

SLIPPERY SOLIDARITY:  
PERFORMATIVE COMPLEMENTS TO THE NATIONAL ALLEGORY

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## ABSTRACT

SLIPPERY SOLIDARITY:  
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This dissertation studies how Spanish American novels and plays from the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century construct collective identity. Instead of focusing purely on the allegorical formulation of national identity, I identify a complementary mode of political expression that slips cosmopolitan, transnational, and colonial perspectives into nation-building discourse.

*Slippery Solidarity* begins by characterizing the “performative” rhetorical devices that carve a space for counter-national perspectives within romanticism’s predominantly national framework. In its most basic sense, “to perform” is to be reflexive about how one acts. I classify *pretending*, *juxtaposing*, and *parodying* as “performative” rhetorical devices because they self-reflexively display the intersection of national and counter-national perspectives. I show that, unlike allegorical texts, in which self-referentiality serves to authoritatively stabilize the concept of the “nation,” performative texts employ this technique in order to destabilize and then transform various tenets of nation-building discourse. *Pretending*, *juxtaposing*, and *parodying* question the patriotic call to take up arms and defend a singular motherland, the state’s homogenizing process of exclusion, the *civilización/barbarismo* dichotomy, and the narrative of national *mestizaje*. By combining allegorical and performative devices, José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi, Soledad Acosta de Samper, and Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda test the complementarity of national, cosmopolitan, transnational, and post-colonial dispositions during the Independence Period. *Pretending* evokes the cosmopolitan critique of nationalist violence in *El periquillo sarniento* (1816); *juxtaposing* depicts the transnational romance in *Una holandesa en América* (1876); and *parodying* critiques the colonial roots of the *mestizo* nation in *La hija de las flores, o Todos están locos* (1852).

This dissertation thus makes two central interventions. First, it traces the cosmopolitan and transnational dispositions that we tend to associate with *modernismo* and the *vanguardia* back to *romanticismo*. In doing so, it characterizes the aesthetic diversity and political complexity of the literature of this period. Secondly, this dissertation paves the way for more nuanced analyses of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Spanish American literature, ones in which national-allegorical interpretation is not the default mode, but one possible reading—among many—of the dialogue between literature and politics.

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## INTRODUCTION: Allegory and Performance in XIX Spanish America

From 1810 to 1898, Spanish colonies in the Americas fought for their independence. Generally speaking, the Creole population wanted to replace the peninsular bureaucrats who held local administrative posts, control their expanding trade routes, acquire better access to overseas markets, revive a depressed economy, and establish political relations with European countries other than Spain (Halperín Donghi 43-46). The desire to articulate a national identity separate from Spain was not a primary motivator of the independence movements, but it quickly became the predominant concern of Creoles once independence was achieved. While each country's struggle for national autonomy differs in terms of duration, method, and ideology, there is (at least) one phenomenon with continental scope: writing played a crucial role in the process of national definition. Benedict Anderson makes this claim in *Imagined Communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (1983). Because Anderson's chapter on Latin America is of questionable historical accuracy,<sup>1</sup> scholars in the field of Latin American Studies tend to cite Anderson's general thesis: the nation is an imagined political community—a discursive construct that does not correspond to any given social, political or geographical reality. Anderson argues that writing, specifically that which was mass distributed in newspapers, created a sense of “nationalism”—the concept that “*invents* nations where they do not exist” (Anderson 6).

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<sup>1</sup> Anderson claims that nationalism first emerged in the Americas at the time of independence. Lomnitz places it *before* independence (developing in stages that begin with European colonization in the sixteenth-century), whereas Chasteen and Castro-Klarén locate the emergence of this phenomenon much *later* (following the collapse of the export boom in the early twentieth-century) (Lomnitz 339; Chasteen xix).

The ability of Latin American letters to make an imagined concept a palpable reality is not particular to wars of independence. As Ángel Rama demonstrates in *La ciudad letrada* (1984), the writing practices of the colonial period established the precedent that “instead of representing things already existing, signs can be made to represent things as yet only imagined” (Rama 8). When European colonizers sketched their plans for Spanish American cities, they organized them on a geometric grid. These ordered cities (*la ciudad ordenada*), impervious to the accidents of the physical world or the vicissitudes of history, did not correspond to a chaotic reality. The ordered city thus transformed reality: its checkerboard grid enacted the political order (rationality and modernity) that the European colonizers desired. The written documents of the urban planners, which conceived of Spanish American cities as “symbolic representations” before they appeared as “material entities,” changed the rules of representation: signifiers can invent signifieds where they do not yet exist, and writing, autonomous from the material world, can create an “idealized political architecture (...) detached from reality” (Rama 6, 41). This symbolic revolution paved the way for the discursive power of the Lettered City (*la ciudad letrada*)—the elite social group that ruled by means of the written word from the last third of the 16<sup>th</sup> century until the final decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

During and immediately following the wars of independence, the Lettered City used writing to consolidate the political order: they drafted constitutions, defined cultural models, imposed the norms of a standardized language, and reformed rural culture to fit the modernizing norms of urban society. This system of signs invented a signified—the



nation—that did not correspond to any material reality. As Rama (echoing Anderson) emphasizes:

The written word designed the foundations of national identity and constructed a version of it in peoples' minds, all in the service of a particular political project. As anyone who stopped to reflect might have observed, this critically important process depended on pen, paper, and graven images—on word braided into discourses, printed and spoken. (Rama 70)

This premise, present in both *Imagined Communities* and *La ciudad letrada*, laid the groundwork for the national-allegorical interpretation of nineteenth-century Spanish American literature. This method of reading, which emerged in the 1980s, emphasizes the ability of allegory to produce the nation textually. Until recently, it constituted the *de facto* approach for studying 19<sup>th</sup>-century Spanish American literature.

The power of national-allegorical interpretation resides in its conjunction of literature and politics—two discursive fields that were nearly inseparable during and after the wars of independence. Julio Ramos's *Desencuentros de la modernidad en América Latina: literatura y política en el siglo XIX* (1989) explicates the concrete ways in which literature intervened in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century public sphere. Building upon the work of Rama, Ramos specifies how writing ordered the fragmented societies of the Post-Independence period, forged a modernizing project, and civilized the “randomness of American ‘barbarism’” (Ramos 3). He studies the writing of two elite *letrados*, Domingo Faustino Sarmiento and Andrés Bello, to prove that literature was “a medium for nonliterary operations” and thus advanced the consolidation of a modern nation-state (Ramos 29).

This project departs from Ramos's claim that "in the period prior to the unification and autonomization of the nation-states, letters *were* politics" (Ramos 53). However, unlike Ramos and his predecessors, I do not limit my study of "letters" to the writing of the elite *letrados* with political power nor restrict the scope of "politics" to that of the nation-state. The authors whose work constitutes my corpus are either *letrados* excluded from the Lettered City (José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi) or *literatos* who derived their authority from literature as a social institution (Soledad Acosta de Samper and Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda).<sup>2</sup> Beyond the confines of the Lettered City, these authors experiment with literary forms that (unevenly) separate their writing from nation-building discourse. Careful examination of their writing debunks the commonly held belief that allegory was the only literary device used to bridge literature and politics in early 19<sup>th</sup>-century Spanish America.

This project identifies a series of rhetorical devices that work alongside allegory, causing the text to slip in and out of the national-allegorical mode. Specifically, I define *pretending*, *juxtaposing*, and *parodying* as performative rhetorical devices that disassemble various tenets of nation-building discourse: the patriotic call to take up arms and defend a singular motherland, the state's homogenizing process of exclusion, the *civilización/barbarismo* dichotomy, and the narrative of national *mestizaje*. In doing so, these devices slow down allegory's impulse to discursively construct the nation and carve a space for "counter-national" perspectives within romanticism's predominantly national

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<sup>2</sup> See Ramos 43 and 55 for a distinction between *letrados* and *literatos*.

framework.<sup>3</sup> Pretending, juxtaposing, and parodying thus give voice to the cosmopolitan, transnational, and colonial perspectives that allegory must quash if it is to articulate a sense of national cohesion.

By studying the complex interplay between allegorical and performative literary form in *El periquillo sarniento* (1816), *Una holandesa en América* (1876), and *La hija de las flores* o *Todos están locos* (1852), this dissertation makes two central contributions. First, it spotlights the tension between two contradictory impulses in the Independence and Post-Independence periods: on the one hand, the ardent desire to allegorically form an autonomous nation and, on the other hand, the performative questioning of the legitimacy and viability of this same endeavor. The performative writing practices of Lizardi, Acosta de Samper, and Gómez de Avellaneda attest to the (partial and uneven) autonomization of literature from the national political sphere much earlier than is traditionally believed. Ramos situates the fragmentation of the Republic of Letters in the late 19<sup>th</sup>-century, specifically in the literary journalism of José Martí, but the authors of this study were writing much earlier. My reading of *El periquillo sarniento*, *Una holandesa en América* and *La hija de las flores* reveals a “discursive field contested by competing subjects or authorities”—even before the consolidation of the modern nation-state (Ramos 87). This project thus registers the aesthetic diversity and political

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<sup>3</sup> My use of the term “counter-national” is inspired in Bhabha’s term “counter-narrative,” which describes texts that “evoke and erase” the “totalizing boundaries” of the nation (Bhabha, *Nation and Narration* 300). In *Nation and Narration*, Bhabha explains how the performative temporality of these counter-narratives interrupts the sovereignty of the nation’s self generation (Bhabha, *Nation and Narration* 299).

complexity of *romanticismo*—a heterogeneous discursive field contested by national and counter-national authorities.

In order to make these claims, this project proposes a more comprehensive way of analyzing the political function of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Spanish American literature. While current approaches either analyze how a text stabilizes or destabilizes a sense of national identity, my approach breaks from this binarism and advances another option. I offer a method for reading texts that do not fully align with the tenets of nation-building discourse, yet do not discard the notion of the nation entirely. By recognizing the plurality of rhetorical devices that tie literature to politics in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Spanish America, we can trace the ways in which cosmopolitan, transnational, and colonial perspectives complemented projects of national definition.

I begin this work by defining allegory within the context of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Spanish American narrative and reviewing scholarship that employs national-allegorical interpretation. After identifying the rhetorical features that enable(d) allegory to stabilize a sense of nationhood, I explain how the performative rhetorical devices differ in terms of their aesthetic operation and political import. I conclude by previewing how each performative rhetorical device counteracts the allegorical formation of the nation: pretending evokes the cosmopolitan critique of nationalist violence in José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi's *El Periquillo*; juxtaposing depicts a transnational romance in Soledad Acosta de Samper's *Una holandesa*; and parodying destabilizes the foundation of the post-colonial nation in Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda's understudied lyric comedy *La hija de las flores*.

## Allegory in XIX Spanish America

If we are to understand how the performative rhetorical devices of pretending, juxtaposing and parodying work alongside allegory to slip counter-national perspectives into nation-building discourse, we must first understand how allegory works in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Spanish America. The term allegory originates in the Greek terms *allos* (other, different) and *agoreuei* (to say openly, to speak); it can be most simply defined as meaning something other than what is openly said (Faverón Patriau 13).<sup>4</sup> However, allegory develops significant temporal, cultural, and regional permutations, and any study of its function must take into account the context of its usage. The allegorical proclivities of nineteenth-century Spanish American narrative can be attributed to the metaphorical discourse of the independence movements. Gustavo Faverón Patriau identifies a process of “vaciamiento semántico” in independence-era rhetoric (Faverón Patriau 70). As slave-owning *criollos* presented themselves as “slaves” of the Spanish crown, “enslaver” and “enslaved” referred to the same person. Consequently, signifiers such as *esclavo* and *esclavitud* were emptied of signification; they no longer referred to concrete signifieds, but were arbitrarily re-assigned metaphorical signification. In one of the many examples that Faverón Patriau cites, “‘esclavos’ pasó a significar, según la literal definición de Amor de la Patria: ‘escluidos de los honores, de las dignidades, de los empleos, i de las rentas’ (Amor de la Patria 63). La elite criolla podía considerarse, así, esclava sin haberse bestializado, y sirvienta sin haberse empobrecido” (Faverón Patriau 60). Reframing

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<sup>4</sup> Quilligan complicates this definition: “the ‘other’ named by the term *allos* in the word ‘allegory’ is not some other hovering above the words of the text, but the possibility of an otherness, a polysemy, inherent in the very words on the page; allegory therefore names the fact that language can signify many things at once” (Quilligan 26).

colonial rule as a state of “slavery” and “servitude” emboldened declarations of independence throughout the continent.

This metaphoric quality of nation-building discourse had two consequences. The first, political consequence was that actual slavery—that is, the enslavement of Africans by the *criollo* population—was of little concern to the leaders of new republics. For Faverón Patriau, the metaphorization of “slave” and “slavery” during the independence movements explains why abolition was such an arduous process; semantic emptying made it easier for colonial structures of inequality to persist in a postcolonial context (Faverón Patriau 55). The second, aesthetic consequence was that there was a real need for allegorical language, which gave new meaning to a network of semantically empty signifiers (Faverón Patriau 24). With its capacity to reassign meaning on a large scale, allegory became the backdrop for 19<sup>th</sup>-century literature: “la cualidad alegórica del XIX, nacida en los vaivenes del vaciamiento semántico de sus discursos públicos, centralmente del discurso liberal, provocó la necesaria inscripción de su literatura dentro de los márgenes de lo alegórico” (Faverón Patriau 70). Faverón Patriau emphasizes that this cycle of semantic emptying and allegorical inclination is historically contingent; the predominance of allegorical literature in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Spanish America is directly related to the rhetorical particularities of liberal nation-building discourse (Faverón Patriau 14, 20–21).

Although scholarship on nineteenth-century Spanish American literature does not typically cite Faverón Patriau’s historical analysis, there is agreement that the nineteenth century was “una época alegórica” (Faverón Patriau 56). Consequently, allegorical

interpretation is considered the *de facto* method for reading the literature written during and after the wars of independence.<sup>5</sup> This tendency first emerged in the 1990s, when a series of scholars writing under the influence of Anderson's *Imagined Communities* demonstrated the critical potential of national-allegorical interpretation. In 1991, the publication of Doris Sommer's *Foundational Fictions: the National Romances of Latin America* advanced a theoretical framework for studying allegory in a specific context (the period of national consolidation in Latin America) and for a specific genre (the national romance). Sommer traces the inextricability of love plots and political plotting in canonical novels from Latin America. In national romances such as *Amalia*, *Sab*, *María*, and *Enriquillo*,

erotics is coterminous with politics in an interlocking, rather than parallel, relationship (...) Love plots and political plotting keep overlapping one another. Instead of the metaphoric parallelism, say between passion and patriotism, which critics have found inevitable in allegory, we have here a metonymic association between romantic love that needs the state's blessing and political legitimacy that needs to be founded on love. (Sommer, "Allegory and Dialectics" 74–75)

In order to theorize allegory in this way, Sommer depends on the definition that Benjamin sets forth in *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* (1963). Within Sommer's interpretation of Benjamin's text, allegory moves dialectically, intertwining two levels of unstable signification in order to produce stable meaning (Benjamin 160, 166, 171). Because these two levels of meaning are mutually reinforcing—each one bolsters the

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<sup>5</sup> See Faverón Patriau 28–29 for a complete list of studies that take a national-allegorical approach to Latin American literature, many of which are neither limited to the 19<sup>th</sup>-century nor the genre of the novel.

discursive authority of the other—this dialectic-allegory resolves discursive instability. This conceptualization of allegory allows Sommer to demonstrate how the foundational fictions stabilize an inherently instable signifier: the nation. The national allegories detract attention from the contradictions of nation-building discourse in order to generate a sense of national stability—however illusory this notion may be (Sommer, *Foundational Fictions* 10).

Sommer's work has shaped over twenty years of literary criticism, but very few scholars take similar care in sharing their theoretical and ideological assumptions about allegory.<sup>6</sup> In the years following the publication of *Foundational Fictions*, scholarship continued to invoke Sommer's understanding of allegory as a stabilizing, comforting, and transformative force in Latin American literature. Many of these studies extend national-allegorical interpretation to genres other than the foundational fiction. For example, Hugo Achugar (1998), Paula (P. Alonso) (2004), and William Acree (2011) study how mass-produced and widely read texts (e.g. pamphlets, magazines, poetry, almanacs, and printed money) allegorize the nation. Fernando Unzueta's *La imaginación histórica y el romance nacional en Hispanoamérica* (1996) enhances Sommer's study by expanding her canon to include historical novels and offering a historical justification for this type of national-allegorical interpretation. Unzueta convincingly analyzes meta-literary texts from the mid-1800s (i.e. prologues, presentational letters, and critical studies) to prove that liberal politicians turned to allegorical literature to bolster their projects of national consolidation. Unzueta's study, considered alongside the historical analysis of Faverón

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<sup>6</sup> Exceptions to this statement include Unzueta, Juan Pablo Dabove, Faverón Patriau, and Julia Paulk.



Patriaú, demonstrates that the expectation that 19<sup>th</sup>-century literature narrates the nation is not (only) a present-day eroticization of the national, but (also) a generic convention defined in the nineteenth century (Unzueta 110).

Nina Gerassi-Navarro also argues that the historical novel, in addition to the national romance, played a central role in the process of national consolidation. Her book, *Pirate Novels: Fictions of Nation Building in Spanish America* (1999), extends the scope of *Foundational Fictions* by identifying additional tropes that channel the desire for political autonomy. In lieu of Sommer's focus on heteronormative couples, Gerassi-Navarro studies the pirate, "an emblematic figure of independence and boldness" (Gerassi-Navarro 7–8). The pirate is an especially appealing figure to Gerassi-Navarro for two reasons. First, it registers the transatlantic dimension of nation-building discourse; the pirate narratives that constitute Gerassi-Navarro's corpus highlight "the extent to which the identity and independence of the Spanish American republics were seen as being contingent on existing European models" (Gerassi-Navarro 8). Secondly, the paradoxical nature of the pirate—it is both lawless and democratic, free and bound, dangerous and comforting—allows Gerassi-Navarro to discuss the instability of emergent nationalisms.

Juan Pablo Dabove similarly bases his national-allegorical reading on a lawless figure: the bandit. In *Nightmares of the Lettered City: Banditry and Literature in Latin America, 1816-1929* (2007), Dabove demonstrates that violence is an inseparable (yet overlooked) element of the national romance. Bandit narratives function as "an allegory of the violent constitution of the nation-state" and reveal the excess, heterogeneity, and

contradictions that define Latin American modernity (Dabove 6, 34). Juan Carlos González-Espitia also studies narratives that deviate from the state-sponsored logic of homogenization and governability. His recent book, *On the Dark Side of the Archive: Nation and Literature in Spanish America at the Turn of the Century* (2011), constructs a corpus of “somber, non-foundational narratives” in which “the nation is not the protagonist of a portrayed or desired happy-ending story” (González Espitia 15). Both Dabove and González Espitia formulate a variation of national-allegorical interpretation that is capable of tracing the fissures of nation-building discourse.

The twenty years that separate the publications of *Foundational Fictions* and *On the Dark Side of the Archive* mark a gradual shift in how scholars define the political function of allegory in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Latin American literature. In the 1990s, the allegorical level of a text was presumed to be a future-oriented idealization of national stability; this type of reading, which is largely indebted to Sommer’s interpretation of Benjamin, promotes national-allegorical interpretation as a way to locate narrative resolution and characterize a text’s coherence. More recent scholarship posits that this approach overlooks the contradictions contained within nation-building discourse. In order to foreground this discursive tension in their readings, scholars such as Dabove, González Espitia, and Faverón Patriau consider allegory to be a presentist articulation of contradictory, unstable nationalisms. To this end, their work draws upon De Man’s concept of allegory, in which two parallel levels of meaning—one transcendent, one immanent—contradict each other. Within this framework, allegory’s incompatible levels of signification undermine the discursive authority of the other, preventing the other from

signifying (De Man 270). Allegory is thus a figure that fails to stabilize meaning and creates a text that resists interpretation (De Man 205; Copeland and Struck 10). In contrast to early models of national-allegorical interpretation, more recent approaches emphasize narrative irresolution and the text's fragmented, incoherent nature. This tendency is not only evident in the monographs mentioned here, but also in countless other publications about 19<sup>th</sup>-century Spanish American literature, which I cite throughout this study.

Faverón Patriau's recent book, *Contra la alegoría: hegemonía y disidencia en la literatura latinoamericana del XIX* (2011), epitomizes the deconstructionist approach to allegorical interpretation. In *Contra la alegoría*, Faverón Patriau sets out to explain why certain Spanish American narratives fail to signify the nation. In order to do so, he formulates an "eclectic" definition of allegory that combines Benjamin's emphasis on historical contingency with De Man's notion of "el fracaso de la referencialidad" (Faverón Patriau 20–21). He terms this type of allegory *contragoría*, understood as "una variant[e] alegóric[a] que carg[a] desde su origen el germen de la disidencia, es decir, alegorías que llevan en sus intersticios elementos contradictorios capaces de hacer colapsar su querida unicidad" (Faverón Patriau 30). This framework enables Faverón Patriau to reclassify foundational fictions such as *Sab* and *María* as fractured allegories of nation building.

Although *Contra la alegoría* purports to "plantear una salida" from scholarship that looks for "una estructura alegórica sobre la construcción de la nación" (11), the study falls short of this aim. Faverón Patriau's focus on narratives that (fail to) narrate the

nation locks him within an allegorical mode of interpretation. However, Faverón Patriau succeeds in demonstrating the rhetorical malleability of allegory in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Spanish American narrative: when allegory moves dialectically, it can abstractly imagine a cohesive national community; when it conjoins contradictory levels of signification, allegory can concretely disintegrate the notion of national unity. One of the key claims of *Contra la alegoría* is that allegory can either succeed or fail in stabilizing the nation as a signifier of collective identity; its political function depends on the historical, cultural and political context of its enunciation (Faverón Patriau 72).

Considered collectively, this body of scholarship gives us two options for studying how 19<sup>th</sup>-century Spanish American literature constructs collective identity. Following Sommer, we can study how the foundational fictions succeed referentially; that is, we can analyze how romantic and historical novels create desire for a referent—the nation—that does not exist within the text. Following Faverón Patriau, we can study how allegorical narratives fail referentially; we can foreground how these narratives produce inconsistent and uninspiring models of national identity. Either we consider the discursive construction of the nation in aesthetically coherent texts *or* we consider the fragmentation of nation-building discourse in disjointed texts. The prevailing analytical paradigms privilege the nation as a signifier of collective identity, and our only choice is to trace its presence or absence.

This project departs from this binary and advances a third option: study nineteenth-century Spanish American literature in a way that recognizes the proliferation of plural signifiers of political solidarity. The texts that constitute my corpus do not

allegorize the nation, nor do they fail to. Rather, *El periquillo sarniento*, *Una holandesa en América*, and *La hija de las flores, o Todos están locos* succeed in signifying cosmopolitan, transnational, and (post)colonial perspectives within the parameters of nation-building discourse. Although these performative texts channel anxieties about projects of national definition, they are not incoherent or hopelessly fragmented. On the contrary, the performative rhetorical devices of pretending, juxtaposing, and parodying integrate counter-national perspectives throughout the text, allowing it to signify a model of collective identity distinct from that of allegorical texts. While national-allegorical interpretation is appropriate for many texts—that (fail to) signify the nation—we need another option for texts that do not limit themselves to the realm of the national.

Many scholars have begun to realize this. If Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* made the nation the buzzword of the 1980s and 1990s, the work of Kwame Anthony Appiah, Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins, and Paul Gilroy have made the cosmopolitan, the transnational, and the transatlantic equally generative terms for present-day scholarship.<sup>7</sup> Within the field of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Spanish American literature, scholars are developing the tools to move beyond a nation-centric study of the period's literature. In *Transatlantic Travels in Nineteenth-Century Latin America: European Women Pilgrims* (2013), Adriana Méndez Rodenas carves a space in the Latin American canon for multi-lingual travel narratives written by foreign visitors. Alejandro Mejías-

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<sup>7</sup> See Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006); Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins, *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling beyond the Nation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998); and Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double-Consciousness* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995).

López takes a similarly transatlantic approach in *The Inverted Conquest: the Myth of Modernity and the Transatlantic Onset of Modernism* (2009). He defines Spanish American *modernismo* as a transatlantic literary field based on three pillars: Spanish Americanism, cosmopolitanism, and modernity (Mejías-López 74). Mariano Siskin's *Cosmopolitan Desires: Global Modernity and World Literature in Latin America* (2014) has a similar premise: it aims to read "Latin American literary modernity as a global relation, a set of aesthetic procedures that mediate a broadened trans-cultural network of uneven cultural exchanges" (Siskind, *Cosmopolitan Desires* 7). By pivoting between the national and global, Méndez Rodenas, Mejías-López, and Siskind demonstrate that the complexities of independence, nation building, and modernization in Latin America exceed the ideological framework of nationalism.

In contrast to this innovative scholarship, which focuses on the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this project traces the emergence of counter-national perspectives in the early nineteenth century. It is especially telling that the three key terms of this study—cosmopolitan, transnational, and (post)colonial—tend to disappear when we consider the Independence Period in Spanish America. For example, scholars avidly discuss cosmopolitanism in terms of the Enlightenment, in relation to *modernismo* at the turn of the century, and especially in the context of 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>-century globalization; nevertheless, cosmopolitanism is rarely mentioned in studies of Spanish American *romanticismo*. This project fills this temporal gap by defining what cosmopolitanism, transnationalism, and (post)coloniality mean specifically in Mexico, Colombia, and Cuba in the early to mid-1800s. I take special care to disentangle the

cosmopolitan, the transnational, and the transatlantic, since these three notions tend to be conflated in recent scholarship on nineteenth-century Spanish America.

It is undeniably difficult to identify the counter-national undercurrents of *romanticismo*—a period during which national self-definition was an upmost concern and the metaphorical nature of political discourse created a literature ripe for allegorization. I argue that a renewed attention to literary form is a key strategy for characterizing the political complexity of *romanticismo*. By recognizing the two classes of rhetorical devices—allegorical and performative—that signify politically, we can trace the co-existence of national and counter-national perspectives during and after the independence movements in Spanish America. I now turn to this second type of literary device. What do pretending, juxtaposing and parodying have in common? How are they different than allegory? And why classify them as “performative?”

### **The Performative in XIX Spanish America**

To begin, I use the term “performative” in three ways. First, “performative” qualifies the rhetorical strategies of *El periquillo sarniento*, *Una holandesa en América*, and *La hija de las flores*. Secondly, the term “performative” groups texts of different genres: it names the formal similarities of a picaresque text written under the influence of neoclassicism, a travel narrative in which letters and diary entries epitomize the first-person intimacy of Romanticism, and a lyric comedy that remits to Golden Age theater and was “performed” in the most literal sense of the term. Despite their generic diversity, all of these “performative” texts counteract the allegorical impulse to construct the nation. Thirdly, “performative” names a different way of reading the political function of

nineteenth-century Spanish American literature. Allegorical interpretation is most suited for allegorical texts that depend on allegory as their primary rhetorical operation; analogously, reading performatively is most appropriate for performative texts in which performative rhetorical strategies predominate.

There is no shortage of recent scholarship that invokes performance, performativity, and the performative to theorize a host of literary, cultural, and political phenomena. The contrast I establish between the performative and the allegorical in nineteenth-century Spanish American literature is not intended to dialogue with or correspond to every other manifestation of the term. For the purposes of this study, I bound the critical extension of “performative” with the theoretical contributions of the performing arts scholar Richard Schechner, the French philosopher Jacques Derrida, and the gender theorist Judith Butler. These contemporary critics expound on the notion of performance that *El periquillo sarniento* first offers in 1816. I turn to Schechner, Derrida and Butler in order to advance a definition of the performative that dialogues with current critical frameworks yet remains grounded in the nineteenth-century corpus that constitutes this study.

Schechner, Derrida and Butler are all responding, whether explicitly or implicitly, to J.L. Austin’s foundational text *How to Do Things with Words* (1962). Austin defines performative language as that which carries out—performs—the action to which it refers. For example, the words “I promise” constitute an action. The utterance “I promise” is a speech act in which saying something is equivalent to doing something. Following this definition, we could conclude that all literature is performative; literary discourse is an



act that performs the action (creating another world) to which it refers (describing that world) (Culler 507). As important as Austin's study has been to our understanding of linguistic acts, this broad definition of the performative does not facilitate a distinction of performative and allegorical literary form.<sup>8</sup>

Thankfully, *El periquillo sarniento* offers a more narrow definition of the performative—one that we can work with. As Chapter One will elaborate, *El periquillo sarniento* characterizes performance as an activity that foregrounds a plurality of perspectives. The fact that Periquillo makes his living by pretending to be someone he is not allows Lizardi's novel to represent the heterogeneous population of New Spain. However, the multi-voicedness of *El periquillo sarniento* goes beyond its representation of a diverse population. To date, critics have overlooked the fact that *El periquillo sarniento* encodes both national and counter-national perspectives; it depicts characters that both exalt their *patria madre* and others that detach themselves from their *patria madrastra* in pursuit of other political communities. Periquillo's performative lifestyle is a way of framing the tension between cosmopolitanism and nationalism, between transcending national roots and valorizing regional differences. I will show how the didactic prologues, which advocate reading *El Periquillo* as if it were a live performance, prepare the reader to notice this cosmopolitan detour from the national. The prologues self-reflexively highlight the centrality of its performative rhetorical strategy—

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<sup>8</sup> Austin defines performative utterances by two characteristics: (1) "they do not 'describe' or 'report' or constata anything at all, are not 'true or false'" and (2) "the uttering of the sentence is, or is a part of, the doing of an action" (Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* 5). Although Austin excluded literature from this definition, literary theorists tend to cite literature as a primary example of the performative functioning of language.

pretending—to the novel’s cosmopolitan critique. *El periquillo sarniento* thus uses the term *performative* to qualify a text in which national and counter-national perspectives intersect—one that therefore requires to be read for dissidence and tension, not harmony and resolution.

*El periquillo sarniento*’s evocation of performance as self-reflexive polyphony can be further elaborated with Richard Schechner’s definition of the term. In his book that defines the field of Performance Studies, Schechner defines performance as “any action that is framed, presented, highlighted or displayed” (Schechner 2). Self-reflexivity is a key component of performativity; any action that is consciously performed “refers to itself, is part of itself” (Schechner 167). Understood within Schechner’s framework, the rhetorical processes of pretending, juxtaposing, and parodying are all performative because they self-reflexively display their action—the intersecting of national and counter-national perspectives.

Pretending involves the non-critical, exploratory performance of another perspective, whereas parodying implies the critical, oppositional performance of another voice. As I have already alluded, pretending in *El periquillo sarniento* enables the novel to temporarily shed its national costuming and test the viability of cosmopolitanism in New Spain. Understood as a social activity, pretending is a form of imaginative play that empathetically explores the differences between Self and Other. In this sense, pretending encompasses the experience of the cosmopolite, whose travels invite him to reflect upon cultural differences and encourage him to see the world from another’s shoes. For this reason, the primary rhetorical strategy of *El periquillo sarniento*—pretending—is

specifically suited to articulate its cosmopolitan perspective. By relating pretending to the more commonly theorized notion of mimesis, I will demonstrate how Lizardi's novel not only re-presents the nationalist sentiments of the independence era, but also represents—creates—an alternative model of cosmopolitan political relation.

If pretending validates the perspective of the Other it invokes, parodying aims to discredit the perspective it critically re-presents. A parody involves two voices: the parodying discourse and the target of this critique. As much as parodying tries to undermine the logical foundation of its object of critique, it cannot help but validate its original: to become the target of a parody, the parodied concept must be important enough to be worth discrediting (Morson 73). Understood in this sense, parodying is similar to the other performative rhetorical devices because it highlights the co-existence of national and counter-national perspectives. By parodying the generic codes of the national-allegorical romance, *La hija de las flores*, o *Todos están locos* exposes how Cuban postcoloniality depends on and even reactivates the object of its critique: coloniality.

Although pretending and parodying clearly involve the performance of another voice, the performative nature of juxtaposing is not as immediately apparent. Juxtaposing involves the side-by-side presentation of two oppositional perspectives. In essence, juxtaposing puts separate, divergent perspectives on the same stage and initiates their dialogue. Because juxtaposing frames and preserves oppositionality in this way, it can signify through the fundamental tension between two different worldviews. This performative framing is key. If juxtaposition did not intentionally display opposition in

this way, the two conflicting voices would speak independently of one another and would not create meaning through difference. In other words, if juxtaposing did not performatively frame its action, there would be no polyphony. In this way, juxtaposing can be understood as a performative process because it frames its action—in this case, putting two different perspectives side-by-side so that they dialogue and inform one another. In *Una holandesa en América*, juxtaposing Romanticism and Realism serves to highlight the irresolvable tension between two different modes of attachment: nationalism and transnationalism. The novel's performative rhetorical strategy encodes the experience of its transnational protagonist, who must learn to juxtapose the two national spaces—Holland and Colombia—that define her identity.

I signify pretending, juxtaposing and parodying in their gerund form for two reasons. First, they constitute rhetorical *processes* that differ from devices such as symbolism, metaphor, and allegory that emphasize the *products* of literary interpretation. Whereas an allegorical framework seeks to determine how literature constitutes a political product—an ideological idea to be exchanged and circulated, my performative approach to 19<sup>th</sup>-century Spanish American literature gives equal consideration to (aesthetic) form and (political) content. This attention to process is characteristic of Performance Studies, a field in which scholars take interest in studying “what people do in their activity of doing it” (Schechner 1). Studying something “as performance,” then, implies that “whatever is being studied is regarded as practices, events, and behaviors, not as ‘objects’ or ‘things’” (Schechner 2). Take for example the difference between *juxtaposition* and *juxtaposing*. While *juxtaposition* names a finished product that happens

to oppose two objects in side-by-side relation, *juxtaposing* signifies the intentional practice of constructing this tension. In effect, all three of the performative rhetorical devices shift our attention from the *product* to the *process* of national definition; in doing so, they articulate the contradictions and paradoxes that underwrite select tenets of nation-building discourse.

There is a correlation between the unique aesthetic processes of pretending, juxtaposing, and parodying and the counter-national perspective they bring about. Each text of this corpus presents a different type of movement in relation to the national: cosmopolitanism in *El periquillo sarniento* aims to *transcend* the exigencies of national attachment; transnationalism in *Una holandesa en América* moves *in-between* two national spaces; and *La hija de las flores* exposes the absurd premise of Cuban postcoloniality, which *folds* colonial cognitive models into its narrative of national *mestizaje*. It is no coincidence that the performative rhetorical devices operative in each text involve a similar type of movement. Pretending in *El periquillo sarniento* allows the text to transcend long-standing generic conventions and temporarily shed its national costuming. Juxtaposing Romanticism and Realism in *Una holandesa en América* highlights the tension between two models of political and intimate attachment—one subjective, singular and national; the other objective, plural and transnational. Finally, the parodic structure of *La hija de las flores* explicitly folds allegorical into performative literary form in order to mock the maddening collapse between colonialism and nationalism in Cuba.

Schechner's framework thus emphasizes the self-reflexive, procedural nature of these performative rhetorical devices. Because allegorical texts also highlight the ways in which they create meaning, it is necessary to distinguish between the function of self-referentiality in allegorical and performative literary form. On the allegorical end of the spectrum, self-referentiality exits the text and authoritatively fixes singular, transcendent meaning; on the performative end, self-referentiality dives into the text and playfully explores plural meaning. More specifically, allegory aims to resolve the internal tensions of the text in order to stabilize a referent—the nation—that is *outside* the text.<sup>9</sup> Allegory shows the reader how to link literal and figurative meaning so that he can imagine a political reality not yet possible within the text itself.<sup>10</sup> As we will see in the blatantly allegorical *Sab*, allegorical texts self-referentially signal this transcendent level of meaning; they cue they reader to exit the text.<sup>11</sup>

Performative texts are also self-referential, but in a different way. Pretending, juxtaposing and parodying draw the reader's attention to the dissident, counter-national voices that are already present in the text. For example, the term *cosmopolita* is explicitly mentioned in the fourth volume of *El periquillo sarniento*, the title of *Una holandesa en América* already signals its transnational concerns, and the symbolic setting of *La hija de las flores* clearly situates the play in (post)colonial Cuba. As conventional readings of *El*

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<sup>9</sup> The foundational fictions are the most obvious example of this principle: "I am suggesting that some allegories, such as the national novels, may have no preexisting and eternal level of referentiality but, rather, make themselves up, all the while attempting to produce an illusion of stability" (Sommer, "Allegory and Dialectics" 78).

<sup>10</sup> See Quilligan 24, 53.

<sup>11</sup> Dabove also detects allegory's self-referential nature; "the national-allegory has a self-referential dimension that has to be read as an interrogation on its instance of enunciation—a questioning of the role of the 'national letrado'" (Dabove 36).

*periquillo sarniento* and *Una holandesa en América* demonstrate, these counter-national perspectives are not always easy to notice. These texts must work hard to foreground the tensions, contradictions, and paradoxes that allegory must quash if it is to articulate a sense of national cohesion. This is the purpose of self-referentiality in performative texts: to highlight the performative rhetorical devices that articulate the cosmopolitan, transnational and colonial undercurrents of nation-building discourse.

*Una holandesa en América* offers a clear example of performative self-referentiality, since it displays its strategy of juxtaposing early in the novel. In one self-referential scene, the transnational protagonist and her cousin debate how to interpret a life-threatening incident. The protagonist emblemizes a Romantic way of understanding the world, while her cousin embodies a Realist perspective. Their conversation serves to foreground how the novel juxtaposes Romanticism and Realism to construct a transnational imaginary. By explicitly drawing the reader's attention to this performative rhetorical device, *Una holandesa* gives semantic priority to the transnational over the national. That is, performative self-referentiality highlights the counter-national referents already within the text, not the national referents that lie beyond it. In brief, allegorical self-referentiality moves outward to stabilize the nation; performative self-referentiality looks inward in order to destabilize the nation.

Both of these impulses, which could also be described as centripetal and centrifugal, are present in *El periquillo sarniento*, *Una holandesa en América* and *La hija*

*de las flores*.<sup>12</sup> That is, pretending, juxtaposing and parodying work within the national-allegorical mode, repeating some of its most pervasive codes to ultimately subvert them. It is precisely for this reason that the term “performative” so aptly describes them. As Judith Butler first theorized in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990), “the action of gender requires a performance that is *repeated*. This repetition is at once a reenactment and re-experiencing of a set of meanings already socially established; and it is the mundane and ritualized form of their legitimation” (Butler, *Gender Trouble* 191). This idea originates in Jacques Derrida’s notion of iterability. In an essay written in response to J.L. Austin in 1971, Derrida contends that performatives must repeat recognizable discursive codes if they are to successfully create meaning. He asks, “Could a performative utterance succeed if its formulation did not repeat a ‘coded’ or iterable utterance (...) if it were not identifiable in some way as a ‘citation’?” (Derrida, *Limited Inc* 18). Understood in this way, the performative rhetorical devices that operate in *El Periquillo*, *Una holandesa*, and *La hija* succeed in representing alternative models of political relation because they cite a familiar method of linking literature and politics: the national-allegorical mode.<sup>13</sup>

In the above passage from *Gender Trouble*, Butler hints that performative repetition involves a transformation—a “reexperiencing of a set of meanings already established” (191). To exemplify how performatives can be subversive, Butler cites the

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<sup>12</sup> Many of the concepts that Bakhtin defines in *The Dialogic Imagination* resonate with the key terms of this project. Pretending, juxtaposing, and parodying can also be understood as “dialogic” devices that register the “polyphony” of the social, political, and cultural context in which they operate. Bakhtin defines the opposing forces of polyphony as centripetal (centralizing, unifying) and centrifugal (decentralizing, disunifying).

<sup>13</sup> This explanation was inspired by Forcinito, whose article analyzes the performance of gender in works by Mansilla, Manso y Gorriti.



case of “butch” and “femme” identities: “the replication of heterosexual constructs in non-heterosexual frames brings into relief the utterly constructed status of the so-called heterosexual original. Thus, gay is to straight not as copy is to original, but, rather, as copy is to copy” (Butler, *Gender Trouble* 43). That is, the repetition of hegemonic constructs has the effect of destabilizing the very signifiers—“gender” and “sex”—that the dominant, heteronormative codes assume to be fixed. The performative nature of *El Periquillo*, *Una holandesa*, and *La hija* can be framed in a similar way: these performative texts repeat the codes of the national allegory in order to undermine their authority. By invoking allegorical constructs in a less allegorical frame, these performative texts destabilize the signifier—“nation”—typically presented as stable. Lizardi, Acosta de Samper and Gómez de Avellaneda cite the discursive patterns of the national-allegorical mode in order to open it to other possibilities of political signification.

The key is that performatives necessarily cite the power structures they oppose:

Performativity describes this relation of being implicated in that which one opposes, this turning of power against itself to produce alternative modalities of power, to establish a kind of political contestation that is not a ‘pure’ opposition, a ‘transcendence’ of contemporary relations of power, but a difficult labor of forming a future from resources inevitably impure. (Butler, *Bodies That Matter* 241)

Theorized in this way, pretending, juxtaposing and parodying operate within the allegorical structure they oppose. Without transcending the desire for political and cultural autonomy, they turn allegory’s power to fix a sense of nationhood against itself and produce alternative modalities of political power: cosmopolitanism, transnationalism and (post)coloniality. In sum, Butler’s specific use of the term “performative”

encapsulates how *El periquillo sarniento*, *Una holandesa en América*, and *La hija de las flores* self-reflexively deviate from the national-allegorical mode without exiting it entirely. Butler's performative is especially relevant for this study because it accounts for the imbrication of opposing modalities of power—in this case, the national and the counter-national.

In the chapters that follow, I restrict the usage of the qualifier “performative” to the three concepts outlined here: rhetorical devices, texts, and a method of reading. To review, I collectively define pretending, juxtaposing and parodying as performative rhetorical devices because they self-reflexively frame their process of intersecting national and counter-national perspectives; Schechner's emphasis on the self-referential nature of performance informs this usage. Next, these rhetorical devices predominate in what we can call performative texts. In this instance, “performative” carries the idea of repetition and citation, which we understand via Derrida and Butler to involve the subversive re-presentation of dominant discursive codes. Understood as performative texts, *El periquillo sarniento*, *Una holandesa en América* and *La hija de las flores* counteract the discursive authority of the national allegory by translating it to a performative context, thereby exposing its limitations as a generator of political reform.

While Schechner, Butler, and Derrida aid in the conceptualization of performative devices and texts, it is Lizardi who defines what it means to read performatively. The next chapter thus opens by analyzing how *El periquillo sarniento* teaches its readership to slow down the reading process, consider aesthetic process before declaring political product, and relinquish the desire to reach some ultimate, national signified. Chapter One,

“Pretending: performing cosmopolitanism in *El periquillo sarniento*,” proceeds to demonstrate how the fourth volume of Lizardi’s famous picaresque text (1816) repositions the nation-state as a steppingstone to a cosmopolitan community of deterritorialized world citizens. During this cosmopolitan detour, Periquillo seeks to relate to his birthplace in a way that would truncate the violent tendencies of nationalist expression. Chapter Two, “Juxtaposing: plural attachment and transnational romance in *Una holandesa en América*” turns to a less canonical novel by the Colombian author Soledad Acosta de Samper. *Una holandesa en América* (1876) tells the story of a Dutch woman who moves to Colombia and must learn to situate her identity in-between two national spaces. This “transnational romance,” as I term it, subverts the civilization/barbarity dichotomy that drives nation-building discourse and thereby advances a model of Colombian national identity that is open to heterogeneity and plurality. Chapter Three then examines a popular, yet understudied, genre of the nineteenth century: theater. Entitled “Parodying: the insanity of postcolonial *mestizaje* in *La hija de las flores*, o *Todos están locos*,” this chapter unearths the specifically Cuban concerns of a lyric comedy by Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda. Performed in both Madrid and Mexico City in the 1850s, *La hija de las flores* discredits the narrative of Cuban *mestizaje* that we see idealized in Avellaneda’s more famous novel, *Sab* (1841). The Conclusion situates the cosmopolitan, transnational, and colonial impulses of Spanish American *romanticismo* within a larger literary tradition. Although these counter-national perspectives seem to be in direct conflict with nation-building discourse in the early 19th century, the performative literary devices break down this

oppositonality. Consequently, by the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth, cosmopolitanism and transnationalism were central to projects of national and continental definition.

Since the cosmopolitan, transnational, and colonial undercurrents of nation-building discourse do not manifest themselves allegorically, as we are trained to expect, but performatively, it is no surprise that the counter-national voices of *El periquillo sarniento*, *Una holandesa en América*, and *La hija de las flores* have been censored, excluded from the canon, or simply overlooked. Since how we read is inextricably linked to what we read, another concern of each chapter is to investigate the political and aesthetic rules that govern canon formation. By comparing *Una holandesa en América* and *La hija de las flores* to their canonical counterparts—respectively, Jorge Isaacs’s *María* (1867) and Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda’s *Sab* (1841)—I will underline how the canon privileges allegorical literary form and its decidedly national content. Because performative literary form imports doubt, contradiction, and ambiguity into the nation-building project, it developed—and still maintains—a marginal position within nineteenth-century literary production.

If this introduction must polarize allegorical and performative literary form in order to distinguish their differing aesthetic and political operations, the following chapters nuance what could appear here to be a strict dichotomy. As will become increasingly evident, the labels “allegorical” and “performative” delineate a spectrum of nineteenth-century Spanish American literature. At one end, we have foundational fictions such as *María* and *Sab*, in which the allegorical impulse to discursively construct

the nation overrides most qualms about the nation-building project. Nearing the other end of the spectrum, we have performative texts such as *El Periquillo*, *Una holandesa*, and *La hija de las flores*, which identify the shortcomings of the nation-state as a vehicle for political and cultural self-definition; their performative rhetorical strategies revise certain principles of national belonging and test alternative models of political solidarity. By reading across this aesthetic and political spectrum, this study revises the tendency to flatten the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Spanish American literature to allegorical narratives of nationhood. Complementing national-allegorical interpretation with other modes of reading enables us to study the complex ways that nationalism, transnationalism, cosmopolitanism, and (post)coloniality intersect in the Independence and Post-Independence Periods.

## CHAPTER 1: Pretending: performing cosmopolitanism in *El periquillo sarniento*

Widely considered to be the first novel of Spanish America,<sup>14</sup> José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi's *El periquillo sarniento* (1816) retrospectively recounts the adventures of Periquillo, an orphaned rogue who makes a living by pretending to be someone he is not. From his deathbed, the older and wiser "Pedro" Sarmiento recalls the mistakes of his youth in hopes of dissuading his sons from repeating his amoral ways. In the fourth volume of this serialized novel, Pedro relays the cosmopolitan lessons he learned in Asia. Cosmopolitanism—as it is mobilized in these exchanges abroad—raises a series of ethical questions: How should the Self relate to the Other? How should we behave as a National People? Unlike later formulations of the term, cosmopolitanism in *El periquillo sarniento* constitutes a moral disposition, not an aesthetic practice that aims to internationalize local culture;<sup>15</sup> it is presented as a morally superior alternative to the prejudicial and violent practices of nationalism.

Periquillo fails to implement this cosmopolitan morality upon return to New Spain. When relaying this experience to his sons, the picaresque describes his demise as a professional pretender as a parallel and related occurrence to his inability to practice cosmopolitan values. This didactic exchange underscores the complex relationship between Enlightenment cosmopolitanism and Romantic nationalism in the Independence Period. Pedro debunks the republican idealization of *amor patrio* and denounces the violence brought about by nationalist sentiments. Instead of positioning the nation-state

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<sup>14</sup> See Benítez-Rojo, "José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi" and Steinberg.

<sup>15</sup> See Siskind, *Cosmopolitan Desires* and Fojas.

as the endpoint of political reform, as Lizardi's pro-Independence pamphlets do, the fourth volume of *El periquillo sarniento* situates the nation-state as a mere steppingstone to a cosmopolitan community of deterritorialized world citizens. Even though the novel's cosmopolitan undercurrent advocates the dissolution of national boundaries—so as to circumvent the violence inherent to nation building—it simultaneously values regional differences and legitimizes the nation-state as a defender of individual rights. By tracing these nuances, this chapter complicates the nation-building framework through which Lizardi's novel is traditionally read.

In contrast to the rest of *El periquillo sarniento*, which documents the wide variety of social types in pre-Independence Mexico, the first chapters of Volume IV take place in the Philippines and a Chinese island.<sup>16</sup> Periquillo is exiled after posing as a state notary and being arrested for treason. He serves his sentence under a Spanish colonel stationed in Manila (Philippines) and then shipwrecks off the coast of China. Despite this spatial dislocation from New Spain, scholars tend to nationalize Periquillo's experience in the Orient. For instance, scholars argue that the Chinese island of Sauchefu represents a utopic future in which New Spain gains its independence, eliminates the unproductive aristocratic class, abolishes slavery, perfects the education system, and strengthens its infrastructure.<sup>17</sup> This utopic reading of the fourth volume bolsters a national-allegorical interpretation of *El periquillo sarniento*, in which Periquillo's meanderings throughout Mexico are believed to unify a heterogeneous national population. This reading proposes

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<sup>16</sup> Hagimoto classifies *El periquillo sarniento* as “the first transpacific narrative in Latin American literature” (389).

<sup>17</sup> See Benítez-Rojo, “José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi” 4; Franco 489; Vogeley, “The Concept of ‘the People’” 463; El-Kadi 37; Núñez Negrón 86; and Moraña 23–24.

that *El Periquillo* instills shared civic virtues in a diverse population, thereby encouraging its readers to defend the political and cultural autonomy of their homeland. Although this approach effectively highlights the nation-building impulse of *El periquillo sarniento*, it overlooks the ways in which the cosmopolitanism of the fourth volume differs from the political commitments of Lizardi's pro-Independence pamphlets.

Many scholars have identified the impact of the European (especially French) Enlightenment on Lizardi's philosophy of education,<sup>18</sup> but it is not only the didactic, dialogic form of *El periquillo sarniento* that draws upon Enlightenment ideals. This chapter demonstrates how Lizardi translates the cosmopolitan musings of Diderot, Kant, and Herder to the Mexican context. *El periquillo sarniento* criticizes the violent nature of national loyalties and advocates cosmopolitanism as a peaceful alternative. Consequently, Lizardi's novel questions the moral foundation of the Independence movement in Mexico, which was predicated on the passionate defense of one's *patria madre*. This observation revises the commonly accepted justification for the fourth volume's censorship; instead of attributing the volume's censorship to its isolated critiques of slavery and colonial society, this chapter posits that its cosmopolitan restructuring of national attachment was far more threatening to the dominant political order.

Periquillo's experiences abroad also amend our understanding of the emergence of cosmopolitanism in the Americas. *El periquillo sarniento* suggests that Enlightenment cosmopolitanism was an important interlocutor in nation-building discourse. Even though

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<sup>18</sup> See Alegría 18; Ette 110; Franco 480; Janik 40; Rea Spell; Salomon, "La Crítica" 169; and Vogeley, "The Concept of 'the People'" 460.



scholars recognize the cosmopolitan nature of Simón Bolívar's vision for Pan-American unity in 1815, the cosmopolitan content of the contemporaneous—albeit more literary—*El periquillo sarniento* remains overlooked. Lizardi's text demonstrates that cosmopolitanism shaped Latin American literature far before the onset of *modernismo*.<sup>19</sup> Instead of reading *El periquillo sarniento* as a foundational text with strictly nation-building aspirations, this chapter analyzes how it turns to cosmopolitanism in order to mediate the contentious relationship between national particularity and continental universality. In this way, Lizardi inaugurates a debate that continues to shape literary and cultural production in Spanish America throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.

In contrast to the standard, national-allegorical reading of Periquillo's oriental excursion, this chapter examines the novel's largely overlooked cosmopolitan detour in the fourth volume. It begins by defining the performative rhetorical device—pretending—that enables *El periquillo sarniento* to slip cosmopolitan perspectives within a largely national(ist) novel. The didactic prologues, which instruct the reader how to interpret a text that pretends to be something it is not, set up the fourth volume, in which Periquillo's life as a professional pretender overlaps with his experimentation with Enlightenment cosmopolitanism. By characterizing pretending on the formal and thematic levels, this first section introduces the correlation between performative form and counter-national content that structures “performative” readings of *El periquillo sarniento*, *Una holandesa en América*, and *La hija de las flores* alike.

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<sup>19</sup> See Fojas vii, 4, 25 and Mota 492 on the convergence of nationalism and cosmopolitanism during Spanish American *modernismo*.

This chapter then proceeds by characterizing the relationship between nationalism and cosmopolitanism in Chapters IV.4<sup>20</sup> and IV.5. In the first of these chapters, Periquillo debates the morality of slavery with a black merchant. The merchant justifies his abolitionist stance with two cosmopolitan principles: the universality of human rights and the incommensurability of different cultural practices. Chapter IV.4 thus maps the moral coordinates of cosmopolitanism and lays the groundwork for subsequent formulations. In the following installment, IV.5, the Spanish colonel preaches another aspect of cosmopolitan doctrine—world citizenship—so that Periquillo feels “at home” anywhere in the world.

The perspective offered by these interlocutors contests ideals set forth in the Mexican Independence movement: although the merchant and the colonel concede the utility of the nation-state, they do not idealize it as the ultimate container of collective identity. They advocate for the temporary preservation of national boundaries—since national affiliation affords the civic education prerequisite to world citizenship—but then promote the eventual dissolution of national demarcations. In this sense, Chapters IV.4 and IV.5 explore how national affiliation can give way to cosmopolitan world citizenship. Ideally, citizens revise their relationship with their birthplace to mirror that of a child and his stepmother. By redefining *patria madre* as *patria madrastra*, the fourth volume explores the possibility of transcending singular national roots. In this model of national detachment, the “step-motherland” provides the cosmopolite with temporary social services and maternal protection, but there is no patriotic, lasting attachment between the

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<sup>20</sup> Volume IV, Chapter 4

individual and this potentially cruel institution. The first part of this chapter demonstrates how Periquillo embarks upon this process of redefining Mexico as his *patria madrastra* and becoming cosmopolitan.

If cosmopolitan thought in Spanish America did not consolidate until the late nineteenth-century (in the works of authors such as José Martí and Rubén Darío), perhaps it is no surprise that the cosmopolitan experiment in *El periquillo sarniento* ultimately fails. The second part of this chapter turns to Chapters IV.6 through IV.9 in order to document this demise. This section reiterates the relationship between performative form and counter-national content by correlating Periquillo's failure as a pretender with his incapacity to practice cosmopolitan values. This chapter concludes by situating *El periquillo sarniento* within larger debates about cosmopolitanism, nationalism, and *mexicanidad* in the twentieth century. Overall, this study of *El periquillo sarniento* investigates its complex aesthetic processes before commenting its various political functions. This sets it apart from other approaches, which either embark on an aesthetic appreciation of the novel or comment its socio-historical significance (Ochoa 204). A performative reading of *El periquillo sarniento* allows us to do both.<sup>21</sup>

### ***El periquillo sarniento*: pretending and reading performatively**

*El periquillo sarniento* presents itself as a text that pretends to be something it is not. While numerous studies have demonstrated that *El periquillo sarniento* disguises its

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<sup>21</sup> One notable exception is Manolo Núñez Negrón's study of *El periquillo sarniento*, in which he analyzes how satire is a rhetorical vehicle for imagining future national stability.

serious social critique as a slap-stick picaresque novel,<sup>22</sup> they overlook one of the text's most enigmatic aspects: the fact that it only pretends to be a novel. *El periquillo sarniento* intentionally performs generic conventions of its day, such as a dedication page and a prologue, but then insists that its audience cannot read the text as they would other contemporary novels. *El periquillo sarniento* therefore teaches its readership how to read performatively—a skill that is essential for unlocking the cosmopolitan pedagogy of the fourth volume.

The prologues begin this work by explicitly performing the generic conventions that define the novel. The first installment of *El periquillo sarniento*, “Prólogo, dedicatoria y advertencia a los lectores,” appears to be written by the author, José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi, under the pseudonym “El Pensador.” In it, El Pensador (Lizardi the character) and his friend contemplate whether to include a dedication to *El periquillo sarniento*. El Pensador recognizes the financial advantage of repeating tried-and-true narrative codes: “Esta continuación, o esta costumbre continuada, me hizo creer que algo bueno tenía en sí, pues todos los autores procuraban elegir mecenas o patronos a quienes dedicarles sus tareas, creyendo que el hacerlo así, no podía menos que granjearles algún provecho” (Fernández de Lizardi 89). El Pensador concludes that “[su] obra no puede quedarse sin dedicatoria” (90) if it is to consciously repeat the generic codes that promise financial gain and literary authority.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> See Benítez-Rojo, Moraña, Vogeley and González.

<sup>23</sup> Even young Periquillo is aware of the performativity of writerly authority. In Book II, Periquillo writes as if he were a notary by reproducing already existing standards: “En el corto término que os he dicho, supe otorgar un poder, extender una escritura, cancelarla, acriminar a un reo o defenderlo, formar una sumaria, concluir un proceso y hacer todo cuanto puede hacer un escribano; pero todo así, y como lo hacen los más, es decir, por rutina, por formularios y por

Like the author of the first prologue, the author of the second prologue—Pedro Sarmiento himself—is critically aware of how novelists establish their authority: they write prologues that guide the interpretation of their work. Pedro explains that “me veo precisado (para que no anden royendo mis podridos huesos, ni levantándome falsos testimonios) a hacer yo mismo, y sin fiarme de nadie, una especie de *prólogo*” (Fernández de Lizardi 96). Pedro senses what prologues to novels are supposed to do: instruct readers how to interpret a piece of writing so that its author will not be misunderstood. Curiously, *El periquillo sarniento* performs these novelistic codes to teach its audience that they should not read it as they would a novel. As Pedro Sarmiento explicitly demands in Chapter III.3, “lo que apeteciera, hijos míos, sería que no leyerais mi vida como quien lee una novela” (Fernández de Lizardi 522). *El periquillo sarniento* pretends to be a novel, but it cannot be interpreted within the same “as if” mode.

Since prevailing reading practices are not appropriate for Lizardi’s performative text, *El periquillo sarniento* seeks to reform them. In Chapter I.2, the young Periquillo complains that his schoolteacher and classmates do not know how to read:

no todos los que leen saben leer. Hay muchos modos de leer, según los estilos de las escrituras. No se han de leer las oraciones de Cicerón como los *Anales* de Tácito, ni el penegírico de Plinio como las comedias de Moreto. Quiero decir que el que lee debe saber distinguir los estilos en que se escribe, para animar con su tono la lectura, y entonces manifestará que entiende lo que lee y que sabe leer.  
(Fernández de Lizardi 118)

In this passage, Periquillo argues that each writing style demands and creates a different reading practice. He suggests that literary form costumes written language, and tone

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costumbre o imitación; mas casi nada porque yo entendiera perfectamente lo que hacía” (Fernández de Lizardi 483).

costumes spoken language; when read out loud, the performer's tone should accurately capture the writing style in order to preserve how the novel signifies (Flores 58). This passage suggests that the costume of language is not an aesthetic ornament, but a semantic indication of how and what meaning is produced. Periquillo suggests that the adept reader is one who is aware of *how* writing's costume—its generic form—communicates meaning. Less worried about how to market his novel to an illiterate audience, Periquillo tasks himself with changing how his literate audience will read. By calling for the reader to critically reflect on how the text displays its act of signification, *El periquillo sarniento* asks its audience to read performatively.<sup>24</sup>

Even if readers cannot attend a live reading of the novel, Periquillo asks them to interpret his novel *as if* it were a performance. He advises: “Una historia como quien refiere, una comedia como quien representa, etc., de suerte que si cerráis los ojos os parece que estáis oyendo a un orador en el púlpito, a un individuo en un estrado, a un cómico en un teatro, etc., decid: éste sí lee bien” (Fernández de Lizardi 118). Periquillo wants his readers to really hear how the text incorporates a plurality of perspectives.

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<sup>24</sup> The relationship between costume and performance is reiterated throughout *El periquillo sarniento*. In Chapter I.11, Periquillo realizes that costuming is only a performance; “Tomé el hábito, pero no me desnudé de mis malas cualidades; yo me vi vestido de religioso y mezclado con ellos, pero no sentí en mi interior la más mínima mutación: me quedé tan malo como siempre, y entonces experimenté por mí mismo que el hábito no hace al monje” (Fernández de Lizardi 256). Again, in Chapter I.13, Periquillo learns that dressing the part of the mourner does not mean that the individual is actually mourning; “El luto no es más que una costumbre de vestirse de negro para manifestar nuestro sentimiento en la muerte de los deudos o amigos; pero este color, a merced de la dicha costumbre, es sólo señal, mas no prueba del sentimiento” (Fernández de Lizardi 285). Comments such as these remind the reader to consider the costuming of *El periquillo sarniento*—that is, to read the text as an act of pretending.

Pretending allows *El periquillo sarniento* to embody a number of genres, and reading performatively will delight in this polyphony;

No creáis que la lectura de mi vida os será demasiado fastidiosa, pues como yo sé bien que la variedad deleita el entendimiento, procuraré evitar aquella monotonía o igualdad de estilo que regularmente enfada a los lectores. Así es que unas veces me advertiréis tan serio y sentencioso como un Catón, y otras tan trivial y bufón como un Bertoldo. Ya leeréis en mis discursos retazos de erudición y rasgos de elocuencia, y ya veréis seguido un estilo popular mezclado con los refranes y paparruchadas del vulgo.  
(Fernández de Lizardi 104)

The rhetorical strategy of pretending allows both *El periquillo sarniento* and *Periquillo* the character to explore a variety of different voices, from serious to comical, erudite to vulgar. Reading *El periquillo sarniento* aloud—or imagining this performance—will emphasize how different voices and styles inhabit a plurality of equally valid worldviews.<sup>25</sup> By teaching this performative reading practice, the opening chapters to *El periquillo sarniento* prepare its audience to notice the political polyphony of the fourth volume, in which national and counter-national perspectives converge.

Even before these key passages, Lizardi hints that this lesson about reading performatively is central to the novel. In Chapter I.1, Pedro instructs: “Dirigid entonces vuestros votos por mí al trono de las misericordias; escarmentad en mis locuras; no os dejéis seducir por las falsedades de los hombres; aprended las máximas que os enseño;

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<sup>25</sup> In contrast to Bakhtin’s dismissal of theater as a monologic genre, Barthes argues that theater is inherently polyphonic. Through the set, the costumes, the lighting, the placing of the actors, their gestures, and their speech, theater involves a plurality of signifiers all at once; “what we have, then, is a real informational polyphony, which is what theatricality is: *a density of signs* (in relation to literary monady and leaving aside the question of cinema)” (Barthes, “Literature and Signification” 262).

acordándoos que las aprendí a costa de muy dolorosas experiencias...” (Fernández de Lizardi 105). The father announces his didactic aim: to teach his sons to interpret the performance of distrustful individuals—such as their father—and of deceptive literature—such as *El periquillo sarniento*. This didactic agenda undergirds the fourth volume, which couples a story about pretending to be a Mexican count with a lesson about interpreting Periquillo’s time abroad.

In this sense, *El periquillo sarniento* does not pretend to be *any* novel, but a specifically *didactic* novel. The title—*Vida de Periquillo Sarniento, escrita por él para sus hijos, y publicada para los que la quieran leer, por D. J. F de L. autor del periódico titulado*—positions the text as a didactic dialogue between a father and his sons.<sup>26</sup> As Pedro describes in the prologue, he feels an “obligation to teach” his sons through conversation: “cuando escribo mi vida, es sólo con la sana intención de que mis hijos se instruyan en las materias sobre que les hablo” (Fernández de Lizardi 95, 97). In this way, Lizardi responds to the preference for practical, utilitarian writing in the early nineteenth century (Franco 487). The fact that the story of his life may also be entertaining to “los que la quieran leer” points to Lizardi’s didactic strategy: to combine moral instruction with “diversion” (522). Later, El Pensador openly discloses that didacticism motivates the entertaining quality of Pedro’s biography:

Cuando estos individuos lo leen lo menos en que piensan es sacar fruto de su lectura. Lo abren por curiosidad y lo leen con gusto, creyendo que sólo van a divertirse con los dichos y cuentecillos, y que éste fue el único objeto que se

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<sup>26</sup> See Vogeley, “Defining the ‘Colonial Reader’” 792 for a discussion of how the novel’s original title establishes Lizardi’s authority and defines his audience.



propuso su autor al escribirlo; pero cuando menos piensan ya han bebido una porción de máximas morales que jamás hubieran leído escritas en un estilo serio y sentencioso. Estos libros son como las píldoras, que se doran por encima para que se haga más pasadera la triaca saludable que contienen. (Fernández de Lizardi 939)

This is a timeless convention of didactic literature: the entertaining delivery of *El periquillo sarniento* disguises some of its most serious lessons.<sup>27</sup>

Just as *El periquillo sarniento* repeats the generic conventions of the novel to then reject its corresponding interpretative paradigm, *El periquillo sarniento* subverts the expectations surrounding didactic literature. For example, Pedro does not uphold the grounding of this didactic conversation in real life experience; it would be so reasonable for readers to believe that “todo es ficción de [su] fantasía” that Pedro promises to forgive “el que duden de mi verdad” (96). This is one of many instances in which the author figures in *El periquillo sarniento* actively undermine their credibility as teachers. Instead of presenting himself as an authoritative beacon of knowledge—as is typical in didactic literature—Pedro insists to his sons that “estoy muy lejos de pretender ostentarme sabio” (Fernández de Lizardi 167). Furthermore, Pedro writes his autobiography (*Vida de Periquillo Sarniento, escrita por él para sus hijos...*) as an open and evolving process of exploring truth, not a concrete pedagogical lesson: “También os prometo que todo esto será sin afectación ni pedantismo, sino según me ocurra a la memoria, de donde pasará luego al papel, cuyo método me parece el más análogo con nuestra natural veleidad”

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<sup>27</sup> Vogeley argues that Lizardi transitioned from writing journalism to writing novels in order to disguise his critique of religion, the law, and the state (“The Concept of ‘the People’” 789). According to González Pérez, Lizardi does not abandon journalism in *El periquillo sarniento*, but combines the generic codes of narrative fiction and journalism to avoid censorship.

(Fernández de Lizardi 104). This emphasis on process over product is characteristic of performative literature and distinguishes *El periquillo sarniento* from the didactic dialogues it emulates. *El periquillo sarniento* pretends to be a didactic dialogue but ends up replacing overbearing, premeditated pedanticism with the “calor de mi fantasía”—the imaginative exploration of unstable, plural signification (Fernández de Lizardi 921).<sup>28</sup>

In sum, pretending constitutes the dominant rhetorical strategy in *El periquillo sarniento*. Lizardi’s text pretends to be a didactic novel; it repeats and then subverts the generic codes that characterize the picaresque novel and Enlightenment-era didacticism. This performance makes sense historically; at a time when the Spanish American novel did not have an established, canonical form, Lizardi’s novel relied on the European codes it knew: the entertaining picaresque novel and the instructive dialogue of the Enlightenment (Franco 484; González Pérez 39). This is not to imply that *El periquillo sarniento*’s act of pretending is unintentional. On the contrary, *El periquillo sarniento* operates within a specifically novelistic and didactic discursive structure with a clear aim: to explore the limits of cosmopolitanism in an era of intense nationalism.

The literary form of *El periquillo sarniento*—pretending to be something it is not—is uniquely suited to express its cosmopolitan impulses. The ideal cosmopolite is akin to an adept performer in many ways. Like an actor, the cosmopolite can see the world from another’s shoes and non-judgmentally re-present the Other’s perspective. In

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<sup>28</sup> This contrasts traditional readings of *El periquillo sarniento*, in which Pedro Sarmiento is believed to maintain a position of paternal authority; see Franco 488 and El-Kadi 32. For another analysis of how *El periquillo sarniento* erodes the foundations of the narrator’s reliability, see González Pérez 32.

this sense, the development of a cosmopolitan perspective can be related to a specific type of performance: pretending—a form of make-believe play that allows the individual to inhabit a variety of identities in rapid succession (Schechner 92). For example, while “playing house,” children can pretend to be the mother, the father, the baby, the nanny, and the dog, seamlessly transitioning from one perspective to another. Pretending expands the perspective of the pretender and asks him to reflect on the Self through the eyes of the Other. Inevitably, this type of make-believe play encourages critical self-reflection, cultivates empathy, and blurs the differences that divide us—much like traveling requires the cosmopolite to do. Understood from this perspective, pretending mirrors the process of becoming cosmopolitan; both cultivate an empathetic, objective perspective that softens the undeniable differences between individuals and the nation-states with which they identify.<sup>29</sup> Throughout *El periquillo sarniento*, but especially in the fourth volume, pretending and becoming-cosmopolitan are parallel processes of consciousness doubling and perspective building.

The chapter thus argues that one of the novel’s most commented themes—pretending—unexpectedly signals its most understudied feature—cosmopolitanism. To review, *El periquillo sarniento* invokes pretending in two ways: thematically and formally. Understood as a form of make-believe play, the process of pretending parallels the development of a cosmopolitan perspective. As a literary form, pretending can be theorized in relation to mimesis. In *Aesthetics of Mimesis* (2009), Stephen Halliwell defines two poles of mimesis, one representational, one performative. On one hand,

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<sup>29</sup> On the perspective-building benefit of make-believe play, see Walton 12.

*mimesis* refers to the process of (unconsciously) representing the world; like a mirror, *mimesis* reflects and often illuminates a reality that is believed to exist outside and independently of art (Halliwell 5, 23). On the other hand, *mimesis* also refers to the process of self-consciously creating another world. This is the idea that “*mimesis* is the production of a ‘heterocosm’ (...), an imaginary world-in-itself, which may resemble or remind us of the real world in certain respects (...) but is not to be judged primarily or directly by comparison with it” (Halliwell 23). This definition understands *mimesis* as performance, since it self-referentially frames its action—producing the imaginary world it represents.<sup>30</sup>

*El periquillo sarniento* vacillates between these representational and performative poles. Although the text re-presents the nationalist sentiments of the independence era, it also represents—creates—an alternative model of cosmopolitan relation. The rhetorical device of pretending thus inhabits the performative pole of *mimesis*. Pretending draws attention to the cosmopolitan “heterocosm” constructed within the text itself. The Enlightenment cosmopolitanism of the fourth volume may or may not correspond with the “real world” of Lizardi’s readers, but that is not the point. By presenting itself as a performative text, *El periquillo sarniento* asks to be read *not* as a realistic reflection of Mexican society, but on its own, self-contained terms. *El periquillo sarniento* characterizes its act of pretending as performative (not representational) so that it will not

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<sup>30</sup> See Baudrillard 171 for a similar distinction between representational *mimesis* (*copying*) and performative *mimesis* (in her terms, *feigning* or *simulating*); representational *mimesis* reproduces a locatable original, whereas performative *mimesis* invents the original it simulates.

be held to the expectation of solely allegorizing the nation and can explore an alternative, cosmopolitan reality.

While other critics similarly characterize *El periquillo sarniento* as a “primer of how to read” (Vogele, “Defining the ‘Colonial Reader’” 795), my discussion of performative self-referentiality is unique in its scope. My analysis is not isolated to the chapters that contain meta-level commentary about the reading and writing process; it extends to surrounding chapters that—on first glance—appear to have little to do with *El periquillo sarniento*’s performative self-presentation. I argue that there is a fundamental relationship between performative literary form and counter-national content: *El periquillo sarniento* pretends to be a didactic novel in order to set up the fourth volume’s foray into Enlightenment cosmopolitanism. Because this counter-national perspective is easily buried by the patriotic rhetoric of the independence movement, the opening chapters of *El periquillo sarniento* self-reflexively draw readers’ attention to the performative rhetorical device—pretending—that carries the text’s cosmopolitan charge. That way, by the time they reach the fourth volume, readers are prepared to notice how Periquillo’s pretending to be a Mexican count functions not only as a lesson about trickery, but also as a trial run in becoming cosmopolitan.

We now turn to this widely misinterpreted fourth volume. In Chapters IV.4 and IV.5, Periquillo learns the fundamentals of Enlightenment-era cosmopolitanism while abroad. Chapters IV.6-IV.9 document Periquillo’s return to New Spain—where his inability to put cosmopolitan philosophy into practice is directly related to his failure as a professional pretender.

***El negro's cosmopolitanism: cultural relativism and the anti-slavery campaign***

The first to be censored in 1816, Chapter IV.4, introduces two principles of Enlightenment cosmopolitanism: the idea that all human beings share the same universal rights and the belief that the diverse cultural practices of the world do not define a single standard of “civilization.” The chapter’s epigraph—“Refiere Periquillo su buena conducta en Manila; el duelo entre un inglés y un negro, y una discusioncilla no despreciable”—foreshadows this counter-national perspective by reminding the reader of the text’s performative nature (Fernández de Lizardi 722). It refers to the conversation between El Periquillo and the morally-upstanding black merchant as “una discusioncilla no despreciable.” This phrase, like *El periquillo sarniento* as a whole, is an act of pretending. The diminutive ending (-illa) pretends that this conversation is of relatively minor importance to the chapter, yet the epigraph modifies this noun with the suggestion that it is not trivial (*despreciable*) at all. Before the reader even encounters the interlocutors of this *discusioncilla*, he knows to read their conversation performatively: How does the conversation between Periquillo and the black merchant present itself, and does this correspond to its true nature? What lessons are performed, and are these lessons a costumed version of something thus far un-said or unsayable?

The *discusioncilla no despreciable* takes place in Manila (Philippines), the Spanish holding where Periquillo is stationed to serve the colonel. Periquillo approaches a rich, black merchant from Jamaica who, much to Periquillo’s surprise, had resolved a potentially violent confrontation and spared a vengeful Englishman’s life. Stunned, Periquillo and the other observers, who “jamás crey[eron] que los negros fueran capaces

de tener almas generosas,” ask the black merchant to explain his behavior (Fernández de Lizardi 726). *El negro* launches into a speech on why the black man should not be considered inferior to the white man. In order to defend his assertion that “el pensar que un negro es menos que un blanco generalmente es una preocupación opuesta a los principios de la razón, a la humanidad y a la virtud moral” (Fernández de Lizardi 726), the black merchant mobilizes various features of Enlightenment thought.

First, *el negro* exemplifies the Enlightenment practice of proceeding rationally rather than sentimentally through an argument. He appeals to *logos*, not *pathos*, when arguing for the abolition of slavery:

Yo no quiero citar a ustedes historias que han escrito vuestros compatriotas guiados de la verdad, porque supongo que las sabréis, y también por no estremecer vuestra sensibilidad; porque ¿quién oirá sin dolor que en cierta ocasión, porque lloraba en el navío el hijo de una negra infeliz, y con su inocente llanto quitaba el sueño al capitán, éste mandó que arrojaran al mar a aquella criatura desgraciada, como se verificó con escándalo de la naturaleza? (Fernández de Lizardi 727)

In this passage, *el negro* explicitly states that he does not want to take advantage of his audience’s emotional sensibility in order to prove his point. Instead of sentimentalizing the plight of the slave through heart-wrenching stories of suffering and exploitation, as Romantic novels such as Anselmo Suárez y Romero’s *Francisco* (1838) or Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda’s *Sab* (1841) will do, *El periquillo sarniento* grounds its anti-slavery argument in Enlightenment *logos*. The preference for Enlightenment *logos* over Romantic *pathos* makes sense given the novel’s publication in the early nineteenth

century, during the murky transition between neo-classicism and Romanticism in Spanish America.

Furthermore, the black merchant implicitly practices two tenets of Enlightenment reason: the universality of human rights and the incommensurability of different cultural practices. Denis Diderot, Immanuel Kant, and Johann Gottfried Herder all argued that “human beings deserve some sort of modicum of moral and political respect simply because of the fact that they are human” (Muthu 268). As is especially apparent in the rhetoric of the Haitian Revolution, Enlightenment cosmopolitanism held that “the rights of man” should not exclude or silence certain human beings (Fine 154). Therefore, in his speech, the black merchant criticizes Christianity for its inability to ensure the right of every man to have human rights. He asks his Periquillo and other audience members:

¿Cómo cumpliré bien los preceptos de aquella religión que me obliga a amar al prójimo como a mí mismo, y a no hacer a nadie el daño que repugno, comprando por un vil interés a un pobre negro, haciéndolo esclavo de servicio (...) y tratándolo, a veces, quizá poco menos que bestia? (...) Si ustedes saben cómo se concierta todo esto, os agradeceré me lo enseñéis, por si algún día se me antojase ser cristiano y comprar negros como si fueran caballos.  
(Fernández de Lizardi 729)

*El negro* deplores the hypocrisy of the Christian faith. Despite its teaching to “amar al prójimo como a [sí] mismo,” the ecclesiastical institution excludes black men from the category of “human.” Perplexed by this enigma, the black merchant speculates how Christians construct different levels of humanity. He concludes that “el maltratamiento, el rigor y desprecio con que se han visto y se ven los negros no reconoce otro origen que la



altanería de los blancos, y ésta consiste en creerlos inferiores por su naturaleza, lo que como dije, es una vieja e irracional preocupación” (729).

Further embracing the logic of Diderot, Kant, and Herder, the cosmopolitan merchant challenges his audience to abandon the vertically stratifying assumptions of cultural, racial, and intellectual inferiority/superiority (*la altanería*) and approach difference in more horizontal, relational terms:

Si el tener a los negros en menos es por sus costumbres, que llamáis bárbaras, por su educación bozal y por su ninguna civilización europea, deberíais advertir que a cada nación le parecen bárbaras e inciviles las costumbres ajenas. Un fino europeo será en el Senegal, en el Congo, Cabo Verde, etc., un bárbaro, pues ignorará aquellos ritos religiosos, aquellas leyes civiles, aquellas costumbres provinciales, y por fin aquellos idiomas. (728–729)

This passage, among others, subverts the civilization/barbarism binary used to justify imperialism and the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Furthermore, and perhaps more subversively, *el negro* recognizes that barbarism has roots within Western civilization itself when he suggests that the African-born slaves (*bozales*) would likely consider *criollo* society in the New World to be uncivilized. Still consistent with the cosmopolitan thinkers of the Enlightenment, the merchant does not defend Western civilization and instead exposes its own contradictions (Fine 157).

Without citing it explicitly, *el negro*’s speech insists on a point that Herder articulated in *Letters on the Advancement of Humanity*:

there is no such thing as a specifically favoured nation (*Favoritvolk*) on earth... there cannot, therefore, be any

order of rank... Least of all must we think of European culture as a universal standard of human values. To apply such a standard is not just misleading; it is meaningless... The culture of *man* is not the culture of the *European*; it manifests itself according to place and time in *every* people. (qtd. in Muthu 276)

Echoing the German thinker, the black merchant argues that “si cada religión tiene sus ritos, cada nación sus leyes y cada provincia sus costumbres, es un error crasísimo el calificar de necios y salvajes a cuantos no coinciden con nuestro modo de pensar” (Fernández de Lizardi 730). Understanding “nuestro modo de pensar” as it pertains to the European colonizer, *el negro* contends that the culture of man is not the culture of the European imperialist. In this sense, his cosmopolitan commitment to honor cultural incommensurability has significant political implications; the justification for slavery—that black people are somehow human beings of lesser rank—is meaningless. He concludes his speech with a strong abolitionist tone: “despreciar a los negros por su color y por la diferencia de su religión y costumbres es un error; el maltratarlos por ello, crueldad, y el persuadirse a que no son capaces de tener almas grandes que sepan cultivar las virtudes morales, es una preocupación demasiado crasa” (Fernández de Lizardi 730).<sup>31</sup> By employing the logic of Enlightenment cosmopolitanism, *el negro* convinces the majority of his audience of the absurdity of slavery.

Periquillo, however, fears the consequences of *el negro's* cosmopolitan philosophies. Although he agrees that slavery is an irrational ranking of men, Periquillo considers social hierarchies to be essential for national security, “porque si todos somos

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<sup>31</sup> The chapters that now constitute the fourth volume were censored in 1816. Although the constitution of 1812 abolished slavery, Cuban sugar planters prevented this law from becoming a reality. See Ruiz Barrionuevo 49.

hijos de un padre y componemos una misma familia, nos tratamos de un mismo modo, seguramente, perdidas las ideas de sumisión, inferioridad y obediencia, el universo sería un caos en el que todos quisieran ser superiores” (732). From Periquillo’s perspective, practicing cultural relativism would mean admitting the irrationality of slavery, the abolition of slavery would demolish social hierarchies, and the independence-seeking Mexican state would be left in a state of chaotic anarchy; “en este caso nadie se reconocería sujeto a ninguna religión, sometido a ningún gobierno, ni dependiente de ninguna ley, pues todos querrían ser legisladores y pontífices universales; y ya ve usted que en esta triste hipótesis todos serían asesinatos, robos, estrupros, sacrilegios y crímenes” (732). Convinced that cosmopolitanism disconnects individuals from the religious and political communities that structure local life, Periquillo rejects the black merchant’s proposal.

Periquillo’s concerns can be understood in two ways. First, the picaresque—alienated from his friends and family—understands the importance of belonging somewhere or to someone. As he remarks elsewhere, “viéndome solo, huérfano y pobre, sin casa, hogar ni domicilio como los maldecidos judíos, pues no reconocía feligresía ni vecindad alguna, traté de buscar, como dicen, madre que me envolviera” (335). Periquillo knows that belonging to some sort of collectivity—whether familial, social, or political—will protect him from a dangerous, chaotic world. Secondly, beyond these personal concerns, Periquillo represents a heterogeneous Mexican people (El-Kadi; Vogeley, “The Concept of ‘the People’”). This diverse collectivity—which aligns with the intended readership of *El periquillo sarniento*—includes the “ilustrísimos, reverendísimos, excelentísimos”

members of the nobility as well as the “plebeyos, indios, mulatos, negros, viciosos, tontos y majaderos” (94). Speaking for the elite as well as the disenfranchised, Periquillo fears that cosmopolitanism will eradicate the networks of national solidarity that protect individual citizens. He not only channels the insecurities of an independence-seeking citizenship no longer protected by Spain, but also voices the outrage of slaves in the New World. In a sense, slaves are exploited by cosmopolitan ideals: ripped from their country, they have no nation to guarantee them rights.<sup>32</sup>

The black merchant—who has profited financially from his world travels—refutes Periquillo’s claim that cosmopolitanism will eliminate the benefits of national attachment. *El negro* assures him that the cosmopolitan leveling of national, racial, and cultural hierarchies will not destroy the naturally occurring organization of society; the already-existing relationships between men and women and parents and children will continue to structure society, even after the abolition of slavery (733). Immediately following this rebuttal, *el negro* ends the conversation with Periquillo. By giving *el negro* the last word, Chapter IV.4 lends credibility to his cosmopolitan disposition. In this chapter, cosmopolitanism becomes a path through which New Spain can abolish the colonial institution of slavery and establish a new social order based on cultural relativism.<sup>33</sup> Although the term “cosmopolitan” (*cosmopolita*) is not explicitly used until

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<sup>32</sup> Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda emphasizes this in *Sab* (1841). As Sab explains, “Yo no tengo padre ni madre... soy solo en el mundo: nadie llorará mi muerte. No tengo tampoco una patria que defender, porque los esclavos no tienen patria; no tengo deberes que cumplir, porque los deberes del esclavo son los deberes de la bestia de carga, que anda mientras puede y se echa cuando ya no puede más” (Gómez de Avellaneda 219).

<sup>33</sup> For a discussion of how *el negro*’s abolitionist stance ignores the history of slavery in the Philippines, see Hagimoto 394–395.

the colonel employs it in the following chapter, it is clear that the black merchant's abolitionist logic channels the beliefs of Enlightenment cosmopolitanism: everyone is an inherently cultural being who is entitled to universal human rights, and all people adopt cultural and moral codes that cannot be deemed inferior or superior to any single standard.

Scholars typically agree that the fourth volume was censored in response to the abolitionist tone of Chapter IV.4 and the critical comparison of New Spain with the utopic island of Sauchefú in Chapter IV.6. While there is little doubt that the content of these two chapters threatened the persistent colonial order, it is unlikely that the specific content of Chapters IV.4 and IV.6 could have motivated the censorship of the *entire* fourth volume. These chapters are not isolated critiques of slavery and colonial social order, but rather part of an extended experiment with Enlightenment cosmopolitanism. The abolitionist argument of Chapter IV.4, while heartfelt in itself, is an act of pretending. The black merchant's criticism of slavery is vehicle for introducing—without explicitly signifying—the rhetoric of cosmopolitanism that underlines all of the fourth volume. Chapters IV.4 through IV.9 invoke cosmopolitan principles in order to undermine two key tenets of nation-building discourse: the *de facto* allegiance to one's birthplace and the patriotic call to take up arms and defend a singular motherland. Chapter IV.5, which is addressed in continuation, builds upon the merchant's teachings in order to launch this critique of nation-building discourse. Chapter IV.5 underlines the censorial nature of Enlightenment cosmopolitanism: it conceives of collective identity in a way that was at odds with Romantic nationalism, a discourse gaining strength after the French Revolution

and during the Independence Period in Spanish America.<sup>34</sup> By tracing the various permutations of cosmopolitanism throughout the fourth volume, this chapter attributes the censorship of *El periquillo sarniento* to its conjunction of two seemingly incompatible ideals—national identity and a tolerant, cosmopolitan disposition.

### **The colonel's cosmopolitanism: world citizenship and the anti-violence campaign**

In Chapter IV.5, Periquillo completes his eight-year sentence to serve the colonel. However, after earning his freedom, Periquillo announces his intention to stay in Manila, a place he now calls “home” (Fernández de Lizardi 737). While the colonel is flattered that Periquillo now considers him to be his “bienhechor,” “mejor amigo,” and “padre” (Fernández de Lizardi 737), he is confused by Periquillo’s disinterest in returning to New Spain. Given that “la preocupación de distinguir con cierto amor particular el lugar de nuestros nacimientos es muy antigua, muy radicada y muy santificada por el común de los hombres,” why does Periquillo call Manila, not Mexico, home (Fernández de Lizardi 738)? In the conversation that transpires, Chapter IV.5 carefully considers the implications of the Enlightenment commitment to forming world citizens by broaching questions such as: How does the individual identify with a particular culture or place? Is the desire for national autonomy incompatible with cosmopolitanism? Can patriotism and cosmopolitanism coexist?

The colonel begins by sharing his vision for one worldwide community of human beings; “Ya te he dicho y has leído que el hombre debe ser en el mundo un cosmopolita o

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<sup>34</sup> See Muthu 280, Scrivener 8, and Wohlgemut 2 for a contrast of 18<sup>th</sup>-century Enlightenment cosmopolitanism and 19<sup>th</sup>-century Romantic nationalisms.

paisano de todos sus semejantes, y que la patria del filósofo es el mundo” (Fernández de Lizardi 737). The colonel defines the cosmopolitan as a citizen whose native land is the world. This is consistent with Enlightenment cosmopolitanism, understood as:

an attitude of mind that attempted to transcend chauvinistic national loyalties or parochial prejudices in its intellectual interests and pursuits. In the ideal, the ‘cosmopolite,’ or ‘citizen of the world,’ sought to be identified by an interest in, a familiarity with, or appreciation of many parts and peoples of the world; he wished to be distinguished by a readiness to borrow from other lands or civilizations in the formation of his intellectual, cultural, and artistic patterns. (Schlereth xi)

Specifically, David Hume and Denis Diderot advocated this conceptualization of world citizenship, in which the cosmopolite is “un homme qui n’est étranger nulle part”—that is, a “stranger nowhere in the world” (Diderot). Throughout the fourth volume, *El periquillo sarniento*’s vision for the *filósofo del mundo* exemplifies the various tenets of this ideal, namely the transcendence of nationalist prejudices and a formative openness to other cultural practices.

The Enlightenment did not, however, place the cosmopolitan ideal of world citizenship in strict opposition with the reality of emerging national affiliations.<sup>35</sup> In fact, the model of citizenship—a model of being at “home”—that the colonel and Periquillo construct is specific to the Enlightenment because it allows for both local and worldly attachments. For example, before proclaiming that “el hombre debe ser en el mundo un

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<sup>35</sup> This is subject to debate. For an explanation of how Enlightenment-era cosmopolitanism and Romantic nationalism overlap in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, see Wohlgemut 4 and Schlereth 103, 106; Fojas and Mota locate this convergence later in the century, with the onset of *modernismo*. For the argument that cosmopolitanism and nationalism are not contemporaneous discourses, but that the former precedes the latter in the history of ideas, see Cheah and Robbins 22.

cosmopolita o paisano de todos sus semejantes,” the colonel recognizes that affectionate identification with a specific *patria* can cultivate the civic and moral virtues prerequisite to the formation of a larger community; “considero que el amor de la patria, aunque es una preocupación, es una preocupación de aquellas que a más de ser inocentes en sí, pueden ser principio de algunas virtudes cívicas y morales” (Fernández de Lizardi 737).

The colonel recognizes the utility of the nation-state while simultaneously advocating a model of world citizenship. His view coincides with that of other Enlightenment thinkers.

As Schlereth explains:

for all their talk of the necessity of the civilization of the ‘world-city,’ few Enlightenment cosmopolites denied the existence of separate nations or encouraged the extinction of nationalities; rather, they conceived the nation-state to be a necessary, intermediate, although artificial agent of union between the individual and humanity; they viewed—perhaps with unusual optimism—the nation-state as a possible instrument in implementing the ‘Rights of Man’ and the universal political norms of an eventual world civilization. (Schlereth 106)

Along these same lines, the colonel considers the nation-state to be a necessary tool for advancing the cosmopolitan understanding of *patria* as *mundo*. This conversation evolves Periquillo’s understanding of cosmopolitanism. While Periquillo previously feared that a cosmopolitan moral compass would destroy national order, the colonel teaches him that national and cosmopolitan dispositions are not incompatible.

This exchange was censored in 1816—years after the French Revolution replaced the critical rationality of the Enlightenment with the patriotic sentimentality of Romanticism (Wohlgemut 2; Scrivener 8). The fourth volume seamlessly couples



nationalism and cosmopolitanism during a period when these ideologies were considered to be mutually exclusive. In this period of national definition and consolidation, *El periquillo sarniento* implies that only a limited part of its readership will be able to practice cosmopolitanism. When the colonel idealizes the philosopher's ability to objectively detach himself from a single nation-state and participate in a community of world citizens, he recognizes that this transcendent perspective is easier for some to achieve than others: "pero como no todos los hombres son filósofos, es preciso coincidir, o a lo menos disimular sus envejecidas ideas, porque es ardua, si no imposible empresa, el reducirlos al punto céntrico de la razón" (Fernández de Lizardi 738). It is only natural that the non-philosophers of the world decide which country to love based on a single, inherited nationalism, since the cosmopolitan abstraction of wordly attachment is not as comforting or centering of a model. If the philosopher embraces this theoretical ideal, the common man seeks a more practical, tangible way of identifying with a space. In this passage, the colonel's use of *disimular* suggests that regional identity based on the openness of a cosmopolitan philosophy needs to disguise itself—perform—as another type of discourse, so that the non-philosophers of the world do not transform the decentered fluidity of a cosmopolitan disposition into the centered groundedness of national belonging. As previously hinted, this link between cosmopolitanism and performance is not circumstantial; it will become increasingly evident in Chapters IV.6 through IV.9, in which lessons about pretending to be Other double as lessons in becoming cosmopolitan.

The performance of an approachable, relatable cosmopolitanism has high stakes; Enlightenment cosmopolitanism constituted an attitude of mind that could transcend the violent expression of chauvinistic national loyalties (Schlereth ix, 107). Enlightenment philosophers such as Voltaire, Lessing, Diderot, and d'Alembert did not consider patriotism to be a virtue, since it “usually implied a definite hatred of humanity” and often represented a collective “prejudice” (Schlereth 107). The colonel articulates this critique of nationalism in the following terms: “En efecto, sea preocupación o lo que fuere, este amor de la tierra en que nacemos no sé qué tiene de violento que es menester ser muy filósofos para desprendernos de él, y lo peor es que no podemos desentendernos de esta particular obligación sin incurrir en las feas notas de ingratos, viles y traidores” (Fernández de Lizardi 738). For the colonel, the ideal citizen of the world is “philosophical,” since this critical perspective allows the cosmopolite to detach himself from his own *patria* just enough to avoid the violence that patriotism typically entails. Consequently, he laments the fact that if one refuses to comply with the Romantic “obligation” to view one’s own country as fundamentally superior to others, he will be ostracized as an ungrateful traitor. The colonel sincerely hopes that disguising the “envejecidas ideas” of Enlightenment cosmopolitanism will allow them to maintain their relevance even as New Spain seeks its political autonomy from Spain. *El periquillo sarniento*’s act of pretending is an attempt to do just that.

Lizardi returns to the colonel’s fear of violent nationalist expression in the final chapters of Pedro Sarmiento’s life. For instance, Pedro explains that the “horror, crime, blood, and devastation” of *El Grito de Dolores* and the Siege of Guanajuato in 1810

necessitated his relocation within New Spain (917). Like the colonel, Pedro Sarmiento explicitly criticizes chauvinistic violence: “De todo esto debéis inferir cuán gran mal es la guerra; cuán justas son las razones que militan para excusarla, y que el buen ciudadano sólo debe tomar las armas cuando se interese el bien común de la patria” (919). Read in conjunction with the fourth volume’s pluralizing replacement of *patria* with *mundo*, this passage seems to endorse war only when it interests the “bien común” of a worlded, cosmopolitan society.<sup>36</sup>

In this way, *El periquillo sarniento* invokes Kant’s 1795 essay “Perpetual Peace,” which expands cosmopolitan philosophy into a model of peaceful international relations. In the third article of this essay, Kant proposes that all human beings share the “right to the communal possession of the earth’s surface” (Kant 106); therefore, every man has the right to visit a nation that is not his “own.” Following Kant’s belief that “no-one originally has any greater right than anyone else to occupy any particular portion of the earth” (Kant 106), Periquillo and the colonel suggest that the cosmopolitan individual can be “at home” anywhere. In the spirit of Kant’s “Perpetual Peace,” they posit that a cosmopolitan erasure of national privilege prevents birthright nationalism from culminating in political violence.<sup>37</sup>

Within his elitist, relatively conservative notion of who can be cosmopolitan, the colonel doubts that Periquillo will objectively manage his own *amor patrio* and practice this model of peaceful internationalism. Instead, he assumes that Periquillo, now free,

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<sup>36</sup> For an analysis of how banditry functions as a critique of insurgent violence in *El periquillo sarniento*, see Dabove.

<sup>37</sup> See Jacob 1; Wohlgemut 19; and Schlereth 124 on Kant’s peaceful internationalism.

would happily return to Mexico and join his friends and family (739). Much to the colonel's surprise, however, the picaresque's philosophical nature works to his advantage.<sup>38</sup>

Periquillo reflects upon his experience in New Spain and concludes that the colonel's cosmopolitan ideal is actually the most practical way of relating to national space.

Periquillo admits that "amar a la patria por haber nacido en ella" is appropriate for those people who consider their country as a kind, protective mother, but rejects such model for himself: "eso que se quede para los que se consideren hijos de su patria y para aquellos con quienes ésta haya hecho los oficios de madre, pero no para mí, con quien se ha portado como madrastra" (739). Periquillo, who considers New Spain to be more of an exploitative, cruel stepmother, needs a different model. The picaresque thus proposes a love-for-country not based on birthplace, but on a cultivated love for particular local features. While Periquillo does not feel an innate connection with his fellow *novohispanos*, he is attached to the geographical sites he frequents. He states:

¿conque a semejante tierra será capaz que yo la ame como patria por sus naturales? No, señor: mejor es reconocerla madre por sus casas y paseos, por su Orilla, Iztacalco y Santa Anita, por su San Agustín de las Cuevas, San Ángel y Tacubaya, y por estas cosas así. De verdad, aseguro a vuestra señoría que no la extraño por otros motivos. (739)

Instead of feeling attached to Mexico because it is his birthplace, Periquillo's attachment to his *patria* originates in his fondness for certain places. He therefore suggests that one could love any country for its local beauty, regardless of whether he was born there and regardless of the quality of life experienced there. As a result, the philosophical picaresque is capable of taking a step back from his long history of suffering in Mexico—estranged by

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<sup>38</sup> For a concise overview of the picaresque genre, see Compton 10–12.

his ignorant family, abandoned by his greedy friends, and fed up with his ungrateful compatriots (*paisanos*)—and love that cultural space for its inherent worth. Periquillo thus embraces what Welsh philosopher Richard Price famously preached in *Discourse on the Love of Our Country* in 1789: love of country is “not the soil or the spot of earth on which we happen to have been born” (Price 2–3; Schlereth 110).

Once fundamentally wary of cosmopolitanism’s relevance in the New World, Periquillo begins to see the benefits of relinquishing emotional attachment to the national soil on which he happened to have been born. Considering Mexico his *patria madrastra* instead of his *patria madre* has two advantages. First, this semantic shift enables Periquillo to appreciate the uniqueness of a geographic region without holding the nation-state to the unrealistic expectation of constantly offering maternal protection. As Periquillo speaks from a doubly black and creole perspective, this cosmopolitan philosophy enables him to reconcile his tumultuous relationship with the Mexican state. Secondly, redefining Mexico as his *step-motherland* severs Periquillo’s emotional connection to his former *motherland*, allowing him to appreciate its regional features without feeling obligated to take up arms and violently defend national space. In this sense, Periquillo follows the Enlightenment philosophers who “replac[ed] or to modif[ied] their attachment to their geographical region or sphere of activity with a more expansive, albeit abstract, attitude toward the whole world” (Schlereth xiii). As Periquillo embraces the colonel’s idea of cosmopolitan world citizenship, his relationship with Mexico does not reproduce the intimate, eternal connection between a child and his mother; instead, Periquillo’s relationship with his birthplace parallels the distanced,

transient connection between a child and his stepmother. Cosmopolitically inclined citizens such as Periquillo need a *patria madrastra* to instill certain moral and civic virtues and provide temporary protection, yet expect that this relationship with the step-motherland will eventually dissolve. Just as the Spanish colonel has taught Periquillo, the critical detachment of the cosmopolitan philosopher from his birthplace allows him to become a citizen of the world. Chapter IV.5 thus reclassifies the nation-state as a steppingstone to world citizenship. The cosmopolitan relationship to a step-motherland has the distinct advantage of truncating national loyalties before they culminate in political violence.

Together, Periquillo and the colonel co-construct the model cosmopolitan citizen: one who valorizes regional differences, but transcends them in order to avoid the violent rhetoric of birthplace nationalisms. This radical caveat offers a postcolonial critique far ahead of its time. In privileging peaceful cosmopolitanism over violent nationalism, *El periquillo sarniento* invalidates the very process through which Spanish American countries attain their independence throughout the nineteenth century. The cosmopolitan characters in the fourth volume remain skeptical of prolonged attachment to a *patria madre* and fundamentally question the benefits of patriotically defending a bordered, national space. Therefore, this chapter proposes that *El periquillo sarniento* cannot be read as a simple extension of the author's pro-Independence writings. Instead, the novel delights in the friction between two competing desires: the draw of Enlightenment cosmopolitanism and the appeal of Romantic nationalism; between peaceful cultural relativism and passionate defense of one's homeland; and between detaching oneself

from a *patria madrastra* and having a nation to guarantee rights. Yet, if *El periquillo sarniento* does sympathize with the desire to cultivate singular national roots, it is far from unconditionally supporting the nation-building rhetoric that surrounded its publication.

This chapter thus offers a more comprehensive explanation of the fourth volume's censorship. During a period of intense nationalist expression, it is not unrealistic that the authorities of New Spain found the colonel's cosmopolitanism to be just as subversive as *el negro's* performed abolitionism. It is *Periquillo's* cosmopolitan critique of nation-building discourse—not only the isolated critiques of slavery and neocolonialism—that incited the fourth volume's censorship.<sup>39</sup>

### **Lessons in China: failed pretending, truncated cosmopolitanism**

After Chapters IV.4 and IV.5 present the tenets of cosmopolitanism, Chapters IV.6-IV.9 depict Periquillo's attempt to put these Enlightenment ideals into practice. Periquillo leaves Manila, shipwrecks off the coast of China, and finds himself stranded on an unfamiliar island, where he fails to treat his foreign hosts according to the principles of universal humanity and cultural relativism. On this island, Periquillo simultaneously fails as practitioner of cosmopolitan morality and as a pretender.

Throughout Chapters IV.6-IV.9, Periquillo's incomplete transition from self-absorbed

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<sup>39</sup> The censorship of another one of Lizardi's writings, a pamphlet published in *Chamorro y Dominiquín* in 1821, supports this idea. In this pamphlet, Lizardi "expresa la opinión de que la mejor solución a los problemas presentes es la separación de México de España aunque no apoya los procedimientos violentos de los insurgentes" (Ruiz Barrionuevo 13). Ruiz Barrionuevo suggests that Lizardi's opposition to the insurgent's violent tactics led to his incarceration.

picaro to self-reflexive cosmopolitan is linked to his insufficiencies as a pretender. The more Periquillo critically reflects on the performative nature of pretending, the more easily cosmopolitanism becomes a way of thinking; conversely, the inability to analyze performance as a process of consciousness doubling parallels the loss of critical distance that would normally advance the process of becoming cosmopolitan. When pretending fails to reflect upon the simultaneous existence of multiple, equally credible realities, the cosmopolitan notion of cultural incommensurability fails as well.

Pretending and cosmopolitanism first intersect thematically in Chapter IV.6, in which Periquillo is stranded on the Chinese island of Sauchefú. In a gesture of cosmopolitan hospitality, the island's local rulers offer Periquillo refuge and request that he work to earn his keep.<sup>40</sup> Astounded, Periquillo pretends to be a Mexican count in order to skirt his assigned civic duties. Throughout Periquillo's performance, the viceroy of the Chinese island (*el tután*) asks him to defend the customs of his homeland. As Periquillo answers questions about the noble and aristocratic classes, the role of religion, and the legal and medical systems in New Spain, the perplexed viceroy cannot help but notice "la diferencia que hay entre los usos de una nación y los de otra" (Fernández de Lizardi 759). Periquillo's act of pretending thus cultivates the cosmopolitan consciousness of Lizardi's readers. The picaro does not disagree with this observation, and he appears to be channeling the principles of cultural relativism he learned from the black merchant.

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<sup>40</sup> According to Kant, the *right of residence* is a product of cosmopolitan hospitality; in contrast, the *right of visitation* depends on the visitor's economic involvement in the host country. See Derrida, "On Cosmopolitanism" on the paradoxical nature of this distinction.



However, as Periquillo's performance as Mexican nobility continues, it is evident that he practices an extremely limited version of *el negro's* cosmopolitanism. Although Periquillo can recognize cultural differences, he does not consider these differences non-judgmentally, as a cosmopolite would. Even though Periquillo does not explicitly oppose his "civilized" culture with the "barbaric" way of life in Sauchefú, it is evident that that merely recognizing cultural difference does not necessarily equate to a cosmopolitan acceptance of alternative ways of life. For example, when *el tután* does not understand what is apparently logical to Periquillo, the picaro believes "que aquél era un tonto, según había oído decir que lo eran todos los que no hablaban castellano" (Fernández de Lizardi 755). Without the guiding vision of *el negro* and *el coronel*, el Periquillo is left to his own judgmental devices. Even though Periquillo has learned the language of the islanders (Fernández de Lizardi 752), he is not sufficiently conscious of his own patriotic prejudices to accept that a foreign way of structuring society may be more effective than the system he knows.

Periquillo's inability to practice cosmopolitan morality becomes increasingly evident in Chapter IV.7, "en el que nuestro Perico cuenta cómo se fingió conde en la isla; lo bien que lo pasó; lo que vio en ella, y las pláticas que hubo en la mesa con los extranjeros, que no son del todo despreciables" (Fernández de Lizardi 761). This epigraph signals that the chapter will treat two central concerns—pretending ("...cómo se fingió conde en la isla...") and cosmopolitanism ("...las pláticas que hubo en la mesa con los extranjeros...")—in tandem. The cross-cultural dinner that takes place between Periquillo, Limahotón (the viceroy's brother), a young Englishman and an older Spaniard

reminds the reader of the cosmopolitan content of the preceding chapters. During the dinner, the Englishman offends his Asian hosts by constantly describing his own culture as superior to that of his hosts; “el joven inglés (...) hablaba un castellano de los diablos, y a más de eso tenía la imprudencia de alabar todo lo de su tierra con preferencia a las producciones del país en que estaba” (Fernández de Lizardi 766). In response to such atrocious behavior, Limahotón explodes in anger: “Justo es que cada uno ame con preferencia el país en que nació, y que, congeniado con sus costumbres, climas y alimentos, los prefiera a los de todo el mundo; pero no es justo que esta alabanza sea apocando la tierra en que vivís y delante del que os sienta a su mesa” (Fernández de Lizardi 766). Limahotón’s statement recapitulates how Periquillo and the colonel conceptualized world citizenship; becoming-cosmopolitan does not preclude patriotic attachment to one’s own culture, but it does demand that the individual transcend this narrow perspective and view other cultural practices as inherently valid to those inherited at birth. After Limahotón storms off, the Spanish guest expands on his host’s proclamation of intercultural respect; “En tierra extraña, y más cuando recibimos favores de los patricios, debemos conformarnos con sus usos y todo lo demás, y si no nos acomodan, marcharnos; pero nunca abatirlos ni ponderar lo de nuestra tierra sobre lo de la suya” (Fernández de Lizardi 767). The Spaniard voices the cosmopolite’s commitment to learning, selectively adopting, and perhaps strategically performing the ways of others (Schlereth xi). In this way, this intercultural dinner ensures that the reader keep present the principles of Enlightenment cosmopolitanism established in previous installments.

These cosmopolitan thought experiments constitute one scene in a chapter that focuses primarily on pretending. Chapter IV.7 inserts cosmopolitan ideas into the dinner scene so that it can treat the themes of cosmopolitanism and pretending in tandem, as the epigraph signifies. In the scenes leading up to the intercultural dinner, the Spanish visitor claims to know the members of the Mexican nobility. In a desperate attempt to avoid exposing his performance, Periquillo proclaims that he is “el conde la Ruidera,” a relatively new position of which *el español* could not yet be aware (Fernández de Lizardi 765). As Periquillo’s operation within the world of his “condazgo imaginario” becomes more and more specific, Periquillo loses the critical perspective of the pretender—that ability to separate Self from behavior, reality from fantasy (Fernández de Lizardi 765). There are three moments in Chapters IV.7 and IV.9 that indicate that Periquillo’s act of pretending is no longer a process of consciousness doubling and perspective building.

At the beginning of Chapter IV.7, Pedro Sarmiento reflects on his younger self. He explains to his children that, yes, it would have been logical to accept *el tután*’s gracious offer to teach him a trade. However, young Periquillo (the Pretender) lacked this critical perspective:

Y cuando reflexionéis en que a la edad de más de treinta años, después de salir desnudo de un naufragio y de haber tenido la suerte de un buen acogimiento en la isla, me propusieron enseñarme algún arte con que, no sólo pudiera subsistir, sino llegar a hacerme rico, diréis; forzosamente nuestro padre aquí abrió los ojos, y conociendo así la primitiva causa de sus pasadas desgracias, como el único medio de evitar las que podía temer en lo futuro, abrazaría gustoso el partido de aprender a solicitar el pan por su arbitrio y sin la mayor dependencia de los demás. Así discurriréis tal vez con arreglo a la recta razón, y así debía

haber sido; mas no fue así. Yo tenía terrible aversión al trabajo, en cualquiera clase que fuera. (Fernández de Lizardi 761)

While performances such as that of the Pretender typically involve a doubling of consciousness that sparks critical perspective, old Pedro implies that young Periquillo was too wrapped up in his own imaginary world to use pretending (becoming-Other) as a way to critically reflect on the actions of the Self.

The severity of the collapse between Self (Periquillo Sarniento) and Other (el conde de la Ruidera) becomes increasingly evident as Chapter IV.7 progresses. In one scene, Limahotón is trying to understand why Periquillo's status as *conde* exempts him from work. Limahotón shares his puzzlement: "Estos nobles que nacen y no se hacen, ¿en qué se ejercitan en tu país? Supuesto que no sirven ni en la campaña ni en la guerra, ni saben trabajar con la pluma ni con la espada, ¿qué hacen, dime?, ¿en qué se entretienen?, ¿en qué se ocupan?, ¿qué provecho saca de ellos el rey o la república?" (Fernández de Lizardi 763). Periquillo, "imbuido en [sus] flojas ideas," responds that the nobility serve society in the same way that picares do: "tratan de divertirse, de pasearse, y cuando más, trabajan en que no se menoscabe su caudal" (Fernández de Lizardi 763). Periquillo is so persuaded by his own performance that his actual identity—that of a work-averse *pícaro*—collapses into his pretended identity. Supposedly, *conde* and *pícaro* are one in the same.

The believability of Periquillo's performed countship is contagious. Soon, everyone on the island is treating Periquillo according to his noble costuming instead of his picaresque interior. As Pedro recalls,

algunos días permanecimos en la ciudad muy contentos, y yo más que todos, porque me veía estimado y obsequiado grandemente a merced de mi título fingido, y en mi interior me daba los plácemes de haber fraguado tal embuste, pues a la sombra de él estaba bien vestido, bien tratado y con ciertos humillos de título rico, que ya estaba por creer que era de veras (...) el mundo las más veces aprecia a los hombres, no por sus títulos reales, sino por los que dicen que tienen. (Fernández de Lizardi 768)

Periquillo's performance is solid (*fraguado*) thanks to his convincing costuming with make-believe titles. Eventually, as Chapter IV.9 details, the islanders treat Periquillo so regally that he wonders if his noble origins were not invented, but real:

Y así, engañados unos y otros, conspiraban sin querer a que yo perdiera el poco juicio que tenía, pues tanto me condenaban y usaban; tanto me lisonjeaban y tantas caricias y rendimientos me hacían, que ya estaba yo por creer que había nacido conde y no había llegado a mi noticia.

—¡Qué mano—decía yo a mis solas —, qué mano que yo sea conde y no lo sepa! Es verdad que yo me titulé; pero para ser conde, ¿qué importa que me titule yo o me titule el rey? Siendo titular, todo se sale allá. (Fernández de Lizardi 789)

As Periquillo loses himself in the “flow” of his performance, he no longer experiences the separation of Self from Other and the distinction between reality and fantasy. His act of pretending is no longer a self-reflexive process of “make-believe” play. Pretending slips into an uncritical “make-belief” performance that fabricates an alternate, false reality—one in which he is actually *conde*.<sup>41</sup>

Although Periquillo suspects a slippage between the real and imagined worlds, he does not realize the consequences of this capsized act of pretending: his inability to

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<sup>41</sup> See Schechner 91 for an explanation of how “flow”—losing oneself in play—compromises reflexivity—the awareness that one is playing.

practice the cosmopolitan teachings of *el negro* and *el colonel*. If pretending is to encourage critical self-reflection and the relativization of difference, the pretender must know he is performing. The perspective of the Pretender and the cosmopolitan both involve, in their ideal manifestations, a self-reflexive doubling of consciousness. The Pretender is both Self and Other at the same time, yet he is critically aware of how these two consciousness see the world differently; as he travels, the cosmopolitan is both at home and abroad, and he adapts to a new culture through a careful display of Self and performance of Other. When Periquillo's performance collapses the distance between *pícaro* and *conde*, he also loses sight of the distinction between Self and Other. Periquillo is seduced by his own performance, and any principles of cosmopolitanism he once practiced quickly disappear. As he admits in Chapter IV.9:

Engreído con el libre manejo que tenía del oro de mi amo;  
desvanecido con los buenos vestidos, casa y coche que  
disfrutaba de coca; aturdido con las adulaciones que me  
prodigaban infinitos aduladores de más que mediana esfera,  
que a cada paso celebraban mi talento, mi nobleza, mi  
garbo y mi liberalidad, cuyos elogios pagaba yo bien caros,  
*y lo más pernicioso para mí, engañado con creer que había  
nacido para rico, para virrey o cuando menos para conde,*  
*miraba a mis iguales con desdén, a mis inferiores con*  
*desprecio y a los pobres enfermos, andrajosos y*  
*desdichados con asco, y me parece que con un odio*  
*criminal, sólo por pobres.* (Fernández de Lizardi 799,  
emphasis mine)

There is a clear connection between collapsed pretending and truncated cosmopolitanism.

Victim of the “pernicious” slippage between performing Self and performed Other,

Periquillo forgets the black merchant's lesson about cultural and moral

incommensurability. Although he once saw the enslaved population as equal human

beings deserving radically better treatment, now Periquillo cannot even consider those of his same socio-economic class as equal. Failing to maintain the double consciousness prerequisite to pretending, there is no way Periquillo can validate a plurality of worldviews, as a cosmopolite would. Periquillo reverts to his self-serving, judgmental, and decidedly anti-cosmopolitan ways and views his fellow man with disgust and repulsion.<sup>42</sup> For the picaresque protagonist, non-critical performance compromises his foray into cosmopolitan thought, and the cosmopolitan disposition he began to develop abroad disappears upon return to New Spain. As Periquillo moves from the Oriental Pacific—a blank slate onto which Lizardi can project his cosmopolitan desires—to New Spain, cosmopolitanism gives way to colonial prejudices and social hierarchies.<sup>43</sup> If Periquillo symbolizes the model citizen positioned to bring New Spain into its stable, independent future, as Mabel Moraña and Manolo Núñez Negrón suggest he does, Lizardi's protagonist represents a citizenship torn between a tolerant, cosmopolitan ideal and a prejudicial, nationalist reality.

### **Cosmopolitanism, nationalism, and Mexican literature**

During a moment of national consolidation, the performative quality of *El periquillo sarniento* breaks down the oppositionality between national and cosmopolitan

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<sup>42</sup> In some ways, Periquillo is like Immanuel Kant, whom scholars accuse of contradicting his own philosophical commitments. If Periquillo's failure as a pretender and a cosmopolitan constitutes a critique of Kantian cosmopolitanism, Lizardi's voice joins a long tradition of scholars who also expose the gaps of Enlightenment philosophy. See, for example, the ongoing debates of Fine, Mendieta, Dussel, Harvey, and Mignolo about whether or not the Enlightenment's specificity to Western European culture undermines its claim to universalism.

<sup>43</sup> For a discussion of how signifiers of exteriority functioned in the cosmopolitan discourse of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, see Siskind, *Cosmopolitan Desires*. For a specific discussion of how *El periquillo sarniento* empties the Philippines of historical signification, see Hagimoto.

values. Subsequent projects of national definition operate at a similar crossroads. For instance, in honor of the centennial anniversary of the beginning of Mexico's independence war, the Porfirian elite organized a series of urban reforms that celebrated the ideals of modernity, cosmopolitanism, and the modern nation-state (Tenorio-Trillo 78–79). While a cosmopolitan perspective mitigates the dangers of national attachment in *El periquillo sarniento*, a superficially cosmopolitan style functions in service of nationalism in 1910. The Porfirian elite imported the architectural styles and urban layouts of Europe to the city of the *centenario*, but this cosmopolitan aesthetic was never intended to remap the public's conception of collective identity. As Mauricio Tenorio-Trillo demonstrates in his analysis of the newly erected Monument of Independence, “the entire composition formed another mélange of republican neoclassic symbolism. There was nothing particularly Mexican about it, nor should there have been: republicanism and nationalism were regarded as universal values” (Tenorio-Trillo 95). In the years leading up to the Mexican Revolution, a superficial cosmopolitan aesthetic strengthened nation-building discourse.

In the post-revolutionary period, cosmopolitanism and nationalism enter into productive tension once again. Specifically, *El periquillo sarniento* intersects nationalism and cosmopolitanism in ways that parallel post-revolutionary debates about *mexicanidad*. For instance, in late 1924, the nationalist writers Julio Jiménez Rueda and Francisco Montverde published articles that condemned “el afeminamiento de la literatura mexicana” and promoted “una literatura viril.” In his article on “Vanguardia y campo literario,” Ignacio Sánchez Prado demonstrates that *viril* and *efeminado*—gendered



descriptors of post-revolutionary culture—correspond to contrasting political dispositions: nationalism and cosmopolitanism, respectively. The *nacionalistas* advocated for a realistic, autochthonous literature that founded national culture on the virility and violence of the Mexican Revolution; the *Contemporáneos*, on the other hand, promoted a vanguardist aesthetic that turned to Europe in order to “exorcizar los demonios del nacionalismo” (Sánchez Prado, “Vanguardia y campo literario” 190). For this vanguardist group, Eurocentric cosmopolitanism offered a way to depart from the nationalist rhetoric of *muralismo* and *la Novela de la Revolución* and “liberar el arte de la prisión del nacionalismo” (Sánchez 219). According to Sánchez Prado, it is this competition between national narratives and cosmopolitan counter-narratives that leads to the emergence of a Mexican national literature (Sánchez Prado, “Vanguardia y campo Literario” 188).

This chapter illuminates how *El periquillo sarniento* paves the way for a literary field that develops in conjunction with the state, yet maintains its ability to critique it. In this performative novel, we already see what Sánchez Prado identifies as “una de las grandes paradojas del campo literario mexicano” in the post-revolutionary period: “por un lado, existe una aspiración constante a definir una cultura nacional ‘oficial’ y a adquirir para la literatura y el arte el derecho a definir los parámetros de la mexicanidad; por otro, parte de la legitimidad adquirida por el campo proviene de su capacidad de criticar al estado” (Sánchez Prado, “Vanguardia y campo literario” 197). Whether we attribute the institutionalization of a Mexican national literature to the publication of *El*

*periquillo sarniento* or to the debates of the vanguard period, the cosmopolitan roots of *mexicanidad* cannot be ignored.<sup>44</sup>

Within this context, Lizardi's formulation of the *patria madrastra* anticipates Octavio Paz's rendition of "lo mexicano" that incorporates national particularity as well as worldly universality. Both Lizardi and Paz represent the particularities of Mexican culture without—and this is the cosmopolitan key—essentializing this singularity and thereby precipitating nationalist violence. If *Periquillo* is to represent a certain Mexican type, his cosmopolitan conjunction of the particular and the universal sets the stage for the model of Mexicanness that Octavio Paz will propose over a hundred years later in *El laberinto de la soledad* (1950).<sup>45</sup> In this light, it is not irrelevant that Paz theorizes the collapse of "reality and appearance, the lie and the truth" as central to Mexican identity (Paz 40). Reading *El periquillo sarniento* in dialogue with *El laberinto de la soledad* underlines the ways in which pretending, cosmopolitanism, and Mexican national identity intersect in the literary canon.

In sum, *El periquillo sarniento* encapsulates how constructions of *lo mexicano* "alternated between a State-supported cultural nationalism and a critical cosmopolitanism embraced by many of the nation's intellectuals" (Cohn 142). This alternation not only characterizes nation-building discourse after the Mexican Revolution, but also occurs in the Post-Independence Period. *El periquillo sarniento* defines *lo mexicano* in a way that

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<sup>44</sup> For a discussion of how *El periquillo sarniento* institutes a Mexican national literature, see Ruiz Barrionuevo 34.

<sup>45</sup> For a detailed analysis of how Paz "distinguishes the singularity of the Mexican as other, without making an essence of that singularity," see Rosman 76–79. For more on how Paz locates diversity within unity, see Moreiras.

recognizes the (temporary) need to identify with a national space, yet also validates cosmopolitan models of political solidarity. The text's innovative literary form—pretending to be something it is not—allows it to couple detached patriotism with peaceful internationalism.<sup>46</sup> Cosmopolitanism thus prevents the valorization of regional difference from degenerating into nationalist violence. Although the cosmopolitan undercurrent of *El periquillo sarniento* has been egregiously overlooked, it is central to understanding the censorship of the fourth volume, formulations of *mexicanidad*, and the emergence of a Mexican national literature.

### Reading Performatively (Part Two)

Cosmopolitanism is so central to *El periquillo sarniento* that the fourth volume repeats a strategy of the prologues: explain what it means to read performatively. In a move typical of didactic literature, Periquillo's incomplete transformation from judgmental picaro to self-reflexive cosmopolite serves to teach the reader a lesson. In Chapter IV.7, Pedro Sarmiento takes a didactic detour from the story about young Periquillo's adventures on Sauchefú in order to warn his sons (and readers) about the dangers of pretending and pretenders. Despite the utility of pretending, it is not always permissible:

No por esto apruebo que sea bueno el fingir, por más que sea útil al que finge; también al lenón y al droguero les son útiles sus disimulos y sus trácalas, y sin embargo, no les son lícitas. Lo que quiero que saquéis por fruto de este cuento, es que advirtáis cuán expuestos vivimos a que nos

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<sup>46</sup> In his study of "Innovation in Mexican Fiction and Politics (1910-1934)," Brushwood correlates cosmopolitanism with periods of literary innovation.

engañe un pícaro astuto pintándonos gigantes de nobleza,  
talento, riqueza y valimiento. (Fernández de Lizardi 768)

The reflective elder makes it clear that pretending can be a useful tool to get one's way, but it becomes dangerous and deceptive when one forgets about its fundamentally performative nature. Therefore, Pedro instructs his sons to carefully consider the performances of daily life;

En todo caso, hijos míos, estudiad al hombre, observadlo,  
penetradlo en su alma; ved sus operaciones, prescindiendo  
de lo exterior de su vestido, títulos ni rentas, y así que  
halléis alguno que siempre hable verdad y no se pegue al  
interés como el acero al imán, fíaos de él, y decid: éste es  
hombre de bien, éste no me engañará, ni por él se me  
seguirá ningún perjuicio; pero para hallar a este hombre,  
pedidle a Diógenes prestada su linterna. Volviendo a mi  
historieta... (Fernández de Lizardi 768–69)

This didactic detour signals to the reader what to learn from this episode: this is a lesson about questioning outward appearance and the importance of not judging a person at face value. Narrating the mistakes of his younger self, Pedro has already demonstrated the need for the individual (whether pretender or cosmopolitan) to constantly recognize *and respect* the difference between Self and Other. In this didactic tangent, Pedro extends this lesson to include individuals who are not performing, but who may be performed upon. If the observer of a performance can understand it as a process of consciousness doubling, he will be able to distinguish between the performance of Self (“lo exterior de su vestido, títulos [o] rentas”) and the honest, internal operations (“operaciones”) of one's true character.

This is also a lesson about how to interpret performative texts. Pedro reminds his audience to read on two levels: according to the superficial self-presentation of the text as well as its inner workings.<sup>47</sup> This self-referential comment, combined with those of Chapters I.2 and III.3, reiterates that pretending constitutes the central rhetorical operation in *El periquillo sarniento*. Nevertheless, it does not preclude the validity of allegorical interpretation. On the contrary, this key passage cues the reader to couple allegorical and performative interpretation. When the reader learns that allegory and pretending work side-by-side in performative texts such as *El periquillo sarniento*, they can discover the hidden political message of the Sauchefú episode: that the autonomous nation-state—if it is to eradicate the prejudices and social hierarchies of colonial rule—must predicate national identity on cosmopolitan values. Allegory and allegorical interpretation signal the text’s national concerns, while pretending and performative reading slip a cosmopolitan perspective into nation-building discourse.

On the one hand, Pedro cues an allegorical interpretation of the Sauchefú episode. Allegoresis begins with the premise that “texts are, superficially, lies; they must be interpreted, or ‘allegorized’ into telling the truth” (Quilligan 46), and the self-reflexive conclusion of the Sauchefú episode calls into doubt the truthfulness of its presentation. As the text shifts from describing Periquillo’s performance as *conde* to telling us how to read this act of pretending, *El periquillo sarniento* creates the “usual link between allegorical episodes—text and commentary” (Quilligan 91). In 19<sup>th</sup>-century Spanish American narrative, allegory shows the reader how to link literal and figurative meaning

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<sup>47</sup> González Pérez and Vogeley make a similar claim, but they classify the text’s inner workings as national, not cosmopolitan.

so that he can imagine a political reality not yet possible within the text itself. Within this interpretive paradigm, Pedro's time abroad is not actually about the referents explicitly mentioned in the text—Asia, pretending and cosmopolitanism—but about the referents that remain outside of these chapters—New Spain and the nation-state. Indeed, most of the scholarship on *El periquillo sarniento* nationalizes Periquillo's experience abroad, allegorizing Sauchefú as the utopic representation of the Mexico-to-come.<sup>48</sup> This type of national-allegorical interpretation aligns with the didactic and novelistic costuming of *El periquillo sarniento*. Superficially, *El periquillo sarniento* is a lesson about nation building: it narrates the nation by representing a heterogeneous population and prescribing the ideal path from colony to independent nation-state.

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<sup>48</sup> Benítez-Rojo, for example, compares the utopic island in *El periquillo sarniento* to the content of Lizardi's political writings, without justifying how this novel signifies its own political motivations. Citing Jefferson Rea Spell's analysis of Lizardi's pamphlets, Benítez-Rojo argues that Sauchefú models a society characterized by: "(1) a reformist-style political program to facilitate the rise of the criollo to power; (2) a program of public administration to liquidate bureaucratic corruption and to build roads, schools, and hospitals; (3) an economic program of capitalist trend to expand commerce, abolish slavery, and qualify and increase the size of the labor force; and (4) a social program based on coordinating the press, the family, the clergy, and the state to perfect educational institutions and eliminate illiteracy, prostitution, theft, alcoholism, gambling, vagrancy, and other vices" (Benítez-Rojo, "José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi" 4). Benítez-Rojo's position encompasses that of many other critics. Jean Franco follows his assessment of Lizardi's political program; she adds that the written word and the codification of laws will be essential for national progress (Franco 489). Nancy Vogeley considers Sauchefú to represent the necessary transition from a mineral-based colonial economy to the agricultural economy of the independent state (Vogeley, "The Concept of 'the People'" 463). Aileen El-Kadi similarly reads Sauchefú as the utopic standard for New Spain. Despite the cosmopolitan undertones of Periquillo's conversations on Sauchefú, El-Kadi argues that the island episode imagines a collective identity devoid of heterogeneity and cultural plurality (El-Kadi 37). Manolo Núñez Negrón similarly overlooks how the fourth volume destabilizes the concept of the nation; his focus on satire leads him to conclude that the Sauchefú episode romanticizes the nation-state's ability to establish social order and collective well-being (Núñez Negrón 86). Mabel Moraña's approach to the utopic representation of Sauchefú is also perplexing; she recognizes that *El periquillo sarniento* does not immediately lend itself to an allegorical reading, but then carries out this type of overbearing analysis anyway (Moraña 23–24).

Be that as it may, a national-allegorical reading cannot fully explain Periquillo's travels abroad. Not only does this interpretive paradigm ignore the cosmopolitan undercurrent that encompasses the Saucheofú episode, it also idealizes the nation-state in a way that is inconsistent with the rest of the fourth volume. When Pedro advises his readers to "study" and "observe" the text's superficiality in order to "penetrate" its disguised meaning, he is also calling for a performative reading practice. His specific mention of costume—"lo exterior de su vestido, título [y] rentas"—recalls the discussion of performative reading in Chapter I.2, which identifies style and literary form as two ways of costuming written language. Roland Barthes elaborates this connection between writing style and theatrical costume in his essay "The Diseases of Costume:"

In short, the good costume must be material enough to signify and transparent enough not to turn its signs into parasites. The costume is a kind of writing and has the ambiguity of writing, which is an instrument in the service of a purpose which transcends it; but if the writing is either too poor or too rich, too beautiful or too ugly, it can no longer be read and fails in its function. *The costume, too, must find that kind of rare equilibrium which permits it to help us read the theatrical act without encumbering it by any parasitical value: it must renounce every egotism, every excess of good intentions, it must pass unnoticed in itself yet it must also exist: the actors cannot, in every case, appear on the stage naked. It must be both material and transparent: we must see it but not look at it.* (Barthes, "The Diseases of Costume" 50, emphasis mine)

Pretending in *El periquillo sarniento* achieves this magical balance. Understood as the text's costume, pretending (to be a didactic novel) is material enough to signify a counter-national model of political relation; at the same time, pretending (the theme) is transparent enough that that it can slip the cosmopolitan values of universal citizenship

and cultural relativity into a largely national(ist) novel. The self-referential comments scattered throughout *El periquillo sarniento* regulate this process of materializing and passing unnoticed. As is true of the other performative texts in this study, *El periquillo sarniento* refers to its own performative rhetorical strategy in order to highlight its counter-national perspective.

The meta-literary conclusion to Sauchefú episode crystalizes this link between pretending and cosmopolitanism. Just after explaining the dangers of pretending, Pedro recommends that his audience “pedidle a Diógenes prestada su linterna” in order to access hidden truth (Fernández de Lizardi 768–69). In doing so, Pedro instructs his readers to use the lantern of a cosmopolite philosopher to guide their interpretation of Periquillo’s experiences on Sauchefú. Connecting all the way back to *el coronel*’s suggestion that the philosopher is best suited to become a cosmopolitan citizen of the world, Pedro suggests that his sons seek the guidance of someone with the necessary critical perspective to transcend national affiliation. It is Diogenes of Sinope, a self-declared cosmopolite, who will teach citizens to see beyond the national surface of *El periquillo sarniento* and notice its internal, cosmopolitan operations.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> In his study of Enlightenment cosmopolitanism, Schlereth recounts Diogenes’ philosophy: “As antiquity’s existentialist, Diogenes (who was Diderot’s ideal) protested that he had no city and no homeland and that his intellectual superiority, his philosophical independence, and his personal self-sufficiency made him a true cosmopolite” (Schlereth xvii). Most of what we know about Diogenes’ life comes from the anecdotes recorded in Diogenes Laërtius’ *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*. If Laërtius recorded Diogenes correctly, it is believed that the term “cosmopolitan” originated with Diogenes. In Laërtius’ rendering, “Asked where he came from, [Diogenes] said, ‘I am a citizen of the world’” (Laertius 63). In *El periquillo sarniento*, the Colonel appears to repeat these words exactly. Laërtius also references Diogenes’ lantern, suggesting that he light it in broad daylight while looking for an “honest man” (Laertius 41).



Pedro's lesson about reading performatively does not supplant national-allegorical interpretation. This is not a question of reading allegorically or performatively, but both, simultaneously. Even though some of Lizardi's characters have allegorical names (Alegoría 21; González Pérez 32), it is an oversimplification to call *El periquillo sarniento* a national allegory. The key is that pretending works alongside allegory to represent a counter-national model of political relation. The allegorical impulse of the Sauchefû episode fixes a utopic national referent outside of the text, beyond the geographical situation of these chapters and beyond the current political situation in New Spain; at the same time, the performative operation of the fourth volume points to a counter-national referent—cosmopolitanism—already present within the text. Pretending slows down allegory's impulse to discursively construct the nation and, in doing so, exposes the cosmopolitan undercurrent hidden within nation-building discourse.

The productive tension that Pedro establishes between allegorical and performative interpretation is consistent with the text's performed didacticism. *El periquillo sarniento* performs the conventions of the didactic dialogue but ultimately relinquishes the genre's claims to universal truth. Within this same logic, Pedro refuses to categorically assign one reading practice over another. By extension, *El periquillo sarniento* denies the possibility of separating nationalism from cosmopolitanism. As is especially evident in the fourth volume, *El periquillo sarniento* delights in the friction between Enlightenment cosmopolitanism and Romantic nationalism, between peaceful cultural relativism and passionate defense of one's homeland, and between detaching oneself from a *patria madrastra* and having a nation to guarantee rights. *El periquillo*

*sarniento* may outline a specific political program in a select few chapters, but the novel as a whole does not fix one model of individual-national identification. By means of its performative rhetorical strategy, *El periquillo sarniento* participates in the project of national consolidation without making a violent, one-to-one link between birthplace and identity.<sup>50</sup>

*El periquillo sarniento* thus grounds the three definitions of the performative that remain operative throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. First, the various prologues characterize *El periquillo sarniento* as a *performative text*; it is a self-referential text in which national and counter-national perspectives intersect. In these opening chapters, *El periquillo sarniento* self-consciously frames its literary action—repeating (and later subverting) the conventions of the didactic novel. By positioning itself as a text that pretends, *El periquillo sarniento* draws attention to the theme—pretending—that inserts a model of cosmopolitan ethics into the dominant discourse of nation building. Secondly, the meta-conclusion to the Sauchefú episode crystallizes the definition of pretending as a *performative rhetorical device*: pretending works alongside allegory to create dialogue between national and counter-national perspectives. Thirdly, the prologues to *El periquillo sarniento* propose a new interpretative paradigm for this polyphonic interplay between allegorical and performative literary form. The goal of reading performatively is to increase attention to literary style—the self-reflexive costuming of the written word—

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<sup>50</sup> González Pérez notes a similar tension between allegorical closure and performative openness in *El periquillo sarniento*, but his analysis falls short of analyzing the political function of these contradictory impulses. Despite his adept analysis of (dis)simulation in *El periquillo sarniento*, González Pérez interprets the text in strictly national-allegorical terms. See especially pages 32, 33, and 41.

so as to honor the plurality of perspectives that dialogue in the text. By training its audience (and future audiences) to read performatively, *El periquillo sarniento* paves the way for an interpretive practice that traces the plurality of signifiers—both national and counter-national—that comprised independence-era political debates.

By reading *El periquillo sarniento* through the performative framework it provides, this chapter illuminates the text's cosmopolitan commitments. It thus offers a more comprehensive explanation of the novel's censorship, situates *El periquillo sarniento* within larger debates about nationalism, cosmopolitanism, and Mexican literature and culture, and distinguishes it from Lizardi's other political writings. *El periquillo sarniento* does not merely reproduce the pro-Independence rhetoric of Lizardi's political pamphlets, but takes a "literary detour" to explore models of collective identity unbound by the nation-state.<sup>51</sup> By means of its performative framework, *El periquillo sarniento* inaugurates a writing practice that exceeds the boundaries of the Lettered City. Performative literary is a medium for expanding *letrado* definitions of "nation" and "nationhood"—even during the height of the Lettered City.<sup>52</sup> If *El periquillo sarniento* is indeed the first novel of Spanish America, it establishes a continental literary tradition in which performance is a rhetorical strategy for articulating anxieties about the nation-building enterprise. Soledad Acosta de Samper's *Una holandesa en América* (1876) and Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda's *La hija de las flores* o *Todos están locos* (1852) are part of this same tradition. Following Lizardi's lead, Acosta de Samper and

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<sup>51</sup> See Bongie 21 on the responsibility of postcolonial criticism to analyze the "literary detour" of politically-motivated texts.

<sup>52</sup> For an explanation of how José Martí completely fragments the Republic of Letters, see Ramos.

Gómez de Avellaneda turn to performative rhetorical devices to represent people, places, and ideas that do not fit into the national-allegorical imaginary.

## CHAPTER 2: Juxtaposing: plural attachment and transnational romance in *Una holandesa en América*

Mientras que la parte masculina de la sociedad se ocupa de la política, que rehace las leyes, atiende al progreso material de esas repúblicas y ordena la vida social, ¿no sería muy bello que la parte femenina se ocupara en crear una nueva literatura? Una literatura *sui generis*, americana en sus descripciones, americana en sus tendencias, doctrinal, civilizadora, artística, provechosa para el alma.

--Soledad Acosta de Samper, 1889<sup>53</sup>

Ahora bien; ¿cuál es el primer deber del escritor en la patria americana? ¿No es cierto que consiste en hacerla conocer y presentarla bajo la forma más halagüeña, obligando tanto a sus habitantes como a los extraños a que la amen y admiren? Sentada esta verdad, añadiremos que para amar una cosa es preciso conocerla y contemplarla bajo todas sus faces, e indagar hasta el fondo su índole y costumbres; en una palabra comprenderla.

--Soledad Acosta de Samper, 1898<sup>54</sup>

Soledad Acosta de Samper (1833-1913) is often heralded as one of the most prolific writers in Colombian literary history, and with good reason. Writing under a number of pseudonyms, Acosta published novels, short stories, plays, and essays that covered a variety of topics: science, religion, history, sociology, literary criticism, and travel. She founded numerous literary magazines and contributed to countless others.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Soledad Acosta de Samper, "Misión de la escritora en hispanoamérica," *Soledad Acosta de Samper: escritura, género Y nación en el siglo XIX*, (Madrid: Iberoamericana, 2005): 81. Originally published in *Colombia Ilustrada* [Bogotá] 15 octubre 1889: 129-132.

<sup>54</sup> Soledad Acosta de Samper, "Los españoles en España," *El Domingo* [Bogotá], 9 Oct. 1898: 59.

<sup>55</sup> Acosta founded the following literary magazines: *La Mujer*, *La Familia*, *Lecturas para el Hogar*. She contributed to *El Domingo de la Familia Cristiana*, *La Prensa*, *La Ley*, *La Unión Colombiana*, *El Deber*, *El Mosaico*, *Biblioteca de Señoritas*, *La Nación*, and *El Eco Literario*.

Despite the abundance of Acosta's literary production, she received little critical acclaim in her time. It is only recently, with the publication of new anthologies that place women writers within national literary traditions, that critics have begun to recognize Acosta's contributions to the development of Colombian literature.<sup>56</sup>

When 21<sup>st</sup>-century literary critics claim that Acosta's oeuvre advances the formation of a national literature, they follow the precedent set by the author's husband in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century. José María Samper publically endorsed his wife's work, which was not an uncommon practice at the time. In his introduction to her *Novelas y cuadros de la vida suramericana* (1869), Samper uses his cultural capital as a male writer and a powerful statesman to facilitate his wife's participation in Colombia's literary scene. As he writes in "Dos palabras al lector:"

Hija única de uno de los hombres más útiles y eminentes que ha producido mi patria, el general Joaquín Acosta [...], mi esposa ha deseado ardientemente hacerse lo más digna posible del nombre que lleva, no sólo como madre de familia sino también de la noble patria colombiana; y ya que su sexo no le permitía prestar otro género de servicios a esa patria, buscó en la literatura, desde hace más de catorce años, un medio de cooperación y actividad.

He querido, por mi parte que mi esposa contribuya con sus esfuerzos, siquiera sean humildes, a la obra común de la literatura que nuestra joven república está formando, a fin de mantener de algún modo, la tradición del patriotismo de

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Her most notable novels and short stories include *Dolores*, *Teresa la limeña*, *El corazón de la mujer* (novels that were collected in the 1869 *Novelas y cuadros de la vida suramericana*), *Una holandesa en América* (1876) and *La mujer en la sociedad moderna* (1895) (Alzate, "Prólogo" 10; Ballesteros Rosas 289; Rodríguez-Arenas 136).

<sup>56</sup> Carolina Alzate and Montserrat Ordóñez have lead these efforts. See Alzate's edition of *Diario íntimo y otros escritos de Soledad Acosta de Samper* (2004), Ordóñez's edition of *Novelas y cuadros de la vida suramericana* (2004) and the jointly published *Soledad Acosta de Samper: escritura, género y nación en el siglo XIX* (2005).

su padre; y he deseado que, si algún mérito pueden hallar en mis conciudadanos en los escritos de mi esposa, puedan estos servir a mis hijas como un nuevo título a la consideración de los que no han olvidado ni olvidarán el nombre del general Acosta. (María Samper 41)

In this passage, Samper emphasizes that his wife carries the name of Joaquín Acosta, a well-respected Colombian general and an obvious symbol of patriotic dedication to the Colombian nation. Samper intentionally elides his wife's foreign roots (her mother was Scottish) and transitory life (she lived in Nova Scotia, Paris, Lima and Bogotá) in order to legitimize her as a national voice.<sup>57</sup> Samper wants his wife to continue “la tradición del patriotismo de su padre,” so he authorizes her access to an elite, patriarchal project: “la obra común de la literatura que nuestra joven república está formando.” Samper's endorsement of her work interpellates the author in a way that gives her no choice but to serve the Colombian nation through her literature. The readers of *Novelas y cuadros* can be assured that Acosta will honor her father's name and, therefore, her country. In this way, Acosta's position as the literary mother “de la noble patria colombiana” is contingent upon her husband's desire (*querer, desear*) and her father's patriotic legacy—not the intrinsic quality of her work. In fact, Samper strategically signals the “humble” nature of his wife's oeuvre, going so far as to doubt “si algún mérito pueden hallar en mis conciudadanos en los escritos de mi esposa.” Given that literature was the only realm through which women could participate in politics, Samper intentionally curtails the potential impact of his wife's work. Women may write as long as their work

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<sup>57</sup> There is some discrepancy on the nationality of Acosta's mother. Alzate and Rodríguez-Arenas describe her as “nacida en Nueva Escocia” and “escocesa” (Alzate, “Presentación” 13; Rodríguez-Arenas 133). This seems to be the consensus, but Samper Trainer argues that Carlina Kemble was born in Kingston, Jamaica to parents of Greek origin (Samper Trainer 241).

submissively complies with the patriarchal order. With this depreciating gesture, Samper includes Acosta in the Colombian literary scene but excludes her from its political extensions.<sup>58</sup>

The first epigraph, taken from Soledad Acosta de Samper's 1889 essay, "Misión de la escritora en Hispanoamérica," repeats this double act of inclusion and exclusion. Acosta looks to men to develop a new nation ("la política") and women to create "una nueva literatura" (Acosta de Samper, "Misión" 81). Acosta both valorizes and marginalizes the role of the female writer.<sup>59</sup> At first glance, Acosta seems to corroborate her husband's presentation of her work. However, her vision for the female writer differs substantially from that of her husband. Even as she ratifies the patriarchal division of gender roles, Acosta does not represent her project as a national one. For her, the mission of the female writer in Spanish America is to "crear una nueva literatura (...) americana en sus descripciones, americana en sus tendencias" (81). In contrast to the nation-building agenda Samper projects onto his wife's work, Acosta envisions a more continental, transnational literary practice. In this light, it is no coincidence that Acosta began her career by translating French novels into Spanish for *El Mosaico*, the famous literary magazine of Bogotá (José Reyes 17; R. L. Williams 34); then, after moving to Lima, she founded *La Revista Americana*, a literary magazine that promoted Peruvian literature (Rodríguez-Arenas 135). Although Samper's presentation of *Novelas y cuadros* obscures his wife's multilingual and transnational experiences, they cannot be ignored.

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<sup>58</sup> A similar dynamic existed between Domingo Faustino Sarmiento and Eduarda Mansilla. See Jagoe 512.

<sup>59</sup> This has led critics to comment on the limits of Acosta's feminist ideology. See Guerra-Cunningham 200 and Helena Rueda 456.



Acosta's notion of a "literatura americana" distances aesthetics from politics. In the first epigraph, the author maintains the gendered divide between (feminine) aesthetics and (masculine) politics. The second epigraph, an excerpt from Acosta's article on "Los españoles en España," neuters the gender of the Latin American writer yet maintains his/her primarily aesthetic concerns. The goal of the "escritor en la patria americana" is to present his country in a way that everyone—citizens and foreigners alike ("sus habitantes" and "los extraños")—can come to understand it (Acosta de Samper, "Los Españoles" 59). Acosta's vision for an American literature does not ignore the different customs and unique essence of each nation; instead, the Spanish American writer should investigate national particularities so profoundly that both insiders and outsiders can recognize their worth. Thus, the transnational "literatura americana" envisioned by Acosta describes Spanish American space in such a "flattering" way that its readers cannot help but "admire" and "love" certain aspects of each *patria*. The goal of the Spanish American writer—male or female—is, Acosta argues, to document diversity, promote cross-cultural understanding, and cultivate plural national attachment. While it is inevitable that artistic representation of national space has political import, Acosta envisions a Spanish American writer capable of describing a transnational reality of "habitantes" and "extraños" without prescribing a path for national reform, as less "humble" writers are left to do.

Read in conjunction, these epigraphs suggest that Acosta's literature does not serve the Colombian nation in the same way that her husband demands. Rather than create an exclusively Colombian literature as Samper envisions, Acosta chooses to

develop a transnational, American one. In this way, Acosta's literary project aligns with that of her female contemporaries, who also "pensaban no en términos de patrimonios nacionales (que típicamente han excluido su trabajo) sino mas bien en términos mundiales o hemisféricos" (Pratt, "Las mujeres" 55). Despite Pratt's attention to these gendered practices of "mediación trasnacional," the limited scholarship on Acosta's writing tends to repeat José María Samper's reductionist inscription of his wife's work within a strictly nation-building context.<sup>60</sup> In contrast to this trend, I will demonstrate how *Una holandesa en América* (1876) registers Acosta's transnational worldview. This novel performs the author's vision for "una literatura americana;" it describes a heterogeneous, eclectic Colombia populated by "habitantes" and "extraños"—a transnational citizenship who has learned to embrace the unique offerings of multiple national cultures.<sup>61</sup>

The transnational turn in *Una holandesa en América* challenges three tenets of nation-building discourse: first, that there is an innate, emotional attachment that ties an individual to a single national space; secondly, that formulations of collective identity should assimilate the foreign other in order to mitigate this threat to national cohesion; thirdly, that nation building requires the "civilization" of its "barbaric" constituents. *Una*

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<sup>60</sup> See especially Rodríguez-Arenas 142 as well as Alzate, "Presentación" 13 and Alzate, "Prólogo" 13.

<sup>61</sup> Acosta also expresses her transnational perspective in the newspapers *El Domingo de la Familia Cristiana* and *La Mujer* (Ordóñez 400). As Acosta writes in *La Mujer*: "En esta pobre Colombia, en donde amamos tanto lo que viene de fuera, y desdeñamos con tanto ahinco cuanto tenemos de bueno, ¿por que nos empeñamos siempre en traer del extranjero cuanta idea mala y perniciosa encontramos, y jamas procuramos transportar a nuestro país lo bueno y benéfico de otras naciones?" (qtd in Encinales de Sanjinés 231). See *La Mujer* No. 25, p. 42. For a comparison of Acosta and José Martí's visions for an American literature, see Helena Rueda.

*holandesa en América* employs a performative rhetorical device—juxtaposing—in order to impart these counter-national perspectives. This chapter advances our understanding of performative literary form by comparing *Una holandesa en América* to another performative novel (*El periquillo sarniento*) and contrasting it with a contemporaneous national allegory (*María*). In doing so, this chapter corroborates a key finding of the previous one: because performative literary form destabilizes the foundation of nation-building discourse, it is typically marginalized by the elite *letrados* committed to projects of national consolidation.

A performative reading of *Una holandesa en América* documents the productive tension between nationalism and transnationalism in the mid-1800s. My analysis situates *Una holandesa* at the crossroads of *romanticismo* and *modernismo* in Spanish America. At this junction, the novel anticipates the modernist cultivation of what Alejandro Mejías-López calls a “transnational literary field,” yet simultaneously registers the nationalist impulse characteristic of Romanticism.<sup>62</sup> Caught between the nation-building discourse of the early 1800s and the Spanish Americanism of the late 1800s, *Una holandesa* requires us to read beyond a national-allegorical framework. Acosta’s novel documents the rapid transition from nation building to continent building. While these two periods tend to be considered in isolation of one another, *Una holandesa* invites readers to pause and consider how Spanish American political thought evolved so quickly. Specifically, this chapter proposes that performative literary form facilitated this formative transition.

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<sup>62</sup> See Mejías-López 50–54.

### 19<sup>th</sup>-century transnationalism in *Una holandesa en América*

*Una holandesa en América* was first published in installments in the Bogotá newspaper *La Ley* in 1876 and then reprinted as a novel in 1888. As its title makes clear, this novel is centrally concerned with the transnational experience. Through a combination of third-person narration, letters, and diary entries, *Una holandesa en América* describes the journey of Lucía from her childhood home in Holland to Colombia, where she reunites with her widowed father and estranged siblings. The novel is imbued with hints of a transnational Colombia.<sup>63</sup> Most obviously, *Una holandesa en América* contains very few “Colombian” characters. With the exception of Lucía’s siblings (who are children of immigrants) and her friend Mercedes, none of the other main characters are born in Colombia. As Catharina Vallejo observes, “Acosta presenta a Colombia (...) como país de inmigrantes que interpretan—re-inventan y así re-crean—la nueva realidad” (Vallejo, “Legitimación” 490). Acosta presents a Colombia populated by transnational citizens similar to Lucía. Lucía befriends an English couple who has transplanted their life to Colombia, and her sister Clorinda marries a foreigner living in Antioquia. *Una holandesa* does not conjure this diverse population in order to represent an ideal nation-to-come; it describes a historical reality.<sup>64</sup> Beginning in the 1850s, the population of

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<sup>63</sup> From 1832 to 1858, present-day Colombia (República de Colombia) was known as the República de la Nueva Granada. The Constitution of 1858 established the República Federativa de los Estados Unidos Colombianos, a name which persisted until 1886 (Vallejo, “Soledad Acosta y su época” 272). For the sake of simplicity and concision, I will use the term “Colombia” to name this geographic space.

<sup>64</sup> It is of note that the diverse population in *Una holandesa* makes no mention of any indigenous inhabitants. Acosta’s exclusion of the indigenous population in Colombia distinguishes her from contemporaries such as Clorinda Matto de Turner, Ricardo Palma, and Juana Manuela Gorriti (Ballesteros Rosas 297).

many Spanish American countries grew quickly as immigration increased (Oviedo 141). In Colombia, immigrants tended to settle near the ideologically liberal Bogotá, where the majority of *Una holandesa* takes place (Vallejo, “Dicotomía y dialéctica” 291).<sup>65</sup> Other hints of a transnational Colombia include Lucía’s multi-lingual capacities and the letters she exchanges with international penpals (Vallejo, “Legitimación” 485–489).<sup>66</sup> Finally, some critics suggest that *Una holandesa en América* was written for a transnational audience.<sup>67</sup>

More explicitly, *Una holandesa* narrates the process through which Lucía comes to embrace a transnational identity. At first, Lucía feels profoundly connected to a singular national space, as the Romantic disposition she inherited from her mother conditions her to do. Eventually, after a difficult transition to Colombian life, Lucía comes to realize that Romantic nationalism does not best serve her personal well-being, nor that of the diverse Colombian population. As pragmatic Realism softens her idealistic Romanticism in the New World, Lucía learns that her sense of attachment to both Holland and Colombia is not predicated on some innate, emotional connection, but instead a rational decision to cultivate a plurality of attachments. The conclusion of *Una holandesa* highlights the spiritual fulfillment Lucía achieves by choosing to identify with multiple families and multiple national spaces.

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<sup>65</sup> For a description of Colombia’s stark regional divisions in the 1850s, see R. L. Williams.

<sup>66</sup> Lucía communicates with her aunt and her cousin in Dutch, with her father in English, with Mercedes in German and English, and with other immigrants in French.

<sup>67</sup> DeJong and Vallejo notice that *Una holandesa en América* footnotes explanations of potentially confusing Colombian customs or terminology. Defining regional terms such as *raunitas* (128) *zamarros* (148), and *cachaco* (186) ensures the novel’s legibility to foreign readers (DeJong 60; Vallejo, “Estudio introductorio” 34).

Unlike *El periquillo sarniento*, which explicitly uses the term *cosmopolita* to characterize the colonel's vision of world citizenship, *Una holandesa en América* does not offer a clear label for Lucía's experience as a Dutch woman living in Colombia. This is not surprising; in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there was ample terminology to describe singular national attachment (*patria, nacionalismo*) and, to a more limited extent, worldly detachment (*cosmopolitismo*, a term borrowed from the 18<sup>th</sup> century), but not a plural identification with two countries, such as Lucía's. In fact, the term *transnational* did not emerge until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when Randolph Bourne used it in his 1916 essay "Trans-National America" to oppose the imperial mentality of U.S. immigration policy and advocate for the country's warmer reception of new immigrants (Pease, "Introduction: Re-Mapping the Transnational Turn" 4; Frassinelli, Frenkel, and Watson 2). The term gained momentum throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century as it was picked up by International Relations scholarship and eventually by Migration Studies. Today, the humanities and social sciences alike take great interest in the transnational, often in relation to scholarship on 21<sup>st</sup>-century cosmopolitanism, globalization and postcoloniality.

As a consequence of this explosion of interest, *transnational* is a notoriously ambiguous and amorphous term, especially when applied retroactively and indiscriminately to earlier historical contexts. Donald Pease's concise definition captures the vast scope of transnational studies: "Overall, 'the transnational' describes a field whose modes of disciplinary analysis, location, objects of attention, and practitioners are in transit and transaction" (Pease, "Introduction: Re-Mapping the Transnational Turn"

6).<sup>68</sup> Within this framework, “the transnational” could refer to a number of phenomenon in this chapter: the transitory life of Acosta, the novel’s legibility to foreign readers, Lucía’s straddling of two national identities, or the interpretive framework I use to understand these affairs. Most convincingly, it is Lucía’s relationship to plural national spaces that warrants classifying *Una holandesa en América* as a “transnational romance.” In fact, “transnational” better labels Lucía’s experience than would any of the following concepts: cosmopolitanism, globalization, internationalism, multiculturalism, post-nationalism, or transatlanticism.<sup>69</sup>

Throughout this chapter, I demonstrate how *Una holandesa* represents a 19<sup>th</sup>-century transnationalism that anticipates many features of its 20<sup>th</sup>-century counterpart. Specifically, *Una holandesa* breaks with the center-periphery movement of colonial imperialism and twentieth-century globalization; documents movement between national spaces without privileging either bordered place, nor negating the nation itself; and describes a condition of contradictory in-betweenness that does not dialectically synthesize difference. As I elaborate on these defining features of transnationalism, I will distinguish the transnational from other concepts with great bearing in the nineteenth century: the cosmopolitan, the global, and the transatlantic. By limiting the scope of the transnational, this chapter sets a precedent of conceptual specificity in nineteenth-century

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<sup>68</sup> See also Jay 5.

<sup>69</sup> Internationalism implies the interaction of self-enclosed nation-states, whereas transnationalism implies an opening of national borders through cultural and economic exchanges; “The transnational differs from the international in that it forecloses the possibility that either nation in the transaction will remain self-enclosed and unitary. In transnational formations, identities, things, finances, and places are not bound by national identifications and investments” (Pease, “Introduction: Re-Mapping the Transnational Turn” 5).

literary studies and asks scholars to reevaluate the widespread practice of conflating the transnational, the cosmopolitan, and the transatlantic in the Spanish-American context.<sup>70</sup>

The collaborative *Minor Transnationalism* (2005), by Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih, provides one of the most lucid distinctions between the transnational and the global. Lionnet and Shih qualify “transnationalism” as “minor” in order to distinguish it from the implicitly “major transnationalism” that other theorists often conflate with “globalization.” When the transnational too closely approaches the notion of the global, transnationalism is criticized for reproducing colonialist ideologies and practices: assuming a universal set of values, disseminating them, and attempting to homogenize world cultures. Lionnet and Shih contend that the logic of globalization produces “a hierarchy of subjects between the so-called universal and particular, with all the attendant problems of Eurocentric universalism” (Lionnet and Shih 5). Globalization moves centripetally and centrifugally at the same time; it “assumes a universal core or norm, which spreads out across the world while pulling into its vortex other forms of culture to be tested by its norm” (5). Even though transnationalism and globalization share certain historical contingencies in the late twentieth-century, Lionnet and Shih define a transnationalism that departs from the totalizing, homogenizing movement of globalization. Instead of reproducing globalization’s one-directional movement from center to periphery, “minor transnationalism” conceives of the rhizomatic, multi-directional, and unmediated exchange of ideas between “networks of minoritized cultures” (7). In this way, the transnational departs from the global because it “can be conceived as

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<sup>70</sup> For numerous examples of this conflation, see Alejandro Mejías-López’s *The Inverted Conquest* (2009).



a space of exchange (...) where it is still possible for cultures to be produced and performed without necessary mediation by the center” (5).<sup>71</sup>

*Una holandesa en América* highlights one such space of transnational exchange: it depicts the non-hierarchical circulation of ideas between two spaces of minoritized culture (Holland and Colombia) without the mediation of contemporary cultural centers (France and Spain). If 20<sup>th</sup>-century (minor) transnationalism circumvents the flow of capital from urban centers in the West to the peripheral developing world, 19<sup>th</sup>-century transnationalism radically opposes the *civilización-barbarie* dichotomy that supported the imperial colonization of peripheral spaces. In contrast to other nineteenth-century novels that represent European-American exchanges, *Una holandesa en América* does not advocate the one-way importation of “civilized” European culture to the “barbaric” Americas. Although Lucía imports some aspects of European culture (such as the valorization of formal education), she also exports some of her discoveries in the New World (i.e. Catholicism, Realist objectivity, and Colombian slang). Lucía recognizes the barbaric and civilized aspects of Dutch and Colombian culture alike, thereby upending the colonialist hierarchy of European over American subjects. Unlike Domingo Faustino Sarmiento or Flora Tristán, who believe French culture to be a universal norm capable of civilizing and homogenizing Spanish American culture, or authors such as Manuel de Jesús Galván, who romanticize the Spanish legacy in the New World, Acosta does not present the Americas as a passive receptor of French or Spanish civilization, but as a co-

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<sup>71</sup> Other scholars corroborate this distinction between the center-periphery movement of globalization and the back-and-forth rhizomatic exchange of transnationalism. See Jay 3 and Frassinelli, Frenkel, and Watson 1–2.

producer of a transnational heterogeneity. In this way, Acosta radically departs from the prevailing ideologies of cultural exchange and revises her contemporaries' narratives of transit and migration.

Despite the fact that Lucía's Dutch origins rarely provoke critical attention, I argue that the protagonist's "Dutchness" facilitates the novel's transnational turn. Acosta depicts "una holandesa" in America—as opposed to "una francesa" or "una española"—for two reasons. "Holanda" and "una holandesa" simultaneously designate a space of minoritized culture capable of entering into transnational exchange *and* an imperial center determined to disseminate its culture to the peripheries. Although the Netherlands was a strong imperial power in the 1600s, the Dutch presence in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Latin American is relatively "minor" in relation to that of the Spanish and Portuguese; while Spain once controlled the majority of the continent, Dutch holdings on the northeastern coast were short-lived. Furthermore, France—not Holland—was the cultural capital of the nineteenth century, and Latin American intellectuals consistently imported French models of governing, writing and living. In this way, the signifiers "Holanda" and "una holandesa" are imperial enough to recall the influence of Spain and France in the Americas, but not so imperial that they reproduce the colonial hierarchy of subjects—civilized Europeans over barbaric Americans—that we see in other nineteenth-century literature. Ingeniously, Acosta's depiction of "una holandesa" in Colombia conjures up images of Spanish colonization of the New World and Francophilic formations of

homogeneous national cultures *in order to subvert them*.<sup>72</sup> By means of Lucía's Dutch heritage, Acosta creates a transnational identity that departs from the discourse of nation building in two ways: first, *Una holandesa* undermines the *civilización-barbarie* scheme of Europeanized national homogeneity and, secondly, abandons the Romantic cultivation of singular national roots.

A transnational departure from the center-periphery model of cultural dissemination has various implications. As Adele Parker and Stephenie Young summarize in their introduction to *Transnationalism and Resistance: Experience and Experiment in Women's Writing* (2013):

Transnationalism is not a new term for internationalism or globalization or any other existing system. It marks a break with the old model of center and periphery. Instead of emphasizing traditional national boundaries, transnationalism places importance on the 'trans': it marks movement across or beyond prescribed cultural and national spaces without privileging those spaces. It grows out of local sites of production but acknowledges that the local must have conversation with the global (1–2).

This is precisely the case in *Una holandesa en América*. Whether labeled as “minor transnationalism” or simply “transnationalism,”<sup>73</sup> Acosta's novel emphasizes the ‘trans’ movement of ideas and people between two sites of minoritized culture (relatively speaking): Holland and Colombia. Lucía privileges neither her original Dutch roots nor her nascent Colombian identity. In cultivating plural attachment to two national spaces,

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<sup>72</sup> Potentially, there is an auto-biographical explanation of Lucía's heritage, given that Acosta's mother was likely Dutch (Alzate, “Presentación” 13; Rodríguez-Arenas 133).

<sup>73</sup> Frassinelli et. al., Jay, and Parker and Young offer definitions of the transnational that resemble Lionnet and Shih's “minor” transnationalism.

Lucía's transnational disposition puts the local in conversation with the global, situating local identity on a global stage without "losing the unique specificities that make [its characters] human" (Parker and Young 4).

This interaction between the local and the global brings us to the next feature of transnationalism in *Una holandesa en América*: the fact that the transnational produces national attachments in most parts of the world (Frassinelli, Frenkel, and Watson 3). Paradoxically, transnationalism has the tendency "to draw attention to what it negates—that is, to the continued significance of the national" (Hannerz 6). Unlike the cosmopolitanism in *El periquillo sarniento*, which advocates detachment from and eventual transcendence of the national, the transnationalism in *Una holandesa en América* exemplifies how national "rooting" and transnational "routing" co-exist in productive tension.<sup>74</sup> Transnational transit does not deny the existence of bordered, national spaces, but paradoxically reinforces their influence on mobile subjects. In this way, the transnational who "operat[es] in several countries" (Pease, "Introduction: Re-Mapping the Transnational Turn" 4) does not resemble post-colonial or nomadic subjects who "function as if they are free-floating signifiers without psychic and material investment in one or more given particular geopolitical spaces" (Lionnet and Shih 8). Indeed, the two transnational characters in *Una holandesa*—Lucía and Mercedes—are profoundly invested in plural geopolitical spaces. Lucía is concerned for the well being of her Dutch and Colombian families and remains emotionally invested in both homes. Mercedes advocates objective attachment to multiple national spaces, yet dedicates

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<sup>74</sup> See Gilroy 19 on the distinction between roots and routes..

significant amounts of energy to Colombian political reform. If transnationalism is a spectrum that moves from national rootedness to transnational flexibility, Lucía and Mercedes vacillate between these two poles. Taken together, their relationship to Colombian space highlights “the multiple relations between the national and the transnational” (Lionnet and Shih 8).

In this way, *Una holandesa en América* marks the double movement of the transnational: “the transnational names an undecidable economic, political, or social formation that is neither in nor out of the nation-state. Inherently relational, the transnational involves a double move: to the inside, to the core constituents of a given nation, and to an outside, whatever forces introduce a new configuration” (Pease, “Introduction: Re-Mapping the Transnational Turn” 5–6). On the one hand, the transnational in *Una holandesa* carries the centripetal desire to root identity in a national space; on the other hand, it centrifugally destabilizes singular national attachment and imagines new relationships between individuals and their territory(ies). Considered in this double sense, transnational discourse is inherently dialogic; “the transnational mobilizes plural, often competing discourses that generate contradictions, new truths, and ruptures” (Pease, “Introduction: Re-Mapping the Transnational Turn” 5). Acosta’s novel juxtaposes two competing discourses—subjective nationalism and objective transnationalism—in order to critique the violent nature of singular national attachment and generate an alternative: a peaceful, plural attachment to multiple nation-states. In *Una holandesa*, the transnational is “neither in nor out of the nation-state,” reinforcing national boundaries as it crosses them.

This is not to say that 19<sup>th</sup>-century transnationalism is merely an extension or a reconfiguration of Independence-era nationalisms.<sup>75</sup> In the specific instance of *Una holandesa en América*, the transnational represents a departure from Romantic nationalism, which idealizes inexplicable emotional attachment to one's birthplace. The transnational turn in *Una holandesa* disarticulates—without completely severing—the emotional connection between Lucía and her “homeland.”<sup>76</sup> This disruption allows the transnational to undermine the identitarian claims of the nation-state (Ashcroft 13); Lucía is not obligated to identify solely with her birthplace and can rationally choose to cultivate plural attachment.

Consistent with Lionnet and Shih's stress on “the creative interventions that networks of minoritized cultures produce *within* and *across* national boundaries” (7, emphasis mine), the transnational in *Una holandesa* first emerges when Lucía crosses national boundaries, but it reaches its apogee *within* Colombian national boundaries.<sup>77</sup> Once settled in Colombia, Lucía does not relate vertically to an ideal image of the Colombian nation; instead, she finds common ground with other immigrants who are embarking on the process of “becoming-Colombian.”<sup>78</sup> As Lucía discovers what it means

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<sup>75</sup> Whether or not transnational opposes or extends nationalism is a hotly debated question. See, for example, Khan 2 and Parker and Young 3.

<sup>76</sup> This language to describe the transnational comes from Pease: “In the nation, territory and people are fused; in transnational formations, they are disarticulated” (Pease, “Introduction: Re-Mapping the Transnational Turn” 5).

<sup>77</sup> Ashcroft similarly configures the origin of the “transnation” within national boundaries: “This idea is the concept of the transnation, a way of seeing the mobility and agency of peoples beyond the category of the international, beyond the category of the transnational as simply a movement between nations. The transnation begins *within* the nation” (Ashcroft 13).

<sup>78</sup> These immigrants include: an English couple involved in the Colombian mining industry; Mercedes, a native Colombian who returns from Europe and rediscovers what it means to love

to be(come) a transnational in Colombia, she sends letters to women who respond from similarly “minoritized” positions, both within national boundaries (Mercedes) and across them (Lucía’s cousin and aunt in Holland); in doing so, Lucía establishes a discursive network through which she can critique Romantic nationalism, share her discovery of plural, transnational attachment, and disrupt prevailing gender ideologies.

Thus, the transnational does not imply the post-national. The transnational turn in *Una holandesa* does not leave behind national demarcations; paradoxically, it reinforces national boundaries as it crosses them and simultaneously disarticulates the relationship between territory and people, birthplace and identity. Consequently, classifying Lucía’s experience as “transatlantic” would overlook the extent to which the transnational dialogues with the national in the novel. Describing Lucía’s movement as “transnational” as opposed to “transatlantic” preserves a pointed reference to her plural national attachments. Additionally, this signifier avoids any slippage from a transatlantic subjectivity to a nomadic or post-colonial one, which, as indicated above, would misrepresent Lucía’s investment in multiple geopolitical spaces. Finally, reading *Una holandesa* through a transatlantic lens risks implying that identification with multiple national spaces originates in an oceanic crossing. Such an assumption would ignore the experience of writers such as Soledad Acosta de Samper, Juana Manuela Gorriti, and Juana Manso, whose literary careers span multiple countries within Spanish America and

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and defend her birthplace; and Lucía’s siblings who, despite being born in Colombia, are raised by their Irish father and continuously navigate various cultural norms.

revise the notion of strictly “national” literatures.<sup>79</sup> As opposed to cosmopolitanism, globalization, post-nationalism or transatlanticism, “transnationalism” precisely names Lucía’s non-preferential relation to two national spaces in *Una holandesa en América*.

*Una holandesa en América* thus departs from the thematic and aesthetic codes that governed canon formation in nineteenth-century Spanish America. Not only does *Una holandesa* critique the Romantic ideal of belonging to one, homogenous nation, it also upends the colonialist, Eurocentric model of one-directional cultural exchange. In continuation, I will demonstrate how performative literary form imparts these counter-national perspectives. In order to contextualize the uniqueness of *Una holandesa*’s transnational turn and begin to address the politics of canon formation, this chapter now turns to Jorge Isaacs’s *María* (1867)—a tale of immigration that was canonized for its allegorical construction of a homogeneous, autochthonous Colombian citizenship. Comparing *María* to *Una holandesa en América* reveals the various possible relationships between aesthetics and politics in nineteenth-century Spanish America: in *María*, allegorical form imparts national content, whereas in *Una holandesa*, performative form parallels transnational content.

### **Assimilation and national homogeneity in *María***

Like many of the novels that Sommer classifies as “foundational fictions,” Isaacs’s novel tells the story of failed love; Efraín falls in love with María, an orphaned

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<sup>79</sup> This list of transnational Latin American writers consists of women because the majority of male writers who moved between countries did so as exiles. This list thus avoids conflating forced exile with voluntary transnationalism. It would be erroneous to imply that exile involves the same circulation of ideas that characterizes transnationalism.



child his Colombian family has taken in, but she dies of hereditary disease before they can marry. More than a love story, *María* is a narrative of immigration and transnational displacement. As Isaacs details in Chapter 7, María was born in Jamaica to Jewish parents, Salomón and Sara, who originally named her Esther. When his wife dies, Salomón gives “Esther” to his cousin (who is Efraín’s father) and asks that he baptize her under the Christian name “María” as soon as possible (Isaacs 12).

As soon as Efraín’s father arrives in Colombia with the Jewish baby, he converts her. Unlike Lucía, who decides on her own terms to move to Colombia and then later to convert to Catholicism, María has no say in her transnational move or forced conversion. As her changed name explicitly signifies, María’s Christian, Colombian, and hispanophone identity quickly replaces Esther’s Jewish, Caribbean, and Anglophone one. María is immediately integrated into Efraín’s family, so she never learns to articulate her otherness. As Efraín recalls, “Durante nuestros juegos infantiles sus labios empezaron a modular acentos castellanos, tan armoniosos y seductores en una linda boca de mujer y en la risueña de un niño” (Isaacs 12). Indoctrinated into a Spanish-speaking culture, María is denied the opportunity to register her otherness (whether Jamaican or Jewish) through her native language (English).

If language signifies national identity, as *Una holandesa* suggests it does,<sup>80</sup> María’s monolingualism stands in stark contrast to Lucía’s multilingualism. While

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<sup>80</sup> On the boat from Europe to the Americas, Lucía associates language with national identity when she meets Andrés van-Rokin, the Realist sailor who was supposed to marry Lucía’s mother; “viendo que era compatriota mío, me le acerqué y le dirigí la palabra en holandés. Se manifestó

Lucía's ability to speak Spanish, French, German, English and Dutch signals her transnational disposition, María learns to speak Spanish so well that she passes as a native Colombian. In fact, her monolingual performance renders her otherness invisible; as Efraín recalls with fondness, "pocos eran entonces los que conociendo *nuestra* familia, pudiesen sospechar que María no era hija de mis padres. Hablaba bien *nuestro* idioma, era amable, viva e inteligente. Cuando mi madre le acariciaba la cabeza, al mismo tiempo que a mis hermanas y a mí, ninguno hubiera podido adivinar cuál era allí la huérfana" (Isaacs 13, emphasis mine). In Isaacs's Colombia, María is admired because she elides her foreign roots and invalidates any suspicion that her parents are different than those of Efraín. In contrast to Lucía, who actively identifies with two families, Efraín's family ensures that María forget her biological family and only belong to their own. By conveniently overlooking the fact that María is an orphan of foreign parents, Efraín's family treats María as if she were a territory-less *tabula rasa* upon which they can construct national family values.<sup>81</sup> They erase the linguistic and ethnic alterity that marks her, making sure that María is assimilated into the Christian, Spanish-speaking ways of her new Colombian family.<sup>82</sup>

If we understand *erasure* "in the Derridian sense of an operation that at the same time hides and shows that it is hiding," it becomes clear that María's forced assimilation

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encantado con aquel acento que debió sonarle como música celestial, puesto que era la de la patria ausente" (98).

<sup>81</sup> On the function of "Jewishness" as a "wandering signifier" in Latin American narrative, see Zivin 2.

<sup>82</sup> Zivin considers this a defining feature of Latin American literature. In contrast to the historic tendency in Europe to expel the "stranger," the overriding tendency in Latin America has been "to convert, assimilate, transculturate, or incorporate the racialized other into the nation" (Zivin 19).

into Colombian culture both erases her foreign roots and also exposes her otherness (Avelar 137). In the above passage, Efraín's use of "nuestra familia" and "nuestro idioma" both excludes and includes María from his family, positioning her as both different and same. On the one hand, the orphan is an Other not originally part of "nuestra familia;" on the other hand, Efraín's family can seamlessly absorb María into their family because she performs sameness by speaking "nuestro idioma" with apparent fluency. In this way, María is both integral to and separate from the Colombian "we." As Efraín tries to hide María's alterity, his pronoun usage inevitably reveals her otherness.

The novel's ideology of erasure also manifests itself in María's voice, which simultaneously denies and affirms her transnational roots. At the age of nine, María speaks Spanish with a strangely melancholic tone. Efraín notices her "acento con algo de melancólico que no tenían nuestras voces" (Isaacs 13); this "nuestro" excludes María, since her accent marks her as Other. María's subtly melancholic accent suggests that she is grieving a loss: in this case, the deletion of her foreign identity. Understood in the Freudian sense, María's melancholy mourns something that is lost—her otherness—while always keeping it present. Although fluently speaking Spanish allows María to obscure the Jamaican and Jewish parts of her identity and pass as an assimilated Colombian, her unique accent cannot help but register her hidden otherness. As Efraín later reiterates: "y su acento, sin dejar de tener aquella música que le era peculiar, se hacía lento y profundo al pronunciar palabras suavemente articuladas que en vano probaría yo a recordar hoy; porque (...) pertenecen a otro idioma, del cual hace muchos

años no viene a mi memoria ni una frase” (Isaacs 20). For María, speaking Spanish both includes and excludes her from her Colombian family.

María’s transnational move and subsequent assimilation into Colombian culture allegorizes the attempted synthesis of a Colombian national identity. Even as *María* admits the undeniable presence of alterity within national space, Isaacs’s novel idealizes the eventual formation of a homogenous nation that could erase difference and absorb the foreign Other.<sup>83</sup> In fact, *María* makes it a point to actively exclude the transnational from the national. In Chapter 23, Efraín explicitly objects to the publication of Cuban poetry in Colombian newspapers; despite the similarities between Cuba and Colombia, Efraín dismisses the relevance of transnational exchanges such as these to his national experience (Isaacs 60). Efraín implies that the transnational should remain outside of the national.

The intercalated love story of Nay and Sinar, two slaves living in Africa, similarly distances the national from the transnational. Chapters 40-43 leave the national plot of the surrounding chapters in order to depict exotic characters in far away lands. These isolated chapters can be interpreted in two ways. First, they highlight the ways in which *María* reproduces the generic conventions of sentimental novels from France; popular novels such as Bernardin de Saint-Pierre’s *Paul et Virginie* and Chateaubriand’s *Atala* often include an element of exoticism to intrigue their readers (McGrady 172). Within this

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<sup>83</sup> Much of the scholarship on *María* explains the novel’s anxiety about difference by pointing to the regionalism that divided Colombia in the late 1800s. For historical context, see Avelar 108 and R. L. Williams 13–16. See Avelar 154 and Sommer, *Foundational Fictions* 173 on how *María* allegorizes Colombia’s inability to synthesize its regional difference.

interpretation, the Nay and Sinar episode is a strategy for satisfying the reader's desire to contemplate the exotic Other. Secondly, this intercalated tale also reinforces the novel's model of homogeneous national identity. By exoticizing African characters and transnational space, these chapters ensure that the transnational remain distant and separate from the national. Much like María's accent simultaneously registers difference and sameness, the Nay and Sinar episode articulates the need to exclude the exotic Other from the national imaginary, regardless of how desirable or necessary the body of the (enslaved) Other may be. In *María's* idealization of a homogenous Colombia, the transnational is erased (in the case of María's identity), condemned (in Efraín's comment about national newspapers), or exoticized (in the Nay and Sinar episode). Over and over again, *María* refuses to recognize the foreign as a constituent element of Colombian national culture.

This brief analysis of *María* enables us to see the stark contrast between Isaacs's national romance and Acosta's transnational one. Acosta abandons Isaacs's flawed model of a homogenous, assimilating nation and proposes a transnational alternative. If *María* allegorizes a Colombia of superficial sameness, *Una holandesa* re-presents this foundational fiction in order to describe a Colombia of profound diversity. Instead of trying to absorb or exclude difference in some sort of national synthesis, *Una holandesa* juxtaposes difference and proposes an alternative order of plural attachment.

In order to rewrite the national content of Isaacs's novel, Acosta also revises the allegorical rhetorical strategy in *María*. *María* and *Una holandesa* propose different models of intimate attachment (Eros) in order to represent distinct models of national

belonging (Polis). *María* epitomizes the Romantic model of singular attachment; Isaacs's novel idealizes the emotional stability that comes with monogamous intimate attachment and imagines a citizenship devoted to one nation (not various regions).<sup>84</sup> Indeed, in *María*, heteronormative, monogamous Eros parallels and reinforces singular national Polis. In contrast, *Una holandesa* debunks the Romantic ideal of loving one husband and one national space. Acosta's novel describes Lucía's multiple personal and national attachments, thereby coupling plural Eros with transnational Polis. In the next section, I theorize the performative rhetorical device that facilitates this transformation of the national-allegorical mode: juxtaposing.

Before proceeding, however, it is necessary to clarify that I am by no means the first to compare Isaacs and Acosta's novels. It is well documented that *Una holandesa en América* (among other novels by Acosta) re-writes the model of femininity advanced in *María*.<sup>85</sup> The reading I offer of *Una holandesa* does not focus on how Acosta (re)defines women's social roles; instead, it considers how *Una holandesa* rewrites *María*'s strictly allegorical signifying process and homogenous depiction of national space.<sup>86</sup> With this focus, I do not deny that Acosta sought to carve out a space for politically active, well-educated women in Colombia, or that *Una holandesa* launches feminist critiques against

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<sup>84</sup> For example, Efraín is overwhelmed by the "amor patrio" he feels for the region he grew up and remains attached to María, his "primer amor" (Isaacs 4, 11).

<sup>85</sup> See Encinales de Sanjinés 143, Gonzales Ascorra; Rodríguez-Arenas; and Vallejo, "Dicotomía y dialéctica." For further discussion of Acosta's feminist commitments, see Encinales de Sanjinés; Gómez Ocampo; Gonzales Ascorra; Guerra-Cunningham; Rodríguez-Arenas; Skinner; Vallejo, "Dicotomía y dialéctica"; and Vallejo, "Estudio introductorio."

<sup>86</sup> Catharina Vallejo's later work begins to recognize how *Una holandesa en América* "se opone a la tradicional endogamia colombiana, reflejada (...) por Jorge Isaacs en *María*, y de la hispanofilia tradicional de la élite colombiana (Vallejo, "Legitimación" 491).

gender inequality and marriage. I intentionally set aside these feminist approaches to Acosta and her writing in order to allow room for other observations about *Una holandesa*'s political commitments. Specifically, my performative approach to the novel reveals how it redefines Colombian collective identity in an unexpected—and controversial—way.

### **Juxtaposing Romanticism and Realism in *Una holandesa en América***

In order to convey its innovative transnational turn and avoid producing another national narrative, *Una holandesa en América* departs from two narrative traditions of its time: the national romance's coupling of heteronormative Eros with national Polis (as previously mentioned) and the *costumbrista* blending of Romanticism and Realism. Unlike *costumbrista* novels, *Una holandesa en América* incorporates aspects of Romanticism and Realism without synthesizing their differences. The symbolic characterization of Lucía and her interlocutors marks the irreconcilable differences between these two aesthetic modes.

Specifically, Part I of *Una holandesa* establishes a dichotomy between the Romantic tendencies of Lucía and her mother and the more Realist propensities of Lucía's Dutch family. This section of the novel describes Lucía's childhood in Holland, where she lives with her extended family. Because her biological parents had moved to Colombia when she was too young to accompany them on the transatlantic journey, Lucía lives with her aunt and her cousin, Rieken. These opening chapters cast Lucía and her mother, Johanna, as hopeless romantics. Johanna's "romanticismo" leads her to

contrive “ensueños inverosímiles” during two distinct courtships, both of which consequently fail (68).<sup>87</sup> Lucía inherits her mother’s tendency to fantasize about worlds that do not correspond with reality. As the young woman corresponds with her father in Colombia, “llegó a formarse una idea enteramente poética e inverosímil de aqueste mundo nuevo, en que creía que todo era dicha, perfumes, belleza, fiestas constantes, paseos por en medio de campos ideales; y por consiguiente, despertose en ella un deseo ardiente de conocer país tan privilegiado” (73). Lucía and her mother thus represent Romanticism’s foundation in poetry, emotion, the new and the unknown, exceptional individuality, and the idealistic transformation of reality; in contrast, their relatives articulate Realism’s basis in prose, reason, the ordinary and the familiar, collective experience, and the mimetic reproduction of reality (Oviedo 140).

A key conversation between Lucía and Rieken enacts this dichotomy. In this telling scene, the two young women describe in different ways how Carlos van Verpoen rescued Lucía. The narrator recounts how Lucía slipped on a bridge and fell into the river in a neutral tone:

Rieken atravesó corriendo y sin vacilar el puentecillo. Pero Lucía, que era más tímida—sintiéndose batida por el viento y deslumbrada por un rayo que cayó a poca distancia y los cegó a todos –, al poner el pie sobre la vacilante tabla

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<sup>87</sup> Johanna’s relationship with the sailor fails because of their incompatible modes of expression. In stark contrast to the sentimental poeticism for which Johanna longs, the sailor communicates his love in simple, unadorned, and decidedly rational prose. Logically, “esto no satisfacía a la ilusa Johanna, quien soñaba con un ideal que no podía existir en aquella tierra tan prosaica, tal vez en ninguna parte del mundo” (69). Johanna then falls in love with Jorge Harris, a flashy young Irish man who woos her by pretending to be the “sentimental” hero of her Romantic fantasies (69). When Johanna discovers this was only an act to procure her sizable dowry, she is devastated (70).



perdió el equilibrio, y se dejó caer dentro del canal, el cual, aunque angosto, era muy hondo en aquel sitio, yéndose al fondo como una piedra... Viendo aquello, Carlos se arrojó al agua sin vacilar y sacó a Lucía, pero no antes de que esta hubiese tragado mucha agua y perdido el sentido. Su salvador la tomó en los brazos y se puso a correr seguido de Rieken. (80)

Following the narrator's factual account, the two cousins offer distinctly different interpretations of Carlos's plunge into the river.

In Lucía's fantasyland, Carlos becomes the Romantic hero who risks his own life in order to demonstrate his love for her. Enraptured by the possibility that she has met her future husband, Lucía explains her desire to thank Carlos for his heroism; "vivo profundamente agradecida y que jamás olvidaré que Carlos van Verpoon me salvó la vida a riesgo de perder la suya" (81). Rieken immediately dismisses Lucía's Romantic interpretation of the river accident and accuses her of exaggeration. Rieken does not contest her cousin's claim that Carlos saved her life, but she does object to Lucía's aggrandizement of his behavior. Rieken tries to reason with Lucía: "La acción de aquel joven no fue un acto de heroísmo: él solo arriesgaba una mojada y nada más. El canal es sumamente angosto en aquel punto y le bastaba agarrarse de la orilla para salir a tierra" (81). Rieken considers Lucía to be "una mojada:" an ordinary girl who happened to fall into the river, not the object of Carlos's affection. A true Romantic, Lucía wants to see herself as someone exceptional and unique; in her response to Rieken, she indicates her belief that her individuality motivated Carlo's act of self-sacrifice. Lucía asks Rieken, "¿te parece que no debería agradecerle absolutamente lo que hizo *por mí*?" (82, my emphasis). In Lucía's Romantic fantasy, Carlos saved her *because* he loves her (*por*), not

*in order to* save some random woman during a storm (*para*). Lucía feels attracted to Carlos, as if his plunge into the river indicated a hidden emotional bond between the two acquaintances. Rieken cannot justify this unsubstantiated connection, arguing that “Van Verpoen nos sacó a las dos de un afán y a ti del agua como lo hubiera hecho con cualquiera otra persona” (82). Within this Realist focus on shared experience, Rieken and Lucía are both ordinary women, and Carlos helps them as he would anyone.

In this conversation, Lucía’s Romanticism directly contrasts Rieken’s Realism. Lucía transforms reality, believes in the exceptionality of each individual and their circumstances, and predicates attachment on an inherent, inexplicable emotional connection. Rieken, on the other hand, mimetically reproduces reality, emphasizes the banality of shared circumstances, and believes that logic, not emotion, motivates the interaction between two individuals. There appears to be no compromise between the Romantic and Realist modes of representation and models of attachment. Either Lucía idealistically praises Carlos’s heroic act of love or she does not thank him at all (82).

This either/or mentality frustrates Rieken, who encourages Lucía to find a happy middle ground between the extremes of Romanticism and Realism; “lo único que te digo es que ni lo creas un héroe, ni tampoco le dejes de agradecer lo que hizo contigo” (82). Lucía is sick of being told that she does not accurately interpret reality,<sup>88</sup> and she reacts

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<sup>88</sup> In a previous scene, Lucía expresses her frustration that her Dutch family will not support her romanticized portrayal of her father’s life in Colombia: “Lucía se propuso rendirle culto como a un ser que aquellas gentes sencillas eran incapaces de comprender. Y en su ignorancia del mundo y entusiasmo juvenil, le revistió en su imaginación de cuantas nobles cualidades halló descritas en los héroes de las aventuras más extrañas” (72). In order to assign her father the noble,

strongly against Rieken's suggestion to abandon her sentimental idealism; "¡El justo medio, el justo medio! (...) ¿No sabes que ese es el problema de la existencia humana y, según aquel libro que nos prestó Carlos y que leímos juntas, rara persona puede hallarlo en su debida forma?" (82). Much like her mother,<sup>89</sup> Lucía sees Romanticism and Realism as two oppositional extremes. It is impossible for these two worldviews to combine, overlap or blend into some "justo medio." By characterizing Lucía and Rieken in these terms, Part I of *Una holandesa* thus establishes a dichotomy between Romanticism (subjectivity, belief in exceptional individuality, attraction toward the unknown, and idealistic transformation of reality) and Realism (objectivity, emphasis on collective experience, preference for the ordinary and the familiar, and mimetic reproduction of reality).

To be clear, Acosta's novel contrasts Romanticism and Realism on two different fronts: as aesthetic modes and modes of attachment. First, Romanticism and Realism constitute two different ways of representing reality; understood as aesthetic modes, Romanticism enhances reality in idealistic or fantastic ways, whereas Realism prides itself in documenting reality exactly as it appears. Secondly, Romanticism and Realism embody two different modes of attachment. Each movement proposes different answers to questions such as: Why do we feel connected to certain people more than others? How do we express our attachment to others? What does it mean to feel attached to a certain

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adventurous qualities of a Romantic hero, Lucía feels the need to distance herself from her Dutch family—"aquellas gentes sencillas"—who see reality differently.

<sup>89</sup> Johanna fantasizes that her Dutch suitor "se manejase como un héroe de novela" by sending her sentimental, poetic letters. This view is irreconcilable with the reality she lives—that of a "sencillísimo holandés" whose "cold" letters only contain "vulgares (...) expresiones de cariño" (68, 69).

place? Is this sense of belonging something we can actively influence, or is it beyond our control?

*Una holandesa* defines Romantic attachment in the singular; this type of attachment idealizes monogamous relationships—with people or places—founded upon an inexplicable, emotional connection. A more Realist model of attachment, on the contrary, does not value such exclusivity. *Una holandesa* characterizes Realist attachment in the plural; this model of attachment encourages the individual to cultivate a number of attachments, which are justified by a rational assessment of one's personal needs and social obligations. Acosta's novel invokes Romanticism and Realism as two different modes of representation and as two unique models of interpersonal and national attachment. When I refer to Romanticism and Realism as two different "worldviews," I do so to indicate their differing aesthetic and political operations.

I propose the term "juxtaposing" to name the ways in which *Una holandesa* preserves and highlights the oppositionality between Romanticism and Realism.<sup>90</sup> Juxtaposing involves the non-reconciliatory framing of two (or more) contradictory perspectives. Consider, for example, the technique of juxtaposition in the visual arts. Colors, shapes, and ideas are not blended, but counter-posed; each visual element participates equally in the production of a constellation of contradictory ideas. In this sense, juxtaposing takes two (or more) strictly delimited perspectives, preserves their boundaries, and places them in side-by-side relation, all in order to signify through their

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<sup>90</sup> For a discussion of Acosta's use of juxtaposition in *Teresa la limeña* (1868) as well as in her non-fictional writings, see Paulina Encinales de Sanjinés 231.

fundamental tension. If we depart from Richard Schechner's basic definition of performance, juxtaposing can be understood as a performative process because it frames, highlights and displays its action—in this case, the side-by-side presentation of two oppositional perspectives (Schechner 2).

In fact, it is the performative nature of juxtaposing that allows it to signify through fundamental tension. If two demarcated viewpoints are not intentionally placed in side-by-side conflict, they function as separate discourses, and neither informs the other. In essence, juxtaposing puts separate, divergent perspectives on the same stage and initiates their dialogue. The conversation that results constructs a point of view only possible through the performative framing of inherent oppositionality. In *Una holandesa*, this “new” point of view is that of the transnational citizen.

In contrast to the other performative rhetorical devices, juxtaposing is uniquely suited to representing a transnational subjectivity. If the cosmopolite is one who *pretends* to simultaneously inhabit a variety of perspectives unbound by national affiliation, the transnational immigrant is one who *juxtaposes* the finite, national spaces that constitute her identity. Understood as a process of juxtaposition, transnationalism places two separate entities (nations) in meaningful tension, while constantly honoring and maintaining the unique delimitations of each one. Whereas cosmopolitanism seeks a harmonious ethical disposition that will reconcile cultural differences and transcend national borders, transnationalism preserves national demarcations and places each unique perspective in the context of other, often conflicting, ones. In brief, cosmopolitanism imagines the synthesis of national difference, but transnationalism does

not. For this reason, the unbounded, identity-bending act of *pretending* carries a cosmopolitan critique in *El periquillo sarniento*, but *juxtaposing* is better suited to the transnational turn in *Una holandesa en América*. *Una holandesa* juxtaposes Romanticism and Realism in order to reproduce the experience of the transnational citizen.<sup>91</sup>

Theodor Adorno's concept of "negative dialectics" informs the ways in which *Una holandesa* resists the synthesis that characterizes cosmopolitanism. In Adorno's revision of the Hegelian dialectic, "the emphasis on the so-called synthesis is absent" (T. W. Adorno, *Lectures* 1). Adorno departs from Hegel's triadic scheme of thesis-antithesis-synthesis, instead believing that "to proceed dialectically means to think in contradictions" (T. W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics* 144). In this sense, *juxtaposing* Romanticism and Realism in *Una holandesa* constitutes negative dialectical movement; the novel does not synthesize the differences between these oppositional worldviews into some sort of stable middle ground. *Juxtaposing* "thinks in contradictions" through the non-reconciliatory framing of polar perspectives.

Furthermore, Adorno's notion of "negative dialectics" helps us answer a pressing question: why does *Una holandesa en América* refuse to synthesize the differences between Romanticism and Realism, as contemporary *costumbrista* novels do? What purpose does *juxtaposing* serve? Adorno contends that the goal of "negative dialectics" is not to resolve contradiction and form a totalizing system, but to expose the inherent

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<sup>91</sup> In *The Grammar of Identity: Transnational Fiction and the Nature of the Boundary* (2009), Stephen Clingman characterizes this correlation between form and content as a defining feature of the "transnational fiction." "At this level form becomes content – a way of being and seeing. Novels working in this manner become not only a mode of exploring the world but also a *kind* of world to be explored" (Clingman 11).

antagonisms that occur *within* concepts; “the concept of contradiction will play a central role here, more particularly, the contradiction in things themselves, contradiction *in* the concept, not contradiction *between* concepts” (T. W. Adorno, *Lectures* 7). Adorno reminds us that that contradiction *within* concepts (such as nationalism and transnationalism) is just as important, if not more so, than the contradiction *between* demarcated worldviews (such as Holland/Colombia or Romanticism/Realism).

In this light, the point of *juxtaposing* in *Una holandesa* is to illuminate the fundamental antagonisms contained within transnationalism—namely, the fact that the transnational contains and depends on the very category it purportedly negates: the national. By juxtaposing a singular, subjective mode of attachment (Romanticism) with a plural, objective one (Realism), *Una holandesa* highlights how nationalism and transnationalism dialogue in constant tension. For the transnational characters in *Una holandesa*, it is not a question of inherited national rootedness or intentional transnational mobility, but both, simultaneously and conflictively. By means of *juxtaposing* Romanticism and Realism, Acosta stages the contradictions *between* nationalism and transnationalism and *within* transnationalism itself. The novel’s refusal to fuse Romanticism and Realism in some sort of *costumbrista* synthesis underlines the ways in which transnationalism signifies through its irreconcilable tension with nationalism.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> My discussion of Romanticism and Realism in *Una holandesa en América* thus differs from that of Gonzales Ascorra and Vallejo, who both contend that the opposition between these views is resolved dialectically by the end of the novel—and consequently read the novel within a more national framework (Gonzales Ascorra 100; Vallejo, “Dicotomía y dialéctica” 296, 298).

Additionally, juxtaposing offers an alternative to *costumbrista* narrative, which typically combines Realist description of social customs and Romantic idealization of national space in support of nation-building discourse. Romanticism's emphasis on patriotic fervor and desire to define the unique and the new made it an attractive mode for Spanish American writers seeking to articulate a sense of national identity in the 1830s and 1840s (Oviedo 68). As scholars such as Doris Sommer, Fernando Unzueta, and Nina Gerassi-Navarro have noticed, Romanticism was the official aesthetic of the nation-building agenda in Spanish America. When Romanticism is blended with Realism in *costumbrismo*, it maintains its national potentialities. It is only by preserving the separateness of Romanticism and Realism that *Una holandesa* can critique the violent tendencies of planting and defending singular national roots. In these ways, the novel's performative form (*juxtaposing*) is uniquely designed to import the specificities of its counter-national content (transnationalism). Acosta's departure from the *costumbrista* blending of Romanticism and Realism enables the novel's critique of Romantic nationalism and possibilitates its presentation of a "transnational romance."

The oppositional relationship between Romanticism and Realism transforms in relation to Lucía's global position. For this reason, I organize my analysis of *Una holandesa* spatially. I have already examined how Part I of *Una holandesa en América*, which takes place entirely in Holland, positions Romanticism and Realism as two antithetical modes of comprehending lived experience. In Holland, it is *either* Romanticism *or* Realism, never both. However, Lucía cannot stay in Holland: she receives word that her mother, Johanna, has died, leaving her father, Mister Harris,



incapable of running his estate in Colombia alone. Mister Harris writes to his daughter and pleads that she come assist in the education of Colombian-born siblings, and Lucía agrees.

As Lucía crosses the Atlantic, she meets a travel companion who teaches her how to juxtapose oppositional worldviews. Mercedes Almeida, a young Colombian girl who is returning to Bogotá after completing her schooling in France, is intimately familiar with the transnational experience. Mercedes teaches Lucía that she no longer has to choose between Romanticism and Realism, but rather can “think in contradiction” and use each worldview to compensate for the shortcomings of the other. Mercedes thus models how to juxtapose Romanticism and Realism in order to understand the contradictory reality of life in the New World. As I will elaborate in the following section, this key character represents a concentrated version of the novel’s own rhetorical strategies.

Upon arrival in the New World, Lucía learns to juxtapose Holland and Colombia and embrace a transnational identity. She ultimately discovers the shortcomings of Romanticism as a representational mode and as a model of attachment. Not only does Romanticism’s idealistic framework fail to encompass the widespread violence of national revolutions, the Romantic model of singular attachment betrays Lucía as well. When the man she secretly admires marries her cousin, Lucía vows to eradicate her former Romantic disposition. The more Lucía’s Romantic disposition softens in the New World, the more she learns to identify in the plural—with two families, two countries, and two worldviews. At first, Lucía struggles with culture shock and homesickness in her new *patria*. Eventually, however, Lucía reasons that a transnational orientation best

meets her emotional, intellectual, and spiritual needs. Lucía learns to juxtapose the two national spaces that constitute her identity, and she happily resolves to live permanently in Colombia.

In order to understand how Acosta constructs this transnational romance, this chapter will identify the three performative features that allow *Una holandesa* to deviate from the national-allegorical mode. First, Acosta's novel relies on a performative rhetorical process—juxtaposing Romanticism and Realism—in order to frame the tension between and within nationalism and transnationalism. Secondly, *Una holandesa* is critically aware of its own narrative behavior; through the voice of Mercedes, the novel indicates its own strategy of juxtaposing. Thirdly, *Una holandesa* is performative because it repeats “familiar verbal or behavioral regimes” (Worthen, “Drama, Performativity, and Performance” 1096). In the same way that the performative statement “I do” marries two individuals by repeating established ceremonial codes, *Una holandesa* constructs a transnational model of plural attachment by reproducing two of the dominant narrative codes of the time: women's travel writing and the dialectical relationship between Eros and Polis, as theorized by Doris Sommer in *Foundational Fictions* (1993).

*Una holandesa* repeats two generic codes of travel writing: the tension between Romanticism and Realism (Gonzales Ascorra 87) and a formal “eclecticism” that combines “personal memoir, the epistolary format, historical documents, along with poetic reverie and multiple literary allusions” (Méndez Rodenas 15). Furthermore, *Una holandesa* appears to repeat the verbal and behavioral regimes of the national romance; it describes Lucía and Mercedes's experiences with love in order to allegorize a particular

model of political attachment. However, I argue that *Una holandesa* does not constitute a foundational fiction; instead of shuttling back and forth between heteronormative romantic intrigues and national political designs, as *María* does, Acosta's transnational romance intertwines plural Eros and transnational Polis. Although *Una holandesa* relies, in part, on the Eros-Polis allegorical regime of the national romances, this is not an act of mimesis, but performative subversion. These performative features enable *Una holandesa* to reformulate Colombian identity along a transnational axis.

### **Crossing the Atlantic: lessons from Mercedes**

Once Lucía leaves Holland and sets sail for the New World, the dual perspectives of Romanticism and Realism begin to inform each other. In Part II, "El Viaje," Mercedes models how to juxtapose these oppositional views. She first mobilizes the critical potential of juxtaposing when she compares two types of boats: sailboats and steamships. Lucía later recounts this formative conversation in her diary, recalling how Mercedes explained:

Vea usted (...) la diferencia entre los buques veleros y los de vapor: los primeros se balancean y sacuden sus blancas velas obedeciendo al caprichoso impulso de la mar; mientras que los segundos, poco elegantes, llevando en pos de sí una cabellera de negro humo, cruzan los espacios como rapidísimas flechas... los unos personifican la poesía del mar, bella pero incierta, y peligrosa muchas veces a los que ponen su fe en ella; los otros, al contrario, son la imagen de la civilización actual con toda su prosa, pero que en cambio nos da rapidez, comodidad, confianza. (92)

Metaphorically, the sailboats represent poetic Romanticism, while the steamships symbolize prosaic Realism. Mercedes's observation reframes the opposition between

Romanticism and Realism established in Part I. For the first time, Romanticism is not considered in entirely negative light, nor is a Realist orientation the perfect way to navigate new experiences. This is not a question of *either* Romanticism *or* Realism, as it was in Holland. Suspended between the Old World and the New World, Mercedes knows how to consider both aesthetic modes without reducing them to a reconciliatory “justo medio,” as Rieken once advocated.

In her symbolic comparison of the sailboats and steam ships, Mercedes *juxtaposes* the aesthetic modes of Romanticism and Realism. She is not erasing their obvious differences; instead, Mercedes takes Romanticism and Realism in side-by-side, conflictual relation, and uses this productive tension to demonstrate how one reveals the blind spots of the other. Taken together but separately, Romanticism and Realism offer a more complete understanding of what it is like to navigate an ocean of experiences and emotions. Mercedes expresses the simple beauty, sentimental capriciousness and seductive dangers of poetic Romanticism *as well as* the aesthetic harshness, industrial speed, and modern utility of prosaic Realism. She suggests that these boats work in tandem: the Romantic sailboat verbosely translates the emotional waves of life, while the Realist steamship succinctly reasons towards progress and modernity. Mercedes’s insightful observation shocks Lucía, who is accustomed to seeing these aesthetic modes as hopelessly irreconcilable. Because Mercedes meaningfully juxtaposes Romanticism and Realism, she is “extraña” and “diferente” in Lucía’s eyes (93).

While Mercedes has lived abroad long enough to develop her juxtaposing perspective, Lucía continues to operate within the Romantic disposition she inherited

from her mother. For example, when Lucía writes to her “sister” Rieken from aboard the boat, she conveys her loneliness and nostalgia in blatantly Romantic terms:

Estoy triste, hermana mía; una aprehensión, un temor ridículo se ha apoderado de mí desde que llegué a este puerto, y confieso que ya más temo que deseo llegar a mi futuro hogar... ¡Oh! ¿Por qué os abandoné, queridas mías? ¿Por qué dejé mi tranquila vida a vuestro lado? ¿Por qué dejé esa casa en que era amada para venir a buscar una existencia nueva, costumbres distintas y afectos que no conozco y que no sé si llenarán mi corazón como lo espero? Perdóname este angustiado grito de mi corazón afligido... (109)

Like many Romantics, Lucía is overcome by angst, apprehension, and doubt. Despite her anxiety about her transnational move, Lucía continues to romanticize what her life will become in the New World. As the narrator describes:

Lucía se hallaba hondamente conmovida al considerar que antes de que se pasara la semana llegaría a la espléndida morada de su padre, cuya elegancia y lujosas comodidades él la había descrito tantas veces, y allí con él y su familia querida pasaría una vida como la de aquellas princesas de la India cuyas existencias parecían un sueño de hadas, de las cuales ella había leído tantas veces narraciones que la encantaban, y estando en Holanda la llenaban de una secreta envidia. (117)

Before Lucía lands in Colombia and meets her family, she remains steadfastly Romantic, both mourning the loss of her familiar Dutch home and simultaneously idealizing her new Colombian home.

Lucía’s Romantic disposition conditions how she conceptualizes national belonging. As she crosses the Atlantic, Lucía fantasizes about feeling emotionally attached to a singular national space. When Martinique first appears on the horizon,

Lucía makes a Romantic apostrophe to “la tierra prometida” (103): “¡América, América (...) yo te saludo! Tú serás mi patria y en ti fundo todas las esperanzas de mi vida; sobre tu maternal regazo han nacido todos mis hermanos, y en tus entrañas encierras la tumba de mi madre; te saludo ¡o América! ya te amo” (103). In this Romantic apostrophe, Lucía’s use of the verb *fundar* suggests that she wants invest everything—her dreams, her identity—in Colombia (Gallego 82). Lucía imagines an emotional connection to the national soil that entombs her mother’s remains and indicates that Colombia will soon be “her country,” just like it is the *madre-patria* of her American-born siblings. In this way, she remains true to the Romantic mode of attachment; Lucía hoped that she and Carlos van Verpoen shared some sort of inexplicable, inherent attraction, and now she similarly predicates her relationship with the New World on buried emotional attachment. Before landing in Colombia, Lucía’s Romantic disposition leads her to idealize a singular national identity. She hopes that her innate connection to a country she inexplicably loves will deliver everything that monogamous, Romantic attachment promises.

However, Mercedes’s particular adoration of the Americas troubles Lucía’s model of singular nationality. When Mercedes sees a rainstorm develop over the mountains of Martinique, this reminds her of Colombia:

¡Ah! (...) ¡qué sensación tan extraña me ha causado este espectáculo! Hace cuatro años que no veía un aguacero sobre un monte, ¡y esta sencillísima vista me ha traído mil recuerdos de mi infancia y de mi patria idolatrada! Hasta ahora comprendo de cuántas futilidades y memorias vagas se compone aquel amor profundo que llaman patrio. (105)

Mercedes defines patriotic attachment in somewhat Romantic terms; love for country is an inexplicable combination of trivial and vague memories. Logically, these meaningless childhood recollections would not add up to any tangible connection between an individual and geographical space, yet affectively, they do. Mercedes's passionate outburst recognizes the desire to experience this "amor profundo que llaman patrio," while simultaneously exposing the irrational, even impossible, nature of such singular attachment. In rediscovering her love for Colombia, Mercedes implies that she had lost touch with her national roots during her time abroad. Through Mercedes's observations, Acosta raises the question of what the ideal relationship to national space should be: Can an individual's love for country change over time? Is it possible to enter into meaningful relation with multiple spaces?

Mercedes's experience indicates the possibility of a more flexible, transnational attachment to plural national spaces. Lucía, however, remains perplexed by her friend's juxtaposing ways; "El carácter de esta niña es cada vez menos comprensible para mí. Mezcla de serias reflexiones y expansivas chanzas, de loca alegría y completa reserva, su carácter no es de su edad ni de su época" (105). It is not only Mercedes's personality that juxtaposes polar opposites; her critical perspective similarly juxtaposes Romanticism and Realism, singular nationalism and plural transnationalism. Lucía cannot fathom how Mercedes feels attached to multiple *patrias*. Just as Lucía thought that Mercedes's "strange" juxtaposition of the Romantic sailboat and the Realist steamship made her wise beyond her years, Mercedes's incomprehensible combination of patriotic attachment and transnational reattachment sets her apart from most of her contemporaries. In contrast to

the many Colombians that were caught up in the nationalist fervor of the Revolution of 1854, Mercedes's comment exposes the absurd arbitrariness of singular national belonging.

Lucía is so new to the transnational experience that she is oblivious to her own identification with multiple countries. Contradicting and complicating her prior declaration of Colombia as "mi patria," Lucía also refers to Holland as "mi patria" (104):

No cesaba de pedir explicaciones acerca de cuanto veía,  
pues todo era para mí nuevo, sonriente, encantador y aun  
más bello de cuanto había leído y soñado. ¡Qué contraste  
con las *dunas* y monótonas llanuras y paisajes de mi patria!  
¡Aquí todo es vida, movimiento, exuberancia! ¡Allá  
silencio, estancamiento, tranquilidad!... (104)

Although Lucía has signaled her patriotic attachment to both Colombia and Holland, the protagonist ironically continues to see these two countries as distinct, incompatible ways of life. The *aquí* of the romanticized Americas does not (yet) inform the *allá* of the ordinary Old World. Just as it was *either* Romanticism *or* Realism in Holland, Lucía identifies with *either* Holland *or* Colombia as she crosses the Atlantic, but never both simultaneously.

Once Lucía lands in Colombia, these oppositional dichotomies evolve into a process of active juxtaposition. The more time Lucía spends in Colombia, the more she realizes the shortcomings of her Romantic disposition. As she abandons the Romantic expectation that an inexplicable emotional connection motivate her attachment to new people and places, Lucía learns to identify with both Colombia and Holland. In Parts III-



V of the novel, Mercedes's juxtaposition of Romanticism and Realism will continue to push Lucía towards a more transnational orientation.

In sum, Part II of *Una holandesa en América*, "El viaje," self-reflexively indicates that *juxtaposing* structures the novel's transnational turn. As Mercedes comments on the difference between Romantic sailboats and Realist steamships, *Una holandesa* performatively displays its own rhetorical strategy for questioning the nation. The metaphoric passage highlights how *Una holandesa* juxtaposes Romanticism and Realism (often through the voice of Mercedes, but not exclusively) in order to characterize the contradictory impulses of defining collective identity: one national and singular, one transnational and plural. As the personification of a transnational *patria* (190), Mercedes previews how the novel will juxtapose two oppositional worldviews in order to frame the formation of Lucía's own juxtapositional, transnational identity.

### **Colombia: juxtaposition and the formation of transnational identity**

Beginning with Part III, when Lucía lands in Colombia, *Una holandesa* juxtaposes national spaces (Colombia and Holland) and conflictive worldviews (Romanticism and Realism). Lucía superimposes Colombian and Dutch geography and cultivates plural attachment to two families, one on each side of the Atlantic. Although she abandons Romanticism and turns to a more Realist perspective to understand the transnational, husband-less life she leads in Colombia, this does not mean that the novel resolves the tension between Romantic and Realist models of attachment. Contrary to Gonzales Ascorra and Vallejo, who see a dialectical reconciliation in *Una holandesa*, I

demonstrate how the novel's two transnational characters, Lucía and Mercedes, hold Romanticism and Realism in productive tension. This tension is fundamental to transnationalism, which paradoxically validates the very desire for national rootedness even as it names a more fluid, transitory way of belonging.

Lucía and Mercedes mark the double movement of the transnational. As Lucía becomes more Realist and Mercedes more Romantic, *Una holandesa* stages the two poles that together—juxtapositionally—define the transnational experience: the inexplicable attachment to singular national space and the rational decision to pursue plural, transnational attachments. By the end of the novel, Acosta clearly identifies the advantages of a transnational identity. Unlike nomadism would, a transnational perspective orients Lucía and stabilizes her simultaneously Dutch and Colombian identities. Furthermore, Acosta criticizes the Romantic idealization of national roots, suggesting that its essentialism generates violence and ironically compromises Colombia's hopes of modernization and democratization. In this light, *Una holandesa* offers transnationalism as a peaceful alternative to violent nationalism.

Lucía is able to open to a transnational perspective because she recognizes Romanticism's shortcomings as a representational mode and as a model of attachment. Lucía quickly discovers that Romanticism idealizes the New World in a way that does not at all correspond to reality. After sailing up the Magdalena River in Colombia and arriving in the port city of Soledad, Lucía's romanticized expectations crumble:

Era aquella la primera vez que Lucía encontraba las  
bellezas tropicales mayores aún de lo que ella las había

ideado, y gozosa y animada admiraba cada cambio de vista, cada planta rara, animal, pájaro o insecto desconocido que se le presentaba. Sin embargo, la mísera y tristísima población de Soledad con sus desvencijadas casas pajizas y calles cubiertas de arenales que quemaban como fuego con el calor del sol, con sus habitantes pobrísimos y escasamente vestidos y el aire de ruina que había por todas partes, todo aquello causó una impresión muy desagradable. (113)

Although the Colombian countryside is more beautiful than she ever imagined, Lucía's Romantic mindset blinded her to the harsh reality of life in the New World. This process of disenchantment continues when Lucía arrives at her father's rural estate. Upon discovering the "desorden irremediable" on the property and her family's lack of education (137-141), Lucía learns that Romanticism as an aesthetic failed to prepare her for the difficulties of moving transnationally.

Romanticism also fails Lucía as a model of attachment. A few weeks later, Lucía learns of Rieken's marriage to Carlos van Verpoen, the man who heroically rescued Lucía from the river. In spite of the fact that Lucía only imagined an emotional bond with Carlos, her cousin's news impacts her substantially. As the narrator explains:

Lucía se avergonzaba al pensar en su mal correspondido afecto, y se propuso hacer todo esfuerzo para olvidar sus desengaños. Entregóse, pues, con alma, vida y corazón a los deberes que se había impuesto, acallando para siempre en su alma todo idealismo, y renunciando para siempre a toda esperanza de amar y ser amada. (238)

Now in Colombia, Lucía realizes how idealistic she was in Holland and while crossing the Atlantic. She admits that she naïvely fantasized about marrying Carlos and renounces the Romantic model of monogamous heteronormative coupling.

This rejection of singular attachment encompasses Lucía's relationship with national space as well. Shortly after this emotional blow, Lucía dismisses the romantic notion of singular love for country and begins identifying with multiple families and multiple countries. The first indication that Lucía is developing a transnational identity comes just after her arrival at her father's estate in Los Cocos. One night, as Lucía considers her new surroundings, she superimposes Holland's flat countryside on Colombia's mountainous geography. She writes to Mercedes: "A medida que muere el día y empieza el crepúsculo, aquella región andina pierde su brillo y esplendor, y me gozo con la imaginación en evocar en su lugar un paisaje de mi cara Holanda: los cerros desaparecen a mis vista, y en aquel sitio se me presentan las llanuras, los canales, las dehesas, los molinos y las risueñas y pintadas quintas de la patria de mi infancia" (146). The superimposition of Dutch and Colombian geography constitutes a specific type of juxtaposition: when Holland and Colombia are laid on top of one another, the oppositional particularities of each national space are still evident. This juxtaposition visualizes the experience of a transnational immigrant, who learns to see herself in both her current place of residence and the country where she was born. This passage takes a feature common to Humboldtian travel narrative—the visual depiction of landscape—and transforms it in order to legibly articulate its transnational turn.<sup>93</sup> Lucía's simultaneous mapping captures the juxtapositional nature of the transatlantic perspective.

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<sup>93</sup> Lucía's emphasis on the visual experience of landscape is consistent with the Humboldtian landscape trope that characterizes many nineteenth-century travel narratives. See Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*.

Notably, Lucía calls Holland “la patria de mi infancia” and no longer considers it to be “mi patria,” as she did while crossing the Atlantic (104, 146). Holland and Colombia no longer compete for the honor of being Lucía’s single *patria*; instead, Lucía’s childhood country can exist on top of—in addition to—her new national surroundings. Lucía does not choose *either* Holland *or* Colombia, as she did on the boat. Now, after a few short weeks in Colombia, Lucía is learning that she can evoke two contrasting realities without having to privilege one worldview over another. Unlike the protagonist in Isaacs’s national allegory, who erases her foreign roots, Lucía actively evokes her Dutch roots in Colombia. This palimpsestic mapping of one geography onto another visualizes how transnationalism, understood as a process of juxtaposition, does not seek to erase the inherent oppositionality of different worldviews. Rather than seeking a neat synthesis, Lucía’s transnational identity bears visible traces of its earlier, national form. At this point in the novel, Lucía is saddened by the fact that she must work to make Holland feel near and tangible, suggesting that she would rather make Colombia “disappear” and simply return to her childhood home (146). By the end of the novel, however, Lucía performs this juxtaposition of national spaces with remarkable acceptance and even enthusiasm.

The more time Lucía spends at Los Cocos, the more she embraces a transnational orientation. In one scene, Lucía tries to convince her father, Mister Harris, to let her read the letters sent by her aunt and cousin Rieken. She articulates the importance of these letters by explaining, “¿no está allí mi tía, mi segunda madre, y mi prima?” (150). Lucía insinuates that she has two families: one in Holland, one in Colombia. She exercises her

right to form—and maintain—various familial and national attachments. Remarkably, Lucía does not view Holland and Colombia in hierarchical relation. As a transnational citizen learning to juxtapose two national spaces, Lucía believes each worldview to be equally valid and equally signifying. Consequently, her experience in the New World neither resembles that of an immigrant (who would reject Holland and idealize Colombia) nor that of a colonizer (who would privilege the Dutch worldview and dismiss the presumably inferior, Colombian one). Even though Lucía once romanticized the possibility of founding a new life in “la tierra prometida,” her actual experience in Los Cocos does not correspond to that of an immigrant. While an immigrant—such as Isaacs’s María—exchanges one national identity for another and maintains a singular national attachment, Lucía does not replace her Dutch roots with a new Colombian identity. As Lucía’s superimposition of Dutch and Colombian geographical space and her cultivation of two national families indicates, she actively incorporates her Dutch heritage into her daily experience in Colombia.

Lucía’s transnational and juxtaposing ways also distinguish her experience from that of a colonizer, whose mission is to civilize the barbaric other by imposing European culture in the Americas. On the contrary, *Una holandesa* suggests that the imperfections and flaws of Old World should not be translated across the Atlantic. As Carlos reminded Lucía before she left Holland, “Usted se va a un país nuevo en donde se desconocen las intrigas y los vicios de esta vieja Europa” (84). His warning does not prevent Lucía from attempting a civilizing mission; she tries to “ordenar y (...) civilizar” her father’s estate and “enseñar a aquellos salvajes a vivir como gente culta” (140, 141). Ultimately, this

colonialist attitude fails. When Lucía attempts to reform the uncultured ways of her Colombian sisters, it becomes clear that must relate to them as an equal—neither an inferior immigrant nor a superior colonizer. As she reflects:

A fuerza de paciencia y longanimidad he logrado que mis hermanos empiecen a no ver en mí una enemiga, intrusa y entrometida, sino una verdadera hermana que solo desea su bien y felicidad. Sin embargo, suele suceder muchas veces que cuando pienso que navego viento en popa hacia el planteamiento de la luz de la civilización en estas mentes incultas, de repente encuentro que me he engañado, y que en lugar de adelantar por los senderos del progreso, he perdido mi tiempo, y me veo precisada a empezar de nuevo y por otro camino distinto. (145-146)

Whenever Lucía thinks she is successfully imposing the “light of civilization” and illuminating her sisters’ uncivil ways, she realizes that she has not made any progress at all. The colonialist belief that one European culture is superior to an American one does not serve Lucía in her attempt to educate her sisters. In this way, *Una holandesa* abandons the *civilización/barbarismo* dichotomy that characterizes many nineteenth-century texts and instead demonstrates how Lucía juxtaposes two national spaces—Holland and Colombia—without privileging one civilized nation over another backwards one.<sup>94</sup> Lucía is not an immigrant who adopts the customs of a foreign land, nor is she a colonizer who presumptuously translates her own worldview and imposes it on others.<sup>95</sup> Unlike the immigrant and the colonizer, who both preserve a singular national identity, Lucía does not privilege attachment to a single national space, whether old or new. In

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<sup>94</sup> For a more detailed discussion of *Una holandesa*’s destabilization of the *civilización/barbarismo* opposition, see Vallejo, “Dicotomía y dialéctica” 294–295.

<sup>95</sup> See Gonzales Ascorra 95 for an analysis of the colonialist and anti-colonialist features of Lucía’s experience in the New World.

contrast to María, Lucía is a transnational citizen who identifies with two nations, and neither is inferior or superior to the other.

This analysis offers an alternative to the national-allegorical reading of Acosta's novel. In one notable iteration, Catharina Vallejo argues that *Una holandesa* advocates the translation of the foreign to the national; "Acosta quiere enfatizar que Colombia necesita mirar hacia afuera e incorporar elementos extranjeros en su cultura, hacerlos pasar de un lugar a otro, traducirlos" (Vallejo, "Legitimación" 491). Within this line of argumentation, the novel's act of translation (which privileges the Spanish language) allegorizes the formation of a multicultural Colombia, in which regional and cultural differences are assimilated and contained "dentro de un ambiente—colombiano e hispanoamericano—esencialmente hispánico y de una insularidad asfixiante" (Vallejo, "Legitimación" 484). In Vallejo's reading, the translational aesthetics of *Una holandesa* synthesize difference in a multicultural melting pot, thereby advancing the nation-building agenda.

In contrast, I argue that *juxtaposing*—rather than translation—more accurately names the novel's rhetorical strategy; instead of erasing and assimilating difference in a monolingual, national melting pot (which occurs in Isaacs's *María*), *Una holandesa*'s performative rhetorical strategy embraces the conflict, tension, and contradiction fundamental to transnationalism. Consequently, my reading of *Una holandesa* re-conceptualizes Lucía's relationship to national space. Vallejo suggests that Lucía *translates* a superior, European culture to a barbaric American space, but I contend that *Una holandesa* radically departs from the colonialist model of cultural exchange. Lucía



*juxtaposes* Dutch and Colombian culture without placing the two in hierarchical relation, electing instead to draw upon their oppositional perspectives within the constellation of transnational thought.

In another example of *juxtaposing*, Acosta's novel counterposes Lucía and Mercedes's unique transnational experiences in order to spotlight the characteristic tension between the national and the transnational. *Una holandesa* does not just outline instances of individuals torn between national and transnational models of identification (Lucía and Mercedes), but posits that this tension is a defining characteristic of life in the New World. As Mercedes demonstrates in a letter to Lucía in Chapter IV.6, her life in Colombia is defined by two contradictory impulses: the Romantic desire to identify with and patriotically defend a single national space and the Realist observation that nationalism breeds barbaric violence and compromises Colombia's quest for modernization and democracy. This epistolary exchange tests transnationalism as an alternative to violent, exclusive nationalism.

In her letters, Mercedes juxtaposes Romanticism and Realism in order to capture their conflictual perspectives and signal the benefits of a transnational model of attachment. Specifically, Mercedes takes advantage of the epistolary form—a feature of Romantic novels that focuses on individual experience and highlights the intimate relationship between two characters—in order to share her Realist evaluation of the ongoing revolution. Mercedes openly declares her juxtaposing strategy to Lucía; “Te advierto que pienso aprovecharme de esta confianza que me inspiras para hablarte de lo que ahora me interesa más que nunca, de manera que no recibirás carta mía en que no te hable de los

acontecimientos políticos de la República” (210). In Mercedes’s intimate letters to Lucía, she objectively recounts the civil war of 1854, during which the two rival fractions of the Liberal party disagreed over economic reform. Mercedes describes the skirmishes between the *draconianos* (who advocated a policy of protectionism) and the constitutionalist *gólgotas* (who supported free trade) (Avelar 110).<sup>96</sup> She writes: “El general Mosquera ha llegado a Cartagena con armas y pertrechos traídos del extranjero y aguarda algunas más para emprender viaje y atacar a Melo, viniendo por las provincias del Norte. Este se manifiesta triunfante, y su único pensamiento es atemorizar a los habitantes de Bogotá con farsas y comedias” (210). Mercedes maintains this Realist, journalistic tone until she mentions her lover, Rafael Hidalgo, at which point she switches to a more patriotic, Romantic narrative of wartime struggle.

Mercedes hopes that Rafael will have the chance to prove himself as a national hero, regardless of whether or not he returns from war alive. Mercedes’s romanticization of the soldier’s patriotic duty alienates her from the experience of other women, who fret for their husbands’ lives. Mercedes confesses to Lucía:

No sé por qué me encuentro muchas veces en desacuerdo con los sentimientos de las demás mujeres. Cuando veo que otras tiemblan porque las personas que estiman están en peligro, y me avergüenzo entre tanto de que aquellas que aprecio no lo estén cuando su deber lo demanda así; o a lo menos cuando pienso que otros pueden creer que tienen miedo... No es porque yo no *sienta*; al contrario, es porque

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<sup>96</sup> In 1854, the *draconianos* allied with General José María Melo and staged a rebellion against the *gólgotas*. On April 17, 1854, Melo overthrew the government of José María Obando, abolished the federalist-leaning Constitution of 1853, and violently defended his power for eight months. Bolstered by the support of the Conservative party, the *gólgotas* eventually defeated the rebellion and ended Melo’s dictatorship (Avelar 110).

siento demasiado, que no puedo amar sino donde admiro, y temo más que la muerte la pérdida de mis ilusiones. Son tan bellas estas, amiga mía, ¡que temo no podrán vivir sobre la tierra! Pero, ¿acaso no podrá haber en el mundo una excepción? ... ¿Será cierto que la humanidad es tan miserable, egoísta y ruín como la pintan? ¡Oh! ¡Desgraciada de mí si alguna vez encuentro que mi ídolo de oro no era sino de arcilla! (211)

Mercedes loves Rafael because she admires his fulfillment of patriotic duty. As an honorable man who has sworn to defend the Constitution of 1853,<sup>97</sup> Mercedes believes that Rafael “tiene que morir, si es preciso, más bien que faltar a sus deberes como ciudadano y patriota” (190). Within this Romantic mindset, Mercedes heroizes the patriot who makes the ultimate sacrifice for his nation. She does not worry for Rafael’s life as much as other, less patriotic women would. Rather, Mercedes’s deepest fear is that she will be forced to abandon her Romantic “ilusiones” about war, which are the source of her desire for Rafael. She cannot love him if he were just an ordinary soldier (*un ídolo de arcilla*) instead of the exceptional hero she dreams him to be (*mi ídolo de oro*). Mercedes is so attracted to a man that will patriotically defend his singular homeland that she would rather mourn his death than see him revoke his nationalist duties (220).

Despite the intensity of Mercedes’s Romantic inclinations, they do not go unchallenged in her letters to Lucía. On the contrary, her letters juxtapose a Romantic idealization of chivalric battle and a Realist documentation of the violent political reality. Specifically, Mercedes recognizes that the widespread desire for patriotic combat—of which she herself is guilty—does not necessarily advance national progress. As much as

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<sup>97</sup> The Constitution of 1853 “consagra el federalismo, las elecciones directas, la separación de la Iglesia y el Estado, la libertad de cultos, el matrimonio civil, entre otras enmiendas” (Vallejo, “Soledad Acosta y su época” 272).

she would like to romanticize her natural surroundings, Mercedes cannot ignore her compatriots' barbaric destruction of such beauty. She writes: "Todo en la naturaleza es hermoso, encantador, menos el hombre que solo respira odios, venganza, crímenes y ambición loca de mandar, de gozar, de hacer su gusto..." (212). Not only do the revolutions in Colombia compromise Mercedes's romanticization of war, but global politics at large also do the same. Mercedes reports on the various revolutions happening around the world:

¿De qué se habla en torno mío? Nada más que de revoluciones, alevosías, traiciones, actos de deslealtad y revueltas públicas, y esto no solo en esta triste República, sino que todo el mundo está agitado y conmovido. Hay guerras en el Perú, en el Ecuador, en Venezuela; hay insurrecciones en España y disputas a mano armada entre Grecia y Turquía; ejércitos franceses, ingleses e italianos marcharon contra Rusia; en tanto la China es víctima de una terrible rebelión en que mueren diariamente centenares de hombres... El mundo entero, pues, es presa de la Discordia. (212)

In this way, Mercedes places Colombian national politics in a greater, international context (Gallego 97). Immediately after romanticizing Rafael Hidalgo's patriotic duty, Mercedes denounces the widespread discord that such nationalist fervor breeds, both in Colombia and throughout the world.

More specifically, Mercedes critiques how the Romantic attachment to singular national space precipitates barbaric violence. Referring to the global revolutions she just described, Mercedes heatedly writes,

¡Y esto llaman siglo de civilización y progreso, de luces e ilustración! Los hombres heredan el amor al combate, el

deseo de gobernar a sus semejantes y las demás pasiones degradantes de sus antepasados, así como los animales heredan los instintos de sus progenitores... Y aunque bautizamos esas pasiones con los retumbantes nombres de gloria, noble ambición, indomable amor a la independencia, la mayor parte de las veces lo que inspira al hombre es un instinto más brutal que intelectual. (212)

This passage associates the Independence movement in Spanish America (characterized by the desire to “gobernar a sus semejantes”) with an inherited, animalistic desire to defend one’s territory. Mercedes deplores the Romantic model of national attachment, in which the relationship between an individual and his country is predicated on some impalpable, innate emotional connection. She exposes the barbaric, brutal consequences of idealizing singular national attachment. Mercedes’s Realist perspective allows her to see how Romanticism costumes nationalism as “glorious,” “noble,” and “courageous” in order to conceal its violent foundation. By means of Mercedes’s juxtaposition of her own Romantic and Realist inclinations, Acosta documents the fundamental tension between wanting to belong to one nation and love those who honorably defend it and simultaneously admitting the barbaric consequences of irrationally defending the homogenous “sameness” of a single, bordered space.<sup>98</sup>

In this way, *Una holandesa en América* and *El periquillo sarniento* identify the same problem: identity rooted in a single national space leads citizens to act irrationally, barbarically, and violently. However, each novel proposes a different solution, via a unique performative strategy. In *El periquillo sarniento*, formal and thematic pretending presents cosmopolitanism as a peaceful alternative to nationalism, whereas *Una*

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<sup>98</sup> See Samper Trainer 253 for a discussion of how this type of tension is characteristic of Acosta’s writing in general.

*holandesa en América* relies on juxtaposing to articulate a transnational response to violent patriotism. While *El periquillo sarniento* advocates cosmopolitanism as a way of transcending prejudicial territorial attachment and forming a worldwide community of deterritorialized citizens, *Una holandesa en América* is not as quick to dispose of the nation as a delimited and defining space. Unlike Lizardi's novel, which rarely uses the term "nation" (and, when it does, reformulates it as a *patria madrastra*), Acosta's narrative explicitly signifies the appeal of the nation: Lucía wants to identify the *patria(s)* that define her and Mercedes idealizes patriotic attachment to Colombia. *Una holandesa en América* preserves the nation as a useful concept to ground identity, but it encourages the individual to identify with more than one bordered space. In contrast to cosmopolitanism's softening of national differences, transnationalism in *Una holandesa en América* emphasizes the differences between Lucía's childhood in Holland and her adulthood in Colombia. Understood as a process of juxtaposing two distinct worldviews, transnationalism does not blur the differences between two national spaces, as cosmopolitanism is sometimes accused of doing. While transnationalism does not deny the attraction of defining oneself in relation to demarcated space, it juxtaposes conflictual national orientations in way that frames and contains their differences, providing just enough of a relativizing perspective to prevent oppositional viewpoints from erupting into uncontrollable violence.

By the end of the novel, Lucía has completely embraced the transnational perspective. Instead of rooting her dreams in one national space, as she did crossing the

Atlantic, she now accepts the fact that Holland and Colombia provide for her in unique ways:

¡Cuánto placer tendría si pudiera (...) contemplar nuevamente el sitio en que pasé mi juventud! Pero también sería para mí gran sacrificio abandonar esta casa y este país que ya quiero tanto. Aunque llevara conmigo a mi padre y a mis hermanitas, comprendo que ya no me acomodaría en Holanda... Todo lo encontraría cambiado, diferente, mientras que la verdad sería que yo era la que había variado... Allí nadie me necesita; aquí no puedo ocultarme a mí misma que he hecho algún bien. Ya estoy satisfecha, y gracias a Dios, que tuvo misericordia de mi alma, no deseo más de lo que tengo. (253)

Recognizing that Holland and Colombia contribute to her happiness in different ways, Lucía feels attached to both “el sitio donde pas[ó] [su] juventud” and her new home—“un país que ya quier[e] tanto” (253). She recognizes that each nation constitutes a bordered space with its own unique appeals, without—and this is the transnational key—idealizing her connection to either one. In this regard, it is significant that Lucía no longer uses the signifier *patria* to name her relationship to Holland and Colombia. Instead, she uses the affectively neutral terms *sitio* and *país*. Now that Lucía has developed a transnational disposition, Holland is no longer “[su] patria” or “la patria de [su] infancia” (104, 146), but one of two geographical spaces that equally define her identity. Her transnational, plural attachment is not based on an innate emotional connection (as *patria* would indicate), but a logical, rational choice to identify with the countries that help her feel “satisfecha”—emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually.

In this way, *Una holandesa en América* figures transnationalism as a feasible, gratifying alternative to Romantic nationalism. Lucía’s contentment distinguishes this

form of nineteenth-century transnationalism from its relatives: first, nomadism or postcoloniality, which are characterized by a lack of investment in any particular geopolitical space, and, secondly, the transnational condition of the twentieth century, theorized by Homi Bhabha to involve a decentered, fragmented subject overcome by anxiety (Bhabha, “How Newness Enters the World” 214–216).

It is important to clarify that *Una holandesa*’s transnational turn does not deny the continued relevance of the nation-state. The novel’s juxtaposition of two transnational experiences—that of Lucía and Mercedes—reminds the reader that the national and the transnational exist in paradoxical tension. By the end of the novel, Lucía’s perspective has shifted from the Romantic/nationalist pole to the Realist/transnational one, and she rationally chooses to identify with two countries. Mercedes evolves in the opposite sense; although she initially mobilized the juxtapositional foundation of a transnational disposition, Mercedes ultimately idealizes an innate connection to singular national space. Even though Lucía and Mercedes have divergent experiences in Colombia, they both constitute transnational characters. Taken together, they symbolize the fundamental paradox of transnationalism: the fact that the transnational always contains its opposite—the national. The novel’s final act of juxtaposition performs the ways in which transnationalism encompasses both the attachment to national space and the deliberate crossing of national borders. If transnationalism is a spectrum that moves from national rootedness to transnational routing, transnational characters such as Lucía and Mercedes inevitably inhabit both poles at some point in their life. *Una holandesa* does not judge



either character's trajectory, since both are perfectly valid experiences of transnational evolution.

By means of its performative rhetorical strategy, *Una holandesa* presents a model of plural attachment that significantly revises the model of singular attachment romanticized in the foundational fictions. These dissimilar models of attachment not only govern individual-national relationships, but also inform the intimate relationships that form between individuals. As an alternative to traditional, heterosexual coupling, *Una holandesa* valorizes intimate relationships between women, either as friends (Lucía and Mercedes) or cousins (Lucía and Rieken). In addition to these intimate relationships, Lucía also pursues strategic ones. She rationally chooses to support the people who need her most, such as Mister Harris, her Colombian sisters, and her Dutch aunt. Lucía cultivates a variety of plural attachments in order to meet her emotional and intellectual needs. Her relationship with multiple spaces and faces provides her with a great sense of spiritual fulfillment.<sup>99</sup> Unlike the love-less characters in Romantic novels contemporary to *Una holandesa*, Lucía is perfectly content outside of wedlock.

In this way, *Una holandesa* exposes the limitations of other nineteenth-century novels that rely on heteronormative love to allegorize the nation. In the foundational fictions, allegory constitutes a conservative gesture: it limits the ways in which a particular signifier (in this case, "love") creates meaning outside of the text. Novels such as *María* succeed at constructing national identity because they write their own

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<sup>99</sup> The last lines of the novel read: "Así en este miserable mundo, cuando el corazón se cubre de luto, el cielo aparece a nuestros ojos brillante y espléndido, ¡y la fe en sus promesas es lo único que nos consuela y endulza nuestras penas!" (Acosta de Samper, *Una holandesa* 270).

commentary and self-reflexively demonstrate how they should be interpreted—as allegories tend to do (Quilligan 31, 53). The foundational fictions overlap “love plots and political plotting” in order to ensure that the reader become conscious of a metonymic, dialectical relationship between heteronormative coupling and national consolidation (Sommer, *Foundational Fictions* 41). By shuttling between sexual desire and political passion, the national romances relentlessly signal the signifier-signified relationship it needs the reader to see: that between monogamous Eros and nationalist Polis. The foundational fictions over-determine this Eros-Polis connection to such an extreme that the reader can ignore the actual instabilities of the State and imagine future national cohesion (Sommer, *Foundational Fictions* 47, 51).

While self-referentiality in allegorical texts serves to stabilize national signifiers, this characteristic of performative texts imbues nation-building discourse with counter-national perspectives. *Una holandesa* self-reflexively displays its key rhetorical strategy—juxtaposing Romanticism and Realism—in order to construct a transnational model of political solidarity. This performative rhetorical strategy does not operate in a vacuum; rather, it works within the national-allegorical mode, effectively pluralizing the ways in which Eros represents Polis. Unlike the allegorical *María*, which over-determines Eros with national signification, the more performative *Una holandesa* under-determines the symbolic link between Eros and Polis. That is, *Una holandesa* gives its readers permission to explore multiple parallels between intimate attachment and political community. Specifically, *juxtaposing* signals the dual appeal of the Romantic and Realist models of attachment; the signifier “love” simultaneously signifies two signifieds: a

singular, nationalist model of attachment (in Mercedes's case), and a plural, transnational mode of relation (for Lucía). Instead of asking its readers to become aware of the one "correct" signifier-signified relationship, as allegorical texts do, Acosta's performative novel asks the reader to see the tension between various, simultaneous signifieds—in this case, the national and the transnational. In *Una holandesa*, it is not a question of *either* the national *or* the transnational, but both, concurrently.

This is the point of performative rhetorical strategies: not to supplant the national-allegorical mode, but to transform it from within. *Una holandesa* repeats the established allegorical codes of nineteenth-century narrative in order to call into question the hegemonic force of their regulatory norms. By coupling allegorical and performative literary form, this transnational romance exposes the limitations (and potentially violent consequences) of singular national attachment. *Una holandesa* challenges various tenets of nation-building discourse in order to transform the prevalent model of national homogeneity into one of transnational heterogeneity. Neither negating the importance of national demarcations nor denying the political power of allegorical narrative, *Una holandesa* demonstrates the complementarity of national and transnational dispositions.

### **Canon formation and the performative mode**

To review, I classify *Una holandesa* as a performative literary text for three reasons. It employs a performative rhetorical strategy (*juxtaposing* Romanticism and Realism), self-reflexively signals this signifying process to the reader (through the voice of Mercedes), and repeats without mimetically reproducing the narrative codes of the

national romance. By means of its performative form, *Una holandesa* advances Acosta's vision for a "literatura americana" and deviates from the nationalist agenda expected of her. This artistic novel opens a discursive space in Colombian letters that does not have to contribute to nation-building discourse. By means of the performative strategy of *juxtaposing*, *Una holandesa* abandons the *costumbrista* blending of Romanticism and Realism, in which the Hegelian synthesis of oppositional aesthetic modes empties each of its critical capacities. The negative dialectical movement of *juxtaposing* enables *Una holandesa* to surface concerns about the formation of a homogeneous nation—anxieties that tend to get lost in *costumbrismo*. As *Una holandesa* criticizes the essentialist, violent nature of Romantic nationalism, it documents heterogeneity, investigates meaningful, transnational exchanges, and embraces plural national attachment.

This analysis of *Una holandesa en América*, especially in comparison to *María*, further characterizes allegorical and performative literary forms as distinct, but intertwined, strategies for constructing collective identity. Even more so than *El periquillo sarniento*, Acosta's novel exemplifies the performative motivation for literary self-referentiality: to display how the text under-determines meaning, thereby encouraging the reader to embrace the tension between the text's multiple, oppositional signifieds. Much like Lizardi's novel stages nationalism and cosmopolitanism as competing desires, *Una holandesa* delights in the tension between two contradictory modes of attachment that—together—constitute transnationalism: the desire to defend and pursue emotional connection to bordered, national space *and* the rational decision to attenuate this dangerous rootedness and identify with multiple nations. In *Una holandesa*,

juxtaposing Romanticism and Realism is a rhetorical platform specifically designed for transnational expression. In *Una holandesa*, the point of performance is to reproduce the conflictual experience of the transnational citizen so that (as the epigraphs hint) its readers can come to understand it.

*El periquillo sarniento* and *Una holandesa en América* signify through a similar parallel between performative form and counter-national content. By extension, we can conclude that the use of performative rhetorical devices is not a gendered phenomenon; it is not only women writers with a feminist agenda who critique national ideologies. As the next chapter will continue to elaborate, there are a variety of performative processes that male and female writers use to revise the relationship between (allegorical) aesthetics and (national) politics in the nineteenth century. In *El periquillo sarniento*, *pretending* parallels the process of becoming-cosmopolitanism, in which the nation-state is a steppingstone to borderless political community; in *Una holandesa en América*, *juxtaposing* preserves national demarcations in order to cross them, embrace their oppositional worldviews, and identify transnationally; in *La hija de las flores* o *Todos están locos*, we will see how *parodying* is a performative rhetorical strategy specifically suited to encode the doubly colonial and postcolonial structures that make up the Cuban nation-state.

In many ways, *Una holandesa en América* met the same fate as the fourth volume of *El periquillo sarniento*; its performative form and counter-national content was effectively censored by local literary authorities and banished from the emergent literary canon. Between 1863 and 1885, the Colombian literary critic José María Vergara y

Vergara and his literary circle “El Mosaico” handpicked the novelists that would be included in their notion of a national literature. Isaacs was included, Acosta was not. A number of hypotheses seek to explain the group’s selection process. In one of these explanations, *El Mosaico* applauded *María* and dismissed *Una holandesa en América* because of the authors’ differing socio-economic statuses; Isaacs’s upper-class, gentleman-scholar credentials motivated *María*’s canonization (R. L. Williams 30). However, this rationale overlooks the fact that Acosta was not writing from a marginalized position. Although her gender may have detracted attention away from the intrinsic quality of *Una holandesa en América* (Vallejo, “Dicotomía y dialéctica” 290), Acosta—like Isaacs—wrote from a position of (relative) power. She launched her literary career with *El Mosaico*—where she published her essays about Parisian culture alongside Isaacs’s poetry—and continued to actively participate in Colombian and Peruvian literary circles (José Reyes 17).

If the socio-economic privilege of these two authors similarly enabled their participation in *El Mosaico*, there must be another explanation for the differing canonical fates of *María* and *Una holandesa en América*. Some scholars believe that *Una holandesa*’s unconventional portrayal of femininity or situation in liberal Bogotá motivated the novel’s exclusion from the conservative national canon.<sup>100</sup> This chapter advances another hypothesis: *María* was canonized for its allegorical construction of a homogenous nation, whereas *Una holandesa* was dismissed for its performative depiction of a transnational Colombia. *María* met the expectations of the literary elites who

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<sup>100</sup> See Vallejo, “Dicotomía y dialéctica” 291, 299 and R. L. Williams 22–23.

invented the Colombian literary canon. Patricia D'Allemand describes these expectations in the following terms:

la noción de literatura 'nacional' elaborada por las élites criollas decimonónicas es tan arbitraria y homogeneizante como la de 'nación' que le sirve de base, en cuanto se sustenta sobre la ficción de unidad social, histórica, lingüística y cultural que éstas aspiran a construir, en gran medida, por medio de la producción intelectual letrada. Esta unidad, como bien se sabe, sólo puede concebirse (y forjarse) a partir de problemáticos intentos de reducción de la heterogeneidad de su referente. (D'Allemand 49)<sup>101</sup>

The literary canon was thus limited to the foundational fictions that reduced heterogeneity and allegorized national unity. *El Mosaico* promoted the novel that actively erased difference (*María*) and dismissed the one that refused to reduce the heterogeneity of the national space it describes (*Una holandesa*). Because the performative form of *Una holandesa en América* imports doubt and contradiction to projects of national definition, it constituted a threat to the elite's conceptualization of nation, national identity, and national literature. The divergent fates of *María* and *Una holandesa* exemplify the marginalized position of performative literary form within the nineteenth-century Spanish American canon.

The next chapter corroborates this assertion by analyzing an explicitly performative and egregiously overlooked lyric comedy by the Cuban author Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda. Like *Una holandesa en América*, this play combines allegorical

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<sup>101</sup> D'Allemand is referring to the work of *El Mosaico* and the 1867 *Historia de la literatura en Nueva Granada*, which was started by José María Vergara y Vergara and completed by Isidoro Laverde Amaya (D'Allemand 48).

and performative rhetorical devices in order to critique prevalent narratives of national definition.



### CHAPTER 3: Parodying: the insanity of postcolonial mestizaje in *La hija de las flores* o *Todos están locos*

Despite the fact that the Spanish-Cuban author Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda (1814-1873) is best known today as a novelist and a poet, she was admired in the nineteenth century for her theatrical plays.<sup>102</sup> Her tragedies, comedies, and dramas were performed throughout Spain, in Mexico City, and in Cuba, and some were even translated to into other languages (E. B. Williams 30, 95; Carilla 48). Avellaneda's success as a playwright is remarkable: in an era when women's participation in the public sphere was quite limited, it was very difficult for female playwrights to stage their work, let alone do so repeatedly, in multiple cities, and with critical acclaim (Fernández Soto 7–8).<sup>103</sup> Despite Avellaneda's documented talent as a playwright, present-day scholarship focuses predominantly on her novelistic oeuvre. For example, *Sab* (1841), an allegorical tale of interracial love, has inspired countless studies about the discursive formulation of Cuban national identity. By privileging *Sab* as the comprehensive touchstone for Avellaneda's views about Cuban *mestizaje*, present-day scholarship loses sight of the minor genres that also participated in nation-building discourse in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

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<sup>102</sup> As Payno writes in 1845 about Avellaneda's play *Alfonso Munio*: "El juicio de los literatos y de los poetas ha sido tan favorable a la señorita de Avellaneda como el fallo del público" (Payno 137–38). Later in the nineteenth century, Altamirano will laud Avellaneda in the following terms: "Todo en las obras de la ilustre americana lleva el sello de ese talento varonil y avasallador que caracteriza a los grandes hombres; todo en ellas es notable, y hasta sus defectos e infracciones de la verdad de las reglas [de la unidad del teatro] tienen el mismo carácter que los defectos de los poetas antiguos, o que las magníficas licencias de Shakespeare y de los más célebres dramaturgos modernos" (Altamirano, "Baltasar" 297).

<sup>103</sup> See E. B. Williams and Fernández Soto for a description of Avellaneda's early passion for theater. She acted as a child and began writing dramas at a young age.

This chapter spotlights one such genre—the lyric comedy. Avellaneda’s *La hija de las flores* o *Todos están locos* (1852) was performed with great success in Madrid and Mexico City in the 1850s. Despite its transatlantic circulation, this lyric comedy intervenes in political debates about independence and national definition in Cuba. Specifically, *La hija de las flores* counters *Sab*’s narrative of national *mestizaje*. It presents the unnervingly abrupt reconciliation of a symbolic family feud. A wealthy (indigenous) woman who does not have the right to manage her own estate quickly forgives the (Spanish) rapist who “discovered” her beauty in a fertile, unknown garden. After the perpetrator and his victim announce their plans to marry, they embrace their previously estranged (mestiza) daughter, Flora, into their (postcolonial) family unit. At the end of play, the superficially happy family goes insane: as the title alludes, “*todos están locos*.” The sappy ending in *La hija de las flores* characterizes the *mestizo* family as so insane that their mental instability compromises the political stability they supposedly represent. In doing so, *La hija de las flores* places in suspense the belief that *mestizaje* was a prerequisite to Cuban independence. Instead of alleging that interracial bonding could unify the Cuban people enough to ward off Spain, as *Sab* and other anti-colonialist texts from the mid-1800s in Cuba do, *La hija de las flores* stages the marriage between a colonizing rapist and his colonized victim in order to represent the uncomfortable reality of nation-building discourse: that the postcolonial nation, in its quest for self-definition and autonomy, must reject its colonial past *and* inscribe colonial race relations into its national future.

The inseparability of the colonial and the postcolonial is a fundamental feature of Latin American postcoloniality. While many scholars agree with this statement, there are others that refute the validity of labeling the post-independence societies of Latin America as *postcolonial*. This line of criticism disputes the prefix *post* and/or questions what constitutes a *colonial* experience. For example, J. Jorge Klor de Alva and Rolena Adorno allege that the notion of *colonialism* mischaracterizes the Spanish presence in Latin America in the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries (Klor de Alva 242–246; R. Adorno 143). The dichotomous opposition between colonizer and colonized—which Klor de Alva and Adorno take as a defining feature of *colonialism*—did not exist in Latin America, where genetic and cultural *mestizaje* intertwined the Spanish and indigenous populations. Enrique Dussel and Fernando Coronil refute these claims; they allege that colonialism is still valid for explaining the asymmetrical relationship of power established between the indigenous populations and the *criollos* (Spaniards born in the Americas) (Dussel 45–48; Coronil 103).

Whether or not the notion of a “postcolonial” Latin America is a logical fallacy depends entirely on our definitions of “post” and “colonialism.” In the context of 16<sup>th</sup>-century Latin America, *colonialism* is understood to involve notions of resettlement and the development and spread of new ethnic forms. Spanish colonialism in Latin America does not necessarily imply economic servitude, social subjugation, and cultural denigration—as colonialism in other areas of the world did.<sup>104</sup> For this reason, the

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<sup>104</sup> It is also important to distinguish between the two different types of colonialism in Latin America: the Spanish imperialism of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and the nationalist settler colonies of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As Thurner elaborates, “In the Americas, for example, settler colonialism became

colonial experience of the Spanish American continent is distinct from that of the insular Caribbean, which scholars typically frame as “a classic case of ‘colonial exploitation’” (Martínez-San Miguel, *Coloniality of Diasporas* 2). The prefix of *postcolonial* also takes on a distinct meaning in the Latin American context. It does not imply a temporal break from colonialism, but rather a problematizing supplement. As Mark Thurner explains, “nineteenth-century ‘afters’ of the Spanish colonial now may be named ‘postcolonial,’ not because ‘the after-effects of colonial rule have somehow been suspended’—that would be an epochal, nationalist, or modernist reading—but rather because ‘emergent new configurations of power-knowledge [were beginning to] exert their distinctions and specific effects’” (Thurner 39). Within this line of reasoning, the “post” of *postcolonial* does not deny the continual existence of colonial power structures in post-independence Latin America.

The alternative framework of *coloniality* encapsulates these nuanced definitions of “post” and “colonialism.” While *colonialism* refers to “the lack of a national sovereign state due to (...) imperial subordination” and is presumed to have a clear end, *coloniality* “refers to the continuity of structures of colonial domination after the end of imperial administrations” (Martínez-San Miguel, *Coloniality of Diasporas* 9; Mignolo, “Geopolitics of Knowledge” 248–249). The term *coloniality* resolves various difficulties of defining *colonialism* in the Latin American context. Because *coloniality* does not

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the province of expanding postcolonial nation-states in the nineteenth century. The devastating consequences of Creole nationalist ‘internal’ settler colonialism (which often invited land-hungry European peasants to do the settling for them) on native societies in the United States, Mexico, and the Andean and Southern Cone countries were in many cases more pronounced than during the formal colonial period of Spanish imperial rule from abroad. To simply call these nationalist settler colonialisms mere continuations of earlier imperial designs is to miss the profoundly different ways in which such projects were imagined, executed, and resisted” (Thurner 29).

imply a process of decolonization, it accounts for the fact that Latin America remained culturally and socially connected to the metropole even after independence was achieved.

Aníbal Quijano's notion of *coloniality of power* explains why the independence of Latin American countries was not simultaneously a decolonizing process. *Coloniality of power* names the ideological machinery that justified the physical conquest and epistemological colonization of the New World: "it was not only about physically repressing the dominated populations but also about getting them to naturalize the European cultural imaginary as the only way of relating to nature, the social world, and their own subjectivity" (Castro-Gómez 281). This Eurocentric system of knowledge is defined by three features: first, the insistence on race as "the fundamental criterion for the distribution of the world population into ranks, places, and roles in the new society's structure of power" (Quijano 183); secondly, the creation of binary categories to govern relations between Western Europe and the rest of the world (Quijano 190); and, thirdly, the belief that Europe was both the origin and the epitome of civilization (Quijano 200–201). Understood as a cognitive model, *coloniality of power* remained operative during and after the independence movements in Latin America. Race continued to structure social relations, epistemological binaries (i.e. *civilización-barbarie*) transformed racial and cultural differences into national values, and the *criollo* elite continued to identify ethnically with the Spanish "colonizer." Quijano's framework highlights that the wars of independence in Latin America were not anticolonial wars, but "civil wars of separation" that maintained colonial inequalities (Klor de Alva 247). In Latin America, postcolonial

discourse—the network of written and spoken communications that analyze, explain, and respond to the cultural legacies of colonialism—redeploys colonial cognitive models.

When I employ polemical terms such as *colonization* and *postcolonial* in this chapter, they should be understood via the framework of *coloniality*. Although I could replace *postcolonial* with *post-independence* in some instances, I prefer the former term because it registers the theoretical framework—*coloniality*—that is essential to understanding Avellaneda’s play *La hija de las flores* o *Todos están locos*. Coloniality is a fundamental concept in this chapter for three reasons. First, it provides a conceptual link between Latin America and the Caribbean. At first glance, Quijano’s term—which “is conceived from the particular context of countries that had and sometimes still have a significant indigenous population and that were also constituted as national states in the nineteenth century” (Martínez-San Miguel, *Coloniality of Diasporas* 7)—does not apply to the Caribbean. However, *coloniality* offers a framework to study the neocolonial and decolonizing experiences in the Caribbean beyond the sovereign and nationalist paradigm prevalent in the rest of Latin America. For this reason, it has become a key concept in several studies about the Caribbean.<sup>105</sup> Although the Latin American mainland does not experience *extended colonialism* to the extent that the insular Caribbean does,<sup>106</sup> *coloniality of power* provides a theoretical common ground for studying the legacies of colonialism in the Caribbean and Latin America. It is within this framework that we can

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<sup>105</sup> See Hall, “When Was ‘the Postcolonial’?”; Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora”; Grosfoguel; and Buscaglia-Salgado.

<sup>106</sup> Martínez-San Miguel uses the term *extended colonialism* to refer to “the complicated sociopolitical status of many countries in the insular Caribbean that do not seem to follow the same colonial-postcolonial or colonial-sovereign state pattern that is the case in most of North, Central, and South America” (Martínez-San Miguel, *Coloniality of Diasporas* 6).

approach *La hija de las flores*—a complex play that pivots between the histories of *mestizaje* and colonization in the Caribbean as well as Latin American contexts.

Secondly, *coloniality* leads to an understanding of the *postcolonial* that “does the critical work of undermining the developmentalist teleology of the nation as the universal historical vessel of a transition from the colonial to the modern” (Turner 39). *La hija de las flores* represents this critical perspective: it subverts the belief that a nation defined by *mestizaje* will effectuate political autonomy and stability. This is what links *La hija de las flores* to *El periquillo sarniento* and *Una holandesa en América*; via cosmopolitanism, transnationalism, and postcoloniality, these three performative works represent identity discourses that take place beyond the configuration of sovereign nation-states.

Finally, the concept of *coloniality* is useful because it transcends the opposition between colonialism and nationalism. Throughout this chapter, I use *postcoloniality* to refer to the post-independence period in Latin America in order to emphasize the extent to which nation-building discourse depended on colonial cognitive models. When I qualify a political state or collective identity as “postcolonial,” I do so to mark the “rather ambivalent ‘double inscriptions’ of the colonial in the national” (Turner 40). This terminology contextualizes the representation of *mestizaje* in *La hija de las flores*. This lyric comedy reveals the specter of coloniality that hides within *Sab*’s narrative of *mestizaje*. *La hija de las flores* foregrounds the fact that *mestizaje* takes two products of colonization—the violent intermixing of races and the notion of race itself—and makes

them the preconditions of postcolonial autonomy.<sup>107</sup> While the enamored characters in *Sab* do not take issue with this logical disconnect, the lovesick characters of *La hija* embody the absurdity of defining a national people in terms of their *mestizo* heritage. If they are to embrace as a unified *mestizo* family, the symbolically Spanish, Indigenous and African characters in *La hija de las flores* must repudiate the violent, exploitative nature of colonialism, yet reactivate its precipitation of racial and cultural mixing.

Avellaneda presents unconditional forgiveness as the only way to resolve this postcolonial aporia. However, there's a catch: the need to forgive the unforgivable makes the postcolonial, *mestizo* family in *La hija de las flores* go insane. "Todos están locos" when they are required to unconditionally forgive the originary act of colonial violence—an unspeakable, inexcusable crime that nevertheless shapes their national future. As Jacques Derrida's essay "On Forgiveness" will help illuminate, unconditional forgiveness is an absurd—but necessary—prerequisite to postcoloniality. By characterizing the *mestizo* family as insane, Avellaneda parodies the narrative of *mestizaje* that contemporaneous Cuban novels, including *Sab*, propagate in service of national consolidation. In contrast to *Sab*'s idealistic portrayal of national *mestizaje*, *La hija de las flores* doubts that the discourse of *mestizaje* will bring about the postcolonial cohesion it promises. The performative *La hija de las flores* revises the conservative impulse of the allegorical foundational fictions and proposes a radical alternative narrative: one in which

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<sup>107</sup> Ironically, as Joshua Lund has perspicaciously noted, theories of hybridity often obscure their racialized foundation. As I will elaborate, *La hija de las flores* is symptomatic of this phenomenon: it avoids explicitly stating the race of its symbolically charged characters.



widespread insanity—and not political stability—results from defining a people in terms of their mestizo heritage.

In order to account for the divergent representation of *mestizaje* in *Sab* and *La hija*, this chapter enumerates the differing functions of allegorical and performative form in nineteenth-century Latin America. I show how the performative rhetorical strategy of *La hija de las flores*—*parodying* the generic codes of the foundational fictions—serves to undermine the narrative of national *mestizaje* that *Sab* allegorically constructs. By means of *parodying* the allegorical foundational fiction, *La hija de las flores* exposes how narratives of *mestizaje* both unify and stratify, reassure and render insane. Like *pretending* and *juxtaposing*, *parodying* deviates from the national-allegorical mode and reappraises the violent practices inscribed within the nation-state. As we saw with *El periquillo sarniento* and *Una holandesa en América*, the performative *La hija de las flores* does not entirely rescind the desire to define a future nation: as it exposes the logical limits of *mestizaje*, it also registers the desire for one big happy *mestizo* family. However, Avellaneda's unsettling play differs from these performative novels in one important way: *La hija de las flores* questions the nation without offering a clear alternative. In this lyric comedy, there is no cosmopolitan or transnational turn to counteract the limitations of the nation-state. *La hija* exposes the maddening aporia that constitutes the *mestizo* nation without offering a cure for the people's collective insanity.

In sum, this chapter coincides with the efforts of Rogelia Lily Ibarra and Kelly Comfort to move the study of Avellaneda's *oeuvre* beyond a limited focus on race and

gender and query her position within the larger discourses of the independence period.<sup>108</sup>

I contrast the allegorical and performative modes of Avellaneda's political expression in order to elucidate the complex relationship between *mestizaje*, nationhood, and postcoloniality in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Cuba.

### **Narratives of *mestizaje***

*Mestizaje* refers to the racial and cultural admixture produced by the encounters of European, Africans, and indigenous groups in the contact zones of the Americas.<sup>109</sup>

While the term *mestizo* most narrowly refers to the cross between an indigenous woman and a European man, a broader definition of *mestizaje* better aligns with its usage during the independence and post-independence periods in Latin America. In his "Carta de Jamaica," Simón Bolívar conceptualizes *mestizaje* in regards to "a species midway between the legitimate proprietors of this country and the Spanish usurpers" (Bolívar 110). However, when Bolívar addresses the second national congress of Venezuela in 1819, his definition of *mestizaje* expands to acknowledge the fundamental importance of peoples of African descent to the constitution of American ontology (Miller 9):

We must keep in mind that our people are neither European nor North American; rather, they are a mixture of African and the Americans who originated in Europe. Even Spain herself has ceased to be European because of her African blood, her institutions, and her character. It is impossible to determine with any degree of accuracy where we belong in the human family. The greater portion of native Indians has

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<sup>108</sup> See Comfort 180 and Ibarra 385.

<sup>109</sup> Mary Louise Pratt first used the term *contact zone* to describe social spaces where "disparate cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of dominance and subordination—like colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today" (Pratt, *Imperial Eyes* 4).

been annihilated; Spaniards have mixed with Americans and Africans, and Africans with Indians and Spaniards. (Bolívar 181)

Bolívar's formulation of *mestizaje* is unique in two ways. First, whereas most early theories of racial mixing elided the African component, Bolívar recognizes the Indigenous, European, *and* African contributions to American *mestizaje*. In doing so, he anticipates Caribbean theorizations of *mestizaje*, such as those later found in *Sab* and *La hija de las flores*. Secondly, unlike contemporaneous formulations of biological *mestizaje*, Bolívar dismisses the notion of European racial purity. By defining a tripartite racial mixture, Bolívar can use the concept of *mestizaje* to chart the unique political destiny of Latin America: "Americans by birth and Europeans by law, we find ourselves engaged in a dual conflict: we are disputing with the natives for titles of ownership, and at the same time we are struggling to maintain ourselves in the country that gave us birth against the oppression of the invaders" (Bolívar 110). Within this line of logic, "Latin America can no longer be ruled by Spain, because its people are not Spanish, and the proof of this difference is the presence—not of an indigenous (...) remnant—but of a 'mixed species' engaged in a 'dual conflict'" (Miller 9).

In this way, Bolívar's writings exemplify how the discourse of *mestizaje* passed from the realm of 18<sup>th</sup>-century "science" to the realm of 19<sup>th</sup>-century politics. *Mestizaje* became the official discourse of nation building in Latin America. It created an intermediate subject and interpolated him as "the citizen" of the imminently independent nation (Mallon 24). In order to do so, the discourse of *mestizaje* departed from the premise that race was "a viable and (...) inescapable determinant of Latin American and

Caribbean character, and ultimately, of cultural ontology” (Miller 7). Consequently, *mestizaje* became a simultaneously semiotic and somatic category of signification; that is, it intertwined biological and cultural mixing in an attempt to define a national or continental identity. This ontological discourse “diffused or subsumed racial, linguistic, and performative differences under the banner of multiracial or multiethnic unity that translated into an integrated and integrative ‘spirit’ or ‘soul’” (Miller 3). Although this homogenizing effect of *mestizaje* will be strongly criticized in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries,<sup>110</sup> the idea of a common “mestizo soul” was fundamental to the independence movements. By claiming a cohesive identity separate from Spain, the discourse of *mestizaje* rallied the diverse ethno-racial groups of Latin America in a common struggle against Spanish colonial power (Chanady 193).<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Largely through the intervention of social scientists, literary critics began to see *mestizaje*’s darker side: *mestizaje* presupposes racial purity; *mestizaje* privileges whiteness and justifies the exclusion of certain minority groups; *mestizaje* promotes a false consciousness that maintains the power of the elite; *mestizaje* is an illusion that erases a pluricultural reality, depicts synthesis where there is none, and detracts attention away from existing social inequalities; and *mestizaje* romanticizes the Indian or the black, thereby dismissing their engagement with contemporary political practices (Miller 5–6). In response to these problematic phenomena, scholars have proposed alternatives to the term *mestizaje*. See Román de la Campa on “transculturation,” Benítez-Rojo, *The Repeating Island* on “syncretism,” Walter Mignolo on “colonial semiosis” and “pluritopic hermeneutics,” Antonio Cornejo-Polar on “migrancy,” and Néstor García Canclini on “hybridity.” For an analysis of how *mestizaje* has recently become an oppositional discourse to hegemonic power, see Chanady.

<sup>111</sup> For example, José Martí’s essay “Mi Raza” (1893) couples a proclamation of the island’s mestizo identity with a call for Cuban independence. Martí writes: “There is no danger of war between the races in Cuba. *Man* seems more than white man, mulatto, or black man. *Cuban* means fore than white man, mulatto, or black man” (Martí 310). Within Martí’s additive logic, the Cuban national identity is a synthesis of its white, mulatto, and negro components. This *mestizo* fusion is greater than any of its individual parts; it forges a strong national character capable of achieving independence. As Martínez-Echazábal notes, “Martí breaks down the racial-hierarchical signifiers (white, mulatto, and black) and displaces them into a national one (Cuban) (...) [“Mi raza”] promoted unity among all Cubans to create a utopian national space in which, at least in principle, Cubans would accept the color-blind equation whereby man equals citizen

During the years leading up to and following independence, *mestizaje* did not correspond to a concrete reality. Instead of (only) registering the racial diversity of the Latin American population, *mestizaje* (also) imagined a cultural sameness. It conceived “un punto de encuentro no conflictivo” where the nation could be defined “como un todo más o menos armónico y coherente—punto que sigue siendo un curioso a priori para concebir (incluso contra la cruda evidencia de profundas desintegraciones) la posibilidad misma de una ‘verdadera’ nacionalidad” (Cornejo-Polar, “Mestizaje, Transculturación, Heterogeneidad” 369). In order to support the project of national consolidation, *mestizaje* promoted the ideals of union, harmony, synthesis, and cooperation; this distinguishes it from terms such as *heterogeneity* and *hybridity*, which foreground difference, plurality, and dissonance and tend to refer to concrete realities (Chanady 202; Hale 577).<sup>112</sup> In the nineteenth century, *mestizaje* is a transcendental signifier that “deja de ser un simple sustituto del sincretismo y la mezcla, y se convierte en la promesa de un proyecto político” (Sánchez Prado, “El Mestizaje” 389).

Allegorical literature proved to be an especially productive medium for advancing *mestizaje*’s political project. Allegory, much like the discourse of *mestizaje*, constructs an abstract, transcendental level of signification that does not correspond to (textual) reality. Take for example Avellaneda’s most famous novel, *Sab* (1841). This national romance depicts an infertile *mestizaje* in order to allegorize a politically productive one. The

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equals Cuban for a distinctly political purpose—independence from Spain” (Martínez-Echazábal 31).

<sup>112</sup> When defined in this way, *mestizaje* is often conflated with *transculturation*—the give-and-take process “whereby both parts of the cultural equation are modified and give way to a new sociocultural conglomerate” (Martínez-Echazábal 37).

novel's mulatto protagonist embodies the Afro-European encounter in the Caribbean, but he never reproduces. Although Sab adopts an (cultural) indigenous mother in addition to his (biological) African mother, he never has the opportunity to pass on this formulation of an Afro-Euro-indigenous *mestizaje*. *Mestizaje*—especially in its cultural form—remains a political abstraction in *Sab*. The novel's allegorical structure allows it to abstract a united Cuban population from the racist reality of plantation culture. In doing so, *Sab* paves the way for Cuban independence and national consolidation.

When I refer to *Sab* as a “narrative of *mestizaje*,” the term *mestizaje* should be understood in accordance with its usage in the nineteenth century. First, *mestizaje* in *Sab* vacillates between biological and cultural formulations. Secondly, *mestizaje* is not limited to its Euro-indigenous variety. Avellaneda's portrayal of *mestizaje*, like Bolívar's (who was writing from the Caribbean), incorporates the African component of Cuban identity. Finally, the discourse of *mestizaje* is intertwined with the politics of nation building.<sup>113</sup> Cuba's struggle for independence from Spain was a long and arduous one; anti-colonial discourse in the mid-1800s preached the need to embrace the island's *mestizo* heritage,

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<sup>113</sup> It is curious that Doris Sommer does not use the terms *mestizo* and *mestizaje* in her analyses of *Sab*. Although the article “Sab C'est Moi” and its corresponding chapter in *Foundational Fictions* employ the terms “hybridity” and “interracial,” there are numerous hints that Sommer is more precisely talking about *mestizaje*. In the introduction to *Foundational Fictions*, Sommer recognizes that *mestizaje* is “practically a slogan for many projects of national consolidation” (Sommer, *Foundational Fictions* 22)—and then reads *Sab* as this type of political project. Elsewhere in *Foundational Fictions*, although not in the chapter on *Sab*, Sommer writes that *Sab* perpetuates the “ideal of *mestizaje*” which “was based in the reality of mixed races to which different virtues and failings were ascribed, and which had to amalgamate in some countries if anything like national unity was to be produced” (78). Sommer, like many scholars, associates *mestizaje* with nation building, unity, and amalgamation. Although Sommer drops the term *mestizaje* when specifically analyzing *Sab*, she continues to invoke its characteristic features: the reconciliation of difference and the production of something believed to be new/superior—in this case, “un tipo ‘autóctono’ único” (Sommer, “Sab C'est Moi” 33, 35; Sommer, *Foundational Fictions* 132, 135).

since this type of integrative national solidarity would provide the stability and cohesion needed to finally claim national autonomy.<sup>114</sup>

The second “narrative of *mestizaje*” studied in this chapter, *La hija de las flores* (1852), can be defined in similar terms. Like *Sab*, this lyric comedy represents a protagonist defined by racial mixture; *La hija de las flores* depicts the bastard child of an indigenous woman and a European man. Although this type of biological *mestizaje* did not occur in the Caribbean—where the indigenous population was decimated during the contact period—*La hija de las flores* expands this representation to include a cultural admixture that is particular to Cuba. When the Euro-indigenous protagonist proclaims that she is part of the matriarchal society of African slaves, *La hija de las flores* incorporates African culture into its formulation of *mestizaje*.

Ultimately, both *La hija de las flores* and *Sab* depict an Afro-Euro-indigenous *mestizaje*. Although these narratives of *mestizaje* refer to specific national context (Cuba), they formulate a racial and cultural mixture with continental scope. This exemplifies how the discourse of *mestizaje* promoted both national and continental unity in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Latin America. *Sab* and *La hija de las flores* can move between national and continental concerns because they obscure the notion of race. Like other theories of hybridity in Latin America (i.e. Fernando Ortiz’s *transculturación* and José Vasconcelos’s *raza cósmica*), *mestizaje* is “tightly bound up with a rhetoric that, while deriving its

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<sup>114</sup> “Romance between previously segregated sectors might ideally create the nation unity among whites and blacks, ex-masters and ex-slaves, that the war for independence would need. In Cuba, in other words, abolitionism becomes a *condition*, not a result, of independence. The fact that *Sab* makes a second appearance during the independence struggle (in 1871, the same year that Avellaneda expunges it from her respectable *Complete Works*), and serialized in a Cuban revolutionary journal in New York, suggests how important of an ideological weapon this novel must have been” (Sommer, *Foundational Fictions* 125).

intelligibility from race, simultaneously obscures that relationship through strategies of exceptionalism and exemplarity” (Lund xvi). *Sab* exemplifies both of these strategies: the novel employs strategies of exceptionalism when it characterizes the appearance and behavior of the mulatto protagonist as unrepresentative of his race;<sup>115</sup> additionally, the novel employs strategies of exemplarity to transform Carlota and Sab into abstract (gender-less and color-less) victims of oppression.<sup>116</sup>

Like *Sab*, *La hija de las flores* also obscures the raciality underlying its narrative of *mestizaje*. Avellaneda neither situates the play in Cuba nor describes the play’s characters in racialized terms. However, the play’s Spanish setting does not prevent it from contemplating the mechanics of *mestizaje* during a period of national and continental definition in Latin America. As I will detail in continuation, 19<sup>th</sup>-century theater commonly substituted one geographical setting for another. With its Spanish setting and Cuban concerns, *La hija de las flores* underlines the political potency of *mestizaje*—a discourse that both transcends and reinforces the notion of race in its declaration of collective identity (Gruzinski 19).

As narratives of *mestizaje*, *Sab* and *La hija de las flores* represent the genetic and cultural mixing of Europeans, Africans, and indigenous peoples in the New World. In both the novel and the play, the notion of *mestizaje* is part of larger debates about collective identity, political independence, and national definition. What sets *Sab* and *La*

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<sup>115</sup> “No parecía un criollo blanco, tampoco era negro ni podía creérsele descendiente de los primeros habitantes de las Antillas. Su rostro presentaba un compuesto singular en que se descubría el cruzamiento de dos razas diversas, y en que se amalgamaban, por decirlo así, los rasgos de la casta africana con los de la europea, sin ser no obstante un mulato perfecto” (Gómez de Avellaneda 104).

<sup>116</sup> I analyze this in detail on page 169.



*hija* apart as narratives of *mestizaje* is the literary devices they use to represent racial and cultural mixing. As I elaborate in the next section, *Sab* depends on allegorical literary form to imagine a *mestizo* Cuba. *La hija de las flores*, in contrast, deviates from the national-allegorical mode in order to critique *Sab*'s narrative of national *mestizaje*. The play makes use of a performative literary form in order to take the abstract notion of *mestizaje* and concretely expose its logical inconsistencies.

### ***Sab*: allegorical projection of mestizo unity**

*Sab* was published in 1841 from Spain, but it is set on a Cuban plantation in the early 1800s.<sup>117</sup> In Avellaneda's novel, the main characters are oppressed by three patriarchal institutions: colonialism, slavery, and marriage. Sab, the mulatto overseer of the de B family plantation, is the personal slave to his master's beautiful creole daughter, Carlota de B; although Sab loves Carlota and works clandestinely to ensure her complete happiness, this type of interracial desire is forbidden within plantation society. Carlota remains completely oblivious to Sab's love until it is too late—when Sab has died and Carlota is imprisoned in an unhappy marriage to Enrique Otway, a greedy foreigner whose marriage to her was a financial investment. Throughout this emotional fiasco, Carlota's cousin, Teresa, represents the voice of reason: she laments the racist ideologies that deny Sab the right to love freely and discerns Enrique's coldhearted plotting. Disgusted by the social codes that govern intimate relationships in plantation society,

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<sup>117</sup> The novel's anti-colonial content incited Spanish censors to ban it in Cuba. Nevertheless, *Sab* reached the island in the 1870s via Cuban revolutionary journals from New York (Brickhouse 173); it was later formally published in the Habana journal *El Museo* in 1883 (Araújo 132).

Teresa seeks out alternatives. Instead of marrying, she joins a convent, where she dies happy. Sab dies a mysterious death, and Carlota lives a life of domestic misery.

Many critics read *Sab*'s tale of curtailed love as an allegory for the Cuban nation to come. In the wide range of allegorical interpretations of the novel, Sab, Carlota, and an indigenous woman, Martina, come to symbolize the protonational Cuban subject, either individually or collectively.<sup>118</sup> To begin, Sab unites the European, the African, and the indigenous components of Cuban *mestizaje*. As many critics have recognized, Sab's racially ambiguous appearance disrupts the binary opposition between white and black:<sup>119</sup>

No parecía un criollo blanco, tampoco era negro ni podía creérsele descendiente de los primeros habitantes de las Antillas. Su rostro presentaba un compuesto singular en que se descubría el cruzamiento de dos razas diversas, y en que se amalgamaban, por decirlo así, los rasgos de la casta africana con los de la europea, sin ser no obstante un mulato perfecto. (Gómez de Avellaneda 104)

This introductory description of Sab characterizes his *mestizaje*—more specifically his *mulatez*—in racial terms, but Sab also symbolizes a cultural *mestizaje*. Although he identifies with his late African mother, a princess from the Congo, Sab also inscribes himself into the indigenous genealogy of the island. He asks Martina, a “descendiente de

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<sup>118</sup> Brickhouse is one of the few critics that ascribe Teresa national-allegorical value. Brickhouse characterizes Teresa as Sab's figurative sibling and fellow interracial doppelgänger: “Initially presented as cold and duplicitous, Teresa's character evolves by the middle of the narrative into the Creole heroine that Carlota fails to become. Indeed, as an alternative female embodiment of a protonational but still colonial Cuba, Teresa superficially adores Otway at the outset of the narrative but soon learns to recognize the truer nobility of the novel's mulatto, and more authentically Cuban, protagonist. She chooses a figurative national autonomy, the isolation of the convent, over compromising herself to the foreign and speculating interests of the Anglo-American interloper, even when given a clear chance to win his hand in marriage” (Brickhouse 177).

<sup>119</sup> See especially Comfort and Sommer, “Sab C'est Moi” for an analysis of Sab's racial hybridity.

la raza india” whose wealth of knowledge constitutes “una importancia real” for Cuban culture, to adopt him as a son (Gómez de Avellaneda 167).<sup>120</sup> When she agrees, Sab positions himself as the legitimate descendent of an original, pre-colonial Cuban mother. As Doris Sommer and Kelly Comfort astutely observe, “this merger of the ‘native’ mother with the hybrid son introduces the possibility for a new Cuban protonational subject; through this familial bond, Sab indeed becomes ‘as legitimate and autochthonous in this New World as were the indigenous...masters of the island’ (Sommer, “Sab C’est Moi” 114)” (Comfort 182).<sup>121</sup> Because Sab’s *mestizaje* encompasses the European, African, and indigenous cultures and races of Cuba, he is the legitimate subject capable of defining an autonomous Cuba.

Sab has the opportunity to enact his tripartite cultural *mestizaje* when he builds a garden in the middle of the plantation. Aware of how much his beloved Carlota appreciates flowers, Sab constructs her a garden, in which “no dominaba el gusto inglés ni el francés (...) Sab no había consultado sino sus caprichos al formarle” (Gómez de Avellaneda 143). Sab’s garden is a product of his *mestizo* impulses. Because it mixes gardening traditions, the garden is a key component to novel’s allegory of Cuban *mestizaje*. As Sommer explains, “from this space of social exile Sab can wrest a kind of independence too; the space allows him to construct a different ‘artificial’ order that can

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<sup>120</sup> “Yo soy también un pobre huérfano: nunca di a ningún hombre el dulce y santo título de padre, y mi desgraciada madre murió en mis brazos: soy también huérfano como Luis, sed mi madre, admitidme por vuestro hijo” (Gómez de Avellaneda 180–181).

<sup>121</sup> See Brickhouse 179 for the claim that Martina resurrects la Malinche; both are indigenous women that originate interracial genealogies.

recognize his natural legitimacy” (Sommer, *Foundational Fictions* 119). Sab’s *mestizo* garden is the site of the future Cuban nation.

When Sab designs his garden, he not only follows his own whims but also considers Carlota’s tastes. He senses that a purely English or French garden will not please Carlota, who also embodies a *mestizo* Cuba. The novel first hints at the symbolic connection between Carlota and Cuba by associating her beauty with that of the island’s countryside:

Eran hermosos los campos que atravesaban: Enrique se acercó al estribo del carruaje en que iba don Carlos y entabló conversación con éste respecto a la prodigiosa fertilidad de aquella tierra privilegiada, y el grado de utilidad que podía sacarse de ella. Sab seguía de cerca a Carlota y contemplaba alternativamente al campo y la doncella, como si los comparase: había en efecto cierta armonía entre aquella naturaleza y aquella mujer, ambas tan jóvenes y tan hermosas. (Gómez de Avellaneda 165)

More specifically, Carlota symbolizes a Cuba in denial of its *mestizo* identity. Carlota “cannot recognize her own mulatto inheritance, a simultaneously national and familial legacy of racial and cultural mixture within which her own slave (Sab) proves also to be not only her first cousin but her soul mate in sensitivity to emotion and to beauty” (Brickhouse 175). Despite Carlota’s blindness to her own *mestizaje*, other characters explicitly associate Carlota with the African and indigenous populations in Cuba: Sab famously compares his own enslavement to Carlota’s oppressive marriage and the inhabitants of Cubitas confuse Carlota with the ghost of Martina, the indigenous woman

who represents pre-Columbian culture in the novel.<sup>122</sup> As one of the few living characters at the end of the novel, Carlota, “la hija de los trópicos,” symbolizes the redefined Cuban subject—one whose cultural identity emanates from the creole, indigenous, and African elements of Cuba (Gómez de Avellaneda 275).<sup>123</sup>

For Anna Brickhouse, Carlota also represents a Cuba powerless in the face of U.S. imperialism, since her lover from the north, Enrique, manipulates her emotionally in order to steal her wealth (Brickhouse 174–75).<sup>124</sup> Carlota’s tragic fate—she is trapped in an exploitative marriage—serves as a warning to Cuba: if the island’s population cannot overcome racial and cultural differences to form a coherent, protonational front, Cuba will remain at the mercy of foreign powers. The final lines of the novel suggest that the salvation of Carlota (Cuba) lies within Sab (*mestizaje*): “¿habrá podido olvidar la hija de los trópicos, al esclavo que descansa en una humilde sepultura bajo aquel hermoso cielo?” (Gómez de Avellaneda 275). In brief, *Sab* envisions a mestizo protonation that would unify its tripartite population in the name of liberation. As an integrated front, Sab,

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<sup>122</sup> “Circulaba rápidamente la voz de un acontecimiento maravilloso, cual era que la vieja india, al cabo de medio año de estar enterrada, volvía todas las noches a su paseo habitual, y que se la veía arrodillarse junto a la cruz de madera que señalaba la sepultura de Sab, exactamente a la misma hora en que lo hacía mientras vivió y con el mismo perro por compañero. Este rumor encontró fácil acceso, pues siempre se había creído en Cubitas que Martina no era una criatura como las demás. Los más incrédulos quisieron observar aquella pretendida aparición, y el asombro fue grande y la certeza absoluta cuando estos mismos confirmaron la verdad del hecho; sólo sí que adornado con la extraña circunstancia de que la vieja india al volver a la tierra, se había transformado de una manera singular, pues los que la habían sorprendido en su visita nocturna aseguraban que no era ya vieja, ni flaca, ni de color aceitunado, sino joven, blanca y hermosa cuanto podía conjeturarse, pues siempre tenía cubierto el rostro con una gasa” (Gómez de Avellaneda 274).

<sup>123</sup> See Comfort 188–89 and Skattebo 195.

<sup>124</sup> Although *Sab* overtly casts Enrique as a “young Englishman,” Brickhouse contends that his implied identity is Anglo-American. As evidence, she cites the passage in which Enrique’s “fair, rosy skin, blue eyes, and golden hair” cause the narrator to wonder “if...he had been born in some northern region” (qtd. on Brickhouse 174).

Carlota, and Martina (and the populations they symbolize) have the potential to abolish slavery, break the patriarchal chains that subjugate women, and free Cuba from foreign control.<sup>125</sup>

The most insightful studies of *Sab* are those that seek to understand how the novel signifies allegorically. Critics such as Julia Paulk and Doris Sommer, for example, identify which of the novel's formal features cue a national-allegorical reading. Paulk focuses on the letter Sab writes to Teresa, which ascribes Sab and Carlota metaphoric signification and signals the novel's figurative level of meaning. The often quoted passage that positions slaves and women as fellow victims of oppression ends up generalizing the particular experiences of Sab and Carlota.<sup>126</sup> Then, even more abstractly, "las mujeres" and "los esclavos" come to represent "los débiles" that oppose "los fuertes" (Gómez de Avellaneda 271). With this progressively generalizing terminology, the letter signals Carlota and Sab's roles in the novel's abstract level of meaning: they represent color-less and gender-less members of "the oppressed" that fight for human equality (Paulk 236). The allegorical movement of this letter constitutes a conservative gesture. By turning Carlota and Sab into more universal examples, allegory conceals the feminist and abolitionist views they embody.

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<sup>125</sup> Comfort characterizes Avellaneda's vision for Cuba as a nostalgic one, claiming that Avellaneda idealizes a pre-colonial and pre-capitalist Cuba in which "the commodities to be exchanged do not include slaves or women and the national subjects are no longer the objects of patriarchal, commercial, or foreign control" (Comfort 180). In this line of interpretation, Avellaneda's ideal national subject "would be an aggregate of the oppressed members of its present" (Comfort 190).

<sup>126</sup> "¡Oh!, ¡las mujeres! ¡Pobres y ciegas víctimas! Como los esclavos, ellas arrastran pacientemente su cadena y bajan la cabeza bajo el yugo de las leyes humanas" (Gómez de Avellaneda 270–71).

Sab's letter to Teresa also cues a national-allegorical reading by recounting the apocalyptic vision Sab has just before dying: "una voz celestial" assures Sab that "el sol de la justicia no está lejos. La tierra le espera para rejuvenecer a su luz: los hombres llevarán un sello divino, y el ángel de la poesía radiará sus rayos sobre el nuevo reinado de la inteligencia" (Gómez de Avellaneda 271–72). As Paulk contends in her astute analysis of this passage, Sab's vision of the dawn of a new age discloses the novel's recourse to allegorical generic codes. Following critics such as Walter Benjamin, Angus Fletcher and Carolyn Van Dyke, Paulk contends that apocalypticism and visions are important features of allegory (Paulk 235). She argues that "while Sab's interests are much more earthly than heavenly (...) the vision suggests a metaphoric interpretation of the novel as a struggle for salvation in the more contemporary sense of liberation" (Paulk 236). Despite the little critical attention Sab's vision has received, it is crucial to unlocking the novel's allegorical rendering of a liberated Cuba.

For Doris Sommer, the fact that *Sab* is both a romance and a tragedy lends it a national-allegorical capacity. Sommer defines the Latin American "romance" as a boldly allegorical love story that intertwines eroticism and nationalism (Sommer, *Foundational Fictions* 5, 24, 31). In the case of romances like that of Sab and Carlota, "erotic interest (...) owes its intensity to the very prohibitions against the lovers' union across racial (...) lines. And political conciliations, or deals, are transparently urgent because the lovers 'naturally' desire the kind of state that would unite them" (Sommer, *Foundational Fictions* 47). In this sense, *Sab* is a textbook example of the foundational fiction that overlaps love plots and political plotting: the interracial union of Sab and Carlota can

only occur in a Cuba where slavery is illegal and the colonialist racial hierarchies have been abolished; at the same time, the very existence of this liberated, postcolonial nation depends on the solidarity of its racially diverse population.

In a typically overlooked passage of the novel, *Sab* self-reflexively indicates the patriotic sentiment embedded in its romantic tale. It is no coincidence that this allegorical cue is part of Sab's letter to Teresa. Sab recalls how Carlota used to read him "los romances, novelas e historias que más le agradaban" (Gómez de Avellaneda 266). Sab describes how these romances inspired a "multitude" of patriotic ideas and opened his eyes to a whole "new world" of political passion:

Yo encontraba muy bello el destino de aquellos hombres que combatían y morían por su patria. Como un caballo belicoso que oye el sonido del clarín me agitaba con un ardor salvaje a los grandes nombres de patria y libertad: mi corazón se dilataba, hinchábase mi nariz, mi mano buscaba maquinal y convulsivamente una espada, y la dulce voz de Carlota apenas bastaba para arrancarme de mi enajenamiento. A par de esta voz querida que yo creía escuchar músicas marciales, gritos de triunfos y cantos de victorias; y mi alma se lanzaba a aquellos hermosos destinos hasta que un súbito y desolate [sic] recuerdo venía a decirme al oído: 'Eres mulato y esclavo.' Entonces un sombrío furor comprimía mi pecho y la sangre de mi corazón corría como veneno por mis venas hinchadas. (Gómez de Avellaneda 267)

Sab longs to be a character in Cuba's national romance and fight for liberty and justice for the island's oppressed population. Despite his ardent desire, Sab cannot ignore the voice that denies him a role in this national narrative. As a racially ambiguous mulatto



with potentially violent revolutionary ideals,<sup>127</sup> Sab cannot figure within the narrative weaving of national identity. Sab's exclusion from the nation enrages him.

In the novel's tragic ending, Sab's unrealized desire to become an integral part of a liberated Cuba combines with his unfulfilled wish to couple with Carlota. According to Sommer's line of argumentation, Sab's political and erotic frustration functions as a "wish-fulfilling projection of national consolidation and growth, a goal rendered visible" (Sommer, *Foundational Fictions* 7). Sab's tragic ending, like that of all the foundational fictions, cultivates the desire for national independence, cohesion, and modernization. This particular national romance identifies the discourse of *mestizaje* as one way of unifying the Cuban people, eliminating Spanish colonial rule, and defining an autonomous nation.

Although *Sab* promotes *mestizaje*, it remains an abstract political signifier detached from reality. Sab's appearance registers the history of Afro-European racial mixing in Cuba, but his *mestizaje* is unproductive. Sab and Carlota do not marry, nor do they procreate. Sab constructs a *mestizo* garden, but he is denied a voice in national narratives. Within these narrative circumstances, racial and cultural mixing are

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<sup>127</sup> We see Sab's potential for violence when he debates whether to kill Enrique, whose death he could easily pass off as an accident: "Helo aquí a mis pies, sin voz, sin conocimiento, a este hombre aborrecido. Una voluntad le reduciría a la nada, y esa voluntad es la mía... ¡la mía, pobre esclavo de quién el no sospecha que tenga una alma superior a la suya... capaz de amar, capaz de aborrecer... una alma que supiera ser grande y virtuosa y que ahora puede ser criminal!" (Gómez de Avellaneda 136–37). Later, Sab directly alludes to the possibility of a slave uprising: "La tierra que fue regada con sangre una vez lo será aún otra: los descendientes de los opresores serán oprimidos, y los hombres negros serán los terribles vengadores de los hombres cobrizos" (Gómez de Avellaneda 168). However, he assures Teresa that he is not organizing "algún proyecto de conjuración de los negros" like the one that just transpired in Haiti (Gómez de Avellaneda 206).

transcendental signifiers that operate solely in an allegorical plane of signification. In *Sab*'s allegory of Cuban nationhood, the discourse of *mestizaje* symbolically includes the minority groups that are still marginalized in practice.

This is one of many contradictions in Avellaneda's novel. Despite its anti-colonialist front, *Sab* reproduces many aspects of colonialist ideology. It romanticizes the notion of interracial harmony, yet characterizes Sab's blackness as a deformation.<sup>128</sup> Sab's proclamation of indigenous heritage is countered by the novel's depiction of Martina as a stereotypical noble savage. As Reino Barreto observes, "although Avellaneda's novel criticizes the effects of colonization on Cuban society, its message is limited by the characters' failure to transcend literary and societal norms. These norms prevent Sab's characters from delivering a powerful message against the oppression of marginalized people" (Barreto 2). In essence, Avellaneda's anti-colonialist text perpetuates the colonialist ideology of oppression.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Faverón Patriau cites a passage that describes Sab as "un monstruo de especies tan raras" (qtd. on Faverón Patriau 105). Paulk identifies remarks by Teresa and Sab that pejoratively characterize African heritage: "For example, Teresa makes it clear that she perceives Sab's racial heritage to be a strike against him as she asks, '¿[Q]uién se acordará de tu color al verte amar tanto y sufrir tanto?' (173). A similar negative attitude is attributed to Sab as he describes himself in the following manner: '¿No notáis este color opaco y siniestro?...Es la marca de mi raza maldita...Es el sello del oprobio y del infortunio' (167). The novel's discussion of slavery claims that servitude degrades the slave and then appears to conflate this 'envilecida' condition inextricably with darker skin tones" (Paulk 234–235).

<sup>129</sup> "For Jerome Branche, the racism and elitism at work in *Sab* combined with the total absence of female slaves from the text make the novel a perpetuation of white patriarchal authority rather than an abolitionist text (Branche 14)" (Paulk 234).

Although *Sab*'s contradictions tend to polarize literary critics,<sup>130</sup> focusing on the novel's allegorical structure explains how it can be simultaneously racist and abolitionist, colonialist and anti-colonialist. Paulk's especially illuminating study reasons that *Sab*'s allegorical formulation of the Cuban nation softens the more radical content of the novel's literal level of meaning. Following Sayre N. Greenfield's definition of allegory, Paulk argues that "the literal elements of the text, particularly the antislavery and the feminist arguments, are at odds with the metaphoric discussion of human equality. In other words, a reading that highlights the metaphoric content can have the effect of erasing the all-important literal details of race and gender in the novel" (Paulk 236). When Sab's letter assigns Carlota and Sab generalized roles in an allegory of liberation, it detracts attention away from the specifically abolitionist and feminist ideals they represent. The novel's appeal to the Enlightenment ideal of equal opportunity and the Romantic notion of freedom of expression—two widely accepted ideas at the time—dissimulates those ideas that are not yet considered mainstream. *Sab* exemplifies how allegory constitutes "a more conservative argument than the position suggested by the literal elements of the text" (Paulk 237). Partly because of its allegorical structure, *Sab* maintains the status quo: there is no interracial marriage and the expression of cultural *mestizaje* is limited to an exilic garden.

Between the initial publication of *Sab* in 1842 and the premier of *La hija de las flores* in 1852, numerous attempts were made to redefine Cuba. Following a period of

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<sup>130</sup> As Paulk astutely observes, "critics demonstrate a tendency to describe [*Sab*] in more absolute terms as either a definitive antislavery work or as an unmistakably anti-slave and anti-abolitionist work. The desire to make a conclusive statement about Sab can mean that notable details do not receive full critical attention" (Paulk 235).

huge economic growth, slave uprisings and conspiracies for political independence shook the island in the early 1840s (Luis 15). Although a Spanish law had technically abolished slavery in 1817, the Escalera Controversy of 1844 led to legislation that strengthened the institution of slavery in Cuba (Fischer 82). During this period, the United States considered annexing Cuba in order to strengthen its slave-holding society and satisfy its expansionist desires (Brickhouse 135). Some Cubans were not entirely opposed to the idea: by becoming a slave state in the Northern American union, Cuba could deter Spanish abolitionism from undermining the basis of the island's plantation economy.<sup>131</sup> The island was not annexed, Cuban independence was proclaimed in 1852, but the revolt was crushed once again. Cuba remained a "colonial society through a century of nation building" (Davies 425). Perhaps this tumultuous period prompted Avellaneda to reconsider the strategies she advocated for Cuban independence and national consolidation. Whatever her motivation, *La hija de las flores* makes *Sab*'s vision of *mestizaje* more concrete—there is an interracial marriage and a child of "mixed" race. This allows *La hija de las flores* to scrutinize the logical underpinnings of nation-building discourse fueled by *mestizaje*. *La hija de las flores* queries what *mestizaje* would mean if it was no longer an abstract political ideal, but a concrete reality.

### ***La hija de las flores*: parodying and Latin American postcoloniality**

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<sup>131</sup> "Even some Cuban critics of slavery supported annexation on the ground that the institution could be more effectively liquidated—in the long run—within the framework of a politically liberal society such as that of the United States" (Bushnell and MacAulay 268). After the U.S. abolished slavery in 1865, the appeal of annexation diminished. If Cuban planters wanted autonomy over their own economy and government, independence from Spain was the only option.

*La hija de las flores* o *Todos están locos* is uncannily similar to *Sab*. It is situated in a garden whose qualities are reminiscent of the *mestizo* garden that Sab constructs in the middle of the plantation. Both Sab and Flora, the play's eponymous protagonist, are racially ambiguous orphans whose inability to name a father leads them to claim matriarchal lineage.<sup>132</sup> Consequently, both characters prove illegible within the European imperialist's worldview.<sup>133</sup> The allegorical novel and the performative play both invoke the rhetoric of rape to describe the Conquest, present an indigenous woman who symbolically marks the identity of her offspring, and depict autochthonous characters that are manipulated by foreign forces. Through these shared features of plot and characterization, *Sab* and *La hija de las flores* depict the slippage between racial and cultural *mestizaje* and characterize the Cuban national family by its African, indigenous and European members.

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<sup>132</sup> When Sab first introduces himself to Enrique, he identifies his origin with a maternal figure: "Mi nombre de bautismo es Bernabe, mi madre me llamó Sab, y así me han llamado luego mis amos" (Gómez de Avellaneda 108). Sab insists that "¡Mi padre!...yo no lo he conocido jamás" (Gómez de Avellaneda 109). As Rogelia Lily Ibarra alleges, "his actions contradict the patriarchal tradition referenced in the epigraph opening the first chapter, which reads: 'Quien eres? Cual es tu patria?'" (Ibarra 392). The obscure, matriarchal lineage of plantation society prevents Sab from knowing his father or, symbolically, legitimately belonging to a country. Sommer contends that Sab's lack of patronym leads him to Martina to "construct a different 'artificial' order that can recognize his natural legitimacy" (Sommer, *Foundational Fictions* 119). In Act I, scene I of *La hija de las flores*, the gardener similarly pressures Flora to name her father and enter the patriarchal symbolic order, but she refuses.

<sup>133</sup> Sab's hybridization "disrupts the binary opposition needed by the patriarchal, slave-owning colonizers to justify and perpetuate their power" (Comfort 181). This is obvious when Enrique first meets Sab and confuses him for another plantation owner: "Sin duda es usted vecino de ese caballero y podrá decirme si ha llegado ya a su ingenio con su familia" (Gómez de Avellaneda 105). Sab becomes what Doris Sommer has described as "an elusive American referent unable to be understood within the inherited signs of a European language" (Sommer, *Foundational Fictions* 117).

Despite these similarities, *Sab* and *La hija* portray Afro-Euro-indigenous *mestizaje* in strikingly different ways. *La hija de las flores* stages the happy ending that *Sab* wishfully envisions. The play's abrupt ending symbolically depicts the formation of a Cuban nation: when the *mestiza* protagonist marries Luis, she pursues relationships unsanctioned by Spain and asserts her autonomy. Additionally, an indigenous woman unconditionally forgives the European man that raped her and accepts his hand in marriage.<sup>134</sup> There is no doubt that the characters in Avellaneda's play embrace their intimate, interracial past. However, far from providing the national solidarity that will advance national consolidation, as *Sab* idealistically hopes, the *mestizo* family in *La hija* goes insane. Consequently, the interracial marriages that should delight the audience end up disturbing them. By replacing *Sab*'s tragic ending with a happy—yet uncomfortable—one, *La hija de las flores* destabilizes the political viability of a national people whose *mestizaje* fuels their claims to autonomy.

The performative rhetorical device of *parodying* facilitates this critique of *mestizaje*. A parody is the critical, oppositional performance of another perspective. Like the other performative rhetorical devices of *pretending* and *juxtaposing*, *parodying* self-reflexively intersects national and counter-national perspectives. Specifically, *La hija* parodies the plot structure of the national romance, in which boy meets girl, an external obstacle jeopardizes their happily-ever-after, the couple struggles to consummate their love, and a tragic conclusion imagines a future in which the lovers delight in stable

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<sup>134</sup> It is not only present-day literary critics that see a correlation between family and nation in nineteenth-century Latin American literature; Avellaneda theorized the nation in familial and gendered terms as well (Davies 432–433).

matrimony. The premise of *La hija de las flores* follows this conventional plot structure: the eponymous Flora desires to marry Luis, but he is to wed Inés. As Inés's father (el Barón) and Luis's uncle (el Conde) insist on their impending matrimony, the play sorts through the characters' obscure pasts. Evidently, the local Count raped Inés years ago, and Flora is their bastard child. However, the play's abrupt conclusion deviates substantially from the model of the foundational fictions. *La hija* exchanges *Sab's* tragic ending for a sappy one: the Count proposes to his victim, Inés accepts her rapist's hand in marriage, mother and daughter embrace, and Luis marries Flora. The family is blissfully happy—and also fundamentally crazy. With this caveat, Avellaneda's comedy parodies the ways in which contemporary foundational fictions idealize the swift, smooth consolidation of a postcolonial nation.<sup>135</sup> Unlike the readers of a foundational fiction, who long for the couple's marital success, the audience of *La hija de las flores* does not know whether to support this strange family unit or deny its very viability.

The illegibility of *La hija's* absurd ending is productively perplexing: Does the play legitimize a *mestizo* national family, or does it dismiss such a family as fundamentally insane? Does Avellaneda valorize the ability of literature to discursively construct the nation, or does the author invalidate the national-allegorical mode of the foundational fiction? In this parody, which voice has more authority: the parodying voice (which critically re-presents the political logic of the national romance), or the original

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<sup>135</sup> Latin America was not the only place where Romanticism became the aesthetic of revolution: “Por otra parte, los tiempos estaban maduros para la rebeldía artística. Tal como en Italia, Polonia o Hungría, es decir, en cada nación que luchaba por su unidad e independencia, el Romanticismo divinó sinónimos de revoluciones, represiones, logias secretas, liberalismo, audacias políticas, prisiones y destierros” (Leal 8).

voice, the object of this critique (the foundational fiction itself)? This irresolution is characteristic of most parodies, since parodying grants authority and validity to the target of its critique. As one scholar of Bakhtinian parody points out, “even a true parody cannot help paying one compliment to its original, namely, that the original is important enough to be worth discrediting” (Morson 73). In this way, the parodic procedure of *La hija de las flores* can honor the desire for national consolidation and also recognize its absurd underpinnings. Like *El Periquillo* and *Una holandesa*, performative texts such as *La hija* destabilize without demolishing nation-building discourse.

It is significant that Avellaneda switched mediums to write *La hija de las flores*; she set aside a largely allegorical narrative tradition in favor of a theatrical tradition with a long history of comedy and parody. Specifically, *La hija de las flores* draws upon the generic conventions of the *comedia nueva* and the *comedia de costumbre*. Adaptations of the *comedia nueva*—a genre defined by the Spanish playwright Lope de Vega in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century—were very popular in nineteenth-century Latin America. *La hija de las flores* exemplifies the following characteristics of the *comedia nueva*: a three-act structure, especially one in which the end of third act makes a satisfying mention of the play’s title as the plot is quickly disentangled; a mixture of tragic and comic elements; and an engagement with the society for which it was written (Thacker 41–49).<sup>136</sup> *La hija de las*

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<sup>136</sup> These features lead Hernández and Prado Mas, two of the few critics that analyze *La hija de las flores*, to read the play as a re-presentation of Leandro Fernández de Moratín’s *El sí de las niñas* (1806). In Moratín’s play, a young girl (Paquita) is forced to marry an older man (don Diego); Hernández believes that *La hija* reverses these roles in its depiction of a young man (Luis) who is forced to marry an older woman (Inés) (Hernández 29). Similarly, Prado Mas contends that Avellaneda’s play “rompe con una serie de tópicos en los que se enmarca este tema



*flores* could also be classified as a *comedia de costumbre*, another theatrical genre that was popular on both sides of the Atlantic in the 1800s. The *comedia de costumbre* is characterized by the use of verse (in various meters), character-types with symbolic value, a plot centered around the marriage of a daughter, and irony, satire, or parody (Villegas 111–112); all of these features are present in *La hija de las flores*.<sup>137</sup>

However, the fact that Avellaneda's comedy draws upon European theatrical traditions does not prevent it from being considered in relation to Latin American genres and political concerns. By intersecting the conventions of the *comedia nueva* and the *comedia de costumbre*, *La hija de las flores* constructs a literary medium alternative to that of the foundational fiction. Avellaneda draws upon theatrical traditions that present key components of the national romance—such as the possibility of marriage, symbolically charged characters, and political engagement—in a comedic and parodic context. This allows *La hija de las flores* to deviate from the national-allegorical structure of *Sab* and reappraise its abstraction of postcolonial *mestizaje*.

The rhetorical device of *parodying* is uniquely suited for this task. In the Latin American context, postcolonial discourse operates by the same logic as parody: it represents the very perspective it aims to critique—colonialism. As Klor de Alva explains,

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dando la vuelta a la tradición cervantina o moratiniana, incluso a la tradición bíblica del viejo y la niña" (Prado Mas 77).

<sup>137</sup> It was not uncommon for plays that were written or staged in Latin America to parody to conventions of (European) romanticism. Manuel Eduardo de Gorostiza's *Las costumbres de antaño* (1819) and *Contigo pan y cebolla* (1833) provide examples from Mexico. In *Baltasar and Alfonso Munio*, Avellaneda resists the generic codes of Romanticism by depicting psychologically complex characters (Dauster, *Historia del teatro hispanoamericano* 17).

Postcoloniality is contained both within colonialism, as a Derridian supplement completing the meaning of this antecedent condition of dependent, asymmetrical relations, *and* outside of it, by its questioning of the very norms that establish the inside/outside, oppressor (colonizer)/oppressed (colonized) binaries that are assumed to characterize the colonial condition. (Klor de Alva 245)

In this contrapuntal understanding of postcoloniality, postcolonial discourse is understood to contain a multiplicity of conflicting narratives: one that rejects the colonial past, another that perpetuates colonialism's pervasive traces (A. M. Alonso 460).<sup>138</sup> Nation-building narratives of *mestizaje*, which are fundamental to postcolonial discourse in Latin America, exemplify this phenomenon. Although *mestizaje* breaks down the "here/there cultural binaries" that structured the colonial encounter, this notion of blending "is rooted in a concept that always returns to segregation: the category of race" (Hall, "When Was 'the Postcolonial'?" 247; Lund 5). Case in point, *mestizaje* was both a politics of inclusion and exclusion in nineteenth-century Latin America. In its indigenist form, *mestizaje* valorizes the contributions of indigenous cultures and resists the influence of the Spanish colonizer; in its Hispanist form, *mestizaje* excludes the minority groups that (supposedly) retard the construction of a Europeanized civilization. As a narrative of ethno-national identity, *mestizaje* simultaneously deconstructs colonial cognitive models and also repeats them.

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<sup>138</sup> *Contrapuntal* is a term coined by Edward Said to "describe a way of reading the texts of English literature so as to reveal their deep implication in imperialism and the colonial process. Borrowed from music, the term suggest a responsive reading that provides a counterpoint to the text, thus enabling the emergence of colonial implications that might otherwise remain hidden" (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 63).

For this reason, postcolonial discourse is often characterized as ambivalent. Following Homi Bhabha, scholars contend that postcolonial discourse both mimics and mocks colonialism. The performative rhetorical strategy of *parodying*—vacillating between mimetic reproduction and mocking critique—channels this characteristic ambivalence of postcolonial discourse.<sup>139</sup> Much like a parody, postcolonial discourse gives credit to the object of its critique (colonialism) even as it attempts to displace it (Hulme 121). Understood within the logic of *parodying*, postcolonial discourse criticizes the violent, exploitative practices of colonialism, yet also recognizes how the products of the Conquest—such *mestizaje*—are central to projects of national definition and consolidation.

*Parodying* is an incredibly potent rhetorical device in *La hija de las flores* because it concretizes the aporias of Cuban postcoloniality. In order to rewrite *Sab*'s narrative of *mestizaje*, *La hija de las flores* exchanges the novelistic/allegorical mode of political expression for a theatrical/performative one. This sets *La hija de las flores* apart from *El periquillo sarniento* and *Una holandesa en América*. Instead of countering the

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<sup>139</sup> Ambivalence is most simply defined as having mixed feelings or contradictory ideas about something or someone. According to Bhabha, the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized is ambivalent because it is characterized by a complex mix of attraction and repulsion. Because the colonized subject is never simply and completely opposed to the colonizer, colonial discourse—"the complex system of signs and practices that organize social existence and social reproduction within colonial relationships" (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 51)—is also marked by ambivalence. "The problem for colonial discourse is that it wants to produce compliant subjects who reproduce the assumptions, habits and values – that is, 'mimic' the colonizer. But instead it produces ambivalent subjects whose mimicry is never far from mockery. Ambivalence describes this fluctuating relationship between mimicry and mockery, an ambivalence that is fundamentally unsettling to colonial dominance" (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 13). See Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man"; Bhabha, *Nation and Narration*; Bhabha, "Signs Taken For Wonders"; and Young 1995. For a definition of *colonialism* that takes this characteristic ambivalence into account, see Martínez-San Miguel, "Colonial Texts as Minority Discourse" 34.

national-allegorical mode from within the generic boundaries of the novel, *La hija de las flores* operates in an entirely different medium. Therefore, before analyzing how *La hija de las flores* undermines the tenets of nation-building discourse in Cuba, we need to define a nuanced method for reading this theatrical piece.

### ***La hija de las flores* and 19<sup>th</sup>-century script analysis**

The theater reviews published about *La hija de las flores* model how to interpret this minor genre. Theater criticism—more precisely, *crónicas de teatro*—was an important component of print culture in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Latin America. These *crónicas de teatro*, which commented local performances in national newspapers, corroborate the three premises of my interpretation of *La hija de las flores*: first, that Avellaneda's plays can be analyzed in their written form; secondly, that 19<sup>th</sup>-century theater commonly substituted one geographical setting for another; and, thirdly, that *La hija de las flores* re-presents novelistic conventions on the theatrical stage. The critical conventions established by the *crónicas de teatro* substantiate my argument that *La hija de las flores* re-writes *Sab's* narrative of national *mestizaje*; although the lyric comedy is loosely set in the Valencian countryside, its central plot—the formation of a happy, *mestizo* family—also speaks to the concerns of Cuba in the 1850s.

When contextualizing a play such as *La hija de las flores*, it is natural to turn to the *crónicas de teatro* published in Mexico. To begin, a number of Avellaneda's plays were performed and commented in Mexico City in the mid-nineteenth century: *Alfonso*

*Munio* and *El príncipe de Viana* in 1845,<sup>140</sup> *La Aventurera* in 1854 and 1856,<sup>141</sup> *El Rey Saúl, y su muerte* and *La verdad vence apariencias* in 1855,<sup>142</sup> and *Baltasar* in 1868.<sup>143</sup> After *La hija de las flores* o *Todos están locos* premiered in Madrid in 1852, a Spanish theater company brought it to Mexico City (Reyes de la Maza, *El teatro en México II* 29). The lyric comedy was first performed on July 10, 1855 in the Gran Teatro de Santa Anna (Sin autor, “Gran Teatro de Santa-Anna” 4). Just over a year later, *La hija de las flores* was staged in Mexico City for a second time. On September 16, 1856, *La hija de las flores* was performed in the Teatro de Iturbide in order to celebrate Mexican Independence Day.<sup>144</sup> Given the ubiquity of Avellaneda’s plays in Mexico City, Mexican newspapers offer substantive cultural and historical context for the analysis of *La hija de las flores*. Additionally, the archive of *crónicas de teatro* is most comprehensive in Mexico, where the genre first emerged. Although reviews about *La hija de las flores* may have been published in newspapers from Cuba or Lima—the two other loci of Latin

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<sup>140</sup> These two plays were performed in Madrid, yet commented in Mexican newspapers. I will discuss Manuel Payno’s commentary of *Alfonso Munio* in continuation. In the “Variedades” section of *El Siglo XIX* on January 12, 1845, an article announces the representation of *El príncipe de Viana* in Madrid and, more remarkably, includes an excerpt of the script in order to attest to the drama’s promise of success: Nos abstendremos de hacer su análisis hasta ver su écsito, aunque estamos convencidos de que será una nueva ovacion al genio, y nos contentaremos con citar los siguientes versos como muestra de la excelencia de esta obra, que indudablemente merecerá tantos aplausos, tantas coronas como *Alfonso Munio Arzobispo*” (Sin autor, “Cosas puestas en razón” 3).

<sup>141</sup> In the Teatro Principal and the Teatro de Iturbide, respectively (Mañón 97; De Oropesa 4).

<sup>142</sup> *El Rey Saúl* was performed in the Teatro de Oriente on January 27, 1855 (Reyes de la Maza, *El Teatro En México II* 283). *La verdad vence apariencias* appeared in the Teatro de Santa Anna on July 12, 1855 (Sin autor, “Teatro.” 4).

<sup>143</sup> Teatro Nacional.

<sup>144</sup> Beginning in the 1820s in Mexico City, national holidays were commemorated with public performances of popular plays, especially comedies (Vásquez Meléndez 278–279). Given that Avellaneda’s dramatic *oeuvre* was both well received by the general public and praised by Mexican *cronistas* for its literary quality, *La hija de las flores* was a likely crowd-pleaser befit for Independence Day celebrations.

American theater in the 19<sup>th</sup> century—this has yet to be confirmed. The breadth and depth of the Mexican archive facilitates a substantiated discussion about how works such as *La hija de las flores* were interpreted at the time.

To begin, Mexican *crónicas de teatro* document that the substitution of one geographical location for another was a typical practice of nineteenth-century Latin American theater. The specifically Cuban reading of *La hija de las flores* that I propose follows the lead of *cronistas* such as Ignacio Altamirano and Cleofas Landro Pérez Zambullo, who also doubted that a play's stated geographical location coincide with its actual cultural, social, and political context. As a first example, we consider Altamirano's review of Avellaneda's biblical drama *Baltasar*. This chronicle, whose form will define the *crónica de teatro* as a distinct genre, was first published in *El Siglo XIX* on July 13, 1868 and then reedited for *La Revista de México* in October 1885. Altamirano's chronicle explicitly questions the play's stated national orientation:

¿Y dedica la Avellaneda su *Baltasar* al príncipe de Asturias, elogiando en su dedicatoria al mismo que ataca tan enérgicamente por boca de la esclava judía? A veces pensamos que esta dedicatoria se escribió para escudarse de la suspicacia, no fuera a ser que tras la joven israelita se descubriese a la patriota hija de Cuba. (Altamirano, "Baltasar" 303)

The strategy that Altamirano senses in *Baltasar* is the same as the one I detect in *La hija de las flores*. Avellaneda conceals the specifically Cuban concerns of the play "behind" its stated situation in Spain. This geographical substitution serves to deflect the suspicion that she was challenging her contemporaries' beliefs about *mestizaje* and Cuban national identity.

If Altamirano indirectly refers to the superficiality of geographical location in nineteenth-century theater, a lesser-known Mexican *cronista*, Cleofas Leandro Pérez Zambullo, characterizes this feature explicitly. In his chronicle published in *El Siglo XIX* in 1845, Zambullo discusses a typical practice of the time: the linguistic translation and geographical adaptation of European plays for a Mexican audience. In this *crónica*, Zambullo harshly criticizes the production of *Influencias de una suegra* in Mexico City's Teatro Principal—a French comedy that was translated to Spanish and set in Madrid instead of Paris. Not only is Zambullo perplexed by the anonymous translator's choice to situate the play in Madrid instead of Mexico, the *cronista* is also frustrated by the translator's careless work. Like many critics and intellectuals of the time, Zambullo is not convinced by the translator's superficial replacement of French geographical references with Spanish ones: “No basta substituir el nombre de París por el de Madrid, pues esto no serviría sino para crear disonancia, si los personajes no se hacen verdaderamente españoles tanto en lenguaje como en modo de proceder, para lo que es absolutamente indispensable conocer las costumbres” (Reyes de la Maza, *El teatro en México I* 366–67). Given that the translator of *Influencias de una suegra* failed to consider the unique cultural practices that distinguish different nationalities, the translation's situation in Madrid does not overwrite the Parisian setting of the original play. Consequently, Zambullo deplores the flawed adaptation.

Altamirano and Zambullo's comments about geographic duplicity bolster the Cuban reading I propose for *La hija de las flores*. In order to signal the relevance of *La hija* to (post)colonial Cuba, Avellaneda harnesses the expectation that the stated

geographical situation of a play does not necessarily correspond to its primary cultural, social, and political concerns. That is, Avellaneda nominally sets *La hija de las flores* in the Valencian countryside while intentionally preserving the characters' markedly American relationships. In this way, geographical substitution constitutes a two-part strategy. On the one hand, as Altamirano's analysis of *Baltasar* suggests, *La hija's* Spanish situation is an attempt to conceal its controversial statements about Cuban nation building; on the other hand, the characters' unconvincingly Spanish nature points to their actual cultural situation—that of a *mestizo* family emerging during Cuba's fight for independence and period of national consolidation.

A close reading of *La hija de las flores* will characterize the play's polemical representation of *mestizaje*, nation-building discourse, and postcoloniality. This method of analysis assumes that a play can be studied as a written text. This premise is subject to great debate: How do we analyze and interpret performance? At what point does a theatrical script create meaning: in textual form, or only when it is performed live?<sup>145</sup> I model my response to these provocative questions after the *crónicas de teatro* published contemporaneously to *La hija de las flores*. I maintain the chroniclers' expectation—which tends to be lost in present-day literary criticism—that the signification of 19<sup>th</sup>-

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<sup>145</sup> See Austin, *How To Do Things With Words*; Barthes, "Baudelaire's Theater"; Carlson; De Marinis; Dort; Sarrazac; Schechner; Slinn; Varela; Worthen, "Disciplines of the Text"; and Worthen, "Drama, Performativity, and Performance." As Worthen summarizes this debate: "Stage vs. page, literature vs. theatre, text vs. performance: these simple oppositions have less to do with the relationship between writing and enactment than with power, with the ways that we authorize performance, ground its significance" (Worthen, "Disciplines of the Text" 12).



century plays manifests itself first and foremost textually.<sup>146</sup> The *crónica de teatro* examines the formal features of a script before commenting its performative representation.

In a telling example from the July 13, 1868 edition of *El Siglo XIX*, Altamirano carefully analyzes Avellaneda's drama *Baltasar*. In this piece, which established the generic conventions of the *crónica de teatro*, Altamirano privileges textual analysis: he dedicates ten of the chronicle's twelve columns to excerpting examples of Avellaneda's admirable verse, debating the symbolic signification of the play's characters, highlighting the ways in which the Biblical drama deviates from historical fact, and classifying *Baltasar* generically (Altamirano, "Crónica de Teatros" 1–3). Altamirano insists that Avellaneda's plays demand such detailed analysis:

Vamos a entrar en el estudio del drama *Baltasar*, no por una vana ostentación de doctrina, que no puede sospecharse en nosotros, sino porque esta notable producción lo merece, pues no sería cosa de dejar pasar un acontecimiento histórico, extraordinario, que se pone en escena, y se pone por un talento superior, sin decir sobre él, siquiera sea por vía de ensayo, algunas palabras que más que crítica son un homenaje rendido al genio. Así, pues, no se extrañará encontrarnos demasiado técnicos, en lo cual procuraremos ser sobrios cuanto nos fuere posible, debiendo los lectores tomar en consideración el asunto y género *de composición* que analizamos. (Altamirano, "Baltasar" 298, emphasis original)

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<sup>146</sup> Carilla, for example, quickly dismisses the literary value of nineteenth-century theater because it was not performed: "las obras dramáticas de la época romántica son – repito – obras que raramente se representaron y que han llegado hasta nosotros como testimonio de un momento y de un teatro, y no como defensa indudable del valor literario" (Carilla 57).

In this passage, Altamirano teaches the readers of *El Siglo XIX* as well as future *cronistas* how to interpret live performance. In amidst articles about the construction of a road from Mexico City to Querétaro and other “noticias nacionales,” Altamirano justifies his technical consideration of *Baltasar*’s formal composition. It is only at the very end of the *crónica* that Altamirano concludes his textual analysis and addresses the quality of the acting, the artistry of the set, and the audience’s reaction (Altamirano, “Baltasar” 322).

Careful consideration of “el género de composición que analizamos” does not only characterize the *crónicas de teatro* about Avellaneda. It constitutes a central feature of the *crónicas* published about other authors, local and foreign alike.<sup>147</sup> The *cronistas*’s collective emphasis on textual analysis is consistent with the role of theatrical scripts in Latin American print culture. Throughout the region, and especially in Mexico, theatrical scripts circulated in ways similar to the serialized novel.<sup>148</sup> Plays, which were published as single pamphlets or distributed in installments in local newspapers, had meaning long

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<sup>147</sup> Notable examples of *crónicas* that prioritize detailed textual analysis include, but are not limited to: Payno’s review of *La Judía de Toledo* (published in *El Siglo XIX* on September 25, 1843) and *Don Juan Tenorio* (published in *El Siglo XIX* on December 12, 1844; Prieto’s *crónicas de teatro* published in *El Siglo XIX* on April 24, 1842, November 23, 1842, and August 22, 1843 (Payno 137–138); as well as a *crónica* signed by “N” and published in *El Siglo XIX* on July 16, 1843 (Reyes de la Maza, *El teatro en México I* 216–217).

<sup>148</sup> Contreras Soto’s introduction to *Teatro Mexicano Decimonónico* highlights the importance of dramas that were conceived specifically as written pieces to be distributed in newspapers. As just one of his many examples illuminates, “Es muy significativo que Rodríguez Galván haya publicado *Tras un mal nos vienen ciento* en el anuario literario *El Año Nuevo de 1840* y que Cisneros haya destinado *La sobrina del tío Bigornia* a su periódico satírico *Don Buellebulle*: los dos sabían muy bien que habían escrito textos de un tipo que era prácticamente imposible montar entonces, bien por censura política – se atacaba a personajes e instituciones de manera directa –, bien por censura estética – ninguna compañía de la época iba a aceptar montar obras tan libres respecto de las convenciones vigentes” (Contreras Soto 17). Additionally, political-satirical dialogues circulated in Colombia in the years leading up to and following independence; many were written to articulate political debates and were never intended to be performed (Reyes Posada 19).

before stage production—if they were ever performed live at all.<sup>149</sup> In 19<sup>th</sup>-century Latin America, theatrical performance was not necessarily the final cause for the writing of plays. My close reading of *La hija de las flores* takes this into account by privileging the scriptural form of the play over its live representation.

My approach to *La hija de las flores* also assumes that it can dialogue with a novel—that is, that theater responds to other artistic modes. The Mexican *cronista* who reviewed the performance of *La hija de las flores* in the Gran Teatro de Santa Anna makes this same claim. In fact, the chronicle published in *El Siglo XIX* on July 15, 1855 also senses that the play harnesses certain novelistic conventions. After discouraging writers from experimenting with unfamiliar genres,<sup>150</sup> the anonymous *cronista* insinuates that *La hija* would have made a wonderful novel, but that it fails as a performed piece:

Difícil y arriesgado nos parece querer trasladar la novela al drama. La narracion, la descripcion, la duracion que dan vida á la primera y la hacen interesante, cansan y embarazan la accion en el segundo. Si en la novela caben los episodios y le prestan encantos, en el drama estorban y distraen el interés. Si en la novela se puede ir desarrollando un carácter lentamente y esplicando la influencia moral de cada acontecimiento, en la accion dramática los caracteres han de esplicar por sí solos... (Sin autor, “La hija de las flores” 3)<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Although we cannot yet be certain, it is not unlikely that *La hija de las flores* circulated in print form; many of the plays that were staged for Independence Day celebrations in Mexico City were sold as individual pamphlets.

<sup>150</sup> “Reflecciones [sic] son estas que nos ocurren siempre que en el teatro vemos un ensayo poco feliz, siempre que vemos languidez en las producciones románticas de autores que han sido escelentes [sic] poetas líricos ó que han producido una buena novela, un acabado cuadro histórico, ó un estudio notable en cualquiera de los ramos de los concimientos humanos. En el drama nadie se traiciona mas que el poeta lírico” (Sin autor, “La Hija de Las Flores” 2).

<sup>151</sup> Spelling and punctuation of these archival sources is consistent with the original.

The *cronista* implies that the numerous, interrelated episodes that compose *La hija de las flores* would enliven a novel, but overwhelm the play. Furthermore, the illegible behavior of the play's protagonist would draw the reader into a novel, but ends up alienating the theatrical audience. After continuing to outline the differences between the novel and the drama, the *cronista* concludes: "Estas diferencias nos parecen bastante motivo para que los autores dramáticos abandonen la idea de vaciar en tres ó en cinco actos una novela por buena que sea, pues miéntras mejores cualidades reuna, mayores serán las dificultades" (Sin autor, "La hija de las flores" 3). Although the anonymous reviewer is speaking in general, his comment illuminates the reading I propose of Avellaneda's comedy: *La hija de las flores* constitutes a performed novel. In contrast to the *cronista*, who views this as a shortcoming, I argue that *La hija's* performance of novelistic conventions is its greatest asset. By translating the national-allegorical novel to the theatrical stage, *La hija de las flores* destabilizes the dominant generic codes of the time.<sup>152</sup> As we will see in the following sections, this allows Avellaneda to revise commonly held beliefs about *mestizaje*, Cuban identity, and postcoloniality.

In sum, my analysis of *La hija de las flores* follows the critical procedures operative at the time of its publication and staging. Like the *cronistas* who reviewed

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<sup>152</sup> See Unzueta 110–117 for a description of these generic codes. Unzueta studies meta-literary texts by nineteenth-century authors of differing national origin to convincingly argue that the terms "novela" and "romance" were used interchangeably, and that both designated allegorical texts. That is, the expectation that the nineteenth-century Latin American novel function as what Doris Sommer terms "romances nacionales" or "ficciones fundacionales" is not (only) a present-day eroticization of the national, but (also) a generic convention defined in the nineteenth century (Unzueta 110). Within this line of reasoning, it is not unreasonable to claim that Avellaneda was acutely aware of the national-allegorical expectations governing the "romances" that she and her contemporaries wrote.

Avellaneda's work, I consider *La hija de las flores* worthy of intense scrutiny, and I contend that it can be studied in its textual form. Furthermore, the *crónicas de teatro* support my assertions that *La hija de las flores* speaks to the concerns of mid-century Cuba and responds to the formal conventions of the national novel. By comparing *La hija de las flores* and *Sab*, I shift attention away from the play's European referents and, in doing so, reveal its Cuban specificities.

### ***La hija de las flores*: Spanish setting, Cuban concerns**

*La hija de las flores* takes place in a garden that is ambiguously set in the Valencian countryside.<sup>153</sup> Although the “jardín espacioso” is nominally situated in Spain, this geographical setting does not limit its symbolic signification (Gómez de Avellaneda 259). In one sense, the garden in *La hija de las flores* also recalls the Garden of Eden; it

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<sup>153</sup> The script supplies this loose geographical situation, indicating that “la escena pasa en una casa de campo de las inmediaciones de Valencia, y a corta distancia del mar” (Gómez de Avellaneda 257). Throughout the play, there are vague references to Spanish geography. El Condé is from Mondragón (3.16.928), a city in the present-day Basque Country, and Doña Inés grew up in Castellón, a province in the northern Valencia. The garden where she was raped is “a cien pasos del Mijares,” also in Valencia (1.13.771). Finally, when Beatriz realizes that Inés is about to reveal her secret and compromise el Conde's honor, she conspires with Tomasa to exile Flora on the other side of the Atlantic. They arrange for Flora to leave with Beltrán (the rich Mexican land-owner who wants to adopt her) on his ship, *La Tisbe*, the following day. Tomasa reassures Beatriz: “Y cuando oigas que a distancia / Un cañonazo resuena, / Sabe que ya va tu Flora / Navegando para América” (3.8.581-84). The imagined journey is from the Spanish Metropole to Spanish America. Nevertheless, these geographical references do not impact the play's production of meaning. These ambiguous signifiers make *La hija* relevant to its audience in Madrid without limiting the play's critique to a Spanish setting. In fact, Avellaneda's description of the “jardín espacio” suggests that the play speaks to more than one geographical situation: “A la derecha del actor, fachada y puerta de una casa de campo; al fondo, una verja con puerta que da entrada al jardín; detrás de la verja, el campo, detrás de la verja, casi en el centro, un poco hacia la izquierda, pero también en el foro, una pequeña glorieta o cenador, cubierto de verdura” (Gómez de Avellaneda 259). Avellaneda's simultaneous use of the Spanish term *cenador* and the Cuban term *glorieta* to name the outdoor eating area suggests that this garden could just as easily be in the Cuban countryside, near the Caribbean—not Mediterranean—sea.

is a site of original sin where an indigenous woman is raped by a colonial exploiter. For this reason, the flower garden symbolizes fertility as well as violation, purity and corruption, beauty and deconstruction. In this sense, the setting of *La hija de las flores* recalls the garden that Sab constructs in the middle of the plantation. In this *mestizo* garden, Sab blurs the division between civilization and barbarism by re-appropriating colonial models to create a unique Cuban form (Ibarra 387). Even more so than *Sab*, *La hija de las flores* dramatizes the fact that the theory and practice of *mestizaje* redeploys colonial cognitive models. By setting the lyric comedy in the garden that *Sab* identifies as the future site of an independent Cuba, Avellaneda establishes a clear intertextual dialogue between these two narratives of *mestizaje*.

In this symbolic setting, the characters of *La hija de las flores* relate to one another in ways that parallel the history of colonialism in the Americas. To begin, the relationship between El Barón and his daughter Inés is reminiscent of that between a European ruler who expands his political domain and the indigenous population inhabiting these conquered lands. El Barón has arranged a marriage between Inés and Luis—not only because he wants his lineage to continue, but also because he believes that Inés does not have the right to control her own wealth. El Barón's good friend, El Conde, explains this logic to Luis:

El Barón,  
que—aunque dice que la adora—  
casi siempre ha residido  
en la corte, lejos de ella,  
lloraba el verla doncella,  
y quiso darla un marido.

Como es en todo extremoso,  
 aquel enlace de su hija  
 llegó a hacerse idea fija  
 en él, y—a fuer de temoso—  
 allá en su nimia conciencia  
 casi se forjó un deber  
 de no dejar en mujer  
 celibataria su herencia.

Hablome de esta manía  
 más de una vez, y entendí  
 que yerno buscaba en mí,  
 aunque no me lo decía. (1.3.337-353)

In this passage, el Conde explains how the marriage between Inés and Luis was arranged: el Conde offered the name of his nephew (Luis) to El Barón, who was looking for a son-in-law to manage his daughter's estate. This passage also characterizes El Barón's power: although he lives far away from the people he presumably "loves," he has the power to control their lives remotely. In this sense, El Barón's actions are characteristic of *imperialism*—the ideology of a dominating metropolitan center that rules distant territories (Said 8).<sup>154</sup> "Allá en su nimia conciencia," el Barón conceives of a tenant of imperialist ideology that will inform colonial practices in the Americas: that the indigenous population—here, symbolized by Inés—cannot be left to preside over their own wealth. This pervasive "mania" endows the European imperialist with the "duty" to save the indigenous population from misusing what is rightfully theirs. However

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<sup>154</sup> Loomba emphasizes the spatial distinction that Said establishes between *colonialism* and *imperialism*: Loomba proposes "to think of imperialism or neo-imperialism as the phenomenon that originates in the metropolis, the process which leads to domination and control. Its result, or what happens in the colonies as a consequence of imperial domination, is colonialism or neo-colonialism. Thus the imperial country is the 'metropole' from which power flows, and the colony or neo-colony is the place which it penetrates and controls. Imperialism can function without formal colonies (as in United States imperialism today) but colonialism cannot" (Loomba 12).

backwards or “cruel” this logic may be,<sup>155</sup> El Barón’s concocted “deber de no dejar en mujer celibataria su herencia” authorizes the colonizer to forcefully take control of the indigenous population and their profitable lands.

El Conde is the colonizer who carries out El Barón’s imperialist edicts. In contradistinction to El Barón, El Conde practices *colonialism*—that is, the techniques that put imperialist ideology into practice in the periphery, such as exploiting the indigenous population and seizing their natural resources (Klor de Alva 266). In *La hija de las flores*, the abusive relationship between el Conde and Inés symbolizes such colonialist practices. The exploitative, nature of their relationship is most evident in the third act of the comedy. In Act III, scene 13, Inés shares the “recuerdo infernal” that, until that point, had been obscuring the characters’ mysterious pasts: her rape. She recalls how she was working in her garden when El Conde “discovered” her: “del jardín / yo propia quise cuidar, / y era todo mi anhelar / que de uno al otro confín / de la tierra, no existiera / planta peregrina y rara / que en mi vergel no se hallara, / y tributo me rindiera” (3.13.781-88). In this exotic space of bountiful diversity, Inés was studying her reflection in the river when a hunter’s shot surprised her and caused her to drop a lily into the swirling waters. She jumps into the river in an attempt to save the *flor de lis*, but ends putting herself in grave danger. As she exclaims: “No sé nadar... / Por la corriente arrastrada / debí morir ahogada / ¡mas no me quiso otorgar / tan grade ventura Dios!” (3.13.821-25). Inés symbolizes the indigenous woman who supposedly needs someone to “save” her. (Un)fortunately, the hunter comes to her rescue, declares “¡Salva estás!”, places her under a tree, and then

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<sup>155</sup> Don Luis suggests that his uncle was operating under a “trance cruel” when he agreed to help El Barón manage Inés’s wealth (1.3.354).



rapes her (3.13.834). Throughout Inés's narration, el Conde's increasing agitation hints that he is the perpetrator of this "espantoso crimen" (3.13.868). More explicitly, his forehead bears the mark of the *flor de lis* that Inés dropped in the water—a symbol of dishonor "que va ostentando en sus hojas / mi eterna deshonra escrita" (3.13.855-56). This, of course, is only logical: driven by the imperialist dictum that the native population needs to be "saved," the colonizer (el Conde) pretends to protect an indigenous woman (Inés) in order to ultimately exploit her body and steal her wealth.

The European colonizer's raping of the New World produces a bastard child: a "niña infeliz" who carries the same "signo de desventura" as her criminal father (3.13.869, 873). Inés believes her daughter to be dead, but el Conde reveals the truth: "¡Te engañaron! ¡No ha muerto!" (3.13.878). Inés's *mestiza* child lives, "¡y está aquí! / ¡Bajo este techo!" (3.13.383-4). Within moments, Flora is reintroduced to her indigenous mother and European father, and the new *mestizo* family anticipates a happy future. Although the *flor de lis* marks the family's thorny past, its petals also pave the family's blossoming future. In response to the gardener's scattering of flower petals, Flora declares: "Y que esa alfombra se extienda, / ¡Oh padre! ¡oh madre querida! / Embalsamando la senda / De vuestra apacible vida" (3.16.659-63). Clearly a stand-in for a site of colonization, the garden in *La hija* symbolizes the violent past as well as the stable future of the *mestizo* family.

In this sense, Flora represents the genetic mixing of the indigenous and Spanish populations. This type of Euro-indigenous *mestizaje* did not occur in Cuba, where the indigenous population was decimated during the contact period, but rather in Mexico,

Central America, and the Andes. However, Flora not only symbolizes biological *mestizaje*, but cultural *mestizaje* as well. *La hija de las flores* invokes the experience of colonialism particular to Cuba via its representation of cultural *mestizaje*.

When Flora inscribes herself within the matriarchal lineage of Cuban slaves, the play's representation of *mestizaje* expands to include African culture. This is evident in Act III when El Conde asks Flora where she is from: "¿Cerca de aquí vivirás / sin duda?" (3.5.245-46). When she replies, "¿Yo?...soy de casa," el Conde presumes that the estate's gardener must be her father: "Aunque tal hija no cuadre / a un rústico, el jardinero / es tu padre, a lo que infiero" (3.5.253-255). Although El Conde notes that Flora does not exactly "fit" (*cuadre*) within the patriarchal genealogy he expects, he insists on naming her father. Flora quickly corrects his mistake. Like Sab, she proclaims matriarchal lineage:

FLORA:	Te engañas: nací sin padre.
CONDE:	¡Cómo sin padre!
FLORA:	Soy Flora.
CONDE:	Será ese acaso tu nombre, Pero... por fuerza hubo un hombre Que te dio vida; en buen hora, Pues debe orgulloso estar.
FLORA:	( <i>Riéndose.</i> ) ¡Vaya! ¡Qué sarta de errores! Si son mis madres las flores, ¿Qué padre puedo nombrar?
CONDE:	¿Las flores?...
FLORA:	Si hay padre mío, Cual dices tú debe haber, El sol lo debe de ser... O el céfiro... o el rocío...
CONDE:	(¡Vamos! ¡Vamos! Se me cae una venda... ya comprendo...) (...)

(Si él<sup>156</sup> está loco, no es tanto,  
 Al menos, como pensé.  
 ¡Esta pobre criatura<sup>157</sup>  
 Sí que lo está de remate!) (3.5.256-68)

Despite el Conde's insistence that Flora *must* have a father, she rejects this mandate and defines herself in relation to plural flower-mothers. As a bastard child, she cannot name her father (even though, ironically, he is right in front of her). Even if she could, this father—the sun, a soft gentle breeze, or the dew—would not be codified within the colonizer's patriarchal society, and el Conde would still deem her completely mad (*loca de remate*). By insisting that “son mis madres las flores,” Flora inserts herself into the history of the transatlantic slave trade.

Although Flora's indigenous-European parentage is not particular to any single country in Latin America, her identification with African culture specifically situates her *mestizaje* in Cuba. Cuban writers in the nineteenth-century exalted the island's African heritage, but this was not always the case throughout the Caribbean. Take, for example, the Dominican genealogy presented in Manuel de Jesús Galván's *Enriquillo* (1879-1882). Unlike Avellaneda's comedy, Galván's foundational text rewrites pre-colonial history in order to elide the African component of Dominican national identity.<sup>158</sup> In contrast, *La hija de las flores* recognizes the African contribution to ethno-national identity. Flora's proclamation of plural flower-mothers moves the symbolic situation of the garden from Latin America in general to Cuba in particular.

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<sup>156</sup> Luis

<sup>157</sup> Flora

<sup>158</sup> See Sommer, *Foundational Fictions* and Fischer in this regard.

Both *La hija de las flores* and *Sab* invoke the African as well as indigenous components of Cuban national identity. *Sab* expands a definition of Afro-European biological *mestizaje* to revalorize the disappearing indigenous component of Cuban culture. *La hija de las flores* opens a representation of Euro-indigenous genetic mixing to incorporate the African contributions to *cubanidad*. This lyric comedy stages the union of its symbolically European, African, and indigenous characters to imagine Cuba's transition from a site of colonial exploitation to a space of postcolonial autonomy. To review, the imperial ruler, el Barón, creates legislation to preside over the wealth of the New World. The colonizer, el Conde, carries out his orders, "saving" an indigenous woman, Inés, from her own demise and then exploiting her body. The bastard child of this violent crime, Flora, represents a future of national *mestizaje*—one that incorporates its white, black, and indigenous components. However, cultural mixing does not remain an abstract ideal in *La hija de las flores*, as it does in *Sab*. Quite the contrary, Avellaneda's play figures *mestizaje* into an unsettling reality.

### **The insanity of the postcolonial nation**

The abrupt conclusion of *La hija de las flores* deviates substantially from the ending of *Sab*. In the final scenes of *La hija de las flores*, the *mestizo* family (Flora-Inés-el Conde) joyously reunites and then promptly goes insane. While *Sab*'s tragic ending looks hopefully toward a future Cuba unified by *mestizaje*, *La hija*'s happy ending pessimistically depicts the present moment—one in which narratives of genetic and cultural mixing engender collective insanity, not political stability. In doing so, *La hija de*

*las flores* parodies the very possibility of (discursively) constructing a *mestizo* national identity.

More precisely, the final scenes stage the apogee of an epidemic of insanity that has been spreading throughout the play. Because the theme of craziness is key to unraveling *La hija*'s critique of *mestizaje*, I begin by tracing the origins of epidemic. With the very first mention of "locura" in *La hija*, the play characterizes the marriage of the colonizer and the colonized as fundamentally insane. Luis tries to persuade his uncle, el Conde, to marry Inés instead of him:

DON LUIS: Pues teniendo esa fortuna,  
                    ¿por qué no se casa usted?  
EL CONDE: ¿Yo?  
DON LUIS: Sí, señor.  
EL CONDE: ¡Qué locura!  
DON LUIS: ¿Locura?  
EL CONDE: Delito fuera  
                    que yo pensara siquiera... (1.3.402-404)

This brief exchange hints at the relationship between el Conde's unforgivable "delito" and epidemic insanity. Although the audience does not yet know it, el Conde's marriage to Inés will require a "crazy" act of unconditional forgiveness.

The *flor de lis*—the symbol of Inés's "deshonra" that marks el Conde's forehead and Flora's shoulder—disseminates this craziness (3.13.856).<sup>159</sup> In a notable example of

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<sup>159</sup> It is unclear whether or not Flora and el Conde have the natural image of the *flor de lis* or the iconographic sign of the *fleur de lis* stamped on their bodies. If they bear the heraldic *fleur de lis*, this insignia, in conjunction with the Rousseauian overtones of Tomasa and Juan's opening conversation, serves to reference the glory of the French Republic. In this context, the *fleur de lis* would symbolize the thorny practice of inequality that undermines the Enlightened state's superficial beauty. Rousseau argues that the civil state of French Republicanism fundamentally

the flower's ability to conjure madness, Luis unknowingly presents Inés a *flor de lis* on their wedding day. She faints, and Luis confirms his suspicion: his future wife “está loca muy de veras” (2.9.717).<sup>160</sup> Soon, everyone is crazy: Luis is crazy for falling in love with Flora so quickly, Inés's fainting spells can only be explained by a mental illness, and Flora is raving mad for claiming floral parentage and protecting her garden from el Barón's destructive hand.<sup>161</sup>

Flora's insanity is the most complex. Her illegible behavior is simultaneously attractive (to Luis) and disquieting (to El Conde). This duplicity is symbolized by “aquella flor misteriosa” that marks Flora's body (3.7.448). Just as the lily's beautiful bloom conceals its thorny spin, Flora's angelic exterior obscures an unspeakable act of colonial violence. Her paradoxical existence—simultaneously the bastard child of the Conquest and the poster child of the *mestizo* nation—is so perplexing that it can only be articulated with mystical, fantastical terminology. For example, her lover Luis cannot

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perverts the natural state of man; civil society's practice of inequality “corrupts in this way all our natural inclinations” (Rousseau 137). Rousseau points to the fundamental paradox of French Republicanism – that its practice of modernity depends on the denial of natural rights, namely with the institution of slavery. The iconographic use of the *fleur de lis* also captures the moral corruption of the imperial state; even though the *fleur de lis* originally glorified the values of French Republicanism on state flags and heraldry, it was also used to brand slaves in Mauritius. In the same way that the lily flower's beautiful petals conceal a thorny stem, the *fleur de lis* represents the tension between the glorification of the Enlightened nation-state and the recognition of its historically violent and exploitative origins. One could argue that these two French specters—Rousseau and the *fleur de lis*—stand in for Spain's troublesome practice of imperialism in the New World.

<sup>160</sup> Comically, Luis and Inés both believe the other is crazy, and they use this as a pretense for calling off the arranged marriage. See Act 2, scene 7.

<sup>161</sup> I have already quoted the passage in which el Conde declares Flora to be insane for claiming floral parentage, which is illegible with his patriarchal model of kinship: “Si él está loco, no es tanto, / al menos, como pensé. / ¡Esta pobre criatura / sí que lo está de remate” (3.5.275-78). According to el Conde, Luis is crazy, but not nearly as crazy as Flora. In Act 2, scene 10, Tomasa calls Flora “loca” for trying to protect the flowers from being destroyed (2.10.746).

determine whether the “aparación divina” (1.1.139, 1.5.514) that greets him in the garden is “ángel, sílfide o mortal” (1.5.597), “flor, mujer, duende o deidad” (1.5.641). Other characters resort to similar terminology: they describe Flora as “mujer celestial” (1.5.573), “la aparición seductora” (1.6.663), “el más lindo serafín” (1.6.749), and “revuelta de ángel y flor” (1.6.777). These denominations serve to translate Flora’s existence to the realm of fantasy, where the violence surrounding her birth can be mitigated and obscured. By describing Flora in this way, the characters of *La hija* rehearse a common literary strategy of the time: they gloss over the violence of the Conquest in order to paint a rosier picture of national history and promote a *mestizo* identity for the national future.<sup>162</sup>

However, the “fantástica leyenda” that surrounds Flora’s birth—that she is the daughter of plural flower-mothers—cannot overwrite the unforgivable crime that positions her as the future of postcolonial nation (3.7.468). Flora’s insane coupling of colonial illegitimacy and postcolonial legitimacy has the potential to compromise the sanity of everyone around her. As el Conde fears: “Dicen que un loco hace cien; / ya estoy mirando la prueba... / y no a cien, a mil podría / trastornarles la chaveta / esa chica encantadora...” (3.6.379-286). El Conde’s worst fears are realized in the final scenes of the play, when the epidemic of insanity reaches its apogee.

El Conde is the first victim. He catches this “plague” when he learns that Flora has the *flor de lis* stamped on her body—a mark that undeniably links him to the

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<sup>162</sup> Note that Sab and Flora are both illegible to their white interlocutors. Sab is illegible to Enrique because of his biological *mestizaje*; when Flora inscribes herself within an African kinship model, her cultural *mestizaje* makes her incomprehensible. It is no coincidence that Avellaneda relates Sab to a monster and Flora to a fantastical creature.

mysterious girl (3.12.683). In turn, Inés is considered crazy when she embraces her daughter “con alegría delirante” (3.15.916). El Barón, “que está algo desviado del grupo que forman los demás,” observes the scene and declares that everyone is raving mad: “¡Señor!, ¿no habrá quien los ate? / ¡Todos lo están...de remate!” (3.15.919-20).<sup>163</sup> Extreme insanity defines the family unit; it is the link that unites the European father, the indigenous mother, and their *mestiza* child.

The madness continues to intensify when el Conde dramatically proposes to Inés. As he takes a knee, it would be logical for Inés to demand an apology, but el Conde does not allow her the opportunity. He refuses to express any notion of regret, repentance, or shame, and instead begs for Inés’s pure, unconditional forgiveness: “Si demanda a tus pies / un criminal tal ventura / ¡no por él, por su hija pura, / acoge su ruego, Inés!” (3.16.930-33). Inés indicates that she unconditionally forgives her “criminal” suitor when she presents Flora to her el Conde. In response, El Barón, who is still observing the scene at a distance, declares that the insanity has reached epic proportions: “¡Ya pasa de locura!” (3.16.934). He vows to escape before this epidemic compromises his reason as well.<sup>164</sup>

El Barón’s declaration highlights the connection between unconditional forgiveness and insanity, a topic that Jacques Derrida broaches in his essay entitled “On Forgiveness.” Derrida wrote this essay in 1999 with the aim to distinguish forgiveness from amnesty, reparation, and reconciliation in response to “a century of war crimes (from the Holocaust, to Algeria, to Kosovo) and reconciliation tribunals, such as the

<sup>163</sup> In this scene, El Barón is physically distant from El Conde, Inés and Flora (as if he were situated in the European metropole) yet nevertheless judges the *mestizo* family unit.

<sup>164</sup> EL CONDE: “Si de aquí no escapo pronto / el contagio... ¡Mas lo afronto!” (3.16.942-34).



Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa” (Critchley and Kearney vii).

Perhaps unintentionally, Derrida’s meditation on forgiveness is directly relevant to the post-independence period in Latin America—a time when political leaders debated how to forgive a century of colonial war crimes and how to reconcile their relationship with Spain.

Derrida theorizes forgiveness as an aporia—a logical impasse that “must announce itself as impossibility itself” (Derrida, “On Forgiveness” 33)—that functions as follows: the only act that requires forgiveness is an unforgivable one, such as el Conde’s symbolic raping of the New World. In Derrida’s succinct formulation, “forgiveness forgives only the unforgivable” (32). Derrida refers specifically to *unconditional* forgiveness, which he distinguishes from *conditional* forgiveness. He argues that when an individual is truly faced with the need to forgive something or someone, unconditional forgiveness is the only valid option. Conditional forgiveness seeks to rationalize, justify, repent, or reconcile a supposedly excusable act—and therefore does not constitute forgiveness, but calculative reasoning. Absolute, unconditional forgiveness, on the contrary, can pardon an inexcusable act that defies explanation.

Returning to the scene of forgiveness in *La hija de las flores*, we can conclude that the union between El Conde and Inés requires an act of unconditional forgiveness because their relation is predicated on an act so violent and unjust that it cannot be forgiven: the Conquest and the colonization of the New World. Unconditional forgiveness such as Inés’s is granted to the “granted to *the guilty as guilty*, without counterpart, even to those who do not repent or ask forgiveness” (Derrida, “On

Forgiveness” 34). *La hija* clearly stages this paradox: even though el Conde never repents for his monstrous crime and maintains his guilty, “criminal” status, Inés forgivingly incorporates him into the new family unit.

Derrida postulates that unconditional forgiveness is an inherently mad practice:

Must one not maintain that an act of forgiveness worthy of its name, if there ever is such a thing, must forgive the unforgivable, and without condition? And that such unconditionality is also inscribed, like its contrary, namely the condition of repentance, in ‘our’ heritage? Even if this radical purity can seem excessive, hyperbolic, mad? Because if I say, as I think, that forgiveness is mad, and that it must remain a madness of the impossible, this is certainly not to exclude or disqualify it. Is it even, perhaps, the only thing that arrives, that surprises, like a revolution, the ordinary course of history, politics, and law. (Derrida, “On Forgiveness” 39)

Unconditional forgiveness—a fundamentally insane act that defies all logic—is inscribed in the heritage of a people. Forgiveness “must remain a madness of the impossible,” since it “can only be possible in doing the impossible:” forgiving an unforgivable crime (33). The process through which the “universal conscience” of a people recounts, names, and archives unforgivable crimes amplifies this “madness of the impossible” (33, 39). As Derrida explains: “because these crimes, at once cruel and massive, seem to escape, or because one has sought to make them escape, in their very excess, from the measure of any human justice, then well, the call to forgiveness finds itself (by the unforgivable itself!) reactivated, remotivated, accelerated!” (Derrida, “On Forgiveness” 33). That is, recognizing and naming a crime so monstrous that it cannot be forgiven, such as el Conde’s, augments the need for unconditional forgiveness, which, when granted,

escalates the madness it entails. El Barón's comment that "ya pasa de locura" summarizes this cycle: the epidemic of insanity spins out of control when Inés unconditionally forgives her criminal suitor.

Even though El Barón recognizes the crazy premise of unconditional forgiveness, he does not deny its necessity in situations such as that of the newly reconstructed family. To the contrary, he reactivates and employs this paradox, as Derrida would expect. In the final lines of the play, el Barón forgives el Conde, blesses the family, and declares himself insane:

EL CONDE: Y perdone a un delincuente  
                  en un amigo, Barón.  
EL BARÓN: (*Aparte, entre conmovido y asustado*)  
                  ¡No sé lo que el alma siente!...  
                  Perdono con mil amores...  
                  y bendigo, si eso es poco...  
JUAN: ¡Viva la hija de las flores!  
FLORA: (*Acariciando al BARÓN.*)  
                  ¡Y su abuelito!  
EL BARÓN: (*Que parece luchar en vano contra el ascendiente de*  
                  *aquella caricia, y que mira FLORA embelesado.*)  
                  ¡Ay señores!...  
                  ¡Me declaro también loco!  
                  (*Abraza a FLORA.*) (3.16.967-974)

The *mestizo* family and those that bless it are insane for unconditionally forgiving the crimes of the Conquest. As the curtain falls, "todos están locos," and the play earns its attention grabbing title.

As *La hija* clearly demonstrates, el Conde's unforgivable crime requires the unconditional forgiveness of Inés and el Barón, and their act of forgiveness—central to the play's construction of a *mestizo* family—rests on the absurd premise of forgiving an

act that cannot be forgiven. This cyclical relationship folds “the madness of the impossible” into the foundation of the postcolonial nation-state. Driven by the desire to form a mestizo family, “todos están locos” in Avellaneda’s comedy when they must forgive the unforgivable. In this maddening paradox, the postcolonial, *mestizo* nation is predicated on an unforgivable colonial crime—one too monstrous to qualify for reparation or reconciliation, and also so foundational to a history of cultural syncretism that it cannot be excused or forgotten. In *La hija*, the “unforgivable itself” activates and accelerates “the call for forgiveness”—a process that intertwines epidemic insanity and postcolonial nation building. The abrupt and unconditional reunion of Flora, el Conde, and Inés exposes the absurd premise of Cuban postcoloniality. *La hija de las flores* questions whether a product of colonization—mestizaje—can be the precondition of postcolonial autonomy. In doing so, the lyric comedy destabilizes the myth of national *mestizaje* propagated in Avellaneda’s *Sab*.

*La hija de las flores* makes this critique by *parodying* the generic codes of the foundational fiction. Up until this happy ending, *La hija de las flores* functions as any national romance would: it represents the unlikely, difficult coupling of various lovers in order to allegorize the struggle for national unity. Then, *La hija de las flores* stages the happy ending that *Sab* envisions for colonial Cuba. There are two marriages: one between the colonizer (El Conde) and the colonized (Inés) and another between the *mestiza* incarnation of Cuba (Flora) and her presumably white lover (Luis).<sup>165</sup> The foundational fictions long for unions such as that of Flora and Luis: with this coupling, the Iberian-

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<sup>165</sup> As the nephew of El Conde, Luis is presumably white.

Indigenous-African protagonist asserts her agency as an autonomous subject and forms relationships unsanctioned by the colonialist and imperialist Europeans in the play. As desirable as this union may be, it is not the focus of *La hija de las flores*. The denouement foregrounds Ines's marriage and relegates Flora's to the background. There are numerous scenes dedicated the reconciliation between the indigenous woman and her subjugator, yet one single line is sufficient to announce Flora's union with Luis.<sup>166</sup> In this reversal of the foundational fiction, the maddening act of unconditional forgiveness is more significant than the joyous proclamation of an autonomous *mestizo* nation.

As a parody of the national romance, *La hija* cannot help but validate the plot structure and ideological underpinnings of the foundational fiction. For this reason, *La hija* does not deny the attractiveness of *mestizaje* as a political ideal. Even as it exposes the insane premises of Cuban nation building, *La hija de las flores* registers the desire to belong to a coherent postcolonial family. As Flora announces at the end of the play: "Aunque es mi ventura inmensa / por tal familia alcanzar, / ¡padre!, ¡madre!, el corazón, / en su tierna agitación, / como que siente un pesar..." (3.16.944-948). This line gives credit to the object of *La hija's* critique—*Sab*, the allegorical foundational fiction that longs for the consolidation of this national unit. This raises numerous questions: Does *La hija de las flores* validate the national-allegorical mode of the foundational fiction by depicting the formation of a happy *mestizo* family? Or does *La hija de las flores* discredit national narratives of *mestizaje* by documenting the collective insanity they bring about? Does *La hija* repeat *Sab's* national allegory, or does it parody this genre?

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<sup>166</sup> "DON LUIS: ¡Conde! ¡mi esposa es Flora!" (3.15.912).

This tension between mimicking and mocking narratives of *mestizaje* is fundamental to Avellaneda's lyric comedy. Its performative rhetorical device—*parodying*—couples national and counter-national perspectives. Like the other performative rhetorical devices, *parodying* works alongside allegory to locate the limits of nation-building discourse. Even more so than *pretending* and *juxtaposing*, this device channels the ambiguity of postcolonial discourse. *Parodying* breaks down binary oppositions: *La hija de las flores* depicts the slippage between happiness and despair, stability and instability, unity and fragmentation.

Even though *La hija de las Flores* gives credit to *Sab*'s allegory of Cuban *mestizaje*, the play significantly revises the novel's representation of postcolonial Cuba. *Sab*'s tragic ending does not change the status quo: the slave remains a slave, the wife continues to bear her matrimonial chains, race continues to divide the Cuban population, and Cuba is still a colony. The novel's allegorical structure generalizes the experience of Sab and Carlota, erases their abolitionist and feminist tendencies, and therefore imagines a race-less and gender-less national people. Even as *Sab* abstracts a modernizing vision for colonial Cuba, its projected postcoloniality does not eradicate the racist and patriarchal vestiges of coloniality. As is true of other foundational fictions, *Sab*'s allegorical structure and tragic conclusion ground the novel's conservative political stance.

*La hija de las flores* replaces *Sab*'s tragic ending with a comedic one in order to expose the logical disjunctures embedded within its narrative of national *mestizaje*. The abrupt conclusion to *La hija de las flores* illustrates the absence of what ought to be—a

stable national people united by their *mestizo* heritage. Even if this ending does not prompt laughter, it is characteristic of comedy: “something is expected and does not happen; the result is comedy” (Feibleman 463). In contrast with *Sab*, the unexpected ending of *La hija* symbolically revolutionizes the status quo in Cuba: the colonizer and the colonized join hands and resolve their previous antagonism; the *mestiza* protagonist asserts her autonomy and symbolically ends Cuba’s long struggle for independence; and race no longer governs intimate and political relation.<sup>167</sup> The catch, of course, is that this Cuban family is not (only) happy, as *Sab* imagines them to be, but (also) insane. In *La hija de las flores*, the insanity of unconditional forgiveness overshadows the happiness of national consolidation. By critically re-presenting the postcolonial future that the foundational fictions long for so ardently, *La hija* equates nation-building discourse to an epidemic of collective insanity.

*La hija de las flores* significantly revises *Sab*’s idealistic portrayal of a *mestizo* Cuba, but it does not completely dismiss *mestizaje* as a tool for national consolidation. Avellaneda’s lyric comedy leaves the audience wondering whether the *mestizo* family can be both happy and insane. *La hija de las flores* implies that unconditional forgiveness is what enables the *mestizo* nation to function. In Cuba and throughout Latin America, nation-building discourse folded colonial epistemologies and the unforgivable crimes of

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<sup>167</sup> In “The Meaning of Comedy,” James K. Feibleman claims that comedy is “by its nature a more revolutionary affair than tragedy” (Feibleman 472). He recognizes that tragedy involves a certain acceptance of the status quo: “Through the glasses of tragedy, the positive aspect of actuality always yields a glimpse of infinite value. Thus tragedy leads to a state of contentment with the actual world just as it is found” (472). Comedy, on the other hand, seeks to transform the current situation: “Comedy leads to dissatisfaction and the overthrow of all reigning theories and practices in favor of those less limited. It thus works against current customs and institutions; hence its inherently revolutionary nature” (472).

the Conquest into definitions of postcolonial autonomy. Unconditional forgiveness is one way of coming to terms with this fact. By illuminating how the act of forgiving the unforgivable is an inherently mad practice, *La hija de las flores* characterizes collective insanity as a necessary evil of national consolidation.

When read in comparison, *La hija de las flores* and *Sab* debate the nature of nation-building discourse in the Caribbean. In this context, *mestizaje*—which is one of many discourses of hybridity in Latin America—has an especially complex function:

The populist appeal of hybridity discourse should serve as a reminder that whilst discourses of hybridity may reveal epistemological contradictions in nationalist discourse, these contradictions can be rhetorically overcome. In fact, (...) the rhetoric of hybridity has been a crucial instrument in *managing* those contradictions. Hybridity might reveal the nation is a lie, but it can also enable the lie to function. Not disruption, but consolidation of the nation-state, then, has been one historical function of discourses of hybridity in the Caribbean. (Puri 49)

*Sab* and *La hija de las flores* capture the nuances of this dynamic. The allegorical *Sab* invokes *mestizaje* in order to consolidate a Cuban national identity; this national romance suggests that this hybridity discourse can effectively manage the contradictions of nation-building discourse. The performative *La hija de las flores* magnifies these contradictions in order to test the limits of *mestizaje* as a tool for national consolidation. Its parodic structure and unsettling conclusion suggest that the contradictions of Cuban postcoloniality may be insurmountable. If collective insanity is not accepted as a byproduct of forming a *mestizo* nation, hybridity discourse will disrupt the process of national definition.



Read in this way, *Sab* and *La hija de las flores* represent the meditations of an internally conflicted author. While the former idealizes the *mestizo* nation as the ideal container of collective identity, the latter advances a more realistic portrayal of the nation and its shortcomings. By switching between allegorical and performative literary modes, Avellaneda debates her own views about *mestizaje* and Cuban identity—two issues in which the Spanish-Cuban author was personally implicated.

In conclusion, the intertextual dialogue between *La hija de las flores*, o *Todos están locos* (1852) and *Sab* (1841) exemplifies the spectrum of literary modes that intervened in 19<sup>th</sup>-century politics. *La hija de las flores*—the most explicitly performative work in this dissertation—illuminates how performative literary form counteracts the allegorical impulse to construct the nation. This performative comedy gives voice to the counter-national perspectives that the allegorical *Sab* must gloss over in its idealization of national cohesion. In this specific instance, *parodying* the generic codes of the foundational fiction disassembles a tenet of nation-building discourse—*mestizaje*—without dismissing the desire for national autonomy. In *La hija de las flores*, performative rhetorical devices work alongside allegory to expose the contradictions embedded within nation-building discourse. Comparing *La hija de las flores* and *Sab* demonstrates the necessity of the allegorical as well as performative modes of political expression. These two literary modes complement each other in order to comprehensively characterize the complex relationship between *mestizaje*, national identity, and postcoloniality in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Cuba.

In sum, this comparative reading of *La hija de las flores* modifies our approach to nineteenth-century Latin American literature in two ways. First, this chapter demonstrates the need to complement national-allegorical interpretation with other critical modes. Secondly, this analysis of *La hija de las flores* valorizes nineteenth-century theater as a key interlocutor in the aesthetic and political debates of the independence and post-independence periods. In contrast to the many studies that exclude nineteenth-century theater from the Latin American literary canon, this chapter exemplifies the untapped analytical potential of reading these plays in dialogue with the century's better-known narrative works.<sup>168</sup> Comparing *Sab* and *La hija de las flores* demonstrates the benefit of expanding the scope of our studies to include narrative, dramatic, allegorical, and performative works alike. By doing so, we can more comprehensively study the discursive construction of national identity in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Latin America.

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<sup>168</sup> 19<sup>th</sup>-century theater is typically excluded from considerations of the cultural, literary, and political developments of the period. At first glance, this seems to be a justified exclusion: although theaters were built as symbols of national identity and financed to promote nationally-oriented values throughout Latin America, they were frequented by foreign acting troops who almost exclusively performed works by French and Spanish playwrights (Carilla 40–41; Brockett and Hildy 367; Reyes Posada 12; Contreras Soto 13; Dauster, “Spanish American Theatre of the 19th Century” 543; Dauster, *Historia del teatro hispanoamericano* 23). In the rare circumstance that play written by a “local” playwright was performed, it often met derisive criticism: the theater critics who reviewed plays in national newspapers wanted to see high-quality, original work—not the “experimental” work of a Latin American novelist first venturing into dramatic writing or the “inferior” adaptation or translation of a European original (Brockett and Hildy 363). The premise that nineteenth-century Latin American theater lacks aesthetic and national appeal grounds its critical dismissal. If Latin American theatergoers exalted the foreign and ostracized the local in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (the claim goes), these dramatic works do not contribute to the formation of national identity or the definition of local culture, so they have no place in the canon (Carilla 40–43). This erroneous belief leads both contemporary and present-day literary critics to analyze 19<sup>th</sup>-century Latin American plays in terms of their fidelity to European standards. When Europe becomes the *de facto* reference point for the period's plays, critics preclude this robust theatrical corpus from entering into relation with other Latin American texts, authors, and issues.

## CONCLUSION

Considered individually, these chapters on *El periquillo sarniento*, *Una holandesa en América*, and *La hija de las flores* each reveal something about the performative mode of political expression. *El periquillo sarniento* (1816) begins by training its readership to think beyond the limits of the national-allegorical mode of interpretation. Its prologues teach what it means to read “performatively” and thus prepare its readers to notice the polyphony of perspectives—national and cosmopolitan—that intersect in formulations of *mexicanidad*. In doing so, *El periquillo sarniento*, establishes the features of performative literary form that we see repeated in *Una holandesa en América* and *La hija de las flores*: first, the correspondence between the performative rhetorical device (e.g. pretending) and the counter-national perspective it brings about (e.g. cosmopolitanism); secondly, the complementarity of performative and allegorical modes of political expression; thirdly, the relative marginalization—or even exclusion—of performative literary form within national literary canons.

The chapter on *Una holandesa en América* advances this initial conceptualization of performative literary form. *Una holandesa en América* (1876) employs another performative rhetorical device (juxtaposing) in order to represent a model of political solidarity (transnationalism) that is distinct from the one formulated in *El periquillo sarniento*. *Una holandesa* offers another example of a performative text that self-reflexively signals how it counteracts allegory’s nation-building impulse. In a move reminiscent of the prologues to *El periquillo sarniento*, Mercedes’s juxtaposition of

sailboats and steamboats cues the reader to notice how the novel pluralizes the possibilities for intimate and political attachment. This self-referential gesture prepares the reader to notice the polyphonic tension between various signifieds—in this case, the national and the transnational. Curiously, this transnational romance repeats some of the conventions of the national romance. *Una holandesa* thus exemplifies how the performative rhetorical devices work alongside allegory in order to create a text that slips in and out of nation-building discourse. By comparing *Una holandesa en América* with *María* (1867), this chapter underlines how a performative reading practice does not supplant, but rather complements, a national-allegorical one.

The chapter on *La hija de las flores* builds upon the previous ones by further characterizing performative literary form. By contrasting the narratives of *mestizaje* in *Sab* (1841) and *La hija de las flores* (1852), this chapter highlights an important distinction between allegorical and performative rhetorical devices: while allegory conserves the status quo, the performative rhetorical devices represent a radical shift in political thought. In *La hija de las flores*, parodying undermines the narratives of *mestizaje* that fueled nation-building discourse in Cuba. The performative rhetorical devices operative in *Una holandesa* and *El periquillo sarniento* similarly challenge a conservative political stance: in *Una holandesa en América*, juxtaposing departs from prevailing ideologies of cultural exchange and thus debunks the assimilationist model of Colombian national culture; in *El periquillo sarniento*, *pretending* denounces the violent expression of nationalist loyalties.

The analysis of *La hija de las flores* also points to the difficulty of exiting the national-allegorical mode. Unlike Lizardi and Acosta de Samper, whose novels were able to skirt the nation-building expectations imposed upon their writing, Gómez de Avellaneda deemed it necessary to switch mediums entirely. *La hija de las flores* sets aside the novelistic/allegorical medium in favor of a theatrical/performative one. It is for this reason that *La hija de las flores* differs politically from the two novels in this corpus. While *El periquillo sarniento* and *Una holandesa* find a way to mitigate the shortcomings of national identity by complementing it with cosmopolitan or transnational models of solidarity, *La hija de las flores* reveals the absurd premises of the nation-building project without offering a way to overcome this logical aporia. Nevertheless, what likens *La hija* to its novelistic counterparts is its conjunction of allegorical and performative literary form; it is this feature that allows all three of these performative texts to register the desire for national consolidation and also articulate reservations about the nation as a container of collective identity.

By beginning with *El periquillo sarniento* and ending with *La hija de las flores*, this dissertation queries the relationship between the performative and the theatrical. The prologues to *El periquillo sarniento* refer to the experiencing of attending live theater in order to reform its audience's reading practices. Even more explicitly, *La hija de las flores* draws upon the theatrical traditions of the *comedia nueva* and the *comedia de costumbre* in order to parody the political work of the foundational fictions. Additional research is required to determine the extent to which nineteenth-century theater—a genre

typically excluded from studies of the period's literature—shaped the aesthetic and political development of the Spanish American novel.<sup>169</sup>

Wherever these performative rhetorical devices originate, it is evident that they have the effect of defying readers' expectations. *El periquillo sarniento* presents itself as a didactic novel, but it does not allegorically fix meaning in the way its readers expect; it replaces overbearing didacticism with the imaginative exploration of unstable, plural signification. In doing so, it skirts the expectation to take the same political stance as Lizardi's pro-Independence pamphlets. *Una holandesa en América* defies readers' expectations in two ways: first, it draws upon the aesthetic traditions of Romanticism and Realism without blending them into some sort of *costumbrista* synthesis; secondly, *Una holandesa* creates a love story in order to allegorize a political community—but instead of doing so to imagine an exclusive, homogenous national identity, it does so in order to carve a space for the heterogeneous immigrant population within Colombian national culture. *La hija de las flores* epitomizes this performative violation of readers' expectations. Despite its Spanish setting, this lyrical comedy represents the Cuban experience of colonial contact, cultural and racial mixing, and national consolidation. Surprisingly, *La hija de las flores* undermines the narrative of national *mestizaje* that Gómez de Avellaneda promotes in the canonical *Sab*. In sum, the performative rhetorical devices—pretending, juxtaposing, and parodying—thwart readers' expectations about

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<sup>169</sup> For example, I will analyze the representation of *mestizaje* and postcoloniality in the dramatic works of Felipe Pardo y Aliaga and Manuel Ascencio Segura. Like Avellaneda, these two Peruvian playwrights also wrote parodic pieces as they struggled to define the national identity of a *mestizo* people shaped by a violent colonial past. I am especially curious to learn if the theater offered Pardo and Segura an alternative discursive space in which they could question the novel's allegorical portrayal of harmonious *mestizaje*, as it did for Avellaneda.

how literature constructs meaning. Consequently, these devices require us to reconsider how nineteenth-century Spanish American literature intervenes in contemporary political debates.

Performative literary form is not endemic to a single country. In *El periquillo sarniento*, pretending intervenes in debates about nationalism, cosmopolitanism, and *mexicanidad*—debates which scholars tend to situate in twentieth-century Mexico, but actually emerge much earlier. Just as it does in *El periquillo sarniento*, the performative rhetorical device operative in *Una holandesa* (juxtaposing) serves to challenge the elite's ideal of singular national identity. Acosta de Samper's novel participates in contemporary debates about immigration, cultural exchange, and the preservation of Colombian culture. Finally, *La hija de las flores* surreptitiously ponders how to effectuate Cuban independence. It questions the benefits of formulating Cuban nationhood in relation to a violent history of racial and cultural mixing. In order to further demonstrate the continental scope of performative literary form, I plan to extend this study to include texts from Peru and Argentina.<sup>170</sup>

Although each of the texts of this corpus is situated in specific national context and a particular political moment, they share various features. First, *El periquillo sarniento*, *Una holandesa en América*, and *La hija de las flores* all challenge fundamental premises of nation-building discourse: Periquillo and Lucía overturn the notion that an individual's birthplace dictates his/her national allegiances, and Flora rejects the

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<sup>170</sup> Possibilities include: the work of Juan María Gutiérrez; Juan Bautista Alberdi's *Peregrinación de luz y del día, o Viaje y aventuras de la Verdad en el Nuevo Mundo* (1916); Ricardo Palma's *Tradiciones* (1863); and *La tierra natal* (1889), *Peregrinaciones de una alma triste* (1875), "Impresiones y Paisajes," and "Hojeada a la patria" by Juana Manuela Gorriti.

possibility of tracing a cohesive cultural identity back to the colonial encounter. Additionally, these texts all take issue with the fact that “all Nation-States are born and found themselves in violence” (Derrida, “On Forgiveness” 57). *El periquillo sarniento* deplores the violent defense of one’s *patria madre*. In a very similar critique, *Una holandesa en América* attributes national and international political unrest to the Romantic idealization of singular national roots. Both of these novels remedy the nation-state’s violent tendencies by softening the innate, emotional attachment to a single national space with strategies of detachment (cosmopolitanism) or plural attachment (transnationalism). While *El periquillo sarniento* and *Una holandesa en América* propose less violently inclined models of collective identity, *La hija de las flores* offers no such alternative. Violence is inscribed into the origin of a *mestizo* identity: either Cuba forgives the unforgivable crimes of the conquest and its *mestizo* people go insane, or it rejects the racial and cultural framework that distinguishes it from Spain and advances its quest for national autonomy.

This observation leads us to the third commonality of this corpus: the performative rhetorical devices bring about counter-national—but not post-national—perspectives.<sup>171</sup> Even *La hija de las flores*, which questions the mental stability and political viability of national people united by *mestizaje*, cannot help but admit the attractiveness of national belonging. Flora longs to situate herself within a familial/national unit. In a sense, belonging to this collectivity transfers insanity from the individual to the societal level. Paradoxically, creating a cross-racial and cross-cultural

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<sup>171</sup> On the post-national and post-national narratives, see Castany Prado; Pease, “National Narratives, Postnational Narration”; and Rosman.



network of solidarity normalizes the insane premises of such affective structures. The nation thus serves to regulate collective insanity. The necessity of the nation is even more evident in the performative works by Lizardi and Acosta de Samper. *El periquillo sarniento* tasks the nation-state with temporarily providing individuals with the protection and civic education they need to ultimately join a cosmopolitan community of deterritorialized world citizens. *Una holandesa* preserves the nation as a useful concept to ground identity, but encourages transnational citizens to identify with more than one bordered space. Considered collectively, *El Periquillo*, *Una holandesa*, and *La hija* highlight the fact that performative literary form destabilizes without completely demolishing nation-building discourse.

We cannot ignore the fact that some of these texts are more successful than others at erecting alternative models of political solidarity. *La hija de las flores* and *El periquillo sarniento* both fail in this regard. *La hija de las flores* offers no viable alternative to a *mestizo* national identity. *El periquillo sarniento* is somewhat more successful: although Periquillo is incapable of practicing the cosmopolitan values he learned abroad, his didactic rendering of this failure functions as a lesson for the next generation. *El periquillo sarniento* thus paves the way for cosmopolitanism and nationalism to complement each other in formulations of *mexicanidad*. Of the three performative texts considered in this dissertation, *Una holandesa en América* most obviously erects a model of political solidarity that can co-exist with that of the nation: transnationalism. *Una holandesa*'s comparative success can be attributed to its formal proximity to the foundational fiction. More so than the other texts in this corpus, Acosta de Samper's

transnational romance stays dangerously close to the political and aesthetic expectations that surrounded the Spanish American novel in the late 1800s. This slippery relationship with the national allegory allows *Una holandesa en América* to document the productive tension between nationalism and transnationalism. In stark contrast, *La hija de las flores* deviates most drastically from the national-allegorical narrative mode. This lyric comedy—like *El Periquillo* and *Una holandesa*—can disassemble tenets of nation-building discourse, but—unlike its novelistic relatives—struggles to reconstruct an alternative narrative of collective belonging. My hypothesis is that performative rhetorical devices are most effective in narrative genres such as the novel and (possibly) the short story. Because narrative genres were governed by national-allegorical expectations in the nineteenth century, they provided an ideal medium in which performative rhetorical devices could slip counter-national perspectives into nation-building discourse. In future research, I will consider the short stories, poetry, and plays of nineteenth-century Spanish America in order to determine the generic constraints of performative literary form.

It is also significant that *Una holandesa* has the latest publication date in this corpus—1876. Near the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, *romanticismo* gave way to *modernismo*, and nation-building discourse of the Independence Period began to exist alongside the continent-building discourse of Spanish Americanism. In this context, the work of the performative rhetorical devices—to suture seemingly contradictory models of political solidarity—became easier. As we have seen, the performative rhetorical devices insert cosmopolitan, transnational, and colonial perspectives in nation-building discourse. At

the beginning of the nineteenth century, these counter-national perspectives were considered threatening to projects of national consolidation; case in point, the cosmopolitan detour in *El periquillo sarniento* was censored, the transnational romance presented in *Una holandesa en América* was excluded from the national literary canon, and the critique of Cuban *mestizaje* in *La hija de las flores* was strategically concealed by substituting one geographic setting for another. In contrast, by the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, cosmopolitanism, transnationalism, and *mestizaje* were central to projects of national and continental definition. This is evident in the political commitments of José Enrique Rodó and José Martí and the aesthetic choices of Rubén Darío, Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera, and Enrique Gómez Carrillo. Although direct causation cannot be established, I suggest that the performative rhetorical devices facilitate this transition from the early to late nineteenth century. By breaking down the oppositionality between the national-allegorical mode and its complements, the performative texts of this corpus set the stage for the political and aesthetic innovations of Spanish American modernism and vanguardism.

Not only does the relationship between nationalism and cosmopolitanism change throughout the nineteenth century, but the definition of cosmopolitanism evolves as well. In *El periquillo sarniento*, cosmopolitanism constitutes a set of moral commitments that govern how the Self relates to the Other; it thus informs how the collective Self—*lo mexicano*—articulates its particularity. Recall that *El periquillo sarniento* positions cosmopolitan citizenship as a form of political solidarity that follows and ultimately transcends the parameters of national attachment; when cosmopolitanism comes after

nationalism, it is considered subversive and consequently censored. However, when cosmopolitanism precedes nationalism, as it does in José Enrique Rodó's *Ariel* (1900), it is not considered threatening to the dominant political order. Rodó promotes cosmopolitanism for its ability to establish "la índole perfectamente diferenciada y autonómica" that was missing in contemporary formulations of Spanish-American identities (Rodó, *Ariel* 37). Rodó considers cosmopolitanism to be "una irresistible necesidad de nuestra formación" because it articulates a sense of continental unity that does not erase ethnic diversity (Rodó, *Ariel* 37). The fact that Rodó positions cosmopolitanism as a constitutive feature of *hispanoamericanismo* illustrates the dissolving oppositionality between cosmopolitan and national perspectives at the turn of the century.<sup>172</sup>

The work of Jorge Luis Borges also exemplifies that "national" and "cosmopolitan" were no longer dichotomous terms in the early twentieth century. In "El escritor argentino y la tradición," Borges debates what it means to write as an author who identifies with both Argentine and European cultures. Borges debunks the notion that Western culture is inherently "universal"—and, by extension, that Latin American culture is "marginal" (Siskind, "Sarmiento, Darío y Borges" 204). He claims that Argentine culture is an integral part of Western modernity: "¿Cuál es la tradición argentina? Creo que podemos contestar fácilmente que no hay problema en esta pregunta. Creo que nuestra tradición es toda la cultural occidental, y creo también que tenemos derecho a

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<sup>172</sup> Ironically, Rodó overlooks this fact when he dismisses the cosmopolitan artistic practices of Rubén Darío as "anti-american" (Rodó, *La Vida Nueva* 8). In actuality, the cosmopolitan aesthetic practices of *modernista* poets—who selectively combined elements of international art—aimed to develop a particularly Spanish-American mode of expression. See Acereda.

esta tradición” (Borges 135). In this way, Borges presents cosmopolitanism as a way to renovate Argentine literature (Hernán 426); he advocates a national literature that not only represents local color but also “innovates” on universal themes (Borges 136). Borges models this practice in “El Aleph” and “El Sur,” two fictions that seamlessly meld culturally specific and universal references.

The concluding paragraphs to “El escritor argentino y la tradición” point to the performative nature of this conjunction of cosmopolitanism and nationalism. Borges writes: “Por eso repito que no debemos temer y que debemos pensar que nuestro patrimonio es el universo; ensayar todos los temas, y no podemos concentrarnos a lo argentino para ser argentinos: porque o ser argentino es una fatalidad, y en ese caso lo seremos de cualquier modo, o ser argentino es una mera afectación, una máscara” (Borges 137). Borges offers a performative strategy—rehearse all themes, not just the superficially Argentine ones—as a way of preventing the continued marginalization and stereotypical simplification of Argentine culture. In the conclusion of “El escritor argentino y la tradición,” Borges encourages his contemporaries to turn to performance in order to juggle the local with the foreign.

In fact, the author employs this technique in “El evangelio según Marcos,” a short story in which a performative literary device—doubling—serves to fuse universal and Argentine references (Haberly 47).<sup>173</sup> This example leads to the tentative conclusion that

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<sup>173</sup> In “El evangelio según Marcos,” the death of Baltasar Espinosa, a young medical student visiting a ranch near Junín, Argentina, doubles the crucifixion of Christ. There are many sources of doubling in Borges’s fictions: mirrors, dreams, sexual reproduction, and what David Haberly terms *representación*, which “is considerably more complex than a verbal simile or metaphor; it doubles the essential attributes of an event, of the life of an individual, or of an entire text” (Haberly 47). Within this framework, Haberly demonstrates how “El evangelio según Marcos”

performative rhetorical devices reconcile national and cosmopolitan dispositions in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries alike. That is, performative aesthetic practices do not originate in the vanguard period, as is commonly maintained,<sup>174</sup> but rather emerge in the early- to mid-nineteenth century. In future research, I will investigate the temporal scope of the performative mode of political expression: under what aesthetic and political circumstances do performative rhetorical devices operate? When do performative rhetorical devices—or derivatives of these original forms—resurface in twentieth and twenty-first century Spanish American literature?

In sum, this dissertation makes two central contributions to the field of Latin American (literary) Studies. First, it demonstrates that there was a wide range of rhetorical devices—from allegorical to performative—that constructed collective identity during and after the wars of independence. This dissertation advances a reading practice that complements national-allegorical interpretation and thus tends to the diversity of aesthetic form and the complexity of political thought in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Spanish America. Secondly (and consequently), this dissertation demonstrates that cosmopolitanism, transnationalism, and (post)coloniality were integral to romantic formulations of nationhood. By tracing the cosmopolitan and transnational dispositions that we tend to associate with *modernismo* and the *vanguardia* back to *romanticismo*, it offers a more

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doubles three different events/individuals/texts: the crucifixion of Christ, Borges's "La forma de la espada," and Esteban Echevarría's "El matadero." Haberly concludes that "this duplicitous doubling (...) enabled Borges to universalize Argentina, to write about what he viewed as the fundamental and authentic characteristics of Argentine tradition in ways accessible—and acceptable—to educated readers in Buenos Aires and beyond" (Haberly 53).

<sup>174</sup> Vanguard manifestos "display the type of art that they espouse, portray art as a 'doing' process that incorporates its recipient into the doing, and dramatize the desired spectator's participation in an encounter of conflicting artistic positions within a context of cultural affirmation" (Unruh 26).

nuanced understanding of the political function of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Spanish American literature.

In conclusion, this dissertation invites critics to reconsider the appropriateness of comments such as this one: "Remove the concept of (...) national identity from the language of Latin American literature, and that literature becomes nearly silent" (González Echevarría 8). Despite the fact that Fredric Jameson's thesis has long been overturned, this type of national-allegorical framework continues to limit our interpretive options. Although González Echevarría's approach allows us to study how Spanish American literature constructs—and also dismantles—"the concept of culture and its corollary of national identity" (González Echevarría 8), it does not offer a means of tracing how Spanish American literature—even in the Independence Period—builds complementary models of political solidarity. If we consider the cosmopolitan, transnational, and (post)colonial voices in *El periquillo sarniento*, *Una holandesa en América*, and *La hija de las flores* to be silent, perhaps it is we critics who are deaf.

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