



**Melissa Maldonado-Salcedo**—New York University

When I look in the mirror, I see myself, but my beauty mark is reflected on the left and not on the right. Everything is accurate, except it is reversed. As a child, I'd spend hours looking in the mirror. Superficially, I understand how I could have appeared to be self-absorbed and narcissistic. However, I was trying to think of ways to trick my reflection. Interestingly enough, this practice sums up my life as an anthropologist working on Argentina and inspired my dissertation research.

Crisis and trauma are features of Argentine history, and as such, have produced a sense of identity that is rooted in a constant struggle between “barbaric” tendencies and civilizing aspirations. This pathological reflex originates in the founding of the nation by Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, which cannot be divorced from the brutal dictatorships, the loss of the Falkland Islands to England, or the mass migration of nationals up north. These events have wounded the Argentine psyche that feels like a birthmark at times, and at others like a glaring blackhead.

When I first started doctoral studies, I had a recurring dream. I was in my freshman dorm, and I could not find my room. I would go door-to-door in search of my armchair. Before heading to the field, this dream drove me to lay on the couch. I came to a similar interpretation as my therapist: I was anxious about finding my place within anthropology. I shared with her that I was often scared to speak because I was afraid someone would yell “Offside!” After explaining the soccer metaphor, she suggested I read the work of the anthropologist Eduardo Archetti. I asked her if she read a lot of anthropology, and her response was, “No, I read a lot about Argentina.” It made sense to me, since after all, she was Argentine.

It was only after reading the work of Eduardo Archetti that I began to feel that within this internal matchup between Argentina versus anthropology, I could score on either side and cheer without guilt. This *classico* was part of the becoming process, and like Archetti, I learned that even a national pastime such as football was imbued with ideas about what it means to be Argentine. Archetti's contributions further a collective quest for self-understanding that provided a mirror to which Argentines could see themselves in a new light. It made understanding sport and play impossible without understanding Freud. Up until that point, I felt intercepted by someone else's voice, not realizing that all the time it was my own.

I was welcomed by the atrocious charm of Buenos Aires and its people as soon as I hit the runway at Ezeiza Airport. In no time, I convert miles into kilometers, and kilometers into minutes. I remind myself that my bed in Lomas de Zamora is exactly 37 minutes away. The smell of croissants, espressos, and *dulce de leche* makes my stomach grumble. As I walk towards the exit each image, person, and thought are acculturating me back home. A new lingerie ad campaign reminds me that despite it all, as the popular rock band Bersuit sings, Argentina has the “most beautiful women in the world.” I immediately suck in my belly and know I probably won't let go for another month. My ability to squeeze into a size six will help me fit in and enable access to the places where I could “study” the nightlife.

When compared to its neighboring countries, Argentina's economic crisis can read insignificant to foreign eyes. After all, the memory of having five presidents in one week, the rampant supermarket looting, and the dollar converting into a depreciated peso is something my grandmother, for one, would like to forget. Every so often, when I call her from Manhattan to check in, she tells me, "Things are the same here, like always." Just a few years back, she lived in a luxury apartment in downtown Cordoba. She owned two high-end women's boutiques and drove a brand new Fiat. She now lives on a street that leads to nowhere, in a partially owned house in the suburbs with extended family, around the corner from where the family clunker was stolen, outside of the flea market where she now sells clothing for "older and fatter" women. I find comfort in knowing that she is resilient and copes well with adversity. After all, she was married to my grandfather: a former bank robber with a penchant for baking, gardening, and prostitutes.

On the first half of my flight, I listened to a compelling critique of the World Bank by the passenger next to me, who happened to be a plumber. Not to be outdone, the last seven hours was spent listening to a woman three seats away from me explain to a fellow passenger why her daughter moved to Miami after obtaining her Italian citizenship. I thought maybe she wanted to confirm her daughter was of European descent, in order to feel comfortable venting that she also was working as an undocumented waitress and living in fear of deportation.

As an anthropologist, I love to listen to stories and many eventually find their way into my ethnographic notes. What is unusual for me is when I am asked about my opinion. How do I answer, as an anthropologist? Argentine? Foreigner? I have become adept in simply nodding my head and taking notes. I jotted, "This is what Argentina now sounds like, a misunderstood has-been whose comeback we anxiously await. Godot, Diego and Jesus."

I stopped by the airport pharmacy for over-the-counter sleeping pills, forgetting that this is something that does not exist in Argentina. Sleeping aids are only prescribed. Surely a bottle of Malbec is more effective than the herbal tea the pharmacist is now trying to sell me. I explained I had just taken a 14-hour flight from New York and was exhausted.

In 1963, the newspaper *Primera Plana* ran an anonymous piece that asked, "Are we (Argentines) neurotic?" Referencing the parallels between what constitutes mental illness and the pathological behaviors that are indicative of Argentine history, culture, and politics, the question suggested that disorders are pervasive or even normalized. In a country where the disappeared and the living coexist, where sport is religion, and where rock music (*rock nacional*) harmonizes with tango, said query reads like a rhetorical hyperbole.

In 2008, Simon Romero in *The New York Times* makes a related inquiry. He cites that for every 100,000 people, 196 are psychologists, so, "Do Argentines need Therapy?" Not as much as they need soccer.

One of the few things that the Argentine state equally gives for free is therapy. For example, it is not uncommon for those who are unable to pay to barter services like cooking or painting in exchange for sessions. In addition to the gratuitous advice ordinary citizens offer, it is safe to say that, like Diego Maradona the soccer manager, and

Pope Francis, Freud is omnipresent. No space is exempt from becoming a “couch,” no one is spared from becoming a patient, and most conversations have the underlying potential to become an impromptu therapy session. Was the pharmacist judging me or simply diagnosing me? Either way, I found myself fighting back the urge to explain why I generally had trouble sleeping at night: dissertation, my eight year old, teaching, grey hair, fieldwork, my love handles.

I gazed behind the counter to see what was available for purchase: an entire course of antibiotics, steroids, and sexual enhancement drugs of all kinds. I can cure an infection, build muscle, and increase my libido without a prescription. The pharmacist sent me home and told me that I will purge the stress of New York immediately after I have my first bite of *asado* (Argentine barbeque). In his educated opinion, my need for sleeping pills was probably a result of being homesick. According to him, New York City and Buenos Aires are practically different worlds. I wanted to respond, “I’m a vegetarian.”

After many hugs and glasses of wine, I finally crawled into my bed. I could hear my grandmother outside recounting her workday and laughing about her different sales pitches. As I turn over and close my eyes I ask myself, “What would Archetti do?” In a matter of minutes, I am asleep. Had I not seen Argentina through Eduardo’s eyes, I might still feel overwhelmed by the task of creating a non-reversed reflection of a place, people, and of myself.

*Melissa Maldonado-Salcedo is a doctoral candidate at CUNY Graduate Center in anthropology working on the Argentine diaspora’s embodied identity. She teaches at New York University on science and feminism and can be contacted at mm659@nyu.edu.*

\* Original publication in error lists the title as “*Argentinidad* or *Nuerosis?*”  
Author has listed the publication with original title as published by the journal for consistency.\*

Author’s title was:

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