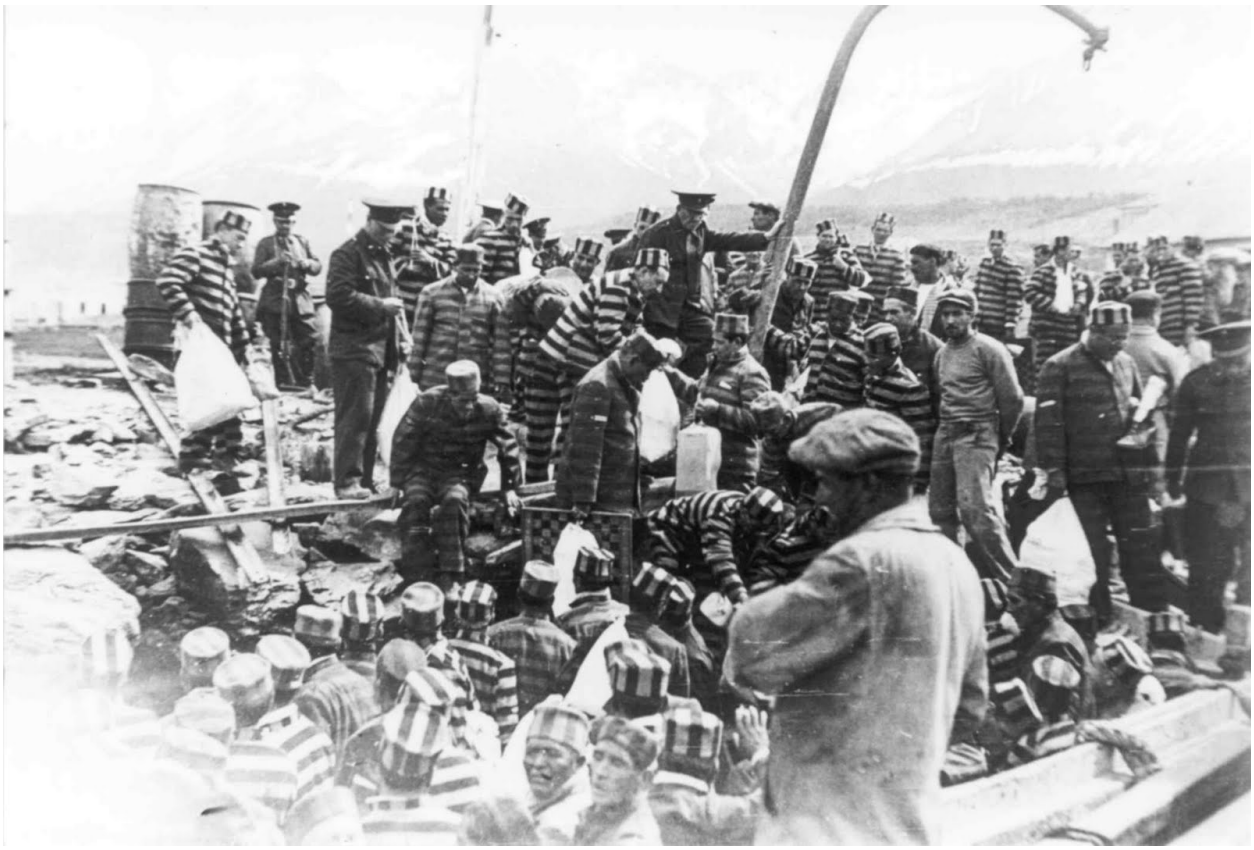

Figure 28. Inmates Departing Ushuaia, 1947
MMP

Once inmates entered Ushuaia they underwent a process of homogenization, identification, and legibility—something most had experienced before when entering northern jails and penitentiaries. This began with a process of respectable presentation. Prisoners were to be shaved and wear the same short haircut. Each received a prisoner number, generally different

[385] On the "incarcerational" element of travel, see Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984): 113.

from the one they held before arriving in Ushuaia.[386] This number was stitched into the inmate's jacket and undershirt. In this way, each inmate appeared similar to others, and therefore was to be identified most markedly by their number rather than personal appearance.

To be numbered, and addressed solely as that number by authorities, was an unsettling and objectifying transition. Journalist Anibal del Rié interviewed prisoner Eduardo Ramírez Releix, who bemoaned that in Ushuaia he was simply called "Number 95." He requested that del Rié not use his number in the publication, but rather, his given name.[387] Ramírez Releix request was more than a plea to reassert his humanity within the prison. Despite many attempts by reporters to humanize and empathize with the condemned, they very often used prisoner numbers rather than names in their reports. This was at times for dramatic effect, and perhaps at times there were word limits in their publications such that numbers freed up space in their papers, but the result was the perpetuation of dehumanization.

At the same time, inmate numbers could carry an element of self-identification rather than simply being an authoritarian coding. In search for self, one's number could become sentimental, or a source of empowerment. Prisoners who constructed the Ushuaia school house requested to etch their numbers into a corner of the room. They promised that the numbers would be out of sight, but that knowing their marks were there would mean a great deal to them as recognition for their labor.[388] One inmate told told journalist Soiza Reilly during their interview that he was no longer Alberto Nicolás Andino. Now, they simply called him Number 95 (*el 95*).[389] Manuel Murillo, who died in his Ushuaia cell, wrote a letter noting that prior to being

[386] Muratgia, *Presidio y cárcel*, 100.
[387] del Rié, *Ushuaia*, 95.
[388] Ramírez, *La Ergástula del Sur*, 30.
[389] Alberto Nicolás Andino was arrested for murdering his wife, claiming that he simply loved her too much. See, "Almas y sombras del presidio Ushuaia" *Caras y Caretas* (Buenos Aires) May 6, 1933.

exiled he was known as prisoner number 55. With his transfer he became number 496. School children would learn that such a re-naming unsettled Murillo until the day he died, as he had become quite accustomed to number 55.[390]

But numbers were not totalizing. From tattoos to nicknames to prison jargon, subcultures defied a top-down ordering of prison life.[391] Yet, such bodily marks were a double-edged sword that could not simply overturn inmate numerification. While a dozen aliases could help one to confuse or evade authorities (and indeed, the prison archives contain names that go on for multiple lines), tattoos were one of the first and most frequent ways of identifying individuals. These marks were entered in criminal data-bases along with prominent scars and body measurements.[392] Moreover, regardless of how inmates or the press felt or responded to inmate numbers as new identities, numbers abounded in the penitentiary system, marking the condemned continuously. Various codes were used to monitor and display their behavior, often signaling the limits or possibilities one was afforded to navigate the prison world. A one to five scale of prisoner behavior was recorded each month using the simple terms: very bad, bad, regular, good, and very good (*muy mal; mal; regular; bien; muy bien*). The prisoner's status was to be immediately apparent to guards by markings on their cells and in a data room. A knotted *trencilla* (tassel) displayed the number of years for which the prisoner was condemned, and its color indicated the type of crime committed. Multiple colors could be used to capture each offense.[393] In addition to the tassels worn by inmates, some prisoners bore letters, such as R.P. for "perpetual reclusion" (*reclusion perpetua*). Boxer Eduardo Sturla claimed that the more

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[390] Carmen Beatriz Hernandez, "Preso Nro. 55" *Cuento y poesia: Centenario de Ushuaia* (Buenos Aires: Banco Hipotecario Nacional, 1984): 15-17.
[391] See chapter seven, Aguirre, *The Criminals of Lima and Their Worlds: The Prison Experience*.
[392] While the prison in Ushuaia inscribed numbers and codes onto inmate clothing in order to identify them and their status, some prison systems inscribed the codes onto inmate flesh. See, Clare Anderson, *Legible Bodies: Race, Criminality, and Colonialism in South Asia* (New York: Berg, 2004).
[393] Muratgia, *Presidio y cárcel*, 96-99.

honest meaning of R.P. was "Rest in Peace" (*requiescan-en-pace*).[394] Sturla claimed that he would have preferred the electric chair to life in prison in Ushuaia. These were not life sentences, but rather, indefinite detentions. Thus, prisoners were not in a situation where they had "nothing to lose," though it was uncertain exactly what could be gained.

Whether imprisoned for a few years or a lifetime, homogeneity and repetition, at least in theory, defined the prison regimen. National Deputy Manuel Ramírez was confounded upon his inspection by the crushing monotony of prisoner life. The activities of prisoners were guided by two comprehensive, twenty-four-hour-a-day schedules: one for winter, one for summer, to accommodate the extreme differences in daylight hours; a Morse code soundscape of long and short whistle shrieks; a morning routine of black coffee and two pieces of bread each weighing 200 grams. Inmates longed for better food and larger portions. There was a vegetable garden on the prison grounds, though fresh produce and meat rations were often sequestered by prison personnel.[395] In the late 1930s, studies showed that prisoners in the national penitentiary suffered from vitamin deficiencies, in particular, vitamin D, and even greater deficiencies of E, C, and B1.[396] Doctors calculated the vitamin contents of foods ranging from carrots to cow hearts in order to correct inmate diets, and they identified the benefits of each for various health risks. After calculating the costs of a diet overhaul, however, and ultimately concluding that the diets in general were sufficient, the Director General resolved to add twenty-five grams of butter to each prisoner's breakfast, and half of a tomato or lemon to their lunch.

Inmates sought their own supplements in lieu of such meager changes, though always at their own risk. Prisoners on good behavior could keep goods such as tobacco or milk in their

[394] "En el país de las grandes tragedias: el presidio de Ushuaia" *Caras y Caretas* (Buenos Aires) January 25, 1930.
[395] MFM, Colección Judicial, Año 1918 Ex. 1301; Libro Policial 1922-23. Control over meat supplies was also used for local price fixing and inflation.
[396] "Las vitaminas en el racionamiento de los penados," *Revista Penal y Penitenciaría* 4, no. 12 (April-June 1939).

cells (Art. 22), although such privileges were constantly checked. Radowitzky cursed that his *mate* gourd and condensed milk were confiscated during a cell check, while another inmate lamented waking up to another day with foul coffee (*endiablado café*) instead of his dear friend *té*, (*mi bueno amigo*)."[397] Coffee without milk or sugar was like black oil, lubricating and fueling the mechanized way of prison life.[398] Inmates were starved of the mundane aspects of civilian life, and therefore struggled to obtain and keep these precious goods to break from routine. Deputy Ramírez looked around the prison, noting inmate numbers, weighed rations, and clockwork schedules, and concluded, "Every single day is rigorous, and mathematically equal."[399] It was tedious and often infuriating. But unlike mathematics, the prison routine was never perfect, never complete, and never a closed system.

Resistance and Resilience

The creation of prison life-worlds was often about resilience against decay, and should not be confused with resistance against official order. In either case, however, these categories are often more reflective of our politics in analytics, than reflective of the intentions of inmates. Historian Carlos Aguirre has noted that with few exceptions, the lives of inmates around the world in modern penitentiaries reveal a great deal of flexibility covering a range of incentives. Rather than being under complete and despotic control, prisoners operate through modes of accommodation, negotiating with personnel and other prisoners to create a "customary order."[400] Resistance, as Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn wrote in *The Gulag Archipelago*, relied upon a set of assumptions. The hunger strike, for example, presupposes that the jailer has not yet entirely lost

[397] See Radowitzky's letter in, Souchy, *Una Vida Por un Idea*; and, Fernández Pico, "De Seis a Siete," 6.
[398] Arnold, "De Profundis," 71-74, stresses that prisoners were trapped between life and death. On the complex relationship between sugar, coffee and tea consumption, and transformations among working classes, see, Sidney W. Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Elisabeth Sifton Books, 1985).
[399] Ramírez, *El Presidio de Ushuaia*, 20.
[400] See chapter six, Aguirre, *The Criminals of Lima and Their Worlds*.

his conscience, or that he is actually afraid or persuaded by public opinion. It is a purely moral exercise, Solzhenitsyn concluded, such that protests require moral responses.[401] Rodolfo González Pacheco, writing about his incarceration in Ushuaia in 1911, was similarly critical in his attempt to understand the role of prison guards—they may be immoral or immune to protests, but he questioned if they had always been that way. Perhaps they too had been desensitized by their role in the prison system. The very technics of training, he surmised, were the tragedy, in which a guard held the world of others at his finger-tip, on a trigger, while his mind might be on his lover.[402] Most responses on the part of guards and authorities were less extreme, but nonetheless a constant preoccupation.

Under this kind of pressure, therefore, resistance was always a risk. The tension between resistance and order, as well as the strength of these categories, have received much attention. Criminologist Ashley Rubin has argued that scholars, in their productive critique of totalizing prison narratives in which inmates are rendered "docile," have nevertheless gone too far in labeling too many inmate actions as resistance—such analyses have diluted the term. She instead suggests "friction" is a more appropriate understanding, since resistance implies "*consciously disruptive, intentionally political actions*."[403] Rubin's point is welcome in suggesting a continuum rather than binary in our categorizations. And yet, Rubin's definition is somewhat

[401] Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago*, 466.
[402] Pacheco, "De Ushuaia: El Centinela." This kind of training is taken to new heights with the training of modern military regimes. See, Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989).
[403] Ashley T. Rubin, "Resistance or Friction: Understanding the Significance of Prisoners' Secondary Adjustments," *Theoretical Criminology* 19, no. 1 (2015): 24. "Friction" is described as "*reactive behaviors that occur when people find themselves in highly controlled environments*" (Emphasis in original). Literature on "resistance" is vast, and Rubin is right to question the extent of the term's applicability for inmates. James Scott's work has been pioneering in the field, including *Weapons of the Weak* (1985) and *Domination and Arts of Resistance* (1990). Many scholars have long been weary of the extent to which the term "resistance" works. Historian Steve Stern, for example, notes "realistic resistance" to highlight just how gingerly subaltern or oppressed groups walk this line. *Peru's Indian Peoples and the Challenge of Spanish Conquest: Huamanga to 1640* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982). An excellent "state of the field" article from this time that still captures well the challenge of pitting practice against system and the rise of Foucault and studies of power is, Sherry Ortner, "Theory in Anthropology Since the Sixties," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 26, no. 1 (1984): 126-166.

passive, or at least takes for granted the unspoken, and certainly undocumented, political nature of certain inmate actions. To get at such intentions however requires a nearly impossible burden of proof. It also dilutes the undeniable power structure in which guards punish, and often punish severely, whether they see "friction" or "resistance," or *choose* to see one versus the other.

Outright resistance in Ushuaia was rare. In 1904, when the prison was still under construction and the guard staff still largely in training, three prisoners were killed and many more injured after a prisoner uprising tried to overtake a diminished guard staff.[404] Fifteen prisoners escaped during the incident, twelve of whom were retrieved two days later, and eventually the other three were corralled. There seems to be no sign of such incidents in later years once the prison was completed and guard teams professionalized. Escape attempts on the other hand, which would likely be characterized as the greatest act of resistance an inmate can undertake, happened often. However, guards and inspectors alike believed that escape from Ushuaia was all but impossible, and therefore they were not preoccupied with these attempts.[405] Prisoners looked longingly across the Beagle Channel to Chile, but the frigid waters offered little hope. And, if geography did not stop escapees, the Chilean police (*carabineros*) would. In 1933, for example, there was a group attempt to escape. An inspection revealed that the bars on cell 11 in pavilion one had been cut with a handsaw between rounds. Chilean authorities in Magallanes eventually detained José Moure Serrano and Enrique Viñas Triero, while Victor Antía, was presumed dead after not returning and receiving no other word of his whereabouts.[406] In 1918, in a far more publicized escape attempt, Simón Radowitzky was similarly captured by Chilean

[404] See, "Sublevación de presos en Ushuaia," *Caras y Caretas* 7, no. 317 (1904).
[405] Ramírez, *El Presidio de Ushuaia*, 35. Despite a long history of maroon communities and networks in places like Zomia, Ushuaia did indeed seem unsavory for escapees in this regard.
[406] MFM, Gobernación de Tierra del Fuego, Jefatura de Policía, "Sumario: Penados nos. 64, 115, 155, y 249," April 20, 1934.

authorities when his comrades aided his escape. One of the most telling aspects of this attempt involved Radowitzky's accomplice, Apolinario Barrera, who so easily gained employment as a guard because so few people desired the position.[407] Guards felt that they too were in exile, and hardly wanted to risk their own lives to track down escaped convicts.

This somewhat *laissez faire* attitude on the part of authorities toward the surrounding landscape opened many opportunities for inmates to explore the limits of their lives outside the prison walls. Inmates, for example, enjoyed taking advantage of the guard's hopes to strike it rich with the region's resources. While working in the forest, prisoners occasionally dumped small amounts of oil obtained from ships or the prison workshops in the soil and rocks near their labor sites. They would then convince guards that they had found what could be the next big oil deposit like those to the north in Santa Cruz.[408] To sell their tale, they would ask to be noted in the day's record-book so as to be credited if the "source" was indeed legitimate. Before long, a group of guards and employees would eagerly inspect the area to find nothing more than a small collection of already refined petrol.

Similarly, inmates mastered the limits of making lives within the prison. A prisoner's cell became a highly intimate space. Markings, writings, and images etched into the concrete told stories of one's life.[409] They filled these spaces with photographs and writings, trinkets and other goods to remind themselves of better times. Inmates clung dearly to items such as photographs and letters from family members, confessing at times that their only goal in life was to regain freedom in order to hug their loved ones once more.[410] However, surveillance and the censoring

[407] For details, see Radowitzky's file in, AGN, Div. Poder Judicial R-5, 1872-1909. A popular recounting of the escape attempt also appears in, *Simón, hijo del pueblo*.
[408] del Rié, *Ushuaia*, 58.
[409] Such stories are so expected by those imprisoned that Jacabo Timerman begins his prison memoir by noting the freshly painted white walls of his cell, which no doubt covered the writings of previous detainees. *Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number* (New York: Alfred a Knopf, 1981).
[410] Ramírez, *La Ergástula del Sud*, 29-30.

of correspondence limited when and what one could hold or display. Protocol required that "incorrigibles" work alone in their cells rather than in common with other inmates, and cell doors were left open or closed based on orders from the warden (101; Art. 18). During such times, items were regularly confiscated. In the case of military prisoner Esteban García, photos of his newborn child were denied him. His wife, in response, wrote from Córdoba to *Caras y Caretas*, where a photo of García's child was published, in hopes that he might see the magazine as it passed through the prison.[411]

That García might see a photograph of his child in a magazine was a distinct possibility. Despite censorship, prisoners seemed well-informed of current events. While it was illegal for inmates to obtain outside newspapers, at any given time numerous periodicals from Buenos Aires could be found. Within a day a paper could circulate through every cell without the knowledge of the guards. Moreover, while each day upon leaving for work the prisoners were inspected, they were ingenious in their ability to hide items, even in the infirmary. One search yielded 120 make-shift weapons, though there was no telling how long these items had been in an inmate's possession.[412] The quickness of this circulation could be exaggerated, and it is equally likely that guards were not so aloof to the presence of these illegal dailies, weapons, and other items. Anytime there is contraband, there is likely an employee gaining from its circulation. What is telling is that one inmate's contraband was another's privilege, and therefore the illegality of objects changed when changing hands. And in either case, inmates could sustain links to the world beyond Ushuaia, even if ephemeral and tenuous.

Opportunities to obtain and circulate contraband were multiple. Inmates were put in charge of the workshops and other operations, and would often be entrusted with holding keys

[411] "Una grata información," *Caras y Caretas* 338 (1906).
[412] del Rié, *Ushuaia*, 26.

and other forms of access to spaces based on their good behavior. Following a violent incident in the prison workshop in December 1914, for example, authorities spoke with Alfredo Peclard (n. 49) because he was in charge of the workshop keys during the previous November.[413] The thirty-year-old Italian photographer had been arrested in 1913 for printing fake money, and was sentenced to fifteen years and a four-thousand peso fine. Guards searched the various cabinets and trunks in the workshops and found the following: a vial of drugs, a sharp knife with a twelve centimeter blade, a five franco mold and a false coin made of copper, a steel stamp fabricated in the workshop and an electric machine for plating, chemistry and physics books in Italian with a falsified signature of the warden, a jar of nitric acid and hydrochloric acid, multiple pairs of new socks that had gone missing from a shipment from the "Vicente Fidel Lopez" steamship the previous August, many meters of white cloth and black satin, a maroon jersey, a pair of socks sewn from a blanket, as well as a new guard's cape, a used uniform, and two hats. The coins, it turned out, had been fashioned from metal ashtrays and inkwells. Peclard, having been arrested for minting counterfeit currency, was investigated. Ultimately, a judge ruled that the coins were not similar enough to be confused with legal currency, and therefore, the punishment could not be as severe as currency forgery. The report does not provide an explanation as to why Peclard made the coins. Was it to stay sharp? To hone his craft? To pass the time? To actually pass the metals off as currency? The reason seems less important than the fact that he could acquire these materials, and that he was willing to risk a potentially severe punishment for his actions.

Nostalgia and Atrophy

The case of Peclard therefore brings into view the possibility of atrophy, and one's wiliness to combat it. Sociologists Stanley Cohen and Laurie Taylor highlighted in their prisoner

[413] MFM, Colección Judicial, 1914 Legajo 51 Ex. 5355. At 5:45am on 28 December 1914, Mateo Góngora (n. 118) attacked Daniel Funes (n. 138) with a sharp object.

study from the 1970s that mental and emotional deterioration are real and regular components of long-term imprisonment. Resignation, they noted, was often visible through a prisoner's lack of desire and will. There is, they concluded, a general loss of one's character.[414] Thus, minting ashtrays could very well have been nothing more than a method to fight atrophy.

Many well-known inmates from around the world at the turn-of-the-century spoke to this point in detail. Peter Kropotkin wrote,

> "In the somber life of the prisoner which flows by without passion or emotion, all the finer sentiments rapidly become atrophied. The skilled workers who loved their trade lose their taste for work. Bodily energy slowly disappears. The mind no longer has the energy for sustained attention; thought is less rapid, and in any case less persistent. It loses depth."[415]

Work could fight atrophy, and long sentences mean repetition of new functions. As a result, many inmates became skilled artists over time. Journalists were shocked by their painting and wood-working skills. Hand-carved chests and furniture circulated throughout the nation. Small trinkets crafted in prisoner cells soon filled the town of Ushuaia. Inmates sat at Singer sewing machines, stitching clothing for themselves, guards, and locals. Larger projects were also employed, including the carving and painting of government building ornaments, signs, and other decorations [Figure 29]. Labor, in other words, was every bit as intellectual as it was physical, and certain jobs were prized over others, not simply to fight the elements, but to fight a number of debilitating processes.

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[414] Stanley Cohen and Laurie Taylor, *Psychological Survival: The Experience of Long-Term Imprisonment* (New York: Vintage Books, 1974): 104-111.

[415] Peter Kropotkin, "Prisons and Their Moral Influence on Prisoners," in *Kropotkin's Revolutionary Pamphlets*, ed. Roger N. Baldwin (New York: Vanguard Press, 1927). The quote continues, "It seems to me that the lowering of nervous energy in prisons is due, above all, to the lack of varied impressions. In ordinary life a thousand sounds and colors strike our senses daily, a thousand little facts come to our consciousness and stimulate the activity of our brains. No such things strike the prisoners' senses. Their impressions are few and always the same."

Figure 29. The Painter, 1933
"El pintor," AGN 18409

Reading, and thus the prison library, was similarly a luxury [Figure 30]. But perhaps the greatest privilege granted to inmates to fight against atrophy was *El Eco*, a prisoner-run newspaper that operated from at least 1930 to 1932. This daily is the most promising archival source for recovering inmate voices and their understanding of these processes. Under the direction of local School Master Jorge Reynoso, the paper served multiple functions, including education. Articles were written about the history of the region, such as, "De la historia Fueguina," which told of Captain Fitzroy and Charles Darwin and the early English missionary work in Tierra del Fuego. There was mention too of Italian, French, and German expeditions in

the region, which showed the international inmate population that they were not the first from their nations to pass through this corner of the world.[416]

Figure 30. The Librarian, 1933
"El bibliotecario," AGN 18411

Some inmates used the paper for catharsis and creativity, while others used it as a confessional. Rogelio González (n. 132), for example, wrote a poem to his pillow, "A mi almohada," the one thing in the prison that best knew his deepest secrets.[417] The pillow's wool "soul" was saturated with González's tears, absorbing his greatest fears and confessions, listening quietly, without judgment. In the same issue, one inmate spoke of sleepless nights, followed by moments of clarity and tranquility in the silence of his cell.[418] Solitude in one's cell,

[416] *El Eco*, 2, no. 19, March 15, 1932, 10. MFM, Hemeroteca 11 Cajon A – 09.
[417] *El Eco*, 2, no. 19, March 15, 1932, 7. MFM, Hemeroteca 11 Cajon A – 09.
[418] "Desvelo ideal," *El Eco,* 2, no. 19, March 15, 1932, 7. MFM, Hemeroteca 11 Cajon A – 09.

therefore, could be a space for escape, release, imagination, and confession. It could change from one night to the next.

Other articles spoke of the environment beyond the prison walls, and revealed a silver-lining of inmate labor in the surrounding forests. One article painted a "motif" of Ushuaia that described a leaden sky and fierce winds that forced locals to stay indoors, depriving the town of any sign of life beyond chimney smoke. And yet, the scene described a sun parting the clouds, if only briefly, during which laboring prisoners took in a magnificent landscape of brilliant contrast between the deep blue sky and blankets of snow on the mountains. This scene, one of splendor and serenity, alluded locals locked away in their warm homes, oblivious, or perhaps blissfully ignorant, of the world outside.[419]

Inmates feared that this sheltered and carceral community denied children a proper childhood. Fernández Pico (n. 91) looked upon them solemnly, "I too am a poet of your sheltered children / Who do not rip their clothes, nor dirty their faces / Nor make snowmen, nor do they have rock wars when they get out of school." In another poem, presumably written to his daughter, Fernández Pico wrote in reassurance that no one could be truly evil, "To the daughter of a prisoner, guard these verses that tell you of my pain… Never think that a soul has been lost: the venom of hate, with all its bitterness, never reaches the depths of a life. At life's core, its most pure, is the wing of a hidden archangel that quivers, anxiously waiting to ascend."[420]

It was worse still for the children of prison employees. José Corrado (n. 437) wrote a tango song about María Luisa Cernadas, daughter of Warden Cernadas and the "hija del presidio." Corrado connects his own life to María Luisa's,

My life's destiny
Brought me to snowy lands

[419] "Brochazos (Motivos de Ushuaia)," *El Eco* 1, no. 1, March 15, 1931, 1.
[420] Juan Octavio Fernández Pico, "A la hija del preso," MFM, Agrupación.

Enclosed by mountains
The laments of prison
Where there are no smiles, nor happiness
Nor celebrations, nor fortune
Nor innocent pranks
Of a happy childhood[421]

That both Pico and Corrado focused on innocence is not surprising. When famed Argentine writer Juan José de Soiza Reilly came to Ushuaia, he interviewed multiple inmates. Of note, he spoke with Miguel Ernst who was incarcerated in 1915 at eighteen years of age for killing and dismembering his business partner Conrado Schneider. Once in Ushuaia he was given the nickname *Serruchito* (little saw). In 1925 Ernst escaped from the prison, but was found two days later, sitting on the trunk of a tree eating chocolates and singing. He requested to be transferred, but was denied. Reilly ended his account with a subdued but highly dramatic claim that after eighteen years in prison, Ernst was "not innocent, but he is innocent."[422]

What Pico and Corrado captured so vividly was not only innocence lost (a standard theme in prison literature), but innocence never experienced by children growing up in Ushuaia. Inmates constantly sought to recapture innocence and play, seeking their own childlike fun through *El Eco.* Like many newspapers, the back page offered an "Entertainment" section, where prisoners provided one another with puzzles, riddles, and math problems. These *cositas* were also educational and often topical, such as using a shepherd counting his sheep for a word problem. Referencing local history and economic activity helped inmates to relate to these stories, and feel, perhaps, that they were closer to home. Others were more intimate and monastic. One entry, "A título de curiosidad," is particularly telling of the lengths to which a seemingly simple newspaper could become a game unto itself. The brief entry provided a list of

[421] José Corrado, p. 437, *La hija del presidio* (Buenos Aires).
[422] Juan de Soiza Reilly, "Presidio de Ushuaia," *Caras y Caretas* (Buenos Aires) January 25, 1930.

the orthographic characters contained on that issue's cover page: 6670 letters and 54 numbers. "E" was the most frequently used vowel while "X" was the least used consonant. The list went on. Pastor Silva (n. 42), the article's author, closed by saying, "If you have ten spare minutes, and you aren't sure what to do with them, check for yourself."[423] Rather than mere Sunday morning activities to be enjoyed around the breakfast table, or something to pass the time during a morning trolley commute, these games—the most mundane and sometimes tedious of activities—became challenges that sparked discussions and debates. They fought boredom. They exercised the mind. They could be worked and reworked, never serving one purpose alone.[424]

De Profundis

The prison administration was aware of the power that these items held. Therefore, the denial of writing and reading instruments, coupled with isolation and reduced rations, was the administrations greatest power. It crippled one's mental and physical strength. Solitary confinement was where decay accelerated. And here, Ushuaia was hardly unique. After a year in solitary confinement in Pittsburgh, for example, Alexander Berkman concluded, "Existence is grim with despair, as day by day I feel my vitality ebbing; the long nights are tortured with insomnia; my body is racked with constant pains. All my heart is dark."[425] Simón Radowitzky would echo these sentiments in Ushuaia, "Between four walls I waited calmly in my long and silent reclusion; resigned, but without hope; with valor, though sick and debilitated. Without seeing the light of day, and unable to speak with anyone, I waited calmly and steadfast for

[423] *El Eco*, 1, no. 1, March 15, 1931, 4. MFM, Hemeroteca 11 Cajon A – 09.
[424] Inmates around the world spoke to the issues. Kropotkin similarly took to reading every word in the limited newspapers he was given. He would rearrange and edit the order of the publications and would mentally write thousands of additional articles. If texts were not available, those committed to memory could be recalled. The very struggle to remember was a tool to combat boredom, *Memoirs of a Revolutionist* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1899; The Anarchist Library, 2012).
[425] Berkman, *Prison Memoirs*, 345.

death."[426] Radowitzky's comrades leveled charges against prison employees for abuses of solitary confinement.[427] Though, they consistently sought to disprove rumors that the prison was killing their martyr, *el hijo del pueblo*, in order to raise his as well as their own morale.[428] Even from afar, they knew that the battle between vitality and atrophy were central to prison life.

And indeed, Radowitzky wrote back to his audience, highlighting the suffering of others above his own. Enrique Arnold (n. 165), who had contemplated suicide, would also spend extended periods in solitary confinement, and gained the sympathy of Radowitzky. While it is difficult to trace Arnold's political history prior to his arrest, Radowitzky explained that Arnold was labeled by Governor Palacios as an intellectual subversive who supported worker causes.[429] He was therefore locked in his cell with the glass window removed, which was replaced by a metal grate with four-hundred tiny perforated holes, each smaller than a match tip. The grate allowed the wind and cold to penetrate his cell, while denying light and causing a seething hiss to fill Arnold's small quarters. Fellow inmates commented that Arnold was dying. They claimed that the infirmary doctor confirmed their fears.

Arnold and his fellow inmates had good reason to worry. Causes of death in the prison ranged from cardiac arrest and brain hemorrhages to skull fractures and asphyxiation by drowning and hanging. But most common was tuberculosis and pneumonia.[430] Some journalists would even argue that "the nature" of the prison was enough to kill an inmate.[431] When inmates did die, prisoners built simple coffins within hours of the death and generally buried the inmate

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[426] These are the opening lines of a letter written by Simón Radowitzky, January 1921. Published in, *La voz de mi conciencia: A todos los trabajadores* (Buenos Aires: FORA, 1928): 3.
[427] "Desde Ushuaia: Demanda ante el Juez Federal," *La Protesta* 21, February 4, 1917, 1.
[428] They argued that Radowitzky was alive and well in the prison, uplifting the spirits of his fellow inmates and continuing the fight for social equality. "Con Simon Radowitzky" *La Protesta* 33, February 21, 1930.
[429] Radowitzky, *La voz de mi conciencia*.
[430] MFM, Fondo Nómina General de Presidarios.
[431] Prisoner 71 was killed slowly by the nature of the prison according to Belascoain Sayós, *Presidio de Ushuaia*, 14.

without a ceremony or vigil. Deputy Ramírez drew on Ushuaia infirmary doctor Guillermo Kelly, who had confessed to a colleague, "in the second penal establishment of this progressive republic [Ushuaia], bones have been broken, testicles have been twisted, prisoners have been punished with dreadful wire bludgeons, preferably on their backs, to turn them ill with TB [tuberculosis] and a thousand brutalities more."[432] Torture and disease went together, as undressed wounds and internal injuries worsened into chronic ailments, or even death. Moreover, as journalist Anibal del Rié noted, "There is nothing more than leaden clouds in the Ushuaia sky," thus denying tuberculosis victims the sunlight needed to help cure them.[433] In addition to the "white plague" and other pulmonary ailments like pneumonia and bacillosis, trachoma (*el terror negro*), was rampant in the prison, and despite isolation and quarantine, contagion was frequent. These chronic diseases formed part of the micro-ecology of the prison forged through a symbiotic relationship of elemental and physical punishment, food quality and rationing, and general living conditions. What is more, prisoners carried respiratory diseases or blindness with them well beyond their imprisonment, often dying from these diseases years after their release, expanding the ways in which practices, experiences, and consequences could not be confined within the prison walls.

Often under-fed and under-clothed, prisoners felt unequipped for the elements. On display in the prison museum today is a letter written by Jesús Peréz (n. 293) to his sister, asking for thick long-underwear and other items to help him survive the cold and reestablish some form of normalcy to his life in the prison.[434] Deputy Ramírez highlighted the dangers of prisoner clothing, or lack thereof. In the infirmary, he noted, prisoners had to share clothing and blankets,

[432] Ramírez, *La Ergástula del Sud*, 65. The letter was written September 1932, addressed to Doctor Frank J. Solar.
[433] del Rié, *Ushuaia*, 28.
[434] Museo Marítimo de Ushuaia, Letter from Jesús Peréz to his sister, November 26, 1916. Peréz was previously inmate number 357 while incarcerated in Buenos Aires.

which spread disease. In the laundry room, the sanitation conditions were deplorable, again spreading illnesses from prisoner to prisoner.[435] The wood-burning *calefacciones* in the prison, moreover, were mere illusions given how quickly their heat escaped. Prisoners who misbehaved were forced to sleep directly on the cold stone floor while the window of their cell was either clasped shut to deny them what little light and air circulation they received, or left open to allow the wind, cold, and snow to enter the cell unobstructed.

These environmental factors, therefore, added a dimension to prison life that has rarely been explored. Prisons, especially modern penitentiaries, have been described as "nonplaces" where time and space end at the prison walls. This was hardly the case in Ushuaia (and I would argue in other prisons as well). The contemporary outdoor campus prison brings this back into view.[436] Nonplace should not be confused with lack of geographic, climatic, or even spatial specificity. Solitary confinement is perhaps the most infamous of these nonplaces. In June 1922, Arnold spoke with guard Miguel Bargellini to report abuses that he suffered while in solitary. His accusations were effective, at least for a short while, as Inspector Manuel Berdejo was temporarily removed from his post. Berdejo had received complaints from multiple prisoners with mixed results.[437] In January 1923 Arnold continued his pleas, also accusing ex-Governor of Tierra del Fuego, Guillermo Risso, for abuse of authority. Arnold argued that upon his initial complaint, he was placed on thirty days of bread and water without further debate. He would remain in solitary for some time longer, and it took its toll on Arnold.

[435] Ramírez, *La Ergástula del Sud*, 47-54.
[436] Mass audiences have been introduced to this form of prison in the television series, *Orange is the New Black*. This prison, in which inmates are frequently outdoors, walking from building to building and surrounding by chain-link fence rather than stones walls, is a constant reminder of place.
[437] Juan Carlos Levece, "Pabellón N. 5," *Karukinká* 25 (1980): 141-157.

He would pen a poem that covered the common prison themes of surrender and repentance in religious overtones. "I am buried alive," opened the final stanza, "I am dead to all, yet I exist where I am." He titled the poem, "De Profundis," Latin for "out of the depths," a term most commonly associated with Psalm 130.[438] De profundis refers to the act of reaching out to God in one's darkest moments from the depths of one's heart and soul, rendering these emotions and process rather place-less and universal.

Arnold was hardly the first inmate to describe his experience as being "buried alive." Life in a small prison cell has often been compared to living in a coffin. But to be buried in this sense is largely metaphorical, like that of the "living dead." Radial penitentiaries often have two or more stories, and therefore, cells as coffins evoke images of urban cemeteries that stack bodies above ground in community mausoleums. The high surrounding walls of a penitentiary can certainly heighten this sensation of burial, but even then, surrounding city buildings, traffic, and other elements could readily remind inmates that human life continued all around them. Alexander Berkman, while incarcerated in Pittsburg a few decades earlier, had written, "Like an endless *miserere* are the days in the solitary. No glimmer of light cheers the to-morrows. In the depths of suffering, existence becomes intolerable; and as of old, I seek refuge in the past."[439] Writing in 1896, Oscar Wilde noted in the opening pages of his prison memoir, also titled *De Profundis*, "The very sun and moon seem taken from us. Outside, the day may be blue and gold, but the light that creeps down through the thickly-muffled glass of the small iron-barred window beneath which one sits is grey and niggard. It is always twilight in one's cell, as it is always

[438] Psalm 130, "A Song of Ascents," the first stanza reads: "Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord! / O Lord, hear my voice! / Let your ears be attentive / To the voice of my pleas for mercy!"
[439] Berkman, *Prison Memoirs*, 331.

twilight in one's heart."[440] Victor Serge, too spoke of a piling, but not of a material weight. Instead, time was what buried inmates, "You know that the days are piling up. You can feel the creeping numbness, the memory of life growing weak. Burial. Each hour is like a shovelful of earth falling noiselessly, softly, on this grave."[441]

Wilde's distinction between his grey and dimly-lit cell inside and the bright blue and gold world outside, Berkman's "no glimmer of light" in the depths of suffering, and Serge's grave submerged by time, can all be re-interpreted with Arnold's live burial. While I have thus far focused on the interior life of prisoners, we see in Arnold's writings how the experience in Ushuaia complicated the prison dichotomy of inside and outside worlds. The surrounding peaks enclosed them, as the steep topography from Ushuaia Bay to the Martial Mountains rises more than four thousand feet in less than a few miles. While a high surrounding barbed-wire fence had been erected by the 1930s, the mountains continued to be the referenced wall around the prison [Figure 31]. Located at the southern 55th parallel, the region is marked by long dark winters and a low-lying summer sun, which can give the feeling of being below ground as the sun hardly rises above these northern ranges. In short, rather than a closed prison purgatory, under-girding the many religious and seemingly place-less revelations of Ushuaia prisoners were meditations on the region's geographical forces. Therefore, a second reading of Arnold's poem allows for a more spatial interpretation, suggesting that Ushuaia was not "the end of the world," but an underworld.

[440] Oscar Wilde, *De Profundis: Lectures and Essays*, intro. Michael Monahan and W. F. Morse (New York: Double Day, 1923). Wilde was imprisoned in 1896 and his writings were published posthumously in 1905.
[441] Serge, *Men in Prison*, 57. He continued, "It is also a tomb. Prison is the *House of the Dead*. Within these walls we are a few thousand living dead…"

Figure 31. Behind Bars, 1933
AGN 18364

Anemic Landscapes

Questions of vitality and atrophy—of decay—were central to austral life and the prisons role in that world. There was a geographic nostalgia that consumed the thoughts and emotions of prisoners like Néstor Aparicio. This was a longing for home, not only for family and friends, but also for a familiar landscape and geography. Aparicio mourned,

> "We lived through a sad winter. The inaction was driving us to despair. The hostility of a mortal climate was making us ill from nostalgia and melancholy. An obsession with the sun, clear skies, golden countrysides, prosecuted us at every hour. At ten o'clock in the morning it was clear and by three o'clock in the afternoon it was already night. Rain, snow, frost, wind, solitude, tragic sadness, were filling all our sensations."[442]

[442] Aparicio, *Los Prisioneros del "Chaco,"* 52.

No inmate conveyed these elements more clearly and more prolifically than Juan Octavio Fernández Pico (n. 91), who was sentenced in 1923 for nineteen years.[443] His body of work captures vividly the ecological complexity of prison life in Ushuaia. While the prison cell was confining and suffocating, the physical space beyond the cell lacked the familiar rhythms of earthly nature. A sunrise or sunset had once signified the beginning or end of a work shift, family time, or conversations with friends—diurnal dynamics spoke to the plurality of human life, the differentiation between one's personal time and their employer's time, spontaneity and routine.[444]

While Fernández Pico's political leanings are less clear, his poem, "A Ushuaia," situates his and others' banishment by highlighting the far south's peculiar diurnal rhythms and cycles, describing an environment that was simultaneously monotonous and extreme, "I too am a poet of your nights without shade / Of your nights so black, of your moons so low / Of your days without skies, of your sun without height / Of your winds like furnace blasts."[445] This emphasis on furnace blasts (*resoplidos de fragua*) is particularly telling of Tierra del Fuego. Patagonia is often referred to as windswept, but this hardly captures the atmospheric dynamics of the far south. Surrounded by oceanic climate-dynamics, the influence of eastward moving cyclones from the polar jet stream coupled with the uninterrupted southern hemisphere westerlies results in winds that converge from multiple angles simultaneously. These winds carry the temperatures of southern Antarctic ice as well as northern glacial ice whose forces are exacerbated by the

[443] MFM, Colección Judicial, Ex. 1111 Folio 186.
[444] Anarcho-syndicalist groups addressed the importance of these different social times for all workers by demanding *los tres ochos* (eight hours each day for sleep, for work, and for leisure), and prisoners like Radowitzky managed to smuggle letters out of the prison to continue their fight. See, Chris Ealham, *Anarchism and the City: Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Barcelona, 1898-1937*, (Oakland: AK Press, 2010). The newspaper manifesto, "La Voz del Presidio de Ushuaia," *La Voz del Chofer* (Valparaiso, Chile) 2, no. 11, May 1, 1924, 6, was penned by Simón Radovitzki (sic) and four others.
[445] Fernández Pico, "A Ushuaia," in, Lazzaroni, *Celdas*, 76-78.

steep climatic gradients of the mountains to the north.[446] "Furnace blasts" captured not only the strength of these gusts, but the sensation of something being so cold that it feels hot, like the burning heat used to forge metals. A decade later, a political prisoner remarked that austral life was most difficult when "the famous southwestern wind blows, tinged with frost, which punishes the flesh like the steel tips of a whip," burning and scarring one's skin.[447] These forces did not simply erode the Patagonian landscape little by little over geologic time; they also eroded the land's inhabitants physically and mentally over biological time, as prisoners were exposed to these conditions as regularized forms of punishment, as elemental torment.

Equally unsettling for prisoners, whether raised in Buenos Aires or Santiago de Chile, Barcelona or Berlin, was that the sun seemed no longer rose in the east and set in the west. In Ushuaia, for months at a time these celestial beings seemed to rotate on horizontal tracks rather than vertical arcs of daily exchange. The extreme latitude was disorienting as the earth's rotation was so different from what inmates knew in temperate regions near the world's center. Winter nights never ended and summer days were debilitating in their totality of light, yet lack of brilliance. "To see it," Fernández Pico said of the sun, "I think that it lacks the strength to rise and flame in order to burn off those clouds of faded and frayed cloth that surround us."[448] This was not simply a description of the landscape, but an appeal to the functions of nature. This was ecological vertigo.

Under a feeble sun, the southern Patagonian environment affected more than humans, and indeed, blurred distinctions between human and animal. Fernández Pico noted that the sheep that

[446] See, Sakari Tuhkanen, "The Climate of Tierra del Fuego from a Vegetation Geographical Point of View and its Ecoclimatic Counterparts Elsewhere," *Acta Botanica Fennica* 145 (1992): 1-64; and, Alan J. Rebertus, "Blowdown History and Landscape Patterns in the Andes of Tierra del Fuego, Argentina," *Ecology* 78, no. 3 (1997): 678–92.
[447] Guillot, *Paralelo 55°*, 100.
[448] Juan Octavio Fernández Pico, "De Seis a Siete," *El Eco* 1, no. 15, December 25, 1931, p. 6. MFM, Hemeroteca 11 Cajon A-09.

were pushed southward when the cattle industry took over the Pampas were now scrawny and fragile as they walked the snow-covered soil, "sad, anemic, and numb."[449] The region's cattle that got lost in the transition "knew not where they lived, nor where to graze." Gardenless homes of metal-siding, with their windows closed, "died dreaming of brighter regions," as if these inanimate objects, like the relocated men, the sheep and lost cattle, "had seen other suns and drank other waters."

This biblical language echoed Charles Darwin's antediluvian Patagonia, but it was also future-oriented, a decaying rather than petrified landscape in which familiar ecological relations broke down.[450] The opposite was true for some tropical prisons. Rather than feeble or anemic, island penitentiaries like Devil's Island in French Guiana were known for the hyper-aggressive nature and unrelenting sun and heat. Prison and government documents in these settings were destroyed by the humidity, while inmates were killed by the "dry guillotine."[451] Indeed, Darwin's theories of natural selection derive from his time in tropical settings, and, in a puzzling way, downplay these earlier experiences in the antipode. Scholars have noted this discrepancy in geographies of evolution versus mutual aid, where hyper aggressive natures on the one hand, and infertile mortal natures on the other, create very different understandings of the world.[452] Modern penitentiaries were constructed around the world to create repeatable environments, though it is clear that certain elements could never be mitigated.

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[449] Fernández Pico, "A Ushuaia," 76-78.
[450] See for example, Clément Duval, *Outrage: An Anarchist Memoir of the Penal Colony* (1929; Oakland: PM Press, 2012). Such stories were so well known that they were captured in earlier works such as, Franz Kafka, *In the Penal Colony*, 1919.
[451] See the memoir, Rene Belbenoit, *Dry Guillotine: Fifteen Years among the Living Dead* (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1938).
[452] See, Daniel P. Todes, *Darwin without Malthus: The Struggle for Existence in Russian Evolutionary Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

The anemic austral nature gave new meaning to the darkness of the prison experience. On the verge of surrender, Fernández Pico opened his poem "Dame más luz," with the refrain, "Give me more light or blind me, the semi-darkness kills me."[453] He claimed that all light in Ushuaia was tragic and therefore he demanded "light that illuminates" rather than the "lividity [that] kills one's conscience." The light from the summer sun was relentlessly dim, while bright lights were either artificial from prison lanterns, or violent flashes from strikes of lightning or the sparks from smashing steel that left stains of black on prisoners' skin and clothing. Marcial Belascoain Sayós, writing for the anarchist paper *La Protesta* in 1918, had described a similar affect after visiting the prison, claiming that in Ushuaia, "the sun denies its own heat," as if it were incapable of performing its natural duties.[454] He argued that Ushuaia's "hostile wilderness," coupled with "the immense cold that comes from the polar south… increased the pain of captives" as part of the disciplinary mechanism.

Ultimately, Fernández Pico and others recognized that they were part of this "hostile wilderness," and quite possibly, they would be returned to its soil and contribute to the faint life of that which would come after. "I too am Ushuaia" ended with the stanza,

And the poet is the poet of himself
If he dies one night so cold, but white, oh so white
He begs of you, humbled by sweet Christianity
That you carry him to a tomb in your grand cemetery
And on the cross place this sorrowful epitaph
"Here lies a sick man, who very well could have been good
And who one day made flowers from tattered cloth.

Conclusion

Inmates in Ushuaia were attuned to southern Tierra del Fuego's geography and ecology. They felt that their incarceration incorporated them into these elements, most often in debilitating

[453] Juan Octavio Fernández Pico, "Dame más luz," *El Eco* 1, no. 15, December 25, 1931, 7.
[454] Belascoain Sayós, *El Presidio de Ushuaia*, 124.

ways that exacerbated the modern prison experience. While border disputes with Chile had since ceased, inmates could not help but argue that this austral land, their carceral ecology, was somehow beyond or outside of their beloved Argentina. Alice Bullard's work on French communards exiled to New Caledonia discusses this type of phenomenon as "death by nostalgia," an extreme longing for the homeland.[455] Decay was the experience of transition from one world to another—mentally, spiritually, materially, and nationally.

If lucky, one received letters, maybe even a visit from loved ones, but such encounters were otherworldly. In Ushuaia, any such contact came through steam ships, exacerbating the perception of this distance such that, via the ocean, prisoners had little sense that they still inhabited Argentina. Fernández Pico wrote,

The ship has gone that came
From under Buenos Aires skies
It brought many hopes
And maternal advice
But it also brought haunting stains
In misspelled words
And though they are sorrowful
They will always be better than nothing
The ship has gone
Leaving in its path
A long wake
That magnifies the late afternoon sun.

Buenos Aires (*porteño*) skies might as well have been from another world entirely. Far from familiar soil and sun, the Argentine flag became a particularly sentimental symbol for inmates. The flag that flew in the town center could be the sign of significant national news. On 2 May 1932 the flag was lowered to half-mast for ten days to honor the death of General Uriburu, who had led the national coup in September 1930. For many inmates exiled by the new

[455] See the chapter, "Fatal Nostalgia" in, Bullard, *Exile to Paradis*. This kind of spirit-breaking nostalgia, some doctors argued, was rooted in a longing for love and lust. See, Dr. Giulio Andrea Belloni "La cuestión sexual penitenciaría," *Revista Penal y Penitenciaría* 4, no. 12 (April-June 1939).

military government, Uriburu's death was welcomed news, but it hardly changed their fate.[456] Seven years later in 1939, June 20th was established as Flag Day, and celebrations were organized for the prisons throughout the nation. It was reported that everyone in Ushuaia broke out in applause during the singing of the national anthem and other patriotic hymns.[457] The following year, inmate Torcuato J. Coronado wrote a poem dedicated to the flag.

This was a question of home (*tierra*). Today one can visit Ushuaia and the flag still plays an important role. The bright blue of Argentina's famous *celeste* is a faded gray, tattered and frayed at the edges, withering like the elements described in inmate writings. This image brings to mind Jorge Luis Borges' poignant story from 1946, "On the Exactitude in Science."[458] The story tells of an empire that sought to so perfectly map its territory that the map itself came to cover the entire expanse of the land. The map, however, eventually frayed into tattered ruins—paper rubble left among animals and beggars on the outskirts of the empire. Ushuaia, under a gray and withered flag was under the opaque control of the penitentiary, not the same bright *sol* of the Argentine nation.[459]

The 1930s, as will be explored in the next chapter, was a particularly poignant time in this regard. September 1930 marked the first modern military coup in Argentina, and the "interior," in many ways, still lacked a significant connection to the capital. Tierra del Fuego, and Ushuaia in particular, was other worldly. Ezequiel Martínez Estrada, in his existential exploration of the nation published in 1933 would claim, Deputy Ramírez, that same year, summed up his report by declaring,

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[456] MFM, Fondo MAN (Bosques) 05.5 Explotación Forestal, Notas Varias Año1932.
[457] "Conmemoración del 'Día de la Bandera,'" *Revista Penal y Penitenciaría* 4, no. 12 (April-June 1939). Inmates in northern Patagonia's Neuquén prison received special rations that day, as well as cigarettes, cookies and candies.
[458] Jorge Luis Borges, *Collected Fictions*, trans. Andrew Hurley (New York: Viking Press, 1998).
[459] Gabriela Nouzeilles argues that Patagonia's winds destruct the work of the state and modernity, "making it difficult, even preventing, the conversion of space to place." Nouzeilles, "The Iconography of Desolation," 253-54.

> "The location of the Ushuaia prison—the only prison camp in the world at this global latitude—is in open conflict with Article 53 of the constitution. The climate and isolation of the region envelops a physical torture and moral anguish, which doubles the punishment of the prisoners and intensifies the situation in which they have no possibility of the social reeducation pursued through their sentencing."[460]

That "global latitude," seemed well beyond the auspices of the *porteño* world. Inmates had known and felt this for a long time. But their voices rarely carried over the Martial Mountains, across northern Patagonia and the Pampas, to the capital. Sounds, after all, decays in travel. Where inmates resided, in reclusion, was both earth and elsewhere. "Silent is Ushuaia / Deadly silent" Coronado wrote, "I beg for my burial / In this legendary land."

[460] Ramírez, *La Ergástula del Sud*, 55. Article 53 states, "Prisons should be clean and sanitary, for the security and not for the punishment of the prisoners detained within them."

CHAPTER FIVE

THE LETTERED ARCHIPELAGO: NATIONALIST NATURES AND THE RE-IMAGINING OF STATE SPACES

Radicalism springs from the foundation of our history. Its affiliation is with the people in their long struggle to acquire personality. In the tradition that nourishes Argentine history, Radicalism is the organic and social current of the people, federalism and liberty. It interprets our emotional and human authenticity; it is the people themselves in their attempt to form a nation which is the master of its territory and its spirit.[461]
UCR Profession of Doctrinary Faith

The party had fallen. "I begin these notes aboard the steamship 'Chaco,' not yet knowing where or when they will end."[462] Victor Guillot opened his memoir with these words from 13 January 1934. The Argentine scholar and national deputy was exiled that January with twenty-two others. They were first sent to Martín García Island on the Río de la Plata bordering Uruguay, and were then joined by twenty more exiles from Buenos Aires. In the midst of uncertainty they hastily published a manifesto in defense of their political party, the Unión Cívica Radical (UCR).[463] Just outside of the capital they were able to receive family and visitors with whom they sang the national anthem and had a modest send-off before beginning their journey south. Ricardo Rojas, a fellow exile and signatory of the manifesto, was able to reach his mother and wife Julieta, sending them hugs and kisses in a telegram that would not be felt until he was over the Atlantic Ocean.[464] Down the Argentine coast they went, passing through Bahía Blanca, and on the nineteenth of January they arrived in Puerto Madryn in northeastern Patagonia—over 1,000 kilometers south of Buenos Aires. That night, at the forty-third latitude,

[461] Printed in, Peter G. Snow, *Argentine Radicalism: The History and Doctrine of the Radical Civil Union* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1965): iii.
[462] Victor Guillot, *Paralelo 55° (Dietario de un Confinado)* (Buenos Aires: Editorial "Sol," 1936): 5.
[463] AGN, Agustín P. Justo, Caja 49 n. 59, January 1934. The majority of these exiles were targeted for being members of the UCR National Convention in Santa Fe, 27-29 December 1933. That same day in January that Guillot penned his opening journal entry, hundreds of communists rallied in the Plaza Italia in Buenos Aires demanding the release of workers held in the Cárcel de Devoto. Ibid, n. 60, 13 January 1934.
[464] Museo Cultural Ricardo Rojas (MCRR), Caja 165, telegram 1355, 14 January 1934.

the evening twilight advanced over the ocean and illuminated the surrounding hills as stars pierced through the setting sun's wake.

On the twenty-first the exiles had access to reports from Buenos Aires, and while most of the news was trivial, they learned that more party members were being sent to Martín García Island. Breaking the solemn mood that evening, someone shouted, "Penguins!" It was a sight to behold, admitted Guillot, such that the Isla de Leones had been misnamed and should be more aptly called *Ile des Pingouins*. A day later they were already in Comodoro Rivadavia where Yacimientos Petrolíferos Fiscales exploited oil—now 1,400 kilometers from Buenos Aires. Just a week in and Patagonia was already looking like one uniform strip of land, just like the traveler narratives had lamented. It was a magical monotony nonetheless. As night fell, the panoramic sunset evoked a connected and spectacular Atlantic port, bringing to mind Río de Janeiro and Lisbon rather than some southern Argentine oil outpost. The summer nights were getting longer; it was still red to the west with just two hours until midnight.

Now over a week into the journey, depression and confinement were starting to take their toll on the ship's detained passengers. Even Ushuaia, feared penal colony though it was, offered some hope of liberation from the tight and limited quarters of what Guillot called the *cárcel flotante* (floating prison). At noon on the twenty-fourth they reached Río Gallegos—fifty-two degrees south, approaching the divide between continental South America and the Magallanes archipelago. Temperatures were dropping from crisp too cold as they inched farther from Buenos Aires and closer to Antarctica. It was still bearable, Guillot noted, but one could see a change amongst the exiles. Winter attire came out, hats and gloves, though resistance lingered. Guillermo Martínez Guerrero could be seen exercising that morning, naked as Adam in the Garden of Eden. That night it began to rain, a nearly freezing rain over the ocean. Finally, with

daylight, the landscape changed as the Isla de los Estados came into view. It was now the twenty-fifth, just a few days until February. Radio, the exiles surmised, would be the only form of contact with civilization from now on as they entered Le Maire Strait. Guillot well knew they were treading infamous waters where many storied expeditions had ended in tragedy. It was all at once exciting and scary, a spectacular scene worthy of those historic narratives. But the pistons of the "Chaco" reminded Guillot of the present—eighty-one revolutions per minute, nine and a half miles per hour. They entered the Beagle Channel. "We have forgotten who we are, where we are going and what awaits us... We are captives of this magnificent austral nature."[465]

Three years prior, a first wave of UCR political exiles were sent to Ushuaia. Salvador de Almenara penned similar sentiments on the captive nature of the south, "They were sending us to Ushuaia, and there, our only jailers would be the snows of the Andes, the cold of the moors, and the endless and monotonous sea."[466] As this earlier group made their way to Rio Gallegos in 1931, Almenara thought of Jules Verne and the adventures of Captain Nemo and the *Nautilus*. He recalled how as a child looking at a map of the Magallanes he got chills of excitement, but now, he and his comrades were entering an uncertain fate.

Almenara's broader account of the transport is one worthy of a novel. On 6 March 1931, he recounted, that a prison guard entered pavilion seven of the Buenos Aires national penitentiary. UCR political prisoners were told by the guard to collect all of their belongings. The prisoners, confused and disoriented, murmured and pondered the possible locations to which they could be sent; one of them whispered "Ushuaia." "Us, Ushuaia? No way. They only send the most infamous military prisoners there."[467] Indeed, few prisoners of the radical party had

[465] Guillot, *Paralelo 55°*, 47.
[466] Salvador de Almenara, *Del Plata a Ushuaia: Memorias de un confinado* (Montevideo: Impresora Uruguaya, 1931): 29.
[467] de Almenara, *Del Plata a Ushuaia*, 11.

been exiled since the Radical Revolution of 1905. Still unsure of their next destination, the UCR prisoners were transported in a small *auto de remise*. They were nondescript vehicles, painted black, though everyone knew their purpose by the police driver and his sidekick in the passenger seat. Almenara could not help but remark on the incredible resources and human ingenuity at the disposal of the hand of justice. As they were loaded into the car, one prisoner pleaded for them not to shut the door in fear of his asthma acting up, but each man knew that the police had heard and denied such replies many times in the past. The closing of the doors created a warm and stale air that produced in the prisoners a sense of fear, but also a kind of clarity and focus. "Argentine citizens, they are sending us to Ushuaia without charge! Down with Uriburu, down with the government! Long live the Radical Party!"[468] When they arrived at the port in three in the morning they saw other cars with more prisoners, including communists, with whom in this moment, according to Almenara, they felt solidarity for being similarly persecuted for their ideas alone.

Despite Almenara's memoir, published in 1931, it is not clear that when the "Chaco" anchored in Ushuaia Bay in January 1934 that the confinados were disembarking on Argentine soil. Guillot's narrative, published in 1936 after his return to Buenos Aires, gives the sense that the UCR members were being exiled to a foreign land, or at the very least, an exotic one marked by foreign place-names.[469] And, unlike common criminals who were imprisoned in the Ushuaia penitentiary, confinados were more akin to political prisoners exiled to Ushuaia, but not incarcerated. Their journey, ultimately, was one that looked and was recounted much like an explorer narrative. Guillot, with a modest bravado argued that aboard "the Chaco" was the recent history of the nation. UCR confinados believed they were not only part of a historic journey, but

[468] de Almenara, *Del Plata a Ushuaia*, 30.
[469] MFM, Libro Policial, Datos 14-01-1933 – 21-07-1937, Parte Diario 26 Enero 1934 (p. 144).

bringing a positive history to the far south in the wake of a conservative military coup in 1930; this history would overturn the bleak and oppressive shadow of the penitentiary.

Nationalism in an Uncertain Argentina

The UCR had ruled for nearly fifteen years prior to the coup, though their popularity had begun to wane. Just a few years prior in 1928, UCR leader Hipólito Yrigoyen had been re-elected president by impressive margins after having held the office from 1916-1922. During the intervening six years the UCR retained power under president Marcel T. de Alvear, however, the return of Yrigoyen would be short-lived due to a series of colliding events. To maintain popularity, the party's expenditures increased at the same time that global agricultural prices fell, which drastically reduced the nation's export profits. Then, in 1929 with the great stock market crash, the United States, which had become Argentina's major economic backer, was unable to continue its heavy investments in the republic.[470] Scholar Peter Snow noted that even with these colliding events, at seventy-six years old and arguably senile, Yrigoyen was never going to overcome the nation's growing discontent with the UCR.[471]

What resulted was the 6 September 1930 conservative coup under General José Félix Uriburu that ousted the UCR from political dominance. Uriburu was born in the province of Salta and had risen quickly through the military ranks. After serving as the defense attaché for both Germany and Britain, in 1922 he was appointed as an inspector general under UCR president Marcelo T. Alvear. After growing discontent with the return of Yrigoyen in 1928, Uriburu led the coup in 1930 with the aid of the conservative Patriotic League. He was careful with the allegiances that he formed, and never owned the title of fascist despite having support

[470] David Rock, *Politics in Argentina, 1890-1930: The Rise and Fall of Radicalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975): 252-264.
[471] See chapter three, Snow, *Argentine Radicalism*, 1965.

from Argentina's small nationalist faction.[472] His reign, however, would be short-lived. Uriburu died of stomach cancer in Paris in 1932. Yrigoyen, who was exiled to Martín Garcia Island by Uriburu, died just a year later after returning to Buenos Aires.

In practical terms, following nearly fifteen years of dominance, the party lost its political power following the coup.[473] The effect however was not immediate. UCR member and soon-to-be exile Honorio Pueyrredón won the gubernatorial election in Buenos Aires in April 1931. Pueyrredón's victory was annulled and conservatives subsequently began rigging elections to silence the opposition during what has come to be known as the infamous decade (*década infame*). The police's Special Section (SS) closely monitored the radicals, as they had communists and anarchists. Although, unlike the latter groups, once in Ushuaia the government seemed to all but forget about these prominent exiled figures.[474]

The historiography for the UCR is extensive, but stops with the coup, book-ending the party's influence in 1930.[475] And yet, while their political strength was suppressed, the UCR members continued to show an impressive amount of influence. For those six months in 1934, a contingent of Argentina's intellectual center shifted, transforming Tierra del Fuego, *el último*

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[472] For a recent work that examines General Uriburu, conservatism, and its relation to as well as divergence from Italian fascism, see chapter two in, Federico Finchelstein, *Transatlantic Fascism: Ideology, Violence, and the Sacred in Argentina and Italy, 1919-1945* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010). See also, David Rock, *Authoritarian Argentina: The Nationalist Movement, Its History and Its Impact* (Berkeley: University of California, 1993).

[473] Between 1904 and 1915, the UCR had 36 national deputies out of 333. From 1916 to 1930, they had 266 out of 488. This was an increase from roughly 11% to 55% of the body. Even after the coup, from 1932 to 1942, they had 125 out of 426, while the conservatives had 138. See Peter H. Smith, *Argentina and the Failure of Democracy: Conflict among Political Elites 1904-1955* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1974).

[474] Guillot, *Paralelo 55°*, 54.

[475] See, Rock, *Politics in Argentina*. For more recent accounts, see, Tulio Halperín Donghi, *Vida y muerte de la República verdadera (1910-1930)* (Buenos Aires: Ariel Historia, 1999); Joel Horowitz, *Argentina's Radical Party and Popular Movement, 1916-1930* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008). Rock has rightly argued that the UCR party further exaggerated Buenos Aires' hegemony over the provinces. But what about during their exile following the 1930 coup? Recent scholarship has explored Peronism in the provinces, and it is fitting, therefore, that an exploration of the UCR in the provinces receives it due. For an excellent work on Perón in the province of San Juan, see, Mark A. Healey, *The Ruins of the New Argentina: Peronism and the Remaking of San Juan after the 1944 Earthquake* (Durham: Duke University Press 2011).

rincón of the nation, into a lettered archipelago.[476] The UCR writings from this time reveal a continued cultural force beyond Buenos Aires that was programmatic for the development of Ushuaia and Tierra del Fuego in the following decades. These writings were made possible because of the nature of the confinados' exile. Rooted in confinement in the town of Ushuaia rather than imprisonment in the Ushuaia penitentiary, confinados were not inmates, nor were they political prisoners per se. They were monitored but not supressed. This was a kind of internal exile, and therefore they were free to roam, write, and converse after signing in with the police registry each day. Locals housed and received these prominent figures with affection and kindness, welcoming them into the social fabric of the community—upon their arrival, local papers covered the event, highlighting the long list of accomplishments and posts of their new neighbors. It is not a stretch therefore to call this a celebrity event. [477] Confinados formed book clubs and other groups to embrace the resources that existed, such that Rojas and Guillot both fondly recalled their trip to the small local library where they spoke with the librarian and applied for membership.

Moreover, the region offered rejuvenating and inspiring natural beauty and spaces. Unlike a city filled with distractions, Guillot remarked that Ushuaia's surroundings were conducive to a pensive and writing way of life. With little oversight and the freedom to engage with locals, confinados provided a unique representation of the region's geography and landscape that would burn off the bleak and oppressive leaden clouds that had for so long weighed on the public perception of Ushuaia. Indeed, they continued their nationalist vision

[476] Ricardo Rojas appears in chapter six of the influential work, Angel Rama, *The Lettered City*, ed. and trans. John Charles Chasteen (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996). For a rethinking of the lettered city, see, Joanne Rappaport and Tom Cummins, *Beyond the Lettered City: Indigenous Literacies in the Andes* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012). I thank Nara Milanich and Ernesto Bassi for their discussions on the "lettered."
[477] "Distinguidas personalidades argentinas se encuentran en Ushuaia," *La Union de Magallanes*, January 31, 1934.

through an ecological narrative in which landscape and geography played central roles. While scholars have been attentive to the UCR narrative of nationalism and spirit, confinado exile writings add a new element to "territory" noted in the doctrinary epigraph above. Tierra del Fuego, not just its inhabitants, needed to be folded into nationalism. These were *geo*-political writings, or perhaps better stated, eco-national in their linking of history, environment, and the nation.

This argument is most apparent in the works of party member Ricardo Rojas, and to a lesser degree, those of Guillot. Since the 1916 presidential victory of Hipólito Yrigoyen, the Radical party had been the (proto)populist voice of the nation. Historian Joel Horowitz has argued that the UCR did not simply call on nationalism, but rather, the party identified as the nation itself, and was the first party to bring the popular masses into politics.[478] Within this vein, Rojas was Argentina's preeminent cultural nationalist. He was a secondary school teacher at the turn-of-the-century and later a literature professor at the Universidad de La Plata, and eventually became the rector of the Universidad de Buenos Aires. By the early 1930s, he was one of the nation's most prized writers and intellectuals. Rojas authored dozens of books, was a regular in publications like *Caras y Caretas*, and was invited to speak at events and institutions around the world.

Rojas' broad experience influenced his complicated relationship with cosmopolitanism, such that, more than just education and high-cultural exchange, he believed that geographical spirituality created the national soul.[479] This was a departure from the Argentine thinkers Domingo Faustino Sarmiento and Juan Bautista Alberdi, both of whom are considered to be

[478] Horowitz, *Argentina's Radical Party*. Horowitz is responding to Daniel James' seminal text on Peronism, *Resistance and Integration*.
[479] Kenneth Weisbrode, "Spiritual Nationalism and Politics in Argentina 1900-1912: A Critical Interpretation," *Program in Latin American Studies Occasional Papers Series* 27 (1991): 14.

founding-fathers of the nation. Rojas argued that despite the advances put forth by these earlier statesmen, they had confused progress with civilization—the former was temporary while the latter was permanent, an essence that was a product of interaction with the land.[480] In a rising tide of hispano-cultural identity in Latin America, Rojas rethought the relationship between Argentina, the interior, and its peoples.[481]

Alberdi had seen railroads as the ultimate form of linking the nation, though this was a continental vision, one in which the Strait of Magellan presented a major obstacle to incorporating the island of Tierra del Fuego. Sarmiento similarly noted that "the Continent of America ends at the south in a point, with the Strait of Magellan at its southern extremity."[482] He was more concerned however with the geography of the Pampas as the cause of corrupt politics in Argentina—cities were islands of civilization surrounding by a sea of barbarism.[483] Published in 1845 and written while exiled in Chile, Sarmiento's *Facundo* predates the War of the Desert and the consolidation of the Argentine nation. Rojas, on the other hand, writing nearly a century later, saw a different landscape and nation entirely—the Republic was in danger of conservative relapse and the important qualities of indigenous peoples were at risk of being lost completely. While Sarmiento championed Europe and the modern city within an American context, Rojas, in

[480] Caroline M. Cameron, "Nationalism Reflected in the Written Works of Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, Juan Bautista Alberdí, and Ricardo Rojas," (MA thesis, Columbia University, 1946). It should be noted that the confinados were not the first nationalists to write treatises while in exile, as Sarmiento had famously written some of his most well-known works while cast abroad to Chile.
[481] See the classic works of José Enrique Rodó, *Ariel*, 1900 and José Vasconcelos, *La raza cósmica*, 1925, from Uruguay and Mexico, respectively. For more on Rojas and Vasconcelos, see, Katja Carrillo Zeiter, "Entre América y Europa: Dos formas de entender América Latina (Ricardo Rojas Y José Vasconcelos)" in *La historia intelectual como historia literaria*, ed. Friedhelm Schmidt-Welle (Mexico City: Colegio de Mexico, 2014).
[482] Sarmiento, *Facundo*, 9.
[483] Zac Zimmer, "Barbarism in the Muck of the Present," Dystopia and the Postapocalyptic from Pinedo to Sarmiento," *Latin American Research Review* 48, no. 2 (2013). The language of the ocean was not merely symbolic. Sarmiento lamented the Spanish's ability, or lack thereof, to embrace and conquer waterways. Ushuaia, therefore, would be particularly strategic as a port in the south on one of the archipelago's largest channels.

the wake of the violence of the First World War, argued for a less Eurocentric modernity, but a modernity nonetheless.[484]

Nationalism for Rojas was not geographic determinism, but rather, a consciousness of territory. This was a reciprocal relationship in which citizen and land improved one another, informed by but not limited to historical connections. When Rojas argued that they must *argentinizar* the south, this did not foreclose the presence or impact of foreigners, but it did demand that immigrants assimilate to a distinctly Argentine culture, rather than simply stabilize an economic and political system. Rojas called this culture "Eurindia" (a neologism based on Eurasia). He saw a hybrid nature in Argentina composed of European and American (indigenous) qualities, which had experienced three phases of history until that point: indigenous, Spanish colonialism, European immigration. The nation was therefore poised to enter a fourth phase in which Argentine culture and nationalism would be achieved through a melding of the previous three epochs with the unique qualities of the land that each group had experienced in particular ways.

Literary scholar Amaryll Chanady's analysis of *Eurindia* (1924) focuses on Rojas' use of a tree as the symbol for the nation, through which he believed that "the Indian constitutes the nourishing roots of the new society," which also meant embracing and integrating the very lands that had created them.[485] This use of a tree as the analogy for Argentine nationalism is all the more palpable in Tierra del Fuego through a heightened attentiveness to landscape and ecology. The fourth stage in this history views the moderns or contemporaries as the foliage, innumerous

[484] Sarmiento's obsession with James Fennimore Cooper and a distinctly American (hemispheric) style and calling could be seen as honed by Rojas, referring in his day to a distinctly Argentine Tierra del Fuego. For more on Sarmiento and Cooper, see chapter two in, Doris Sommer, *Foundational Fictions: The National Romances of Latin America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).
[485] Amaryll Chanady, "Ricardo Rojas's *Eurindia*: The Contradictions of Inclusive Models of Identity," *Revista de Estudios Hispánicos* 34 (2000): 590.

and giving of fruit and flowers—the ecological and national pay-off of cultivating the roots, tree, and its branches.[486] *Eurindia* was published ten years prior to Rojas' exile in 1934, and is more theoretical in its nature analogies. What we see in Rojas' exile memoir, *Archipiélago* (1942), in conjunction with this broader nationalist argument, is an attempt to not only build nationalism through a relationship to territory, but to similarly integrate the provincial territory into the intellectual and geographical center of the nation (Buenos Aires). In other words, the land was anthropomorphized in that it too was othered (*la tierra maldita*), and needed to be incorporated into the nation (*argentinizar*) and national body.

Rojas' greatest frustration with Argentine operations in the far south, including the Ushuaia penal colony, was that previous governments had squandered the inherent skills and practices of natives, who were in his eyes *naturally* evolved for Tierra del Fuego. Natives knew how to hunt and cultivate food, they navigated the channels and survived the frigid climate that so many explorers from Europe and Argentina had viewed as inhospitable and unforgiving. Indeed, long-standing Argentine debates have centered on a dichotomization of civilization and barbarism that is rooted in relation to land. The Pampas were barbarous for Sarmiento, but later converted to productive agricultural lands by Europeans. Northern Patagonia was a vast desert now dominated by sheep ranchers and the global wool industry. Southern Tierra del Fuego, rather than being improved, was further darkened by the creation of a torturous penal colony.

Archipiélago explores an alternative understanding of this region and proffers a positive future for development. It provides a nuanced ecological addition to Roja's tree analogy put forth in *Eurindia*. Moving beyond this earlier and better-known work, *Archipiélago* does not simply represent the peoples of Tierra del Fuego and Argentina. Rather, the tree itself and its ecology

[486] Rojas, *Eurindia*, 78.

become central to the nation and nationalism in *el sur*. In other words, Rojas moves beyond theory and into practice in his exile work by coupling the otherness of people and land, and pointing to a new Argentine geo-body identity.

The Antipode Mirroring Europe

UCR members engaged in a rich geographical lexicon and ecological imaginary, one that picked up on Director Muratgia's nuanced and holistic ecological vision for the prison after popular support began to wane.[487] Popular discontent was captured by the all-encompassing phrase, *la tierra maldita*, and more specifically by the 1930s, *criollo siberia*. In short, the inmates were violent, the prison was poorly operated, and most importantly, the region was inherently inhospitable and therefore incapable of rehabilitating prisoners. This negative perception of the land dates back to Charles Darwin, who claimed that "Death and Decay prevail" in Tierra del Fuego.[488] Rojas responded to Darwin directly. He argued that *Archipiélago* rectified Darwin's labeling of Tierra del Fuego as "la tierra maldita," a term which had for over half a century "justified the creation of latifundias and prisons" rather than the fostering of civilization in southern Patagonia.[489] His work used anecdotal experience and thorough studies to reveal the positive potential of Ushuaia, not for science or inherent beauty, but for Argentine development.

What we see in Ushuaia therefore is not simply observations of landscape and environment, but competing visions of place based on point of view and one's goals. As Paul Carter argues in his work on Botany Bay, Australia, "the spatiality of historical experience

[487] Muratgia, *Presidio y cárcel*.
[488] Darwin, *The Voyage of the Beagle*, 450.
[489] Rojas, *Archipiélago,* 169, 182.

evaporates before the imperial gaze."[490] Therefore, spatial pluralities can be highlighted by competing visions, politics, and states of freedom. In this regard, there was certainly overlap between how confinados and common prisoners experienced southern Tierra del Fuego. The concept of a criollo Siberia continued, but few people could claim to have any first-hand experience with the place it purported to describe.[491] And indeed, personal experience often brought a different set of descriptions. Upon arrival, Guillot simply called the region *la torva latitud* (grim latitude). Though these accounts, like those of Rojas, were ultimately supplanted by more nuanced and programmatic descriptions of the region in his memoir that were optimistic and illuminating.

Unlike most common criminals, confinados were learned men well versed in the numerous travel accounts on Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego. From the voyages of Ferdinand Magellan and Charles Darwin to the national explorations of Francisco "Perito" Moreno and Julius Popper, they already had detailed images of landscapes that inflected their expectations. But the UCR party was also keenly aware of how the prison had transformed recent representations of the region. Rojas' first impressions of Ushuaia echoed those of popular opinion, as he wrote in a letter to his wife that the town looked like a Russian village under snowcapped mountains.[492] However, these environmental accounts were quickly transformed and influenced by personal experience and discussions with locals. Dr. Castellanos and Mr. Lawrence, for example, assured Rojas that European grains prospered in Tierra del Fuego as they did in Russia, but so too did various fruits and flowers for one's garden.[493] Guillot recounts a

[490] Paul Carter, *Road to Botany Bay: An Exploration of Landscape and History* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010): xxii.
[491] This concept is drawn out in more detail by historian Lila Caimari whose history of the Argentine prison system provides a brief account of the 1930s political prisoners, *Apenas un Delincuente*, 71; 245.
[492] MCRR, Ricardo Rojas to Julieta Rojas, February 8, 1934.
[493] Rojas, *Archipiélago*, 198-200.

conversation with a local during which they agreed that the island of Tierra del Fuego was not as extreme to the south as Sweden and Norway were to the north, and that the climate was not as unbearable as people typically claim.[494] These were not mere subtleties of geographic dispute, but rather, significant reorientations of southern Patagonia's defining qualities.

Also looking toward Europe, Rojas constructed a comparative analysis to convince the Argentine government and public that Tierra del Fuego was capable of producing a prosperous society of Euro-Argentine constitution. Like Guillot, Rojas argued that while Tierra del Fuego's relation to the South Pole appeared similar to that of Norway to the North Pole, its seemingly extreme latitudinal position actually coordinated more closely with a milder Denmark. He highlighted that the temperatures of the region were not as frigid as people had claimed, especially compared to Russia, where the temperatures were consistently much lower. What made Tierra del Fuego so extreme, Rojas claimed, were its unstable atmosphere and the influence of the polar current's cold unrelenting winds. Nevertheless, such a climate was not a problem in itself, as a similar atmospheric dynamic existed in Scotland with relation to the North Sea. There, he noted, the "human plant grows with physical and mental vigor." Said another way, Rojas claimed that despite the environmental and climatic obstacles of Tierra del Fuego, like in Sweden, Canada, and Scotland, an "industrious and healthy society" could prosper in the far south as it did in the far north—the Argentine tree of nationalism could flourish in antipodal soil.[495]

The geographic discussions and descriptions by Rojas and Guillot are detailed and impressive, and no doubt, these men were observant during their exile as they traveled

[494] Aparicio, *Los Prisioneros del "Chaco,"* 65-66; 100-01.
[495] Rojas, *Archipiélago*, 166-68. Rojas even noted Darwin's claim, "Inhospitable as the climate appears to our feelings, evergreen trees flourish luxuriantly under it." Darwin, *The Voyage of the Beagle*, 216.

extensively through the region. But neither scholar was a geographer and their forays into Ushuaia's surrounding physical elements relied extensively on the studies conducted by Italian geographer and missionary, Alberto María de Agostini. Published in 1929, Agostini's *Mis viajes a la Tierra del Fuego* was an in-depth attempt to overturn, or at least nuance, the various representations of Tierra del Fuego as an inhospitable tierra maldita.[496] Agostini spent more than ten years in the region between 1910 and 1929, covering both Argentine and Chilean Tierra del Fuego as well as northern regions in Patagonia. It is no surprise therefore that confinados pull many of their geographical claims from Agostini, including their comparisons of Tierra del Fuego's longitude to that of Denmark, rather than Norway.[497] More than a decade prior the German-trained geologist Bailey Willis made his own comparisons of Patagonian climates with the north, though he used references from the United States. He projected that the Beagle Channel occupied a confluence of climate dynamics that teetered between the coast of Maine, Lake Superior, North Dakota and Montana on the one hand, and Chesapeake Bay on the other, arguing that the web-footed Oregonian would prosper in the grey and wet climate.[498] Indeed, contradictory claims and perceptions by explorers were rooted in the extreme differences throughout the island.[499] While Argentine Patagonia is described as the pampa versus the cordillera, only in Tierra del Fuego does Argentina occupy the windward side of the Andes

[496] Alberto M. de Agostini, *Mis viajes a la Tierra del Fuego* (Milan: La Cardinal Ferrari, 1929). Thus, while explorers like Charles Furlong claimed in front of the Royal Geographic Society that the region was a *terra incognita* in 1933, Agostini's lengthy publication shows that others were already traversing the island's interior. In honor of his work, tourists today can visit Alberto de Agostini National Park, which comprises more than 5,600 square miles west of Ushuaia in southernmost Chile.
[497] Agostini, *Mis viajes a la Tierra del Fuego*, 10.
[498] Willis, *Northern Patagonia*, 5-6. Willis was somewhat prophetic in this claim, as the introduction of beavers to Tierra del Fuego have utterly transformed ecosystems throughout the island, and therefore attracted much attention from scientists. See, Jonathan J. Henn, Christopher B. Anderson, and Guillermo Martínez Pastur, "Landscape-level impact and habitat factors associated with invasive beaver distribution in Tierra del Fuego," *Biol Invasions* (16 March 2016).
[499] Agostini, *Mis viajes a la Tierra del Fuego*, 16. See also, Julius Popper, *Exploration of Tierra del Fuego*.

Mountains. Thus, unlike northern towns such as Bariloche where Willis conducted surveys, Ushuaia is hidden away and obscured from the rest of the nation—it was exposed to rather than sheltered from the polar elements. Shifts in seasonal wind patterns caused some trees to have sinuous contortions and a general eeriness such that Agostini could not deny the presence of death in the region, a spirit that he claimed occupied the silence.

The town of Ushuaia depended completely on the prison personnel, as did tourist activities, such as trails up the mountains and roads to Lago Fagnano, which were made possible through inmate labor.[500] Guillot similarly noted that everyone works for, in one form or another, the prison or the government. Every dollar that passed through the town first passed through these two institutions, both of which actively prevented the expansion of private enterprise. The geographer and the exile both expressed the potential for an expanded tourism sector that might overcome these obstacles to the creation of a more organic community.

Rather than planning from afar, first-hand experience stirred up unexpected visions for the region. In mid-February, Guillot surprised even himself, noting, "Today has blessed us with weather worthy of Nice [France]. Without rhetoric or hyperbole, the clean and luminous atmosphere has warmed incredibly beneath the rays of the sun in this latitude."[501] Just a few days later he delighted that the climate reminded him of the French Riviera's Blue Coast; the weather was mild, but the sky was pure, clear, and definitively marvelous, and as he compared this to the windswept plains to the north of the Martial Mountains he thought, "Tierra del Fuego is a piece

[500] Agostini, *Mis viajes a la Tierra del Fuego*, 135. Agostini spent little time talking about the prison, though he did report that the inmate population oscillated between 500 and 800 prisoners (well beyond its proposed capacity), and that construction was underway to house 3,000 inmates. This expansion in population, however, like many others proposed, never happened. Confinados, like Néstor Aparicio, also picked up on these relations, looking solemnly upon common prisoners laboring in the streets and suffering public beatings, and when possible, spoke with these men, learning the details of solitary confinement and food rationing. He and fellow confinados even trafficked letters and remittances back to common prisoners' families. Aparicio, *Los Prisioneros del "Chaco,"* 56.
[501] Guillot, *Paralelo 55°*, 139.

of Eden randomly thrown into the southern archipelago."[502] This Edenic comparison of Ushuaia to Nice and the Blue Coast reveal not only a completely different set of European and biblical referents from those of Russia and banishment, but a particularly upper class imagery and lexicon. Such luxuries continued during their exile. They enjoyed a trip aboard the "Río Negro" and savored local *centolla* (crab) with rice, and while most outings were more modest, daily excursions on foot included heading into the mountains to eat wild berries and marvel at the natural wonders just outside the town. On another occasion, fellow confinado Esteban Crovara was able to acquire two *corderos* (lambs) from a police officer, making that night's menu: *mouton roti et salade*. Rojas had similar experiences, and discussed being mistaken for a free-man while consuming mutton on another occasion with the "Swedish cowboy" Lombardich.[503] The group invited Rojas on an excursion aboard Lawrence's schooner to the Murray Canal, but he had to decline the offer and remind the men that he was in exile and lived within certain, though limited, constraints. These encounters with locals led Rojas to conclude, "Everyone here knows that the beauty of the landscape contrasts with the negative projects of the government. No one ignores the causes of Fuegian pain, which does not come from the physical geography, but rather from humans."

This was at the core of Rojas' work. It was an appeal to a paradigm shift in how Argentines thought of their southern land. He continued, "Some readers will think that these are the pessimistic cogitations of a poet in captivity; but they are not. I believe I have already demonstrated the truth with facts and figures. In Tierra del Fuego injustice reigns everywhere;

[502] Guillot, *Paralelo 55°*, 199.
[503] Rojas, *Archipiélago*, 145-149. Hardly limited to the end of the world, Lombardich sent his children to prestigious universities such as Córdoba, and they would later become doctors who traveled to Europe, Africa, and throughout the Argentine republic.

whether a result of selfishness or ignorance, however, these wrongs can be made right."[504] Rojas' rhetoric, in other words, was to untangle the prison and local government from Ushuaia's environment as well as its history. The "leyenda negra" persisted, yes, but the land was "cursed" for the exterminated natives, for the prisoners living under antiquated and sterile conditions, for the exploited workers without resources and for the humiliated local citizens.[505] This could all change.

Community in Confinement

Tierra del Fuego was not simply a misunderstood landscape. Just as common criminals experienced an interiorized southern Patagonia in their prison cells, confinado writings conveyed a dramatic domesticated exile. Such scenes appear sporadically in traveler narratives, and can be revealing of the larger journey. Bruce Chatwin's famous travel narrative from 1977, *In Patagonia*, has been influential in shaping modern perceptions of the region. For Chatwin, meeting strangers and hosts along the way was integral to his understanding of Patagonia. While in the north a man offered him shelter from the inclement weather, leading Chatwin to note, "The rain drummed on the tin roof. For the next two hours he was my Patagonia."[506] This short and seemingly banal line opens an entire world of geographic possibilities rooted in sociability. Common prisoners had no such respite when returning to their cells, at least not in this way, but confinados did. There is in the confinado accounts an air of optimism, even fondness, for these spaces. As they befriended locals and entered their homes, a new Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego was revealed to them.

[504] Rojas, *Archipiélago*, 180.
[505] Rojas, *Archipiélago*, 183.
[506] Bruce Chatwin, *In Patagonia* (New York: Summit Books, 1977): 29.

Images of confinados in their rooms reveal modest but well-furnished spaces, heat, and a relatively high level of comfort. They gathered in their new dwellings like the "Casita Verde" (Little Green House) and the "Casa de Los Farones" (House of the Pharaohs). Some of these were private homes, while others were old government buildings. In the poem "El Primer Argentino," Guillot describes a scene in which he and other political exiles curse the weather while sitting around a warm stove that was full and glowing red, "As the flavorful mate circulated / so did the theme of the conversation / from somber to light-hearted / in the fraternal circle."[507] These elements of relative freedom coupled with mundane delicacies were rarely accorded to common prisoners (a burning stove, mate, unmonitored conversation). Confinados had their own stoves, blankets from the navy that lined their walls for added insulation, and other creature comforts that were, at best, contraband if obtained by common inmates, which could at any moment be taking away or lead to harsh punishment [Figure 32].

Figure 32. Mate, 1934
MCRR

[507] Guillot, *Paralelo 55°*, 121-23. "El Primer Argentino" was one of the first commercial establishments in Ushuaia that became a meeting place for exiles, including Andrés Ferreyra, to whom the poem is dedicated.

When a snowstorm struck in February, Guillot noted with delight that he took comfort for a couple hours in his bed. He recalled a similar February in Milan with his family, but of course, as he noted, such stretches were expected in the northern Italian winter as the seasons were inverted. This therefore, was a snowy summer in southern Patagonia. Guillot's recollection reveals an upper-class geographic sensibility, one that could be put to the test given his heightened status as a confinado. For fun one night, they turned off the furnace to see just how low the interior temperatures would drop. This was a playful luxury, to test their limits against the cold, with the safety of knowing that at any moment, the heat could be restored by the turning of a valve within arm's reach.

The public saw images of confinados "bearing the glacial cold" in overcoats and hats, scarves, and other nice items while the locals pictured wore more modest attire.[508] Rojas sent one such image to his wife of himself, four fellow exiles, and the local, Pepe [Figure 33].

Figure 33. Our House in Ushuaia, 1934
R. Rojas, Enrique M. Mosca, Honorio Pueyrredón, Federico Alvarez de Toledo, Adolfo Güemes, Pepe
MCRR

[508] "Soportando el frío glacial de Ushuaia," *La Libertad* (Buenos Aires) Abril 29, 1934. Pictured in the photo are: Rojas, Mosca, Pueyrredón, Alvarez de Toledoy Güemes y el ciudadano José Viñas.

Indeed, the confinado "Pharaohs," as many locals would refer to them, took photos throughout their time in Ushuaia. Well-dressed and comfortable, they looked more like visiting diplomats than banished exiles. The Ushuaia cemetery, like the prison cells, conveyed stories to confinados that were not their own, bringing them in close contact with the specter of death so often conveyed in regional accounts. Guillot read the tombstones and questioned the lives and sins of forgotten inmates, such as prisoner "Alvarez," who was left shoeless in the winter.[509] Confinados would not fall to such a fate. Instead, they were the bearers of the nation, as Guillot had remarked, bringing history to the south, walking proudly with chests out and an heir of dignity. While the images of confinados reveal well-dressed and proud men, their writings strive to establish a legitimacy through a sense of the unknown and a hardship that must be conquered. Moreover, they told the stories of inmates, speaking on behalf of the incarcerated as well as on the behalf of the region's environment and ecology. This was a different kind of traveler narrative, an exile narrative, which reinforced one's manliness and nationalist mission.[510]

These, however, were only temporary respites according to Rojas, as such experiences regularly caused cabin fever, "Life in Ushuaia is confined to life indoors, huddled around the fire, like the Onas, while outside the wind howls and the gray sky enwraps in its unsettling sadness the beach and mountains."[511] Such confinement, he concluded, stunted one's growth and

[509] See also, Guillot, *Paralelo 55°*, 68.
[510] These images reveal a gendered power dynamic. Inmates in the penitentiary were often feminized in their classification as feeble-minded and succumbing to criminal desires, and then emasculated in their interactions with guards and sense of loss of control. On the gendered relation of who speaks for whom in Argentina during this period, see, Nouzeilles, "An Imaginary Plague in Turn-of-the-Century Buenos Aires." For a discussion on nationalist visions and masculinity, see Eduardo P. Archetti, "Situating Hybridity and Hybrids" in, *Masculinities: Football, Polo and the Tango in Argentina* (New York: Berg, 1999). For more on the critique of a top-down masculinity, see Pablo Ben, "Plebian Masculinity and Sexual Comedy in Buenos Aires, 1880-1930," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 16, no. 3 (2007).
[511] Rojas, *Archipiélago*, 202-203.

intellect. Thus, inmates and townspeople alike suffered from a life indoors, which prevented their adaptation to the region.

Whether indoors or strolling the streets, exile had its benefits. For confinados, this heightened confinement and closeness fostered solidarity.[512] The repetition and overlap in the writings of Rojas and Guillot, is revealing of shared experiences, discussions, and perhaps, planning their strategy for betraying the south in a new light. However, because these prominent figures were not held in the prison itself there was always a distance and hierarchy between inmates and confinados.[513] Amongst the UCR Guillot argues that the forced intimacy of exile helped to unite and put forth a vision of Argentine,

> "We have been brothers in our ideals, and brothers in our common misfortune. We are united, moreover, in the hope of the future destination of the reconstruction of Argentine democracy—and this time it will be definitive—for the sacrifices and efforts of the Unión Cívica Radical. The forced intimacy of our trip singularly favors this close labor… From the thirtieth kilometer of our journey aboard the 'Chaco' various groups of exiles arrived in Ushuaia a community of men equipped with a new and deep spiritual cohesion."[514]

This heightened communication also extended to the privilege of contact with loved ones via Ushuaia's radio station and telegrams. Newspapers covered these interactions, even reproducing the hand-written cable from Rosario S. de Rojas to her son Ricardo, "I am healthy. I think of you constantly. Kisses and blessings."[515] Dr. Mario Guido noted the "unforgettable night" experienced with his fellow exiles in mid-April when confinados were treated to another transmission. This time it included support from artists of the day, as well as their loved ones

[512] Peter Zinoman's work on Indochinese communist prisoners in Vietnam shows the powerful ways in which imprisonment can foster solidarity among existing groups as well as other inmates through dialog and mutual aid organizations (even if they were often segregated within the prison). See chapter seven in, *The Colonial Bastille*.
[513] Moreover, the UCR had imprisoned many of the Ushuaia inmates in decades prior for their politics. Mistreatment of imprisoned anarchists was a common theme in publications like *La Protesta*, as well as booklets like del Sar, *¡Ushuaia!*.
[514] Guillot, *Paralelo 55°*, 132-133.
[515] "Con intensa emoción hablaron para los exilados en Ushuaia," *Crítica* (Buenos Aires), April 5, 1934.

who read poems and other sentimental words over the airwaves.[516] Indeed, this cohort of exiles attracted a new group of protestors demanding justice. No longer was it solely anarchists critiquing the penitentiary and demanding the release of their comrades. Students at the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy at the Colegio de Graduados, for example, wrote to the President, General Augustín Justo, as did Rojas' professional colleagues who wrote in solidarity along with high-profile figures like Leopoldo Lugones.[517]

Moreover, some confinados were accompanied by their wives, which had not been an option for common criminals since the original cohort that volunteered at the turn-of-the-century. These women brought a different form of life and vibrancy to the community. Confinados recalled Martínez Guerrero's spouse playing guitar for the men while Honorio Pueyrredón's wife recited poetry. Both also added extra hands for the regular bridge games. The government spent thousands of pesos each month to provide confinados with private housing and food, which facilitated these regular and impromptu gatherings.[518] The result, Guillot argued, was that they were united as much in adversity as they had been in victory during the previous years of radical rule.[519] Songs in this regard were important to these gatherings, not just for entertainment, but for reaffirming their mission:

Neither injustice nor oppression,
Will break us
For the men of the Radical Party
Are courageous

In remote latitudes
Facing the gloomy southern sea

[516] "La transmission del sabado en la radio stentor, destinada a los confinados politicos, fue una nota de inolvidable significado," *Tribuna Libre* (Buenos Aires), April 16, 1934.
[517] "Piden la libertad del Doctor Rojas," *Tribuna Libre* (Buenos Aires), April 13, 1934; "Por la libertad de un colega," *Boletín de la Sociedad Argentina de Escritores* (Buenos Aires), April 1, 1934; "Leopoldo Lugones pidió la libertad de Ricardo Rojas," *La Literatura Argentina* (Buenos Aires), June 1934, 287.
[518] See, "Gastos por Alimentos," 1934, in, MFM (ADIP). They, like some of the radicals exiled during Uriburu's reign, would be provided roughly five pesos per day and allowed to secure their own housing within the town.
[519] "Como vivian los radicales en Ushuaia," *Crítica*, August 4, 1934.

The vibrant cry of the Radical
Soars into the breeze[520]

And yet, time and distance, as perceived as a battle between an unincorporated Tierra del Fuego and the world out there—el norte—was still a struggle. "In certain circumstances—I believe it has been written before—distance has the same effect as time. Things that happen far away take place in the past and emerge like outdated clothing…"[521] For Guillot, exile to the remote corner of Ushuaia also meant a temporal exile, in which he lived in a another epoch, forgotten to the modern world and only fleetingly in contact with loved ones. Radio was still a luxury, and in practical terms, Ushuaia residents lived by the schedule of steamships that brought newspapers and letters that bore dates from the recent past.[522]

Rojas argued that one of the great challenges for Argentina was to more fully incorporate the region into the nation's communication network, as a letter sent to his family in Buenos Aires from Ushuaia took fourteen days to arrive, while mail sent from Buenos Aires to Japan would arrive quicker despite crossing a continent and an ocean. Newspaper delivery suffered a similar delay, as dailies arrived in batches in the south and no one had the patience to work through them all.[523] Such complaints may have been exaggerated, but it was common for locals to speak of their daily rhythms as relying on technologies, or the lack thereof.

As a remedy, confinados advocated for the autonomous powers of Argentina's interior, arguing that Patagonia deserved its own council, and that Tierra del Fuego, given its unique geography, history, and isolation, should have its own governing body. At present, Rojas noted, Tierra del Fuego's four sub-regional government bodies were isolated from one another and did

[520] Guillot, *Paralelo 55°*, 177.
[521] Guillot, *Paralelo 55°*, 162.
[522] "Buques Esperados" *El Eco Fueguino* 1, no. 5, October 23, 1903, MFM Hemeroteca 03 Folio 1.
[523] Rojas, *Archipiélago*, 192.

nothing more than exist on a map. This too, seems to be an exaggeration, as police networks and shipping lanes connected the major populations centers throughout the archipelago. Nevertheless, such claims buttressed the fourteen-point plan put forth in *Archipiélago* to improve the region. Rojas began by declaring Ushuaia a *puerto libre* (free port), which would encourage more commercial activity. Guillot too could envision a future bustling Ushuaia when, one night during exile, he observed four ships anchored in the harbor. They were all part of the state apparatus, but with the city illuminated and the ships lit facing the shore, the port looked like a heavily-trafficked economic space.[524] To service such a future port, infrastructure improvements, including roads and air traffic connections between Buenos Aires and Ushuaia, as well as improved connections with Punta Arenas, Chile were necessary. Spanish colonization never reached the region, Rojas reminded his readers, and therefore Tierra del Fuego did not experience the transition to independence as had the rest of the country—history had not quite visited the region, until now.

Return of the Exiled and the Eradicated

The confinados were not exiled for long. Within just a few months, most of them were back in Buenos Aires and other northern cities, continuing their nationalist mission. Guillot published accounts of his exile experience for *Crítica* as early as July and August of 1934. Readers throughout the city received a new installment of "How the Radicals Lived in Ushuaia" every few days, giving them access from the source. In fact, *Crítica* had been featuring the exiles since their departure, showing them playing billiards and conversing over coffee in local restaurants.[525] One subtitle captured the situation well, "There was not a minute of boredom," while another paper showed Rojas, Guido, and Mosca, comfortable around the dining table after

[524] Guillot, *Paralelo 55°*, 72.
[525] "Cómo vivían los confinados politicos en Ushuaia," *Crítica* (Buenos Aires), May 15, 1934.

lunch, conversing and staying warm.[526] Without the categorization of "confinado," such images and captions might have belonged to a regular UCR gathering.

Nevertheless, their exile was at times precarious, and therefore their return was a relief. Rojas' friends celebrated his return and anticipated his work as a missing piece of the national historical puzzle. Miguel Contrera Lugones welcomed Rojas back from the *tierra de nieve* (land of snow) noting his certainty that Rojas' work would shed light on a still dark corner of the nation.[527] Unlike Guillot's account, however, readers were not presented with Roja's writings until seven years after his return when *La Nación* first published portions from what would become *Archipiélago* each Sunday from August 1941 to January 1942. There were nineteen total installments, including a twentieth in the form of the work's epilogue, which was a fictional account of an escape from the region. Throughout 1942, newspapers and literary journals published glowing reviews of Rojas' work, highlighting the powerful and lyrical history of Argentina's far south. Alfredo L. Palacios, then representative and later senator and ambassador, published a letter to his dear friend in *La Vanguardia* claiming that he had re-read *Archipiélago* in *La Nación* and it was nothing short of a "nationalist restoration" that marked the future of "argentinidad" in the south.[528]

More than providing personal accounts, Rojas buttressed his support for Ushuaia by providing a history of the region. His goal was not simply to educate the public about the prison, but Tierra del Fuego more generally. By the end of his work, Rojas realized that he had described three periods in the history of Tierra del Fuego: the first was the age of explorers, then that of the indios, and finally, the age of Argentine sovereignty and the Ushuaia prison. This, in

[526] "En las soledades del sur Patagonia," *La Voz del Pueblo*, June 2, 1934. Pueyrredón was pictured in the paper, standing stoic in front of his home, the roof covered with snow, and he, bundled up in a warm coat and hat.
[527] Telegram from Miguel Contreras Lugones to Ricardo Rojas, July 8, 1934. MCRR 60C 421.
[528] "Carta a Ricardo Rojas," *La Vanguardia*, June 14, 1942.

line with his analysis that Tierra del Fuego was outside of Argentine history, did not begin with indigenous peoples, though they clearly predated explorers in the region. His point, it seems, was focused on narratives of the region. Darwin's unfavorable descriptions of the region were first influenced by those of James Cook from the 1770s. This was understandable, Rojas noted, as poor weather combined with a lack of provisions and adequate clothing would produce such sentiments in anyone. John Byron's writings from an excursion in the 1760s suggested that if it were not for Tierra del Fuego's winters, the flora and fauna in the region would stand out as some of the most beautiful in the world. Traveler accounts of the region were often contradictory, and no single telling should stand in for the whole, "A Magical island, certainly, and one worthy of a new legend, for Darwin's has persisted for too long, and does not contain the whole truth."[529]

Rojas's work also provided one of the most thorough accounts of prison operations for public consultation, including budgets, wages and construction costs. He concluded that prisoner labor in the surrounding forests was inefficient and that purchasing timber from private suppliers would be cheaper, but such practices were prohibited. Labor in the prison workshops was even less practical. He noted that the cost to house each prisoner was roughly ten pesos per day, while that of Rojas and his fellow political exiles was much lower at roughly three pesos and forty centavos, "There is no doubt, this is all absurd."[530] Moreover, each prisoner was supposed to receive a pair of boots and two sets of clothing each year. They also received an overcoat, just like the guards, though typically they received used coats when guards were given (or took) new

[529] Rojas, *Archipiélago*, 51. Julius Popper, as noted in chapter two, reached the same conclusion. He, however, was responsible for the eradication of indigenous groups.
[530] Rojas, *Archipiélago*, 102-103. Official records show that Rojas was covered by $3.35 per day, and most political prisoners received roughly $4. Rojas was housed by Stelios Luizón. As noted, however, such rationale is misleading given the private support confinados received.

sets. In general, as many prison inspectors had already argued, the prison was simply not the self-sustaining institution that it was intended to be. These critiques of the penitentiary, however, strategically neglected to mention that discontent had been voiced during the years of Radical rule (1916-1930).[531] Anarchists in particular voiced concerns during this period that sounded quite familiar to the critiques leveled by confinados between 1931 and 1934.[532] Confinados, therefore, made vague and timeless critiques of the prison. When highlighting particular ills, they strategically pointed to post-1930 operations following the appointments of Prison Director Adolfo Cernadas and Warden Carlos Faggioli, which many groups noted was a particularly violent period in the penitentiary's history.

This vague chronology of the prison was folded into a larger critique of the treatment of indigenous peoples in Tierra del Fuego. "I understand that my confinement is now part of Fuegian history, a symbol more than an ill-fated destination; but I do not want to speak about me, because what happened to me was not confinement, the Onaisín are the confined."[533] The End of the World was like so many other contact zones in recent memory. Beginning in the 1880s, the increased presence of "civilization" had brought not only violence, but also disease that diminished populations by roughly ninety percent, marking a black page in human history.[534] Once again near the capital, Guillot was back in the present, speaking of the far away and lost to history Onaisín people. It would have been a noble act, the confinados agreed, to save

[531] The Radical Party was also in charge during killing of roughly 1,500 laborers to the province of Santa Cruz, just north of Tierra del Fuego. See, Osvaldo Bayer, *Los vengadores de la Patagonia trágica* (Buenos Aires: Galerna, 1972).
[532] I engage this topic in depth in chapter three. Belascoain Sayós, *El presidio de Ushuaia*. While the prison did not have a particularly good record during the Radical period, President Yrigoyen did eventually pardon Simón Radowitzky in 1930, the prison's most famous inmate and anarchist.
[533] Rojas, *Archipiélago*, 205-206.
[534] Guillot, *Paralelo 55°*, 189-191. The year the Ushuaia prison was closed, reports argued more explicitly for mountainous zones of confinement to fight bacilosos and other pulmonary illnesses. See, "Proyecto de sanatorio de montaña para empleados y teburculosis bacilosos," June 30, 1947.

and engage the indigenous peoples of Tierra del Fuego to better understand and take advantage of their adaptation to the island's geography. The Onas were a laborious people fit to work the region's timber and agricultural industries, while the Yaghan were expert navigators having spent generations in canoes and were therefore ideal to improve Argentina's fishing industry. Patriotism in Argentina too quickly forgot that the constitution demanded that natives be saved, rather than being snatched by barbarism, a process that stained the southern white snows with blood.[535]

These writings re-introduced the term "Tierra del Onaisín" to the popular lexicon, paying homage to an indigenous past in which Argentines needed to salvage what they had recently destroyed and squandered. The timing was apt, as the cultural milieu in Argentina had recently taken interest in an indigenous cultural heritage that had for a long time been denied. In fact, in 1929, *Crítica* took on the exclusive rights to the story that man had inhabited the Santigueño Chaco in northern Argentina for more than 5,000 years.[536] Roja's nationalism tree in this discourse took on a very literal significance. Indigenous peoples were the roots, dead to the present world, stable and buried in the ground, but now providing necessary resources to the nation. One reviewer praised Rojas for providing a history of yesterday, today, and a vision of tomorrow that required Argentines to re-conquer the region and rehabilitate a tarnished south, one that would benefit from an indigenous past, but not have a living indigenous future.[537] As noted in the previous chapter, a national identity had already emerged through Patagonia and the

[535] Rojas, *Archipiélago*, 185.
[536] On the growth of anthropology and interests in an indigenous past, see, Carolyne R. Larson, *Our Indigenous Ancestors: A Cultural History of Museums, Science, and Identity in Argentina, 1877-1943* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2015). As Larson notes, this emphasis on an indigenous past will be replaced by a gaucho-centered folklore in the wake of the 1943 military coup.
[537] "Los habitants de los territorios no son hijos del país," *Noticias Gráficas*, April 22, 1942.

fossils displayed in the nation's natural history museum.[538] Rojas reanimates these visions, focused this time not on petrified fossils and skeletons, but instead, on the active and productive remnants of indigenous peoples, both their spirits as well as a claim for the nutrients of nationalism. Ushuaia under the state was no longer a place considered capable of rehabilitating prisoners, but rather, it was a second failing of civilization—first with regard to the treatment of natives and then of criminals. Tierra del Fuego was now the thing in need of rehabilitation and rescuing.

Tierra del Fuego's ecology could now be a place of salvation for those suffering the woes of modernity, especially disease and overcrowding. Discussions of tuberculosis retreats circulated in Argentine publications at the time, referencing the creation of villages in France and Switzerland where pure air allowed ultraviolet rays to reach one's skin unimpeded while reflections from the winter snow would increase such beneficial exposure.[539] Rojas claimed that the few existing tuberculosis cases in the region could not be attributed to climate or geography, rather they were products of social vices. The surviving natives of the island who did not drink or smoke never knew the pains of pulmonary illnesses, and the European offspring of missionaries raised on the island had lived healthily and happily into their seventies.[540] Southern Patagonia's pure air was healthier than that of Buenos Aires, providing a space to cure the sick who lived in

[538] Carolyne Ryan Larson, "'The Ashes of Our Ancestors': Argentina's National Indigenous Heritage under Negotiation and On Display in the Museo Etnográfico, 1904-1930" *The Americas* 69, no. 4 (April 2013): 467-492. For a broader work on iconography and political motivations that includes the use of skeletons in the Southern Cone, see, Rebecca Earle, *The Return of the Native: Indians and Myth-Making in Spanish America, 1810-1930* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

[539] See, "Ciudades para tuberculosis," *Caras y Caretas* 36, no. 1788, January 7, 1933. For other contemporary imaginings of hygienic spaces, see chapter ten in, Diego Armus, *The Ailing City: Health, Tuberculosis, and Culture in Buenos Aires, 1870-1950* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

[540] For similar claims of a salubrious northern Patagonia, see, Ernesto Bohoslavsky and María Silvia du Liscia, "La Profilaxis del Viento: Instituciones Represivas y Sanitarias en la Patagonia Argentina, 1880-1940," *Asclepio. Revista de Historia de la Medicina y de la Ciencia* 60, no. 2 (July-December 2008): 187-206.

anti-hygienic conditions in the packed housing of the nation's capital—the region could be beneficial for *blancos* once they "acclimatized."[541]

This latter comment highlighted that while the island was sparsely populated, in nevertheless offered a cosmopolitan history given this array of international explorers and expeditions that shaped the region. There was not, however, an equally cosmopolitan infrastructure. While railroads and highways transported tourists and industry from Mar del Plata to Nahuel Huapí in northern Argentina, no such infrastructure existed for popular or private use in Tierra del Fuego.[542] Had prisoners been put to work constructing such infrastructure projects, they surmised, all of Tierra del Fuego could have been connected over the previous thirty years. Such discussions referenced neighboring Chile, both as a model, but also, as the main sender of individuals in Ushuaia. Punta Arenas, Chile was the cultural capital of the Magallanes with roughly 40,000 inhabitants, 30,000 of whom were Chilean. But more important than its electric infrastructure, cars, and schools, was the fact that it was Chilean, in character and demography.[543] Famous writers such as Roberto Arlt and Juan de Soiza Reilly similarly reflected on the *chilenización* of Patagonia. Arlt said that to mention Buenos Aires in the Patagonian mountains was not to speak of the capital, but instead of a distant city in a foreign land.[544]

Ushuaia, moreover, still contained a frontier demographic in which men outnumbered women five to one. While Buenos Aires had a similar gender profile at the turn of the century due to mass immigration, by the 1930s the male to female gap had closed. Ushuaia, once again, was seen as lagging. These narratives praised an indigenous past and looked toward an Argentine

[541] This claim is troubling as by the 1930s indigenous peoples on the north end of the island were suffering tuberculosis epidemics. See, Romina Casali, Martín Fugassa, and Ricardo Guichón, "Aproximación Epidemiológica al Proceso de Contacto Interétnico en el Norte de Tierra del Fuego," *Magallania* 34, no. 1 (2006): 87-101.
[542] Rojas, *Archipiélago*, 187-189.
[543] Almenara, *Del Plata a Ushuaia,* 77.
[544] Roberto Arlt, *En el país del viento: Viaje a la Patagonia* (1934; Buenos Aires: Ediciones Simurg, 1997).

future, it was still a particular demographic shading the nationalists' desires. "The strongest races are formed in arctic regions," Rojas concluded, referencing northern Europe to validate Ushuaia's potential—Antarctic South America was a mirror image of (Western) Arctic Europe.[545]

Conclusion

Confinados attempted to redefine place through critiques of a built-environment, one that was Argentine but amiss in the nation's perceived progress. This discourse, however, was built on a short and particular exile. Rojas was held as a confinado from January to May of 1934, Guillot from January to June—less than half a year. These relatively short tenures during the summer and the early winter months were closer to the timeline of an explorer of Patagonia than a prisoner of Tierra del Fuego, and indeed, their rhetoric reappraises a lexicon and representation of the region employed by early nationalist travelers.[546] As the next chapter will show, locals and journalists alike subsequently picked up this new nationalist narrative.

After all, in the simplest of ways, UCR confinados never disappeared from the public eye; the public could follow their odyssey, and in a way, lived it with them. Moreover, their returns were announced in popular publications, unlike those of common criminals, who had been all but forgotten by the world—if they did return, few noticed.[547] When Doctor Adolfo Güemes spoke to the National Committee on 28 July 1934 upon his return, he proudly addressed the audience as citizens, highlighting the recent exile and return of party members from the "desolate" regions of Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego. He concluded, "Radicalism is to continue

[545] Rojas, *Archipiélago*, 168-69.
[546] Darwin returned to the region in May and June, commenting, "I never saw a more cheerless prospect; the ducky woods, piebald with snow, could only be seen indistinctly, through a drizzly hazy atmosphere." *The Voyage of the Beagle*, 208.
[547] "Vendrán del Sur algunos de los confinados políticos," *La Nación*, April 28, 1934.

without interruption until equality, social, civil, and political liberty are obtained for all Argentines."[548] That same year the ban on the UCR was lifted. While the historiography has shown that the UCR was severely limited in political terms during the infamous decade, the confinado exile experience tells a different story of influence and cultural capital.

This story was reiterated over the following decade as the confinados' writings were published, and for the confinados themselves, they recounted their journey in a myriad of reunions. Some, like the gathering of the National Committee were invigorating and celebratory, others, were more somber. In 1943, Julieta Meyans, the wife of exile and former Foreign Minister Honorio Pueyrredón, passed away.[549] Her funeral in Buenos Aires' famous Recoleta Cemetery focused on her Christian faith and good deeds, but also, her selfless and patriotic ways exemplified in her decision to join her husband in exile in Ushuaia. The procession brought together the former confinados—a reunion for old friends—and additional letters were received from residents in Ushuaia. Amongst the most prominent names in Argentina's history, Meyans' rests in the Pueyrredón mausoleum, remembered in a plaque that notes "San Julián 1932" and "Ushuaia 1934" One attendee recalled that in San Julián, Meyans assisted a hungry man simply known as "el anarquista," who would come to call her "mamá Julieta." Jesús Blanco, a resident of Ushuaia, remembered Doña Julieta as a generous and simple, yet grand and noble soul that brought light to the darkness of the far south. Guillot had noted in his memoir that Meyans lifted the spirits of the confinados countless times, though he was not there to retell these tales, for he had passed away three years earlier.[550]

[548] AGN, Augustín P. Justo, Caja 100, n. 100-109, Dr. Adolfo Güemes, *Tres Discuros* (Buenos Aires, 1935).
[549] Biblioteca Nacional Argentina (BNA), Julieta Meyans de Pueyrredón's Funeral: En Memoriam (Buenos Aires, 1943).
[550] For more on Guillot's death, see the essay "Palomar" in Bayer, *Los anarquistas expropiadores y otros ensayos*.

These moments show the heightened level of solidarity and fraternity amongst this privileged group of confinados. Common inmates did not have such reunions and could not simply recall with levity their months spent in the south—indeed their tenures were rarely so short. Guillot's poem on fraternity ended with the stanzas:

An eternal silence
Fills the darkest night
And the winter in the mountaintops
Besieged with eternal ice
The invisible Southern Cross

I go quietly in the darkness
Alone in solitude
A blanket around my neck
Communicating to the banished
The warmth of a friendship

Confinado memoirs offered hybrid narratives of travel and captivity that informed a human-landscape nationalist vision. These were not simply top-down visions of nationalism, rather, they were dialogs informed by interaction with locals and engagement with regional sources that otherwise might not have been consulted in Buenos Aires. In this way, the confinado experience was not one of discovery, but rediscovery, and repurposing through conversation and experience. These were not, however, men who withered, decayed, or died. Their hardships should not be discounted, but they should similarly not be conflated with the prisoner experience in Ushuaia. Confinados were not individuals locked away in cells and forgotten to the world outside. Theirs was a collective journey, a publicized journey that depicted a national project in attempts to unite Buenos Aires and Ushuaia. They believed that they brought Argentine history to the island, which also meant incorporating the region into the present through an ecological narrative of the nation. "The pharaohs," because of their exile, proposed the way to a new nationalism in southern Argentina.

CHAPTER SIX

A KIND OF CLOSURE: THE PARENTHESIS IN A NATURAL HISTORY

...the history of Ushuaia is too recent to be of interest.
Armando Braun Menéndez, *Ushuaia*, 1938

By the time the UCR political prisoners of 1934 were released, it was well-known that the Ushuaia penal colony had not met its call. Rather than success stories of reformed convicts and a sustainable timber industry, stories of torture, harsh weather, inadequate facilities, and lack of rehabilitation were the norm. Political prisoners had brought such stories, with increasing detail, to a new and broader audience. Ushuaia and southern Tierra del Fuego in this dialog were liminal spaces, peripheries of the periphery. On the one hand, this was an Argentine institution, marking the southern extreme of the country. On the other, the practices were deemed un-Argentine, a disgrace. After their exile experiences, UCR members sought to bring home men who were incarcerated, as well as bring home this far corner of the nation.

The prison would not close for another thirteen years, but during this time, a new discourse was circulated by various groups, from geographers and naturalists who saw beauty in the region, to businesses that sought profits. In either case, the timeline of Argentine history was put into question with relation to the prison. Tierra del Fuego, which had long been described as outside of modern human history, would once again be discussed as such. The prison in this narrative became a parenthesis, an unfortunate moment when man interfered with natural history. This chapter explores, therefore, not only the closing of the Ushuaia prison, but the reconceptualization of Argentina as a nation that reached back in geological time to justify the creation of a national park in the same forest once felled by inmates.

The Prison Dilemma

Ushuaia was not the only worrisome prison in Argentina by the mid-1930s. There was a general consensus among penologists and jurists that Argentine prisons were not meeting the needs of the nation, let alone fulfilling the promises of modern incarceration. The national prison population had grown from 2,861 in 1929, to 4,511 in 1935. Overcrowding had become commonplace and facilities were crumbling. By 1938, even the National Penitentiary in Buenos Aires was in such dire need of repairs that a proposal came to relocate the prison. Buenos Aires had continued to expand since the population boom at the beginning of the century, and available real estate near the city center was scant. The National Penitentiary, located on Avenida Las Heras, occupied one of the most populated and expensive neighborhoods of the city [Figure 34]. Therefore, the prison was a financial and urban planning burden on the capital.

Figure 34. National Penitentiary, 1930s
MPA

General Director of Penal Institutions, José María Paz Anchorena , echoed the concerns from 1925 of the Special Prison Legislation Commission (Comisión Especial de Legislación Penal y Carcelaria). The commission had argued that the Argentine prison problem was, "before all else, material."[551] Laws, regulations, and the enlightened penal codes, all promised a strong and effective system. However, Argentine prisons were simply ill-equipped to realize these promises. Each time renovations and other works were proposed by reformers, financial and resource shortcomings arose. And with each year, the problem was exacerbated. By the late 1930s, it was no longer simply a shortcoming of space and resources, but in fact, an economic quandary. Indeed, prisoner cells in the National Penitentiary, small as they might have been, were now some of the most prized square footage in the Capital Federal, which had reached four million residents.

Selling the penitentiary, therefore, could finance reform and relocation. Paz Anchorena reiterated ex-Deputy Dr. Leopoldo Bard's belief that penitentiaries should be (re)located to create agricultural communities and large workshops such that prisoners become true laborers whose energy would transform the nation through public works.[552] Most importantly, these works should not destroy the will of inmates, Bard noted, as was witnessed by travelers on the "Cap Polonio" who looked upon the crushed souls of Ushuaia inmates held in perpetuity. This southern reclusion lacked a social connection. The year of the report, Ushuaia held nearly nineteen percent of Argentina's prison population and was the most deplorable of all institutions.[553]

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[551] José María Paz Anchorena, *Plan de traslado de la penitenciaría nacional y construcción de dos colonias penales* (Buenos Aires: Talleres Gráficos de la Penitenciaría Nacional, 1938): 7-8.
[552] Paz Anchorena, *Plan de traslado*, 10.
[553] Legislators from Cuba and Canada were also in attendance. See, American Prison Association, *Resolutions Adopted by the Annual Congress, New York 1919, Including the Declaration of Principles of 1870, Cincinnati* (New York: American Prison Association, 1919).

Historians have highlighted these national concerns and argued that the closure of the Ushuaia penitentiary was imminent by the mid-1930s.[554] In addition to overcrowding (537 inmates occupied 380 cells), official summaries noted the degradation of the prison's facilities. Pavilion one was dilapidated, while pavilions three and four, which held the infirmary, and housed the school and library respectively, were equally in need of updates. With growing abuses on the part of guards toward inmates, pavilion two was used exclusively for a "certain class of prisoners."[555] And yet, this would increasingly be the reason to maintain the prison, not close its doors. The *Revista Penal e Penitenciaría* published plans in their 1936 annual report for expansions and modernizations in most of Argentina's prisons. The report argued that no individual should be sent to Ushuaia whom the state wished to rehabilitate.[556] Therefore, the institution should be reserved for the most violent of criminals, those beyond repair, who posed a threat of "contaminating" other inmates.[557] Indeed, the government continued to send those deemed most violent and dangerous to Ushuaia expressly because of these more rigorous conditions. In exchange, a few prisoners who proved to be less dangerous were transferred to the National Penitentiary in Buenos Aires.[558]

Closure, therefore, was not a foregone conclusion. Some authorities were even optimistic. Unlike the financial woes of the National Penitentiary in Buenos Aires, there was no real estate bubble in Ushuaia. Moreover, inmate labor costs were incredibly cheap, stone and other raw materials were abundant, and the mild winter of 1934 allowed for continued work in the forests all year. The hospital and electricity factory, producing 175Kw, were lacking but functional, and

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[554] Caimari, *Apenas un delincuente*.
[555] *Memoria de Justicia e Instrucciones Públicas*, 1934, p. 551.
[556] Dirección Gral. de Institutos Penales, "Plan de construcción carcelarias y organización de los establecimientos," *Revista Penal y Penitenciaría* 1, no. 2 (October-December 1936): 284.
[557] *Revista Penal e Penitenciaría* 1, no. 2 (Buenos Aires: Ministerio de Justicia e Instrucción Pública, 1936): p. 284.
[558] "Nuestros establecimientos," *Revista Penal y Penitenciaría* 4, no. 11 (January-March 1939). In 1938, for example, 65 inmates were transferred to Ushuaia, while 15 were returned to Buenos Aires.

the prison was still the official printing-press for the government.[559] The relationship between the prison and growing town, therefore, was one that offered multiple forms of expansion.

Thus, despite negative perceptions of the prison, proposals for expansion and repairs were made again in 1938. A $340,000 proposal included the construction of a new pavilion that would house 222 prisoners, restoration of pavilion one, repairs to the workshops, the construction of a new carpentry shop with an annex, and finally, the finishing of the hospital.[560] There were also proposals to replace the outdated and inefficient wood-based heating furnaces with steam-powered systems. Some plots were shifted away from the prison, such as public lands redirected for military use as well as for sawmills in 1938, but it is clear that prison operations continued and in many respects expanded.[561] This included the continued building of Ushuaia's infrastructure with inmate labor. In 1945, prisoners worked in the quarry to extract 38,000 blocks of cement for the municipal slaughterhouse and Ushuaia's new church.[562] Thus, despite mounting claims of human rights violations, through the mid-1940s those who opposed the political powers of the conservative military Argentine state feared exile to Ushuaia.[563] And, as always, those who committed violent crimes were at risk of southern transfer. Operations would continue through 1947, as no one was certain when the prison would actually close [Figure 35].

[559] "Talleres gráficos carcelarios," *Revista Penal y Penitenciaría* 4, no. 11 (January-March 1939).
[560] Museo Penitenciaría Argentina Antonio Ballvé (MPA) Archivo Histórico Penitenciaría, Tomo 15, C-35 n. 10, May 3, 1938.
[561] "Reserva de terrenos fiscals en Ushuaia," *Revista Penal y Penitenciaría* 4, no. 11 (April-June 1939).
[562] *Memoria de Justicia e Instrucciones Públicas*, 1945, 337.
[563] In 1943, for example, communists protested against the potential exile of their comrades See the *noticia*, Partido Comunista, "Los Lideres Antifascistas Codovilla y Real en Peligro de Ser Confinados en Ushuaia," June 26, 1943, Buenos Aires. Centro de Documentación e Investigación de la Cultura de Izquierdas (CeDInCI), SHB/CPA C1/11-2.

Figure 35. Inmate Labor, 1947
AGN 1197766

Promoting Austral Argentina

While the larger public no longer supported the prison, and administrators continued to make plans for expansion, a new narrative was being crafted by locals in Tierra del Fuego and those who might profit from alternative ventures. In line with the writings of UCR members who lamented the prison but praised its surroundings, this new narrative tried to tell the "true" history of Tierra del Fuego and its natural beauty. In August of 1935, for example, journalist Jose Pedro Correch reported on his visit to the penal colony, "The climate does not kill anyone who can eat, bundle-up, move around and exercise," however, "a man, shackled and without shelter, he cannot last long."[564] Tierra del Fuego was not the "mortal" climate so frequently described just a decade earlier. It was a space for growth, a space for reflection, a place to escape the madness of

[564] Jose Pedro Correch, "Tierra del Fuego, una visita a Ushuaia, cuyo presidio debe ser traslado," *Ahora*, August 29, 1935.

the capital. Pedro Correch put nature in contrast with the prison, while others, simply moved beyond the institution all together.

One of the biggest champions for reclaiming the region had much more invested than the average journalist. The Braun-Menéndez family, who were the largest landowners and moneylenders in southern Patagonia, were the result of an international marriage between Argentine and Chilean families. They created a trans-border oligarchy, including media and news outlets, such as the magazine *Argentina Austral*. The publication, as historian Alberto Harambour-Ross has shown, was the promoter of a kind of frontier settlement and southern trans-Andean trade.[565] While Ushuaia received far less attention than cities north of the Martial Mountains in the region's pasturelands, it was sold to readers as part of a broader Patagonian paradise, even as early as the late 1920s [Figure 36].

Figure 36. "Ushuaia Surroundings," *Argentina Austral*, 1929

[565] Harambour-Ross, "Borderland Sovereignties."

In the December 1943 publication, Juan Muñiz wrote a special edition contribution on the "world's most southern city" in an attempt to salvage its grim reputation. "For many people the name 'Ushuaia' evokes a world of punishment, a horrible and fierce place, deserted and inhospitable. But the truth is quite different." Turning to Ushuaia's "true" nature, Muñiz continued, "Nestled in a corner of marvelous and natural beauty it is like few other places on the planet, where the mountains and forests, flowers and nests, abound, and human life prospers sheltered by the home and protection of civilization"[566] The harsh elements were not total, and neither were the horrific actions of humans in the region. There was hope and optimism for reconciliation. Rather than use Ushuaia for ill, he concluded, the state and its people could embrace the region's beauty and resources to create something new and productive.

These were recurring themes. In 1929 the journal had re-published a 1911 letter from then Minister of Public Works Ezequiel Ramos Mejía that discussed agrarian policy and progress in the region. Ramos Mejía, writing to then president Roque Sáenz Peña, argued that exploitation of the forests would always be narrow in scope if operations were carried out on foot. Without the creation and expansion of roads, railways and shipping routes, the project and potential profits would forever be limited. While the prison had brought many of these features, publishers at *Argentina Austral* highlighted that, eighteen years had passed, and the situation was the same.[567] Moreover, the territory received the lowest investment from the *Consejo Agrario* of any province or territory, receiving just over 1.26 million pesos per year (Buenos Aires, the largest recipient received nearly 34.2 million). Thus, despite the port and rails that reached into the

[566] Juan Muñiz, "La ciudad más austral del mundo: Recordando la fundación de Ushuaia y su cincuentenario," *Argentina Austral* 15, no. 150 (December 1943): 12-18.
[567] Ezequiel Ramos Mejía, "Politica agraria en la presidencia Saénz Peña" *Argentina Austral* 1, no. 5 (November 1929): 20-23. Original letter from July 1911.

forest, an extensive prison garden and workshops, the infrastructure was insufficient for realizing Ushuaia's full potential.

In 1938, Dr. Armando Braun Menéndez wrote his own short history. He used this local authority to claim that despite the great many publications on the penal colony, specialists such as criminologists had not needed to study the region's broader history. This take ignores Director Muratgia's holistic ecological vision from the 1900s, but effectively showed that public opinion and knowledge about Ushuaia was limited to and synonymous with the prison. Braun Menéndez, in his attempt to re-brand Ushuaia, cast a dim light on the "fearsome" prison and its "thick grey walls."[568] He countered the failed civilizing mission of the prison by highlighting the earlier works of British missionaries. In particular, he looked to the Patagonia Missionary Society, who had come to the region in the mid-1850s to civilize indigenous groups in the region. By looking back to a white and European history in the region, one that was longer than the history of the prison, Braun Menéndez sought to legitimize a benevolent, positive, and collaborative history in the region that overcame the short-comings and ills of the prison.

Braun Menéndez, like other champions of Tierra del Fuego in the 1930s and 1940s, performed a simultaneous deep history and short-term memory loss. The narrative presented the island's natives as an impressive people, while the first Europeans to inhabit the region were at worst, well-intentioned. This offered a renewed sense of adventure and exploration that could expand the region's limited tourism industry. Indeed, an anticipated tourism boom continued to swell in the 1940s, though journalists noted that the frequency of ships in and out of the region continued to be a problem (about eight a year, while mail was delivered regularly only during the summer), as was a general lack of amenities. However, once established, people would certainly

[568] Armando Braun Menéndez, *Ushuaia* (Buenos Aires: Talleres Gráficos de la Penitenciaría Nacional, 1938): 3.

come to see Bahía Lapataia and Lago Roca, arguably the most beautiful sites in all of Argentina, according to Horacio Lütscher, who argued that the land hardly warranted the title of "Tierra Maldita."[569] Echoing the early claims of naturalist E. H. Holmberg, Lütscher noted that the prison was the only large exploiter of timber in the region, and these exploitations served little more than the needs of the prison. He was certain however, that with time and knowledge, people would forget the term "Tierra Maldita" completely. The new District Forestry Office, which sought to correct these industry flaws, would repeat the claim a year later, arguing that the legend of "la tierra maldita" should be "buried."[570]

The Naval Archipelago

Tierra del Fuego took on a new identity in 1943 when it was transferred from the Ministry of the Interior to the Naval Ministry. It was logical in many ways, as Ushuaia was isolated terrestrially by the Martial Mountains, but had always been connected to the capital and international markets through steamships, however infrequent. This change in authority also reified what UCR exile Ricardo Rojas had noted of the region. Tierra del Fuego, separated from continental Argentina by the Strait of Magellan, was therefore separate from the nation. The archipelago was ruled effectively by Chile, he argued, given that Chile had historically operated a much stronger navy and oceanic presence in the south. Ezequiel Martínez Estrada had claimed a decade earlier that Patagonia is a "land which belongs to the ocean."[571] While the latter was a more existential claim, the geopolitical significance of Tierra del Fuego was increasingly clear, and at least in part, this is what authorities sought to address in the transfer of authority.

[569] Horacio L. Lütscher, "Ushuaia y zona sur de Tierra del Fuego," *Boletín de Tierras y Colonias* 293 (April 1941): 27-33.
[570] El Ministerio de Agricultura, *Exposición forestal*, 11-12.
[571] Martínez Estrada, *X-Ray of the Pampa*, 144. For a provocative spatial theorization of ocean and terra firma relations, see, Hau'ofa, *We are the Ocean*.

The relationship between the navy and the prison was not new. From the earliest days of felling, it was naval ships that transported timber, as well as inmates. In a letter written June 1946, Tierra del Fuego's Naval Captain, Fidel A. Degaudenzi, spoke of the potential public works for the region. He noted that, while prison personnel had always been quick to assistant the navy with ship repairs or providing some needed rations, in general the prison operation was a bureaucratic mess built on nepotism and that squandered resources.[572] A thorough vetting process for ex-soldiers and policeman before transferring to Ushuaia could professionalize the staff, and married men should be provided housing for their family to build a more balanced community. Moreover, the navy argued that rather than exiling the most dangerous criminals to Ushuaia, the state needed to take into consideration their skills and physical health to ensure that the prison population would be a working population. Despite a prisoner population of 408 that appeared to be a ready and disposable workforce, the captain argued that only two of the prisoners were skilled enough bricklayers to adequately carry out proposed projects. Such a problem was revealing given that many young men in the town could benefit from these skills, but no schools existed to improve the craftsmanship of carpenters, mechanics, or bricklayers.

Moreover, despite the prison having a cobbler operation that could service the entire island, residents often ordered shoes from Buenos Aires and Rosario to avoid the high local prices. An even bigger disappointment stemmed from the incapacity of the wood-working shops to construct doors and windows, despite the region producing such large quantities of timber. Said most directly, "The role of the prison in improving and lowering the cost of living for the people of Ushuaia is null."[573] Employees continued to be paid paltry wages, especially given the high cost of living in the region. As such, the report concluded, it was unreasonable to expect

[572] AGA, N. 135, June 21, 1946.
[573] AGA, n. 135, nota 2, June 21, 1946.

more efficiency or quality out of these personnel and their projects when they were so inadequately compensated.

Though the navy also critiqued that the lower level employees consisted entirely of ex-policeman and foreigners, it is not specified why such a demographic was inherently problematic. As for the prison population, inmates were either sick or elderly, with roughly ten percent being completely incapacitated. These conditions directly affected the navy when, in 1945, Admiral Portillo requested seventy prisoners for a work projected, and claimed that nearly every inmate was either sick or unskilled for the task at hand.

This led one study to conclude that Tierra del Fuego was a little Argentina caught in the past. The 1943 work by Francisco Suátier Martínez stated that the island contained all of the physical elements of the Republic, "Anyone who knows Tierra del Fuego knows the country; anyone who knows the country does not need to go to Tierra del Fuego."[574] Mountains and deserted plains, rivers and lakes, flora and fauna of all kinds, this compact territory embodied all of the elements that made the Argentine nation. For Suátier Martínez, Tierra del Fuego was not a farce, but a *patria chica* reliving Argentina's past; it was defined by its potential to the "nth" degree. Tierra del Fuego, as the Republic had been at the turn-of-the-century, was defined by an immigrant population and a male population. The stand out feature was, however, the prison. Tierra del Fuego was a land defined by men whose profession was to guard other men who could not flourish because of their captivity. Like the pampas of the nineteenth century, caudillos ruled a frontier region, in which nepotism proved more effective than efficiency. Tierra del Fuego, it was argued, was passing through a necessary stage to enter the modern world that would begin with the closing of the prison.

[574] Francisco Suátier Martínez, *Los Territorios* (Buenos Aires: Institúto Cultural Joaquín V. González, 1943): 305.

Prison Closure and Softer Discipline

On 23 March 1947, President Perón announced that the Ushuaia prison would close. This was part of a series of prison reforms, which included naming Dr. Roberto Pettinato the General Director of Penal Institutions. Perón argued that closing the Ushuaia prison would be the first and one of the most important changes to be made in the nation's prison system. Pettinato took the airwaves and announced that the closing of the prison was more than the solving of a carceral problem, it spoke to the conscience of the entire Argentine public and their desire for human solidarity.[575] The day following the announcement of Ushuaia's closing, newspaper editors jumped at the opportunity to proclaim their support. One paper noted what so many already knew, "The polar climate does not cure criminals."[576] Newspapers told of the opening of land for civil projects and how private enterprise was moving in on the timber fields.[577] A reporter for *La Prensa* argued that Argentines for too long misconceived the region as inhospitable and of "*mala calidad*," when in reality it was rich with oil, fish, timber, and other industries that should now be proudly exploited.[578] Others headlined that Perón's call to "Humanize the prison system" was worthy of covering the entire front page.[579] *Crítica* ran a new series in response to their previous "Ushuaia: Tierra Maldita." Now, over twenty years later, Ushuaia was finally the "Tierra Redimia." "It is impossible to forget the diabolical sound of the shackles as prisoners rose to their feet… They were strong men—save for a few—when they entered the prison. Today the lot of them are sick and disoriented."[580] The following day they reiterated the common critique that

[575] "Supresión de la cárcel de Ushuaia," *Revista Penal y Penitenciaría* 12, no. 43/46 (1947): 468.
[576] "La temperatura polar no corrige al delincuente" *Fronda*, March 24, 1947.
[577] "Las Tierras Fueguinas Ganadas Para el Trabajo," *La Razón*, March 23, 1947, 5; "Ha Sido Suprimida por el Gobierno la Cárcel de Ushuaia," *La Nación*, March 23, 1947, 6.
[578] "Concepto equivocado sobre la Patagonia," *La Prensa*, March 26, 1947, 10.
[579] "Suprimese la cárcel de Ushuaia," *El Lider*, March 23, 1947.
[580] "Ushuaia: Tierra Redimida," *Crítica*, April 5, 1947.

inmates should not be reduced to a number.[581] The Peronist social revolution, Pettinato exclaimed, had reach Ushuaia.

And indeed, Pettinato traveled to Ushuaia on Perón's behalf to examine the various components of the prison and personally announce its closure. One afternoon he rode the train into el monte, where he offered the leñadores a brief break from their labor to explain that soon, they would all be transferred. He also walked through the local cemetery and paid homage to those who had lost their lives in the harsh polar conditions, and in the prison's central rotunda, held a mass funeral for all of the lost prisoners and employees. Prisoners over the following months would be seen leaving the penitentiary. Still dressed in their striped suits, with white knapsacks thrown over their shoulders, they once again bordered steamships to journey north [Figure 37]. In the capital they were met by friends and family; even President Perón greeted a group of inmates upon their return, as he took the opportunity to celebrate his reforms.[582]

Figure 37. Closing of the Ushuaia Prison, 1947
"Supresión de la cárcel de Ushuaia," *Revista Penal y Penitenciaría*

[581] "Ushuaia: Tierra Redimida," *Crítica*, April 6, 1947.
[582] "Una gigantesta obra de reconstrucción carcelaria sera operada en el país," MPA, Tomo 15, C35-8, August 26, 1948.

While Ushuaia had relied on reclusion and hard labor, Perón backed Pettinato's reform proposal for "softer discipline." Drawing from Captain Alexander Machonochie, the prison reformer of Norfolk Island, he noted, "Let us build more on suggestion and less on strength; let us use more encouragement and less walls." However, rather than an "open-door" system in which the prison reached out into the world, Pettinato wanted to bring the world into the prison. It was, in no small way, an attempt to domesticate prison spaces. Inmates would no longer wear the striped uniforms that so infamously identified them. They would have irons in their cells to press their more discrete grey uniforms, and they received teapots and burners to prepare *meriendas*, the classic midday snack and tea-time in Argentina. They would also have communal meals at tables with tablecloths and flowers that lined a checkered tiled room [Figure 38].

Figure 38. "Meal Time," *Softer Discipline*, 1952

Pettinato argued,

> "The Softer Discipline Treatment is, undoubtedly, the most important penitentiary experiment that Argentina has to offer to the consideration of interested observers… Our attempts to solve the problem of pre-freedom—humble as they may be—also convey our earnest desire to find a solution to it; a solution that will help to prevent shock produced by an abrupt transition from prison discipline to absolute freedom."[583]

However, the plan revealed a lack of faith on the behalf of directors that anyone aside from the most exemplary of prisoners could be reformed. In its preliminary stage, the plan would allow prisoners to undergo "soft discipline" for their final twenty months in prison (the actual time granted by the government would be twelve months). However, to qualify for this luxury, the inmate had to be a first-time offender, have served at least four years in prison, never been punished for immoral behavior, and have exhibited "exemplary" behavior during the final four periods of their evaluation (each three months long). The four-year minimum rule was set because Pettinato believed that a long duration was necessary to completely transform the inmate's social adjustment, often referred to as "institutionalization." In other words, prisoners required four years to be broken of their criminal habits, but then required this "soft discipline" transition of twenty months to be properly reintroduced to society and its norms.

Thus, while this was a seemingly more humane system than that of Ushuaia, it did little to address the prisoners who had been exiled. Their records as recidivists eliminated them from such privileges in advance. The larger shift, therefore, was one away from a frontier mentality to one of civility. Ushuaia and the forest were supposed to be a respite from modernity where men would become industrious through hard labor. Ideally, they would then use those skills to settle Tierra del Fuego. Softer discipline, however, suggested that urban and gentile life were once

[583] Roberto Pettinato, *Softer Discipline Treatment* (Buenos Aires: Ministerio de Justicia e Instrucción Pública, 1947).

again the Argentine priority. Ushuaia, in this narrative, was to be left to its natural state, one of wildness to be visited and appreciated, but not necessarily inhabited by the average Argentine.

A New South

With Ushuaia now rid of inmates and open to private ventures, many were quick to champion new ideas for the region. Aquiles D. Ygobone argued that after years of inefficient extraction and devastating forest fires, the September 1948 "Ley de Bosques," was finally turning southern Argentina's forests into promising venture, but also an ecological role linked directly to the climate and soil conservation.[584] The foundation of the aeronautics club brought new technologies for surveying and capturing the region's forest cover. Photographic images from above revealed nearly 88,000 hectares of of *lenga* and 138,000 hectares of *ñire* spread across a 533,000-hectare expanse along the channel. In addition to timber operations, new species such as foxes were introduced, plans were made to improve sealing and apiary cultures, and there was an estimated 60 million tons of peat bog to be exploited.[585]

The town was also primed for change. One month after the Forest Law, in October 1948, the steamship "Génoa" brought 620 Italian immigrants, including 72 women and 74 children, to Ushuaia with the explicit goal of constructing a new urban center.[586] The city aim was to surpass a population of 10,000 people. For their labors they would receive prefabricated homes and resources to erect factories. Alberto Agostini, in his follow up to *Mis Viajes* (1929), noted that in just three years these Italian immigrants helped to transform the haunted landscape of Ushuaia's

[584] Ygobone, *Instituto tecnológico del sur*. The law, 13.273, is more formally known as the "Defensa de la Riqueza Forestal." Ygobone estimated more than 2.2 million hectares of forest in the region.
[585] The introduction of new species, however, has led to some major ecological transformations in Tierra del Fuego, some of which have sparked worrisome debates in the conservation community. See, Christopher B. Anderson, et. al., "Do introduced North American beavers *Castor Canadensis* engineer differently in southern South America? An overview with implications for restoration," *Mammal Review* 39 n. 1 (2009).
[586] "Una Ciudad Entera de Inmigrantes" *La Razón*, October 21, 1948.

carceral past into a beautiful and active town.[587] More geographers, such as Professor Primavera Acuña de Mones Ruiz, traveled south to celebrate these changes. In the summer of 1948 at the invitation of the Naval Minister, she boarded the naval vessel, "Ushuaia." As her ship arrived, de Mones Ruiz acknowledged an indigenous land, "the world of the Onas," though she noted that the region was now dominated by Chileans and Spaniards, as well as Basques, Yugoslavs, English, and Checos. Argentines constituted the minority, in part, because they were ignorant to the values of the land—she might change their minds by educating the masses.

De Mones Ruiz, in a subsequent presentation in 1950, cemented for school audiences a vision of Tierra del Fuego. Her experience included an interior scene in Luis Garibaldi's home, which read much like that captured in the writings of UCR exile Guillot. With a warm fire burning, she circled the room, noting the modern novels on the rustic shelf and beautiful furniture. Candy dishes and local flowers filled the room, "all was in perfect order," as if it were a great salon in Buenos Aires. Similarly, she put Ushuaia into perspective by noting that its climate had been exaggerated by previous authors, and, "Ushuaia, the southernmost population in the world, situated at 54'59'' latitude south and 58'59'' longitude west of Greenwich, occupies an analogous geographical position with Belfast, Newcastle, Hamburg, or Koenisberg in the northern hemisphere."[588] While some people called Ushuaia "windy bay," she continued, this was a poor title given that the winds were far more prominent in continental Patagonia. The polar fronts are actually rather mild, and Ushuaia while cold, allows for quick acclimation. While her discussion of Ushuaia was strikingly similar to UCR exiles with regard to geography, she departed from the writings of common criminals with regard to the town's children. With the

[587] Alberto de Agostini, *Treinta años en Tierra del Fuego* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Peuser, 1956): 19.
[588] Primavera Acuña de Mones Ruiz, *Tierra del Fuego: Impresiones de un Viaje* (Buenos Aires: Talleres Gráficos Artes, 1950): 43-45.

prison closed, the movement in Ushuaia was "feverish and contagious." There were endless possibilities for the population and its productions to grow. Children who grow up in Ushuaia were agile and robust—they played in the snow, were well-dressed, and exuded an amazing spirit in this incomparable natural setting. And the town indeed had grown. Cars and jeeps pass through the streets, and a bus connected the military and air bases, and communications had grown within the archipelago as well as with Buenos Aires.

This increased military presence continued the shift marked in 1943 when power was transferred to the Navy. And, when the prison closed in 1947, it was the navy that took over the facilities, took inventory of its belongings, and began new plans for *el sur.*[589] The following year, the Argentine state reoriented their focus south, or south of south, to Antarctica. They commissioned for a new map to be drafted of what would formerly be known as "Austral Argentina," referencing reports from 1906 concerning southern territories in relation to Chile.[590] Now, the phrase "Región Argentina Antártida" would most accurately and definitively define those portions of the Antarctic continent that belonged to Argentina. Extensive reports had been drafted years earlier in 1940, making strong arguments for Argentina's claim to sections of the continent, or the "wedge" as it would appear on maps.[591] It was a global continent with Argentine qualities.

Despite being a continent with no permanent residents, Argentine scholars no longer spoke with the bravado of explorers seeking pristine and virgin landscapes. Eulalia Marquez de Milesi introduced the "Conciencia Antartica Argentina" conference, for example, by noting that

[589] AAA, C-10, 52, December 22, 1947.
[590] AHC, Caja AH/0003, Antártida y Malvinas, Ex. 19, 1948.
[591] AHC, Caja AH/0003, Antártida y Malvinas, Ex. 13, 1940.

nothing in nature is eternal, but rather, all things change, advance, and evolve.[592] De Mones Ruiz noted the global significance of Antarctica with regard to the atmosphere, claiming that the white continent made up the "lungs of the earth." This distinction from a prehistoric or eternal land and climate is important. While these lungs were ancient, they were nevertheless living, and therefore dynamic and capable of change and being changed, for better or worse.

Ushuaia, wedged between and thus connecting the Pacific and Atlantic, was a crucial port that also, by the gift of God according to some, faced the South Pole. Dr. Juan Vilaseca, one such believer, addressed the navy to speak of Tierra del Fuego's unique geopolitical position and potential. Argentina had been a young nation and was ill-prepared to properly integrate Tierra del Fuego into the international community in the previous decades. But no longer, Vilaseca claimed, as Argentina could now bring this remote part of the continent into the nation and world. Standing on the summit of Monte Olivia, Argentines could look down into their past that was the ominous penal colony, but also toward the southern horizon pregnant with future splendor. This past was written in blood, like Sing-Sing and Devil's Island, but in the history of the nation, it was nothing more than a "parenthesis." Vilaseca could not deny that it was a "lukewarm sun" that illuminated this panoramic view, but rather than being feeble as so often described by prisoners, Vilaseca's sun reflected off the southern glaciers through the trees to form an arboreal rainbow.[593] In this land, plants took easily to in the soil and sprouted, as the aridity of the north died in the straits, providing the necessary elements for lush gardens and diverse wildlife in the south. Like others before him, Vilaseca divided the island into these two geographic and political sectors—the pastoral north with Río Grande and the forested south with

[592] Primavera Acuña de Mones Ruiz, *Conciencia Antartica Argentina* (Santa Fe: Extensión Universitaria, 1948): 16. Mones Ruiz, however, repeated much of the language that labeled Patagonia: *eterna, virgen, extensa, desolada*.
[593] Juan E. Vilaseca, *Tierra del Fuego: Conferencia pronunciada en el Centro Naval* (July 7, 1948): 2.

Ushuaia. This time, however, he emphasized the international tourism potential of Ushuaia and the south.[594]

Under President Arturo Frondizi of the Intransigent Radical Civil Union—a new branch of the UCR to which Frondizi first enter politics—southern Tierra del Fuego would be preserved. Already by the mid-1950s, foresters claimed that ten to fifteen million seeds were beginning ghe processes of naturally repopulating the Fuegian forests.[595] Then, on the final day of September 1960, the parks department founded Parque Nacional Tierra del Fuego under law 15.554.[596] The park would occupy the land of multiple property holders, including Jorge Lombardich, who had housed confinados. Stretching north from the Beagle Channel and west to the Chilean Border, the national park became the new public works focus of southern Tierra del Fuego. The park covered 63,000 hectares, including 63 hectares of glacial ice and nearly 16,000 hectares of protected forest.[597] At the time it was the only national park in Argentina with access to the ocean, though, in combination with parks neighboring Chile, Brazil, and Paraguay, these protected spaces lined nearly four percent of the nation's borders.[598] Already by 1958, the government explored the idea to assign parcels to locals to construct weekend cabins in what would become the park. By 1962 they were constructing kiosks to sell various goods to tourists,

[594] Guillermo Sent wrote a report on southern Patagonia a few years later in 1955, and similarly noted that until recently, only prisoners and prison personal had enjoyed the beauty and healthy climate of the region. Guillermo W. Sent, *La Patagonia austral y Tierra del Fuego: Impresiones de carácter económico-social recogidas durante viajes de estudio realizadas en 1952-1953* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Albatros, 1955): 19.
[595] Lucas Tortorelli, "La lucha por la vida en los bosques Argentinos," *Natura* 1 (1954).
[596] Frondizi's presidency was a brief democratic respite following the overthrow of Perón in 1955. Supported by Perón, Frondizi too would be deposed in 1962. The creation of the park, however, was not simply a benevolent act on the part of the centrist UCRI ruling party. As Susana Hecht has shown, 70% of the national parks created in Latin America came in the 1970s and 80s under dictatorships. See, "Invisible Forests: The Political Ecology of Forest Resurgence in El Salvador," in *Liberation Ecologies: Environment, Development, Social Movements*, ed. Richard Peet and Michael Watts (New York: Routledge, 1996).
[597] Programa Pobladores y Comunidades, Dirección Nacional de Conservación de Áreas Protegidas (DNCAP), Censo Parque Nacional Tierra del Fuego, 1965.
[598] For more on the formation of national parks in Latin America, see, Jack W. Hopkins, *Policymaking for Conservation in Latin America: National Parks, Reserves, and the Environment* (Westport: Praeger, 1995)

and ground was broken for the Hostería Nacional Alakush.[599] The 1960s marked a an new era therefore, in which Ushuaia and southern Tierra del Fuego would be a place for leisure, escape, and meditation [Figure 39].

Figure 39. "Meditation," 1960s
AGN 255149

Expansion, including infrastructure and administration, continued into the 1970s to establish a world-class national park. More broadly, conservation became a way to celebrate the diversity of geographies in Argentine, and November sixth was registered as "National Parks Day." Scholarship on Argentina's national parks is still small, though recent work has highlighted the competing use of parks to claim borderlands between Argentina and Brazil.[600]

[599] See various requests in, Archivo de los Parques Nacionales (APN), Expediente 1650, Gobernación del Territorio Nacional de la Tierra del Fuego. Construction was completed in 1965.
[600] Frederico Freitas, "A Park for the Borderlands: The Creation of the Iguaçu National Park in Southern Brazil, 1880-1940," *Revista de Historia Ibero Americana* 7, no. 2 (2014).

And indeed, Parque Nacional Tierra del Fuego was part of a much larger parks movement. While Darwin's vision of Patagonia continues to tower over the region (Cerro Darwin is still the tallest peak on the island), it would be Francisco P. Moreno—one of the Argentine nationalists who sought to overturn Darwin's negative comments—who would be memorialized as the great explorer and voice of the region's wild spaces. Lucas Tortorelli and Dr. Ygobone, among others, would celebrate Moreno in a November 1954 conference, noting his love not only for nature, but a national nature.[601]

Promotions for Argentina's national parks would note that such acts of conservation reached back centuries to Switzerland in the 1540s and the Americas in the early 1600s.[602] Protecting the earth's flora and fauna, pamphlets argued, was the sign of an advanced civilization. These memorials and honorariums placed "Perito" Moreno in the company of Alexander von Humboldt, which reaffirmed Argentine's expertise and good will, while placing the nation in a historical tradition that reached well beyond the history of the republic. Order and status were therefore restored.

Conclusion

Various government reports, media investigations, and personal testimonies revealed the large divide between theory and practice in the Ushuaia prison. By all accounts, as the Perón administration was all too ready to highlight, the open-door project as an institution of incarceration and rehabilitation was a failure. Because they closed the penitentiary, they also took credit for much of the subsequent development in the region. The irony was all too palpable when a group of Peronists was exiled to Ushuaia in 1955 following the overthrow of the

[601] Ministro de Agricultra y Ganaderia, *Primeros jornadas argentinas de parques nacionales* (Buenos Aires, 1954).
[602] DNCAP, Censo Parque Nacional Tierra del Fuego, 1965.

government in a coup led by General Eduardo Lonardi.[603] For those seventeen exiles, the language of a dark and frigid prison was resurrected. Sympathizers and other exiles wrote in solidarity from places like the temperate city of Montevideo, envisioning their friends in frigid cells where water leaked through the cracks, forming frozen stalactites dangling from the ceiling.[604]

Their imprisonment however was only a brief return. In the following decades Ushuaia grew, as did its positive image. In addition to the national park and new waves of immigration, tax and industry initiatives were put in place to accelerate growth in southern Tierra del Fuego. The Ley de Promoción Industrial No. 19.640 was passed in 1972 to promote the island through tax exemptions. In effect, Ushuaia became a "zona franca" and became a light industrial center. This brought an influx of workers from around the region, raised local wages, but also inflated the cost of living. Restaurants, hotels, and other services were built to service the new workforce and growing tourism industry. By the 1990s, Ushuaia was a "boom-town" receiving a cruise ship every three days on average—many of which headed south to Antarctica—bringing roughly 55,000 tourists and twenty million dollars annually to its shores.[605]

In 1997, the prison was converted to a museum and today brings thousands of visitors who consume "dark tourism."[606] They walk through the cells and take pictures next to papier-

[603] La Liga Argentina por los Derechos del Hombre, *Ushuaia: Penal de la Muerte: Los tortuados acusan* (Buenos Aires, 1960).
[604] Originally published in "El 45" in 1956, see, "Oración por Diecisiete Almas," *Prosa de hacha y tiza* (Buenos Aires: Juarez Editor S.A., 1969): 139-140. The prison was used once more during the Falklands/Malvinas War in the 1980s. See the memoir, Simon Winchester, *Prison Diary, Argentina* (London: Hogarth Press, 1983).
[605] Veronika Braumann and Christoph Stadel, "Boom Town in Transition? Development Process and Urban Structure of Ushuaia, Tierra del Fuego, Argentina," *Yearbook. Conference of Latin Americanist Geographers* 25 (1999): 33-44. For more on Tierra del Fuego's resource and industrial values, especially post-1960, see, Claudio A. Ricciuti, *Breve reseña económica de Tierra del Fuego: Datos de 1895 a 1995* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Papillon, 1996).
[606] One the rise of "dark tourism," see, Michael Welch, "Penal Tourism and a Tale of Four Cities: Reflecting on the Museum Effect in London, Sydney, Melbourne, and Buenos Aires" *Criminology and Criminal Justice* 13 (2013).

mâché replications of the inmates; they explore the historic wing, which is free from renovation to give tourists the experience of how cold the prison was for inmates. In this way, Ushuaia has been reunited with peer penal colonies such as Robben Island and other former prisons that have become tourist destinations and sites of memory.[607] While these prisons exist within a broader penal history, they also reveal their own particularities, and are commemorated in their own acts of erasure. In Ushuaia, the national park and museum put green and dark tourism side by side. It reveals the tension of national memory. Green, here, is positive and timeless. The forest is curated through regrowth and the protection of a certain kind of biodiversity—its lushness is meant to speak for itself, it proclaims that I am here and have always been. Dark, on the other hand, is a mistake, one of human time. This mistake, however, is engulfed by the longer natural history of the nation. Where the prison once encroached on the forest, now, it is the forest that creeps back into the city. It is a fine line, constantly manicured to juxtapose past and future, and experience as ephemeral.

The Ushuaia tourism and industry infrastructure therefore, and the narrative scaffolding they are built upon, is buttressed by the integrated social-ecological history of the prison and forest. Newly planted trees reveal a recent history, one in which a seemingly timeless and prehistoric past was felled and charred during a "parenthesis" in natural history. The prisoner train failed to produce a lasting industry but the tourist train today chugs along. The positivist penitentiary failed to transform inmates into productive Argentine citizens but the prison-turned-museum frames a history that is stable in an Argentine narrative of (corrected) progress. The dense forest and formidable climate denied the creation of a permanent Euro-Argentine community yet the national park provides a steady, if transient, population that brings dollars and

[607] Annie E. Coombes, "Robben Island: Site of Memory/Site of Nation," in *History After Apartheid: Visual Culture and Public Memory in a Democratic South Africa* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).

euros to the region. Said another way, this is an ecological dialectic—at first dangerous, threatening, and melancholic, then challenged and exploited to mutual detriment. Now it is resolved in a re-preservation of a "prehistoric" *and* "Argentine" landscape that occupies a repurposed nature narrative from convicts to conservation.

EPILOGUE

HISTORY AND FUTURE IN A PLACELESS PATAGONIA

The Andes, which reach into the Cretaceous, were seen during their formation by eyes as complete as ours.
Ezequiel Martínez Estrada, *X-Ray of the Pampa,* 1933

At the time that I was nearing the end of my dissertation, Douglas Tompkins passed away. He died while kayaking on Lake General Carrera on his private estate in Chile. Conditions, as they so often can be, were stormy with high waves over frigid waters; he capsized and was consumed by the lake in his beloved Patagonia.

Tompkins was best known as the co-founder of the clothing companies, Esprit and North Face. In his later years he left the clothing industry behind and became an eco-philanthropist and conservationist. Most famously, he purchased over two million acres of land in Chilean as well as Argentine Patagonia with his wife Kristine McDivitt Tompkins, who was the former CEO of the clothing company Patagonia—North Face and Patagonia participate in a multi-billion-dollar outdoor apparel industry. Nearly 500,000 acres of this land had been converted into five conservation parks in collaboration with the Chilean government. At the time of Tompkins' death, more of their holdings were in the process of being converted into an additional seven parks.[608]

However, this relationship between private philanthropy and environmental conservation was not always a welcomed one. Tompkins, as well as other entrepreneurs from the global north, had purchased large swaths of land throughout Patagonia, promising long term conservation, as well as eco-tourism and other ventures to make them economically viable. One investor has sought to float fresh water from Patagonia—one of the richest fresh water sources in the world—

[608] Caty Enders and Jonathan Franklin, "Doug Tompkins: Life and Death of the Ecological Visionary Behind North Face," *The Guardian*, December 13, 2015.

via oceanic currents to the dry regions of Africa.[609] Various local groups in Patagonia have been dubious of such benevolence, highlighting long-standing indigenous claims to the land, as well as the irony of a foreigner creating national parks.[610]

Lake General Carrera spans the Andes and connects Chilean and Argentine Patagonia. It sits nearly 1,000 kilometers north of Ushuaia. Connecting the histories of the Ushuaia Penal Colony and southern Tierra del Fuego with this northern stretch of Patagonia would be, at best, arbitrary. And yet, Tompkins' death on that lake took place in no place at all. Whether reported in *The Guardian* or *The New York Times*, he was swallowed by the very land that he sought to preserve: Patagonia. To call this regional place-name into question seems trivial. Like provinces or states, even cities, we know that none of these nouns can capture the complexity that they claim to represent. But to speak their names is to tell a story, one that is political and charged. Prisoners almost never used the term Patagonia; they rarely spoke of Tierra del Fuego. Their experiences, it seems, did not relate to these titles. Ushuaia; la tierra maldita; these resonated with men who did not seek adventure or a paradise beyond the congested city. They were forcibly exiled into an unfamiliar and uninviting land.

Today tourists can ride the restored train (*el tren del fin del mundo*) that transported inmates and timber back and forth from the town of Ushuaia to the forest. Tourists are of course told that inmates labored in the forest. They are told that the austral nature punished inmates; these men were helpless and without agency. While the penitentiary museum has inmate statues and papier mâché figures to be observed, such figures do not exist in the protected forest lands of

[609] Brian Dumaine, "Warren Adams: Searching for Profits and Saving Patagonia," *Fortune*, March 10, 2011.
[610] See, Emily Wakild, "Purchasing Patagonia: The Contradictions of Conservation in Free Market Chile," in *Lost in the Long Transition: Struggles for Social Justice in Neoliberal Chile*, ed. William L. Alexander (Lexington: Lanham, 2009). For a broader discussion, see, Roderick Neumann, "Nature-State-Territory: Toward a Critical Theorization of Conservation Enclosures," in *Liberation Ecologies: Environment, Development, Social Movements*, ed. Richard Peet and Michael Watts (New York: Routledge, 1996): 195-217.

Parque Nacional Tierra del Fuego. Rather, the suggestion is that the prison was the site of incarceration while the forest was an ephemeral, if not daily, site of labor. Such a representation dilutes the role of the forest *as* prison for inmates. Here, the blurring of geologic time and biological time simultaneously occludes and reiterates a story of timeless nature juxtaposed with a human misstep. We maintain monuments of mistakes, and let nature *return* to center, to what is natural and right.

Tourism and industry embrace both of these narratives. In 1996 French intellectual Jean Baudrillard cringed at Ushuaia's "chaotic, incoherent cowboy-film modernity," which was congested with petrol, computers, and the internationally recognized "duty-free." He argued, "What you discover here is not a new, original world, but the relentless mix of a wild elemental form of an equally relentlessly destructive grip exerted by the human race."[611] This strange balance is what many tourists seek. They shop on Avenida San Martín, then head *into* Patagonia, the wild, the past. On my first visit to the town, I was told by an innkeeper that Ushuaia is not really Tierra del Fuego; the real Tierra del Fuego is out there, in the mountains, away from the bustle of the world's southernmost capital. Beyond the city was something untouched. The juxtaposition forms its own narrative; the prison was a parenthesis; the city is a necessary evil—a launching point into something outside of humanity, that is then the point of re-entry.

Baudrillard's "cowboy-film" remark has been recently brought to fruition through the filming of *The Revenant* (2016)—a film that is as much a period piece as it is a geography piece. Leonardo DiCaprio's character, Hugh Glass, is asked early in the story why he came to "the edge

[611] Jean Baudrillard, "Tierra del Fuego – New York," in *Screened Out*, trans. Chris Turner (1996; New York: Verso, 2002): 128-129.

of the earth."[612] A man of few words, it seems that he is escaping (in)humanity, joins the Pawnee people, and becomes (re)connected with the natural world. While seemingly spectacular, the tropes of this story—the rugged frontiersman and noble savage—have been thoroughly examined. It is the filming of this picture that warrants note here. This story of a fur-trapper in the early 1800s in the contemporary Dakotas seeks to capture a mood and ethos more than a particular place. Interviews with Director Alejandro Iñárritu and the cast reveal that, rather than costume or dialog, it was time *as* place that was so hard to capture. Climate change became the talking point, as the crew had to travel farther and farther north to find snowy regions in order to represent Glass' hardship.[613] As the North American winter turned to spring, the crew turned south, far south—interchangeable it seemed, are the Arctic and Antarctic. The final scenes of the film were shot in southern Tierra del Fuego, just outside of Ushuaia. It was, for the purposes of the crew, timeless and wild enough, to capture the geographic-past. A land before western man, at the edge of the earth, evading the Anthropocene. The struggles of the crew, weathering the storm to tell a story was like déjà vu. Celebrities had once again come to Ushuaia, this time by air rather than sea. The edge of the earth as the edge of time—the glaciers atop the Martial Mountains have survived to tell the story.

[612] This trope has been rehashed many times in Hollywood. If the poles are outside of history, they are often treated as outside of the future as well. In *Blade Runner* (1982), the non-human "replicant," Rachel, is so ingrained with human desires that she seeks to "go north" to escape the chaotic postmodern city.

[613] The Anthropocene, therefore, was one more obstacle faced by the production crew. Anthropocene literature is growing quickly. As a starting point, see, Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Climate of History: Four Theses" *Critical Inquiry* 35, no. 2 (Winter 2009): 197-222.

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