“LA MALA VIDA”: SOURCE AND FOCUS OF DEGENERATION, DEGENERACY AND DECLINE
Richard Cleminson & Teresa Fuentes Peris
Available online: 17 Dec 2009

To cite this article: Richard Cleminson & Teresa Fuentes Peris (2009): “LA MALA VIDA”: SOURCE AND FOCUS OF DEGENERATION, DEGENERACY AND DECLINE, Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies, 10:4, 385-397

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14636200903400173
“LA MALA VIDA”: SOURCE AND FOCUS OF DEGENERATION, DEGENERACY AND DECLINE

This special issue, which arises from the 2008 symposium “La mala vida in the Hispanic World”, brings together a number of contributions that examine the issues of social deviancy and marginality in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when fears about social abnormality became rife in the Hispanic world. As in other countries, such as Britain, Italy and France, deviancy, poverty and crime were thought to be present especially in the “lower orders”, among certain racial types and in proletarian milieus and were identified by a number of emerging scientific paradigms such as criminology, psychiatry and the sexual sciences. Often these practices were subsumed under the label “la mala vida”. They were pinpointed in the first instance by a number of Italian works such as that of Alfredo Niceforo and Scipio Sighele, La mala vita a Roma (1898), followed by their Spanish and Latin American counterparts, including Constancio Bernaldo de Quiro’s and José María Llanas Aguilaniedo, La mala vida en Madrid (1901). In addition to being united by their subject matter, texts such as these represented an especially modern take on the ills of society, incorporating the latest scientific interpretations of deviancy. They also reflected particular national interpretations of decline. As Daniel Pick has pointed out, the “language of degeneration” possessed multiple accents according to locality (Pick 10). In France, it reflected concerns over a pathological repetition of revolution; in Italy, it reflected issues arising from post-unification and in England the rise of the city and of mass society threatened conservative visions. In Spain, the thoughts of commentators who advocated the “regeneration” of the nation by means of far-reaching changes envisaged by regeneracionismo cannot be disaggregated from concepts of degeneration (Girón Sierra 295).

Beyond reflecting national and even local languages of degeneration, discourse on la mala vida was transnational; many authors translated others’ texts or contributed to them in some way. The discourse on this subject was evidently cross-European and the “mala vida” texts display scientific and cultural commonalities across national boundaries. Bernaldo de Quiro’s translated Niceforo’s La transformación del delito en la sociedad moderna (1902), and Rafael Salillas, the criminologist to whom the authors of La mala vida en Madrid dedicated their book, wrote the prologue of the Spanish edition of the work by Niceforo. The book by Bernaldo de Quiro’s and Llanas Aguilaniedo was translated into German as Verbrechertum und Prostitution in Madrid (Criminality and Prostitution in Madrid, 1910), showing a further international dimension. In addition, Llanas translated La mala vita a Roma for the publisher B. Serra in 1901; Bernaldo de Quiro’s began a South American tour in 1907 and resided for some time in Buenos Aires “donde dejó muestras de su colaboración intelectual” in the form of Eusebio Gómez, La mala vida en Buenos Aires (1908). The “mala vida” became an international phenomenon with shared interpretive paradigms and perceived social threats.
analysis of *la mala vida*, therefore, not only illuminates the kind of work that falls under this heading, but also explores the complex relationship between modernity, science, literature and criminality.

**Degeneration and decline: the threat of physical and mental disease**

At the heart of this complex relationship was a generalized fear across Europe and the Americas of mental, moral and physical degeneration. Degeneration theory was first formulated in 1857 by the French psychiatrist Bénédict Morel in *Traité des dégénérscences physiques, intellectuelles et morales de l’espèce humaine et causes qui produisent ces variétés maladies* (1857), which had established the influence of the social environment as one of the drivers of degeneration. Poor housing, inadequate working conditions and lack of sanitary education were seen as the causes of destitution, alcoholism, prostitution and other social evils. It was believed that insanitary living conditions in the cities could produce little else but brutalized and immoral individuals who would continue degenerating physically and morally throughout generations of urban existence. Later in the century, the Budapest-born Max Nordau argued in his book *Degeneration* (1892) that the pace of life had increased markedly under capitalism and that the price of progress was an inevitable wear and tear on the brain and nervous system which, in turn, caused the human organism to degenerate.

Although the influence of an adverse social environment—the pressures and insalubrious conditions of urban life in the industrial period—was perceived as a major cause of racial degeneration, studies on degenerationism tended to be characterized by an excessive biological determinism. Darwinist evolutionary theory inevitably underscored the idea that moral, mental or physical deficiency was hereditary. As Pick notes: “Whilst seen to stem from acquired diseases (drawn from poverty, immoral habits, unhealthy work and so on), dégénérescence tended to imply an inherent physical process, an immanent narrative within the body and across bodies, beyond social determination.” Both in medical discourse and in social thought there arose a conflict between those who viewed poverty as a result of insanitary environment, malnutrition and trade fluctuation, and those who advocated the notion of “hereditary predisposition”, according to which physical, mental and moral failings were transmitted from generation to generation. The poor came to be regarded either as victims of the “system” or of the social “deviancy”—itself an effect of industrial capitalism and urban life—which they had inherited from previous generations and which they would themselves self-perpetuate and reproduce. Degeneration was thus seen as a product and a cause of social evils, constantly and inevitably reproducing itself.

In his *Traité*, Morel had established that the main factor contributing to the degeneration not only of individuals but of the whole human species was hereditary alcoholism. He proposed the theory that the children of alcoholic parents could inherit their alcoholism. Also, he introduced the concept of “polymorphous heredity”, according to which the hereditary transmission of a pathological condition could
predispose the descendants to a whole range of different hereditary diseases, resulting from various morbid transformations. These would become aggravated as the hereditary progression continued, until the final exhaustion of the species.8

Morel’s work on dégénérescence was continued and reformulated in France later in the century by the degenerationist psychiatrists Valentin Magnan (who “re-located the concept in even starker evolutionist terms in the 1880s”)9 and Paul Maurice Legrain, whose impact on late nineteenth-century Spanish discourses on racial degeneration was considerable.10 This influence was, however, not systematic, manifesting itself in a tendency to turn what the authors understood to be a major cause of degeneration—hereditary alcoholism—into an easy explanation which could account for all social problems or “social pathologies”. Indeed, alcoholism became easily linked to social evils such as criminality, insanity, prostitution, begging, unemployment and political subversion, all of which were regarded as threats to the established social order. More particularly, the dangers posed by the emergence of mass violent protest and the new socialist ideas which propounded a radical transformation of the existing order led bourgeois propagandists to establish a very close association between alcoholism and political revolution. Working-class protests were therefore discredited and marginalized, presented as the product of insane, abnormal and degenerate minds. This perspective pervaded the copious pseudo-scientific literature which emerged in France after the events of the Paris Commune in 1871. Along very similar lines, in Il delitto politico (1890), Lombroso and Lashi criminalized and pathologized working-class insurrections, emphasizing their link with alcoholic excess.11 A few years later, in Gli anarchici (1894), Lombroso associated anarchism with criminality, arguing that anarchists were marked by a series of physical and mental stigmata.12 Degenerationism was no longer a strictly medical issue, as it had begun to penetrate the political and social arenas also, potentially affecting not only all individuals but consequently the whole of society (Campos Marín Alcoholismo, medicina y sociedad 161–7). Disease and health were seen to be much more closely connected than had been previously thought; the difference between them was not one of kind but one of degree and there was always the possibility of slipping back into a diseased or regressive state, despite the attainment of high levels of civilization. Older Enlightenment notions of confidence in progress and social change were under attack and vacated a “cultural and psychic space which [was] then flooded by new and intense fears of social death” (Dollimore 128).

The threat of degeneration and dissolution was, however, ultimately controllable if any kind of hope for the future was to be retained: structuring this thought were precisely two different trajectories in the very conception of degeneration itself. On one hand, experts desired “to isolate a social threat—to reveal, transport, castrate and segregate ‘noxious elements’” (Pick 106). On the other hand, “it seemed that degeneration lay everywhere, demanding massive campaigns of public hygiene, [and] the closer investigation of whole populations” (Pick 106). The question, in effect, was whether “degeneration [was] separable from the history of progress (to be coded as ‘regression’, ‘atavism’ or ‘primitivism’), or did it reveal that the city, progress, civilisation and modernity, were paradoxically, the very agents of decline?” (Pick 106). The individualized/generalized and controllable/chronic operation of disease and its vicissitudes made for a compelling set of theories which commanded social
action to delimit, contain and curtail the threat. This threat was embodied in a
reversal or a regression to earlier forms of life, characterized by violence, lack of
consciousness, instability and brutishness. Vice, disease and crime and their etiologies
were “resignified” and what was feared was a collapse, a sliding-back to nastier, more
primitive beginnings, where a lack of differentiation between “inferior” and
“superior” types and lifestyles became predominant and the crowd, rather than the
individual, was what moved humanity. As Dollimore has observed, “A return
to what was, at the primitive stage of the organism’s development, a perfectly
appropriate and therefore healthy state of things” was now understood to be diseased.
The “dark side” of progress must not get the upper hand. Those individuals who
represented the biologically and socially superseded must not rise to the fore; above
all, “There must be no going back” (Dollimore 141).

Although it was Max Nordau who had provided the most emblematic treatment
of society’s decline—or the fear of its decline—in his Degeneration (1892), many
other writers had provided theories of similar catastrophic developments well before
he did and had posited the possible “return” to atavistic beginnings from a more
primitive biological past. As we have noted above, doctors and psychiatrists such as
Morel and the later Magnan had placed different emphases on the relative worth of
“objective” anatomical and biological conditions and social influences affecting
degeneration. Magnan developed a particular psychiatric model and ascribed less
influence to environmental factors than to hereditary ones. But, as Michel Foucault
points out, there was another significant difference between early nineteenth- and late
nineteenth-century models of degeneration. In later understandings a new element
had crept in and played a fundamental role: that of sexuality and especially “deviant”
sexuality. Indeed, Magnan and the psychiatrist Jean-Martin Charcot were to write
a celebrated piece on a case of “inversion du sens génital” in 1882, establishing a
link between the perversion of the sexual instinct, a new concept in itself, and
degeneration. If, for Foucault, the two great innovations in the technology of
sex in the second half of the nineteenth century were “the medicine of perversions
and the programmes of eugenics”, it was the theory of “degenerescence” that allowed
all these interpretations to feed one another (Dollimore 138). Foucault wrote that the
theory of “degenerescence” explained how a heredity that was burdened with various maladies (it made little
difference whether these were organic, functional, or psychical) ended by
producing a sexual pervert . . . but it went on to explain how a sexual perversion
resulted in the depletion of one’s line of descent . . . The series composed of
perversion—heredity—degenerescence formed the solid nucleus of the new
technologies of sex . . . Its application was widespread and its implantation
went deep. (Foucault The History of Sexuality 118–19)

The tripartite explanatory framework was at the heart of psychiatry but it also
informed several other disciplines that emerged or were consolidated in the mid to
late nineteenth century, such as jurisprudence and legal medicine, as well as concepts
dangerous or endangered children, dangerous individuals and mental illness or
madness. These disciplines “all functioned for a long time on the basis of
‘degenerescence’ and the heredity—perversion system” (Foucault The History of
Sexuality 119), and gave rise to new technologies of social control that fed from and in
turn helped to create new types of deviant. In the same way as disease is constructed
on the basis of specific ideological needs and structured along the categories of
representation accepted within that ideology or discourse, those groups and
individuals designated as threats to stable bourgeois order became subjects of
surveillance, medico-legal intervention, psychiatric treatment and very often isolation
in the appropriate asylum or holding centre, such as the prison. These threatening
individuals are, according to Michel Foucault: “Les hommes de déraison que la société
reconnaît et isole: il y a le débauché, le dissipateur, l’homosexual, le magicien, le
suicide, le libertin ... À partir du XVIIe siècle, l’homme de déraison est un
personnage concret prélevé sur un monde social, jugé et condamné par la société dont
il fait partie”.17

This “bio-political” undertaking to maximize resources, to configure the
possibilities of a nation, to harmonize forces, and to neutralize dangers and
abnormalities, identified behaviours that were “excessive” or were insufficiently
prudent not only in bodily and psychical terms (the “dissipateur”, the libertine) but
also in terms of what their freedom would signify for the health of the collective, in
this case bourgeois conceptions of social, economic and political stability.

Gender, criminality and decline in Spain

In the case of Spain, what were the specific groups of “abnormal” individuals that
were identified as dangerous? What disciplines were set in motion by the pressing
demand to control, survey and order? How did these come together in the kind of
texts that we discuss here? In order to provide some answers to these questions, we
need to understand the social, political and scientific context of the late nineteenth
century in Spain, its concerns with respect to degeneration, the articulation of specific
scientific disciplines, the identification of certain “dangerous classes” and the role of
the city in the production of social deviancy.

Much has been written about the notion of decline that was current in Spain at the
end of the nineteenth century. While we will not repeat these findings here, it is
useful to recall that numerous contemporary commentators not only voiced this
feeling of decline but analysed its symptoms and etiologies: internal decline, a lack of
spirit, abulia, and a pervading sense that what was natural, known and proven had
somehow been dislocated and placed out of joint (Altamira; Macías Picavea). Such a
decline was commonly seen to be connected to falling moral standards and insouciant,
over-indulgent sexuality. Concerns about these questions were connected to other
fields of specialist inquiry that came on stream at the end of the century. These
included medico-legal or forensic medicine, which identified the causes of crimes and
those individuals that committed them, concepts of “social dangerousness”, childhood
as a new category under threat that had to be managed, criminology, ethnography and
the study of “subcultures” in the cities, studies of the sexual perversions and
prostitution, and attempts to articulate national and international measures to combat
criminality and political dissidence.
The rise of criminological explanations for deviant behaviour

In Spain, the last quarter of the nineteenth century saw the decline of organicist thought and the rise of positivist notions of social life (Suárez Cortina 143–79). Although positivism suffered setbacks in Europe as a whole at the end of the century as reason and science were deemed insufficient to explain the world (Cacho Viu 58–62), positivist notions informed Spanish social science well into the twentieth century. It was in this overlap between organicism, positivism and the theories of Karl Krause that discourse on the “mala vida” emerged in the form of “krausismo—positivismo” in Spain. Experimental psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists and political scientists of the respective stature of Urbano González Serrano, Gumersindo de Azcárate, A. Machado Álvarez and Adolfo Posada, along with other major figures such as Luis Simarro and Odón de Buen, would consolidate these ideas politically in the constitution of the Partido Centralista in 1894, drafted under the direction of Nicolás Salmerón, the translator of Max Nordau’s Degeneration (Suárez Cortina 147). The new social theories of these and other thinkers were largely informed by three discourses: first, Krause’s organicism; second, Spencerian evolutionary thought; and third, “solidarist” conceptions of mutual responsibility and solidarity between the individual and society as a whole which drew on German Kathedersozialisten, French solidarisme, and English New Liberalism (Suárez Cortina 147–8). 21 This combination—eclectic in essence—can be seen, for example, in the work of Azcárate. In his speech on social laws delivered to the Madrid Ateneo in November 1893, he remarked: “El sentido mecánico sostendrá que, al modo que una máquina se recompona cambiando esta o aquellas piezas, cabe reformar la sociedad por partes y desde fuera, sustituyendo lo nuevo a lo antiguo con manifiesta ventaja y ningún inconveniente”. 22 The interdependency between individual and society was manifest and one could not develop without the other: “no es posible el cambio ni puede ingerirse lo nuevo sino mediante una gradual transformación y de un proceso por virtud del cual nazca y se desenvuelva la nueva relación, siendo íntima e interna como todas las que se dan entre las partes de un organismo”. 23 The analysis of the various components of the “mala vida”, their interrelation and effect upon broader society was indebted to this organicist perspective but also took on elements of positivism whereby, ultimately, these components could destabilize the whole of society.

Studies on the “mala vida” in Europe and Latin America

Deviancy, poverty and crime came to be considered by the new social discourses as a subset of a widespread degeneration affecting European cities. These disorders were assumed to be the province of the “lower orders” in particular, of certain racial types and proletarian milieus. Studies which focused on particular groups of marginalized individuals responded to a broad range of anxieties: about the growth of commercialism and new patterns of consumption; about the interrelations between public and private space, the organization of the state, and the nature of class; about the creation of police forces or the workings of secret societies; or about the emphasis on family ties to the detriment of looser friendship-based networks. 24 Many of these
concerns were subsumed under the concept of “social defence”. While works on these *malefactors* purported to be scientific and were transnational in their scope, they were also somewhat journalistic and impressionistic in their attempts to shine a spotlight on the “underworld”. They constitute a kind of precursor to the anthropological and sociological texts on social deviancy that emerged later in the century. Texts on the “mala vida” were, in part, also related to the rise of cheaper publishing and a larger, more educated reading public.

In spite of the different socio-cultural contexts in which they were produced, and the specific interests and idiosyncratic approach each author brought to the classification of those individuals populating the “mala vida”, the texts written on this subject, on both sides of the Atlantic, focused on a similar range of marginal groups: prostitutes, “sexual inverts”, “sexual perverts”, beggars, vagrants, alcoholics, gamblers and thieves. Other categories of social marginality were also addressed. *La mala vida en Madrid*, for instance, devoted a fair amount of space to the figure of the “golfo”, or child criminal; *La mala vida en Barcelona* (1912) by Max-Bembo also included amongst the inhabitants of the “mala vida” groups such as “suicidas”, “contrabandistas”, “brujas” and “niños mártires” (children subjected to child labour); whereas *La mala vida en Buenos Aires* covered other minor categories such as usurers, fortune-tellers, “curanderas” and “charlatanes”. Interestingly, this last book was the only one to approach the issue of political strife, a problem which the author linked to the rise of immigration in the country, a main cause of the “mala vida” according to Gómez. In addition to variations in scope, it should be noted that there were variations in the scale of coverage that these books gave to the same subject. For example, the issue of begging is treated in much more detail in *La mala vida en Madrid* than in the other two works. Similarly, whereas alcoholism constitutes a section of Max-Bembo’s Part 2 on “la miseria”, it receives much less attention in *La mala vida en Buenos Aires*, where it is mentioned briefly in the first section of the book on the causes of the “mala vida”. In *La mala vida en Madrid*, the authors do not include a specific section on the subject; instead, alcoholism is identified as one of the main causes of delinquency in the book’s final chapter, titled “La elevación de la vida”, which offers concluding remarks on the causes and solutions of the “mala vida”.

Unlike Niceforo and Sighele’s *La mala vita a Roma*, which included examples of “serious crime” (acts which clearly transgressed the limits of legality), the texts produced in Spain and Argentina focused mainly on what José Ingenieros described in his Prologue to *La mala vida en Buenos Aires* as “fronterizos del delito” (individuals whose lifestyle and behaviour, without being “technically” criminal—or punishable by the legal codes—were on the borders of criminality). Indeed, Spanish and Latin American authors’ conception of the “mala vida” and their understanding of which categories of people made up the “mala vida” differed from that of their Italian counterparts. The individuals analysed by the Spanish and Argentinean texts were considered as pathological, abnormal and dangerous, on account of their social inadaptability and deviant behaviour. Yet their behaviour was not, strictly speaking, criminal or illegal. The borderline between the “mala vida” and criminality was often blurred in these works.

The first article of this special issue, which develops these arguments further, engages in a comparative analysis of the most relevant works on the “mala vida” produced in Spain (*La mala vida en Madrid* [1901] and *La mala vida en Barcelona* [1912]),
Italy (La mala vita a Roma [1898]), and Latin America (La mala vida en Buenos Aires [1908]) in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Ricardo Campos examines the impact of positivist science in the specific socio-cultural context of each country and its attempts to apprehend and categorize an urban population situated on the borders of legality—beggars, “golfo”, prostitutes, homosexuals and criminals—in order to discipline them. The article explores the influence of degenerationist discourse and criminal anthropology in the works devoted to the “mala vida”, as well as the role of these writings in the elaboration of concepts of “peligrosidad” and “estado peligroso” and their impact on the penal code.

Rafael Huertas analyses the literary and scientific representations of the “golfillo” or “niño de la calle”, the first link in a chain of child and juvenile criminality. The strong presence of this inhabitant of the “mala vida” in Spanish urban society at the turn of the century is evidenced in the abundance and variety of publications on the subject produced during this period—from the brilliant descriptions of the “bajos fondos” found in Baroja to the medico-social, anthropological and criminological studies centred on the “mala vida”. Public health experts, psychiatrists, sociologists, criminologists, jurists and other experts developed a series of strategies aimed at the prevention, as well as the surveillance, control and even repression, of criminal childhood. A common characteristic of the various discourses which emerged around the figure of the “golfillo” was the medicalization and pathologization of the criminal or abandoned child.

Pura Fernández’s study focuses on Emilia Pardo Bazán’s novel La piedra angular (1891) within the context of discourses on criminal anthropology which emerged in Europe at the end of the nineteenth century. The interest raised by the “mala vida” and its inhabitants in scientific and pseudo-scientific circles allowed fiction writers to transcend the purely literary dimension and engage in moral, political and penal debates. Pardo Bazán’s novel is based on a historical criminal case. This enables her to explore a variety of narrative techniques, from the “crónica de sucesos” to the analysis of clinical cases, which were common devices in new medico-legal writings of the time. By voicing the collective interest in criminology and social pathology Pardo Bazán was in a position to reach a broader readership as well as validate her status as a writer and a shaper of opinion.

The fourth article in this collection analyses the depiction of male homosexuality as part of the “mala vida” in three cities—Madrid, Buenos Aires and Barcelona—where the “profligate life” was investigated by criminologists. Richard Cleminson discusses the influence of new psychiatric theories of “sexual deviance” in “mala vida” writings on both sides of the Atlantic, tracing the connections between these transnational discussions in order to show that homosexuality was understood as converging on the boundaries of prostitution and criminality. His analysis of three crucial “mala vida” texts examines how notions of gender and sexual deviance interplayed with social dangerousness, degeneration and threats to a stable bourgeois order at the turn of the twentieth century. Finally, the article explores the depiction of a growing homosexual subculture in the large cities.

The final essay, by Teresa Fuentes Peris, analyses the theme of alcoholism and degeneration in Vicente Blasco Ibáñez’s novel La bodega (1905). Alcoholism, perceived as the main cause of racial degeneration, had been identified at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as the clearest manifestation of the
immorality of the working classes and as the root cause of their poverty and associated evils, whether criminality, begging, unemployment or political conflicts, all of them associated with the “mala vida”. A counter-discourse emerged from the anarchist and socialist movements which subverted the traditional association of the working classes with immorality and instead denounced the bourgeoisie as corrupt and degenerate. In La bodega, Blasco Ibáñez, in line with contemporary anarchists and socialists, denounces an abject, idle and debauched bourgeoisie, wallowing in drunkenness and lust. In the novel, alcoholism and degeneration amongst the rural working classes is portrayed as the result of a pathological social system which encouraged the recourse to alcohol as a means of evasion.

Notes

2 The importance of Rafael Salillas in the construction of Spanish criminology is noted by Maristany del Rayo (XL) in his discussion of Salillas’ “Laboratorio de Criminología” whose reports appeared in the Anales del Laboratorio de Criminología from 1899 and in the Revista General de Legislación y Jurisprudencia from 1900 to 1902. See the impressively detailed accounts of delinquent life and slang in Salillas’ two works El delincuente español. El lenguaje and El delincuente español. Hampa.
3 These connections are revealed in the note by Broto Salanova 5, note 2. A further European—Latin American connection is provided by Dr. Looyer, Los grandes misterios de la mala vida en Buenos Aires comparada con la de las grandes capitales europeas (1911).
4 In spite of accepting the importance of environmental factors, Morel still contended that these only affected adversely the innate characteristics of the working classes: as discussed by Huertas García-Alejo Locura y degeneración (34).
5 On the reception of Nordau in Spain, see Davis. The translation of Nordau’s Entartung (1892–3) into Spanish by Nicolás Salmerón was published in 1902. The French version, Dégénérescence, was published in 1894.
6 See Campos Marín, Martínez Pérez and Huertas García-Alejo (8–32). In spite of the environment being regarded as a key factor in degeneration, there is a sense, in Morel’s Treatise, that the degenerate’s family tree and its journey towards extinction are immutable: see Pick (101).
7 Pick (51). Some degenerationists (among them Morel, the Italian criminal anthropologist Cesare Lombroso and the English psychiatrist Henry Maudsley), following Lamarck’s evolutionary theories—according to which acquired traits could be inherited—posited that the effects of industrial urban life were transmitted down the generations and were intensified in the process: as noted by Jagoe (163). This reflects the links established during the period between degeneration and biological determinism. The notion of heredity thus often overshadowed explanations of degeneration based on environmental factors.
8 These ideas were replicated three decades later by Magnan in Leçons cliniques sur les maladies mentales (1887). See, in this respect, Huertas “Valentin Magnan” (362). In Spain, the idea that the effects of alcoholism were transmitted and intensified from generation to generation, until the family line became extinct, was disseminated by Rafael Cervera y Barat, among others, in Alcoholismo y civilización (1898), where he
records the research carried out by Legrain in his book *Dégénérescence social et alcoolisme* (1891). Cervera includes a description and classification of a series of physical and mental pathologies—all resulting from the alcoholism of an ancestor—and their progression through three different generations. Notably, he documents cases of tuberculosis, meningitis, epilepsy, mental weakness, madness, violence, criminality, prostitution, vagrancy and alcoholism. Cervera’s text reflects his fears and alarm regarding the pernicious effects of racial degeneration on intellectual and human capital, and thus on productivity and national growth also. As he emphatically put it: “el alcoholismo engendrando idiotas merma el *capital social de inteligencia* . . . [y] con la mortalidad precoz abre otra brecha no menos considerable al *capital humano*” (114).

9 Pick (52).

10 For a discussion of the association established between alcoholism and degeneration, see Huertas *Locura y degeneración* (61–9); Campos Marín and Huertas (125–7); and Campos Marín *Alcoholismo, medicina y sociedad* (55–81). For how the ideas of Magnan and others were received in Spain, see Campos Marín (“La teoría de la degeneración” 429–56); Plumed Domingo and Rey González.

11 Lombroso’s scientific theories on criminality, which emphasized the notion of hereditary alcoholism as a major cause, had become influential in Spain from the late 1880s, reaching a high point in the mid 1890s. See Maristany, and Peset and Peset.

12 Regarding the link between anarchism and criminality, see Lombroso and Mella (25–32).

13 On the threat of the crowd, disturbance and criminality in the thought of Gabriel Tarde, the first to theorize this (*Les lois de l’imitation*, 1890), Gustave Le Bon (*Psychologies des foules*, 1895) and Scipio Sighele (*Psychologie des sectes*, French trans. 1898 [1894]), see Leps (62–3). Sighele was one of the first to write about “*la mala vida*”. On the reception of ideas about crowd psychology in Spain, see Trinidad Fernández (263–7). Le Bon’s work, for example, was first published in Spanish in 1911.

14 Rosario points out that the two authors borrowed the term “inversion of the sexual [genital] instinct” from the Italian legal doctor Arrigo Tamassia, who had written about such a subject in 1878. See Rosario (70).

15 A model whereby the sexual and psychiatric sciences were not created ex nihilo but in a complex process of mutual conformation with social processes and individual agency on behalf of those most affected by their premises is suggested by Oosterhuis and the work of Hacking, “Five parables” and “Making Up People”.

16 This follows the argument elaborated by Sander Gilman on the representation of disease, following in turn the “hard, rigorous relativism that regards knowledge as a social product, as a matter of dialogue between different visions of the world” espoused by W.J.T. Mitchell in his *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986. See Gilman (2).

17 Michel Foucault *Histoire de la folie*, cited in Eribon (385).

18 The link between bourgeois values, social control and surveillance has been argued, with the case of Spain in mind, by Álvarez-Uría. In more general terms, but with an emphasis on France and Germany, see Foucault *Los anormales*.

19 A good example that blends literary, social and political analysis is Harrison and Hoyle.
Two of the first modern medico-legal texts to be published in Spain were Fodere and Fernández del Valle. On the concept of childhood as subject to dangers, in the “arroyo” or bustling city street but also in sexual terms, see Cleminson and Vázquez García (137–73). For an analysis of social dangerousness in general, see Campos Marín “Higiene mental”. On national and international attempts to police and control rising workers’ movements and associated terrorism, in particular, anarchism, see Jensen.

On the “socialismo de cátedra” see Álvarez-Uría and Varela (175–206). Specifically, these authors equate the so-called Escuela de Oviedo (Adolfo Buylla, Adolfo Posada, Gumersindo de Azcárate) with German “socialismo de cátedra” (Verein für Sozial-Politik) (Álvarez-Uría and Varela 187, note 12).

The mistrust shown towards practices of friendship, particularly between men and between men and children, took on particular dimensions at the end of the century. In the light of the criminalization of homosexuality and in respect of the dangers thought to surround children (vide supra), friendship came to be associated with illegitimate networks outside the family circle and acceptable political expressions. This process is outlined in Ortega (105–6).

See Silió Cortés. More generally, see Foucault “Society” (59–65).

For instance, Max-Bembo, as a pedagogue, in his prologue to La mala vida en Barcelona, emphasized the importance of “criminal pedagogy” in his study. As he states in his “Aviso al lector”: “Mi obra no es una clínica, es una misión sagrada de pedagogo” (n.p.).

In this respect, it is worth noting that Bernaldo de Quirós y Llanas Aguilaniedo categorized homosexuality under the heading of “prostitution”. Max-Bembo’s taxonomy of “la mala vida” is similarly peculiar, as he uses seemingly identical headings to describe different aspects of the “mala vida”. Thus, Part 1 of his book is titled “La anormalidad”, under which he analyses “sexual inversion”. This is followed by a third part headed “El vicio”, which he devotes to prostitution (including male prostitution).

Works cited


