

A CULTURAL HISTORY OF LATIN AMERICA

Literature, Music and the Visual Arts
in the 19th and 20th Centuries

Edited by

Leslie Bethell



A CULTURAL HISTORY OF
LATIN AMERICA

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A Cultural History of Latin America

A CULTURAL
HISTORY OF
LATIN AMERICA

*Literature, Music and the Visual Arts
in the 19th and 20th Centuries*

edited by

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PREFACE

The Cambridge History of Latin America (CHLA), edited by Leslie Bethell, is an international, collaborative, multi-volume history of Latin America during the five centuries from the first contacts between Europeans and the native peoples of the Americas in the late 15th and early 16th centuries to the present day.

A *Cultural History of Latin America* brings together, in Part One, chapters from CHLA volume III *Latin America: from Independence to c. 1870* (1985) and CHLA IV *Latin America: c. 1870 to 1930* (1986) and, in Part Two, chapters from CHLA X *Latin America since 1930: Ideas, Culture and Society* (1995) to provide in a single volume a history of literature, music and the visual arts in Latin America in the 19th and 20th centuries. This, it is hoped, will be useful for both teachers and students of Latin American history and culture.

There is a small degree of overlap between the second of the two chapters in Part One, a general survey of Latin American literature, music and the visual arts, which ends in 1930, an economic and political rather than a cultural watershed, and the separate chapters on narrative, poetry, music, architecture, and art in Part Two, all of which begin appropriately *c. 1920*.

A companion CHLA 'student edition' *Ideas and Ideologies in Twentieth Century Latin America* (1996) includes an essay by Richard M. Morse, 'The multiverse of Latin American identity, *c. 1920–c. 1970*', of particular interest to readers of this *Cultural History of Latin America*.

The bibliographical essays which accompanied these ten chapters in CHLA volumes III, IV and X, and which have been omitted here for reasons of space, can be found, revised and updated, in the supplementary volume to the *Cambridge History of Latin America*, CHLA volume XI *Bibliographical Essays* (1995).

Part One

1

LITERATURE, MUSIC AND THE VISUAL ARTS, *c.* 1820–1870

It is difficult to make sense of the cultural history of Latin America in the nineteenth century without an understanding of the age of revolutionary struggle and independence with which it begins. This would be true even if the Latin American experience at the time had not itself been so firmly inserted within the context of international events following the revolutions of 1776 and 1789, the incipient industrial revolution in Europe and the spread of liberalism following the century of enlightenment. The historical transition from European colony to independent republic (or, in the case of Brazil, from colony to independent empire), corresponds broadly to the beginning of a transition from neo-classicism, which itself had only recently replaced the baroque, to romanticism in the arts. Triumphant romanticism is the characteristic mode of the new era, particularly in literature – though the continuing influence of neo-classicism in the other arts, especially painting and architecture, is much more persistent than is generally appreciated. Hugo's equation of liberalism in politics with romanticism in literature applies more forcefully, though even more contradictorily, in Latin America than in Europe, where much of the romantic impulse was in reality an aristocratic nostalgia for the pre-scientific, pre-industrial world. This brings the historian, at the outset, up against an enduring problem in using labels for the arts in Latin American cultural history. Terms such as neo-classicism and romanticism are often inaccurate approximations even in Europe where they originated, yet critics frequently assume that they designate entire historical periods of artistic development, rather than denote the formal and conceptual contradictions of historical processes as these are reproduced in art. In Latin America these same labels can at times appear to become completely disembodied, losing all direct concrete relation to historical determinants, giving rise to a persistent perception among

Americanist artists of a conflict in which America's 'natural' and spontaneous realities are repeatedly constrained and oppressed by Europe's coldly rational 'cultural' forms.

Spain was the nation which had given Europe the picaresque novel and Don Quijote, but was also the colonial power whose Holy Inquisition had prohibited the writing and diffusion of prose fiction in its American territories and, especially, of all works about the native Americans, the Indians. It was therefore both appropriate and profoundly ironic that the first outstanding literary work of the independence period in Spanish America should have been a picaresque novel, *El periquillo sarniento* (1816), by the Mexican José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi (1776–1827), a satirical survey of opportunism and corruption which looked for the first time at the structure and values of contemporary Mexican society, using the themes and expression of popular culture in a clear emancipatory gesture characteristic of the novel's generic function at that time. Lizardi, self-styled *El Pensador Mexicano* (the title of his first newspaper, 1812), was a journalist, politician, bureaucrat and man of letters, and the close relationship between journalism and literature forged by his generation continues in the continent to this day. In addition to his newspaper articles, he published innumerable satirical pamphlets and broadsheets demanding freedom of expression and claiming for the still adolescent press the role of orientating public opinion and taste: 'Public opinion and the freedom of the press are the muzzle and leash for restraining tyrants, criminals and fools.'¹ Ironically enough, Lizardi appears to have wrapped his ideas in fictional guise not out of an artistic vocation but in order to avoid censorship and imprisonment or worse, but his characteristically heterogeneous works give us our most complete picture of those turbulent and ambiguous times. It is tempting to link him with the Argentine Bartolomé Hidalgo (1788–1823), whose *cielitos* and gaucho dialogues on contemporary politics during the revolutionary period convey vividly the language and mentality of the age. Lizardi's educated wit and Hidalgo's popular humour were, however, the exception. The staple fare of the neo-classic period was a diet of heroic hymns, patriotic odes, elegies, madrigals, epigrams, fables, and comedies and tragedies framed by the poetics of Horace, Boileau and

¹ From his last newspaper, the *Correo Semanario de México* (1826), quoted by Carlos Monsiváis, *A ustedes les consta. Antología de la crónica en México* (Mexico, 1980), 19. All translations in the text are the author's.

Luzán. Divorced from the emotions and conventions which created and conditioned such works, it is difficult for the modern reader to identify with them; yet most of the literary expression of the revolutionary period is clothed in such forms. Among writers neo-classicism gradually came to be associated with the more conservative versions of Enlightenment doctrine and with the authoritarian outcome of the French Revolution, in view of its association with the contemporary cultural policies of the Portuguese and Spanish empires. Little wonder, then, that writers were searching for something new. What they found was a European romantic movement at first sight tailor-made for them, whose combination of political passion and private sentimentality would make a particularly lasting impact on Latin American literature and art generally precisely because it corresponded to the early decades in the history of the new republics. Germán Arciniegas has gone so far as to assert: 'The republics that were born romantically in the New World constitute the greatest achievement, the masterwork of the Romantic spirit.'² And another modern critic, Luis Alberto Sánchez, individualized the idea by declaring that Simón Bolívar himself was an intrinsically romantic spirit who became the focal point of Spanish American artistic expression: 'How long might it have taken for our romanticism to emerge without the stimulus of a man and a writer like Bolívar? And to what extent would Bolívar have been able to realise himself without the literary and romantic aura which surrounded him?'³

The pre-independence and independence period in Spanish America was an age of travellers, intellectuals, journalists, poets and revolutionaries. Many men were all these things by turns or at one and the same time, and they embodied the Americanist concept by living, learning, working and fighting in other men's countries, like Byron, who called his yacht *Bolívar* and longed to go to America, and Garibaldi, who did go, and who wore an American poncho as a mark of rebellion to the end of his days. The interwoven lives of men like the Mexican Father Servando Teresa de Mier (1765–1827), the Venezuelans, Francisco de Miranda (1750–1816), Simón Rodríguez (1771–1854), Bolívar (1783–1830) and Andrés Bello (1781–1865), or the Guatemalan, Antonio José de Irisarri (1786–1868), are as remarkable in their peripatetic majesty as anything the Enlightenment or revolutionary periods in Europe have to show. The Ecuadorean José Joaquín Olmedo (1780–1847) expressed the Bolivarian dream in

² Germán Arciniegas, *El continente de siete colores* (Buenos Aires, 1965), 391.

³ Luis Alberto Sánchez, *Historia comparada de las literaturas americanas* (Buenos Aires, 1974), II, 230.

verse: 'Unite, oh peoples,/ to be free and never more defeated,/ and may the great chain of the Andes make fast/ this union, this potent bond.' The dream dissolved, as is known ('we have ploughed the sea'), but its memory echoes still both in contemporary politics and literature. In those early days, before even the provisional boundaries of the new republics had been finally determined, many writers anticipating the new order – which would be *criollo* and bourgeois in intention, if not yet in reality – would have approved the 1822 declaration by José Cecilio del Valle (1780–1834), a Honduran who was also an ardent Central-Americanist: 'From this day forth America shall be my exclusive occupation. America by day, whilst I write; America by night, whilst I think. The proper object of study for every American is America.' After the revolutionary period the Americanist theme lived on, but circumscribed and directed now by nationalism, as men and republics came down, albeit reluctantly, to earth.

In the meantime, however, a number of writers were already seeking a new expression to communicate their new perspective on American reality. A writer like Lizardi, for example, although undoubtedly more innovatory than most, still really belonged to the Enlightenment and appeared to see his immediate task, not unreasonably, as that of helping his countrymen to catch up by filling in the gaps in their knowledge and correcting the errors of the past and present rather than constructing the new republican culture that was on the horizon. Had everyone attended to the foundations as he did, more castles – or, rather, government palaces – might have been built on the ground instead of in the air. The theatre was vigorous for a time in many regions, with a predominance of dramas in which morality and patriotism fused almost to the point of synonymity, but none of the plays of that period are ever performed today. Only lyric poetry managed to effect tolerable adaptations to the changing circumstances, so that a small number of poems by Olmedo, Bello or the young Cuban, José María Heredia (1803–39), are as close to the hearts of educated Latin Americans today as are a few well-known paintings of Bolívar, Sucre and San Martín and the scenes of their triumphs in battle. These, however, are no more than isolated landmarks in a vast and mainly uninhabited landscape.

The most characteristic poet of the era is José Joaquín Olmedo, whose lasting fame was secured by his celebratory *La victoria de Junín. Canto a Bolívar* (1825). It is one of the very few serious works which deals with the independence struggles as such. Olmedo was quite unable to find a

suitable form for his romantic subject, but perhaps this is appropriate. At any rate, the famous cannon thunder of the opening verses is memorable, though it provides the first of many examples of Latin American literary works which have no lived experience of the reality they are attempting to communicate. In that opening salvo we have Olmedo, who was not present at the battle, purporting to recreate it by ‘firing away’, as Bolívar himself felt obliged to point out, ‘where not a shot was heard’. Sarmiento would later write romantic – and enduringly influential – evocations of the Argentine pampa without ever having seen it, and his twentieth-century apostle, Rómulo Gallegos, would emulate him by writing *Doña Bárbara* (1929) having spent a total of five days on the Venezuelan llanos where his apparently authoritative novel was to be set. In this respect, however, the classic predecessor of them all was Chateaubriand, who set *Atala* (1801) on the banks of the Mississippi, although – or perhaps because – he had never travelled that far. No wonder some critics say, not altogether fancifully, to judge by the writings of artists and intellectuals, that America has been more dreamed about than lived.

Neither Olmedo nor his more important contemporary, the Venezuelan Andrés Bello, introduced any innovations in versification or style and their poetry remained essentially neo-classical: measured, harmonious, exemplary and impersonal. What had changed were the themes or, more precisely, the attitude towards them. Those new themes were American nature, virginal again as the Spaniards had conceived it at the time of the conquest (for now it belonged to new masters); the Indian, viewed for the moment not as a barbarian or forced labourer, but as a noble savage ripe for redemption; and political and cultural liberation inaugurating a new social order. Bello would have been one of Latin America’s great men had he never written a word of poetry (in this regard he is similar to José Bonifácio de Andrada e Silva in Brazil), but he did. His *Alocución a la poesía* (1823) correctly assumed the eventual triumph of the revolutionary forces and effectively inaugurated nineteenth-century literary independence in Spanish America. It was later used by the Argentine writer, Juan María Gutiérrez, as the introductory work in his *América poética* (Valparaíso, 1846), the first important anthology of Latin American poetry. The *Alocución* was in some respects closer to Virgil or to Horace than to Victor Hugo, but it clearly perceived the great themes of the American future, calling on poetry to ‘direct its flight/ to the grandiose scenarios of Columbus’ realm/ where the earth is clothed still in its most primitive garb’. Nevertheless, Bello’s own rather ponderous

verse (more eloquent than poetic, in Pedro Henríquez Ureña's phrase) was itself an indication that this world of nature, mother of poetry, would remain largely unexplored during the nineteenth century, a 'poetry without poets', to plagiarize Luis Alberto Sánchez's verdict on the state of the Latin American novel a century later. What Bello was effectively demanding, of course, was what would later be called *nativismo* or *criollismo*, both forms of literary Americanism which would indeed gradually emerge from the later romantic movement. In his second major poem, *La agricultura de la zona tórrida* (1826), the descriptions of the American landscape and its vegetation recall the Guatemalan priest Rafael Landívar's earlier evocation (*Rusticatio Mexicana*, 1781) or the Brazilian José Basílio da Gama's *O Uruguai* (1769), and anticipate the equally admirable *Memoria sobre el cultivo del maíz en Antioquia* (1868) by the Colombian Gregorio Gutiérrez González (1826–72) towards the end of the romantic era. For a long time, however, despite Bello's passionate plea, and despite innumerable beautiful anthology pieces now largely forgotten by criticism, Latin America's natural regional landscapes would be merely 'backcloths', 'settings', not truly inhabited by the characters of literature. There was to be little internalization of landscape, except in Brazil, where both social and literary conditions were different and where Portuguese traditions obtained. At the same time it must be said that much dismissive criticism of nineteenth-century Spanish American poetry and prose as descriptive or one-dimensional is itself unthinking and superficial. Peninsular Spanish literature had little or no tradition of natural observation, and the European travellers to the New World at this time were only more successful in evoking its landscapes and inhabitants because their works implicitly communicated the necessarily limited view of the outsider. Latin Americans themselves were secretly searching not for reality but for emblematic images – the Indian, the gaucho, the Andes, the tropical forests – in literature and painting, just as they had to search for them as themes for their national anthems, flags or shields.

Bello and Olmedo were both mature men approaching middle age when they wrote their famous poems and were too set in the Enlightenment mould to discard their neo-classical formation. They were both fortunate, however, to witness what Olmedo called the triumph of the Andean condor over the Spanish eagle in the southern continent. Other revolutionaries did not live to see that day. One of the most revered is the young Peruvian Mariano Melgar (1791–1815), a rebel executed by the

Spaniards. After a classical education, he wrote love poems which are still recited in Peru, including impassioned Inca-style *yaravies* which made him, according to Henríquez Ureña, 'the first poet to give voice in a consistent fashion to Indian feeling in Spanish poetry'.⁴ In his famous 'Ode to Liberty', he saw the intellectual and the people united in the romantic new world to come: 'Cruel despotism,/ horrid centuries, darkest night,/ be gone. Know ye, Indians who weep,/ despised sages, the world entire,/ that evil is no more, and we have taken/ the first step towards our longed for goal . . ./ And those who called my land/ an "obscure country",/ seeing it so fertile in wonders/ now say, "Truly, this is indeed a new world".' Melgar did not live to see that world, but his youthful and passionate poetry make him a genuine precursor of it.

Different but also tragic was the poet of frustrated independence, the Cuban José María Heredia, the most authentically lyrical poet of the period and the first great poet of absence and exile (see especially 'Vuelta al sur' and 'Himno del desterrado', both from 1825). Critics disagree about his literary definition, but many view him as a precursor and some as even the initiator of Latin American romanticism. His precociousness, political failure and tragic destiny have encouraged such a view, which, despite his clearly neo-classical point of departure, is persuasive. *En el teocalli de Cholula* (1820), which he wrote at the age of 17, and *Niágara* (1824), inspired partly by Chateaubriand, have become literary symbols of Latin America's natural majesty as also of historical imminence. When it became clear that Cuba was not to share in the exhilaration of a triumphant independence struggle, Heredia, moving to the United States, Venezuela and Mexico, gradually gave himself up to despair. In 'La tempestad' (1822), he was already lamenting, 'At last we part, fatal world:/ the hurricane and I now stand alone'; and, in 'Desengaños' (1829), he at once reproves his passive compatriots and acknowledges his own surrender to despair and domesticity ('the novel of my fateful life,/ ends in the arms of my dear wife'). He was not to know that those who did see political liberation would themselves be lamenting its dissipation in many of the new republics until well after mid-century.

Brazil's evolution was less turbulent, but more productive. As the only Portuguese colony in the New World, Brazil arrived earlier at a distinctively national conception of its literary identity, in a movement which, coinciding with the high-point of neo-classical *arcadismo* or pastoral literature, spread from Minas Gerais to Rio de Janeiro and then

⁴ Pedro Henríquez Ureña, *Las corrientes literarias en la América hispánica* (Mexico, 1949), 112.

to Pernambuco from about 1770 to 1820. Brazil, moreover, had been the theatre of one of the earliest responses to advanced European and North American thought in the shape of the *Inconfidência Mineira* (1788–9). By far the greatest writer of the period, however, was José Bonifácio de Andrada e Silva (1763–1838), tireless promoter of Brazil's literary independence and patriarch of its relatively peaceful political independence in 1822. He was an Enlightenment figure who distinguished himself in scholarship and scientific research, whilst occupying a number of important administrative posts in Portugal and Brazil. His literary career followed a path from Virgilian classicism to an almost Byronic romanticism, though possibly his most representative works are his patriotic verses. A man with some of the qualities of both a Miranda and a Bello, he was perhaps the most widely read and productive man of letters of the era in Latin America.

The period from the 1820s to the 1870s saw a violent and often incoherent struggle to restructure the Latin American societies. The interests of the rural sector, its regional caciques and oligarchs predominated, but the project of the era was clearly urban and bourgeois. Liberalism was espoused, slavery abolished everywhere but Brazil and Cuba, education was revolutionized and culture gradually refurbished on national lines. All the arts except literature languished or declined at first in most regions, because they required a level of wealth, investment and stability lacking in Spanish America generally – the Brazilian case was very different – until the 1870s or later. Relatively few important buildings were erected and few paintings or musical compositions were officially commissioned before mid-century, other than the traditional religious works for churches. The academies founded in some large cities in the last years of the colonial period remained immersed in the most unimaginative versions of classical doctrine and style. The political functions of art were not immediately perceived, except in Brazil, where continuity of monarchical and aristocratic perspective allowed the reconstruction of Rio de Janeiro to be undertaken, mainly in French neo-classical style. Literature, however, retained all its traditional social functions and acquired new ones. Most of the best-known writers of the nineteenth century would be men of action. Yet when these patriots and revolutionaries found time to look around them, they found themselves in a vast, barbarous continent which was less welcoming than Bello, for example, had remembered when he dreamed about it through the mists

of his London exile. It was an empty, overwhelmingly rural and agricultural continent, whose only significant industry was mining. In 1850 the total population was only 30 million scattered among twenty countries. Most cities remained in appearance much as they had in colonial times; apart from Rio de Janeiro, which had almost 200,000 inhabitants, only Mexico City, Havana and Salvador (Bahia) had populations of more than 100,000.

Since the project of the era was to build new republics with new cultures, it is appropriate to begin with architecture. The end of the eighteenth century had seen the triumph of neo-classical architecture throughout the western world. It was to be particularly welcome in Latin America in the early nineteenth century because of its misleading identification with the French Revolution (its identification with Napoleon's empire received less emphasis, at least from liberals), whilst the baroque became identified with Spain and Portugal, perhaps unreasonably since the discord between structure and ornamentation which characterizes its Latin American versions may itself be interpreted as a sign of rebellion. The baroque style, at any rate, had unified Latin American art. As the continent became more accessible – perhaps vulnerable would be a better word – to contemporary European influences other than those of Spain and Portugal, neo-classicism in architecture and painting, and later romanticism in other fields, gave art a secular function, and reinforced this unity.

In a few Spanish American cities, particularly those like Buenos Aires which had little distinguished colonial architecture, the independence struggle gave an impetus to architectural innovation which would symbolize the rejection of Spanish colonialism. Many buildings in Buenos Aires were constructed according to non-Hispanic principles, and French, Italian and British architects were frequently employed. Nevertheless, it is essential to recognize that this process was already under way at the end of the colonial period. Neo-classicism's cooler, more rational lines were already visible in, for example, the Palacio de Minería in Mexico City built by the Spaniard Manuel Tolsá (1757–1816), also known as the sculptor of the equestrian statue of Carlos IV on the Paseo de la Reforma, in the churches and great houses constructed in the Bajío region of Mexico by Tolsá's pupil, Francisco Eduardo Tresguerras (1759–1833), in the dome and towers designed for the metropolitan cathedral in Mexico City by Damián Ortiz de Castro (1750–1793) and in Santiago's Moneda Palace built in the last years of the eighteenth

century by the Italian architect, Joaquín Toesca (1745–99). At the same time, it is equally important to acknowledge that the continuing existence of colonial architecture, dominant in strictly quantitative terms, and the place it has held in conservative minds, meant that Spanish American architecture after independence, taken as a whole, remained unavoidably provincial (as it did until the 1930s). Unlike Brazil, most of the new republics were too impoverished to undertake a great process of reconstruction in the so-called anarchic period between the 1820s and the 1860s. Nevertheless, what innovation did take place was in general accord with neo-classical taste, symbolizing the adoption by the new rising elites of European rationalism and positivism, and pointing the way in the process to the specific economic and political future of Latin American societies as perceived at the time. Nothing shows more clearly than architecture what the nineteenth-century project was all about, for nothing materializes more dramatically the selection of the Enlightenment and France as the Latin American cultural and ideological model, frequently translated, it has to be said, into the Versailles of Louis XIV and the Paris of Napoleon. If any reconstruction of colonial culture is inevitably the view from the monastery or the fortress, the edifice containing Latin America's nineteenth-century culture would remain, in effect, despite the apparent predominance, first of romanticism and then of modernism, a neo-classical academy, and the impact of this on Latin American art would be enduring. (In Mexico the Academia de San Carlos, founded in 1785, survived to serve as one of the pillars of institutionalized artistic activity there until well into the twentieth century.) If the baroque spoke of an identity, however contradictory, between church and state, neo-classicism symbolized bourgeois liberties and civil society, the growth of secular education and a general process of integration into the wider European world order. For this reason European educationalists like Lancaster and Thompson were invited to Caracas and Buenos Aires by Bolívar and Rivadavia as early as the 1820s, at the same time as droves of French and Italian architects arrived to build new neo-classical edifices alongside colonial structures, much as the Spaniards had once built on top of pre-Columbian monuments. As early as 1816 during the residence of Dom João in Rio de Janeiro, a French Commission on Fine Art led by Joachim Lebreton (1760–1819) arrived to advise on future construction and, in effect, to lay down a blueprint for artistic policy for the rest of the century. Auguste-Henri-Victor Grandjean de Montigny (1776–1850) was the principal architect; he

designed the Academy of Fine Arts in Rio and many other buildings. Later Louis Léger Vauthier built the theatres of Santa Isabel in Recife, Belem de Pará and São Luís de Maranhão. Italian architects and other artists remained influential in most Spanish American republics until the 1870s, when French models finally triumphed, but as early as 1823 it was a French architect, Prosper Catelin (1764–1842), who completed the façade of the cathedral in Buenos Aires in neo-classical style seventy years after it had been started; and another Frenchman, François Brunet de Baines (1799–1855), founded the first school of architecture in Chile, though it was a Chilean, the famous writer and thinker Benjamin Vicuña Mackenna (1831–1886), who later redesigned the city centre and earned the name ‘the Chilean Haussmann’.

The transition from the American baroque’s peculiar combination of the sacred and the paganistic – concealing many tensions and contradictions even as it flaunted them – to neo-classical rationalism and positivism was also a transition to an architecture which was actually severely hierarchical in its symbolism, and this permitted – indeed, it imposed – an increasingly tyrannical academicism in Latin American art which would in the long run become reactionary and archaic, and was not finally to be shaken until the First World War a century later. It is partly for this reason that artists in many fields have been led to believe that the baroque – shaped by instinct and intuition – is the true vehicle and expression for the Latin American *mestizo* character, and that colonial art is therefore closer to Latin American reality. This is highly problematical, needless to say, but it seems evident that baroque ornamentation gives more scope for hybridization and syncretism than any version of the classical.

The French Artistic Mission in Rio dismissed the work of the incomparable Brazilian architect and sculptor, Aleijadinho (1738?–1814), as a ‘curious gothic antique’. His true worth would go unrecognized for more than a century, and the values of foreign experts determined the course of Brazilian architecture and the plastic arts for most of the nineteenth century, illustrating another general problem for the art historian. The vertebral division in Latin American art from the early nineteenth century until the present day is between Americanist–nativist and European–cosmopolitan currents, a distinction which has frequently caused more difficulties than it has resolved. In the last century, however, there was another side to this problem. Within Latin American art itself, unlike the situation during the colonial period, there opened up a particularly wide – indeed, a virtually unbridgeable – gap between

academic art (*arte culto*) and popular art (*arte popular o semiculto*). The latter, of course, was not perceived as having any history, for it was only in the 1840s that some Europeans, under the spell of romanticism, began to conceive of the concept of folklore. Latin Americans would take a long time to assimilate such lessons and spent most of the nineteenth century attempting to suppress or conceal their own uncultivated and implicitly shameful folk art and music, until the moment when strong regionalist movements finally emerged and socialism made its first tentative appearance on the Latin American stage. If we look at the case of painting, for example, in Mexico it was later artists like Diego Rivera who recognized the full worth of popular engravers like Posada or Gahona, just as it was Frida Kahlo who rehabilitated the popular tradition of *pulquería* wall painting; in Peru, likewise, it was artists, not critics, who most lovingly recalled the contribution of 'El mulato Gil' (José Gil de Castro, 1785–1841) to Peruvian and Chilean post-independence culture and the contribution of the great popular artist, Pancho Fierro (1803–79), later in the century. Latin American art criticism was overwhelmingly provincial and subjective, concentrating almost exclusively on historical, biographical and generally 'literary' aspects, with very little aesthetic insight in evidence. Almost all art criticism appeared in newspapers and most of the critics were poets and writers, so that purely plastic criteria were effectively ignored. The great writer, thinker and future president of Argentina, Domingo Faustino Sarmiento (1811–88), was one of the first art critics in the continent and almost certainly the earliest in Argentina, whilst Vicuña Mackenna takes precedence in Chile. The first exhibitions in Buenos Aires were held in 1817 and 1829, but for the next half century such events were few and far between in most other cities.

Despite the predominance of neo-classicism in architecture and, at first, through the influence of the academies, in the plastic arts, the quest for a national art and literature was, as we have seen (remembering Bello and, later, Sarmiento), a grand continental theme from the moment of independence; but the ideal was a very long time in the achieving. For most of the nineteenth century Latin American painting was almost exclusively descriptive. Brazilian painting, for example, which had been particularly backward during the colonial period (unlike music, sculpture and architecture), set out to take a more determinedly nationalist course after independence in 1822, but nationalism as channelled through French and Italian tutors not infrequently produced a merely

insipid version of a supposed 'universalist', in fact thoroughly Europeanized, art. Academic painting encouraged the depiction of historical personages and events in the style of David and Ingres. The imperial government invited teachers to Brazil from Paris and Rome and sponsored young artists to travel and study in Europe. The most important of the artistic immigrants was Nicolas Antoine Taunay (1755–1830), who came with the French Artistic Mission and painted many portraits and landscapes, including *O morro de Santo Antônio em 1816*. As well as his famous scenes of slave life, Jean-Baptiste Debret (1768–1848) painted portraits of João VI, the *Sagração de D. Pedro I*, and the *Desembarque de D. Leopoldina, primeira Imperatriz do Brasil*. Brazilian painting proper only really began in the 1840s, when Jean Léon Pallière Grandjean de Ferreira, who was a grandson of Grandjean de Montigny, returned to Brazil after spending most of his early life in France and galvanized the artistic world with the latest European techniques. Manuel de Araújo Porto Alegre (1806–79), barão de Santo Angelo, equally well known as a poet, was a notable disciple of Debret, best known for his *Coroação de D. Pedro II*. But this was court painting at its least audacious, and in the works of even the most accomplished later artists like Vítor Meireles (1832–1903), Pedro Américo (1843–1905), José Ferraz de Almeida Júnior (1850–99) and Rodolfo Amoêdo (1857–1941), the dead hand of European academicism reaches well into the Brazilian republican period after 1889.

In other countries also the most significant phenomenon of the first half-century after independence was the arrival of a succession of artists from Europe, intrigued by the colourful types, scenes, customs and landscapes of the newly liberated continent. Artists like Vidal, Fisquet, Nebel, Verazzi, Menzoni and, above all, the German Johann-Moritz Rugendas (1802–58) and the Frenchman Raymond-Auguste Quinsac de Monvoisin (1790–1870), went to work, teach and write, and exerted an influence out of all proportion to their real status in their own countries or in the history of art. Frequently they sent their works back for reproduction or for sale to collectors of the picturesque. In Chile, for example, artists like the English naval officer, Charles Wood (1793–1856), who painted marine views around Valparaíso, Rugendas, who lived there from 1834 to 1845 after visiting Brazil and Mexico and was a friend of Andrés Bello, Monvoisin, who was also there in the 1840s, and E. Charton de Treville (1818–78), between them provided most of the scenes which thereafter illustrated Chilean histories of the period. Not

until the 1870s did significant native-born artists appear. In Mexico the most influential painters of the period were the conventional Catalan Pelegrín Clavé (1810–80), brought to Mexico by Santa Anna in 1846 to reorganize the Academy, and the Italian Eugenio Landesio (1810–77), known for romantic landscapes such as *Chimalistac*, *Valle de México*, and *Vista de la Arquería de Matlala*, exhibited in 1857, and also tutor to Mexico's most important nineteenth-century artist, José María Velasco (1840–1912). Such travelling foreign artists were in many cases the first to record Latin American life in the early republican period, and it took some time in a number of countries before national artists – for example, Ramón Torres Méndez (1809–85) in Colombia, Martín Tovar y Tovar (1828–1902) in Venezuela – were able to adopt the genres and styles which these frequently more romantically inclined Europeans had laid down.

The only way in which most artists, other than popular painters, could conceive of their search for a national art was through *costumbrist* painting. In Argentina the first important national painter was Carlos Morel (1813–94), who painted portraits of Rosas and his mother but was best known for his scenes of gauchos, Indians and local customs in the late 1830s and early 1840s, with titles like *La carreta*, *Payada en una pulpería*, *La familia del gaucho*, or *Cacique pampa y su mujer*. These works, many of which first appeared in his 1844 album *Usos y costumbres del Río de la Plata*, have been reproduced on innumerable occasions. In such pictures, and those of other Argentine painters like Carlos Pellegrini (1800–75), we see a varied, colourful, social and natural world constrained in painting which is ultimately one-dimensional. These were artists viewing their own reality – though of course the underlying point here is that it was not yet truly their own reality – partly through European eyes. Yet they were generally well in advance of the men of letters, largely because they moved in much wider social circles than the salon life to which writers of the period were often confined. Indeed, as in peninsular Spain and other parts of Europe, many *costumbrista* poets and writers who reproduced the picturesque and the picaresque learned their skills of observation primarily from their contemporaries among the painters. A case in point was the leading Argentine romantic, Esteban Echeverría (1805–51), who was in the same art class as Carlos Morel when they were both students, and may well have been inspired to write his brutal novella *El matadero* (1838) partly as a result of a picture by the English painter, Emeric Essex Vidal.

Portraiture had developed only slowly during the eighteenth century, but expanded rapidly during the first sixty years of the nineteenth century. Neo-classicism encouraged an austere, voluminous style of portrait painting, as exemplified in the works of travellers like Rugendas. Indeed, most artists made a living painting portraits of the rising bourgeoisie, although of course the trade declined abruptly after about 1860 with the spread of the daguerrotype, at which point many painters like Morel and Prilidiano Pueyrredón (1823–70) in Argentina also became photographers. Pueyrredón, son of the famous general, was, unlike most painters, a member of the social elite and spent much time in Europe, where he was influenced both by David and Delacroix. He produced a vast output of more than two hundred paintings, of which more than half were portraits in oils. The most famous was his portrait of Manuelita Rosas dressed in Federal red (1850), but he also painted outstanding portraits of his father (1848), his friend, Don Miguel J. de Azcuénaga (1864), both also from life, as well as pictures of Rivadavia and Garibaldi. Typical of men of the age, Pueyrredón was in fact a trained engineer and architect who was responsible for many of the public buildings erected in and around Buenos Aires between 1854 and 1864 after his return from a second sojourn in Europe. He also produced such well-known landscapes as *Un alto en el camino* (1861) and *San Isidro* (1867), and numerous scenes of native customs.

Only with the gradual triumph of romanticism in the plastic arts and literature, however, were painters like Pueyrredón in Argentina, Almeida Júnior in Brazil, Velasco in Mexico and Juan Manuel Blanes (1830–1901) in Uruguay able to begin the move out of academic, descriptive or merely *costumbrist* painting in the direction of a more specifically individualistic and to that extent – at this stage – national style. In the second half of the century, when romanticism had been more profoundly absorbed and had itself in turn given way to Courbet's naturalism, a few painters, often influenced by the findings of archaeological expeditions (those of J. L. Stephens and E. G. Squier, for example), made the first faltering attempts to gain inspiration from a historically grounded but formally romantic return to aboriginal roots. Francisco Laso (1823–69) of Peru, for example, seems to foreshadow *indigenismo* in his attempt to travel this road by uniting individual and national identity in pictures like *El habitante de la cordillera* (1855).

In music the national concept was barely reflected at all until well after mid-century, at a time when conservatories and other formative institu-

tions had developed or were being newly founded. Before that it was largely left to the chapel-masters of the great cathedrals, such as José Maurício Nunes Garcia (1767–1830) and Francisco Manuel da Silva (1795–1865) in Brazil, or José Antonio Picasarri (1769–1843) in Argentina, to lay the foundations of national musical life, often forming schools of music, philharmonic societies and ensembles, and thereby ensuring that patriotic or nativist currents did not take art music too far from its religious base in the continent. In Mexico the musical scene was dominated in the post-independence period by José Mariano Elizaga (1786–1842), known in that most patriarchal century as the ‘father of Mexican music’. San Martín is said to have had a fine singing voice and to have intoned Parera’s *Marcha patriótica* to the massed crowds in Santiago de Chile in 1818, whilst in later years Juan Bautista Alberdi wrote numerous salon pieces for piano. In Brazil Pedro I himself wrote the Brazilian Hymn of Independence, as well as an opera whose overture was performed in Paris in 1832. By that time the minuet and mazurka, polka and waltz had arrived in Latin America, rapidly became acclimatized and then gave birth to local versions and variations.

But if every educated man and woman had an interest in music, its public performance and development were securely in the hands of foreigners after the chapel-masters had had their day. In Chile, exceptionally, German influences were strong; but there as elsewhere, Italian opera had been popular since the early eighteenth century and continued to dominate the scene, initially through Rossini and Bellini. When new theatres were opened it was usually with opera in mind, since the performance of symphonic and chamber works only really became feasible, even in the larger republics, in the last quarter of the century. Opera apart, the main musical fare consisted of piano and song recitals, and light musical theatre, particularly the Spanish *género chico* of *zarzuelas* and *sainetes*, usually performed by Spanish touring troupes.

Argentina and Brazil are the most interesting countries in terms of music during this period. In Argentina as elsewhere, patriotic music in particular flourished alongside the more vernacular *cielitos*. At the same time European salon music grew rapidly in social acceptance after 1830, in somewhat ironic counterpoint to the rural music of the gaucho *payadores* and their pampa *gatos*, *vidalitas* and *tristes*. Yet despite the aura of barbarous spontaneity which appears to have surrounded such folk music at the time, its European heritage is obvious, and the gauchos, for all their alleged savagery as denounced in contemporary literature, were

not remotely as beyond the pale as the Indians and negroes who predominated in other nations. In this sense it is not surprising that the River Plate region, even before the waves of European immigration in the last quarter of the century, should have largely followed European trends in developing its musical culture. Buenos Aires, moreover, was always an especially welcoming host to Italian operas, which appeared regularly from the 1820s – Rossini's *Barber of Seville* was premiered in 1825 – until by 1850 some two dozen operas were being mounted regularly in Buenos Aires each year. More than a dozen theatres opened in the city during the nineteenth century, including, in 1857, the Teatro Colón, which would in time make Buenos Aires a world opera capital.

In Brazil, where the development of culture moved through successive organic rather than revolutionary transformations, Italian opera was even more effectively acclimatized. The transfer of the Portuguese court to Rio de Janeiro in 1808 and the establishment of an independent empire in 1822, whilst initially stifling such creativity as had been apparent in the late eighteenth century, provided for a more stable and continuous evolution over the ensuing decades than was possible elsewhere. The mulatto priest, José Maurício Nunes Garcia, although primarily an outstanding composer of sacred music, including an admired Requiem Mass (1816), is credited with having written, in 1809, Brazil's first opera, *Le du gemelle*. In the 1840s his pupil Francisco Manuel da Silva reformed the orchestra of the Imperial Chapel and galvanized musical activity in the capital; he established the national conservatory in 1847. In 1856 Manuel de Araújo Pôrto Alegre, the celebrated poet and painter, provided the Portuguese text to music by Joaquim Giannini, an Italian professor at the conservatory, to produce *Véspera dos Guararapes*; and in 1860 Elias Alvares Lôbo went further, himself composing the music for an opera *A noite de São João*, staged at the new Opera Lírica Nacional, with a libretto based on narrative poems by the most important novelist of the era, José Martiniano de Alencar (1829–1877). The following year saw a still more significant event, the performance of *A noite do castelo*, the first work by Antônio Carlos Gomes (1836–96), destined to be nineteenth-century Latin America's most successful composer, above all with *Il Guarany* (1870), based on Alencar's already famous novel *O Guarani* (1857). It remains the only Latin American opera in the international repertory to this day.

Only negligible attention has been paid to the history of the theatre in

nineteenth-century Latin America, and the casual observer might conclude that there were few if any theatres, playwrights or plays. This is far from being the truth, although it is true that theatres were mainly confined to national or provincial capitals and that the standard of artistic achievement appears to have been generally low. Moreover, as we have seen, most theatres were opened with opera or light musical comedy in mind. Nevertheless, the theatre was a central focus of literary activity at a time when literature was still far from acquiring the essentially private character it has assumed today, occupying the same place in the construction of the imagination as the cinema and television now. Thus, when the young Sarmiento arrived in Santiago de Chile for the first time in 1841, he conceived it as a 'theatre' full of unknown personages in which he was called upon to act.

Taking Mexico City as an example, there were already two theatres in operation in the 1820s, one of which served to finance the hospital while the other was built on the site of a cockpit and continued to be associated with this activity in the popular mind. A play entitled *México libre* was produced at the Coliseo Nuevo in 1821, the year of Iturbide's triumph, in which Mars, Mercury and Liberty together defeated Despotism, Fanaticism and Ignorance on Mexican soil, while in the succeeding years of the decade dramas with titles like *El liberal entre cadenas* and *El despotismo abatido* were performed. Most of the leading impresarios and actors were Spaniards, a tradition only temporarily interrupted by their expulsion after 1827. Manuel Eduardo de Gorostiza (1789–1851), a doughty liberal campaigner and outstanding dramatist – *Contigo pan y cebolla* (1823) is his best known work – was one of the unfortunate exiles of the period. Censorship was still prevalent, despite independence, though most of its motivation remained religious and moralistic rather than political. By 1830 in Mexico City, as in Buenos Aires and Rio de Janeiro, the opera had become the favourite pastime of the upper classes. The city was also visited by French ballet troupes, foreign conjurers and balloonists, exotic performing animals and, in due course, other diversions such as Daguerre's diorama in 1843 and wrestling in 1849. Almost all such events took place in or directly outside the theatres. The age of the impresario had dawned, and show business was just around the corner. By the end of the 1830s European romantic drama had arrived, above all in the shape of Hugo's plays, and as early as 1840 Mexican imitations such as *El torneo* by Fernando Calderón (1809–45), or *Muñoz, visitador de México* by another young romantic, Ignacio Rodríguez Galván (1816–

42), were appearing, while the *costumbrist* works of the Spaniard Manuel Bretón de los Herreros were soon filling theatres in Mexico as they would elsewhere in Spain and Latin America for over half a century.

Needless to say, during the nineteenth century and particularly the romantic period up to the 1880s, the theatre was not only an artistic phenomenon but an important focus of social activity, and theatre criticism often seemed as much concerned with the behaviour of the audience and the state of the auditorium as with the drama and its performance. Most of the plays and authors have long since been forgotten, but in its day the romantic theatre, both historical and *costumbrist*, was a closer reflection of contemporary reality than either the novel or poetry. In 1845, for example, the recognition of the independence of Texas by the United States inspired a Mexican drama entitled *Cómo se venga un texano*. At the same time the continuing influence of Spain in theatrical and musical tradition must not be overlooked. In the 1850s the *zarzuela* was revived in the Peninsula and transferred to Spanish America, proving particularly popular in Mexico. José Zorrilla, whose *Don Juan Tenorio* was staged in Mexico in 1844, only six months after the first performance in Spain, spent much time in the Mexican capital. Many other foreign touring companies and star performers visited Latin American countries with increasing regularity throughout the nineteenth century, sometimes at great personal risk, and a number of them died of diseases such as cholera and yellow fever.

In the 1850s four more theatres opened in Mexico City and the Teatro Nacional in 1858 saw the first performance of an opera by a Mexican composer – this was in fact the only Mexican thing about it – *Catalina de Guisa* by Cenobio Paniagua (1821–82). Soon afterwards a comic opera treating national customs, *Un paseo a Santa Anita*, was launched and became an overnight sensation, the forerunner to the *revistas* so important in later Mexican popular theatrical history. After Juárez's triumph in 1861 theatre censorship was removed and specifically Mexican works were positively encouraged. The two leading dramatists of the period were Juan A. Mateos (1831–1913) and Vicente Riva Palacio (1831–96), Juárez's close collaborator, who was also an excellent short-story writer. Riva was the author of the famous satirical song. *Adiós, mamá Carlota*, which heralded the expulsion of the French in 1867, an event also celebrated by Felipe Suárez's romantic drama *El triunfo de la libertad*, about a Mexican guerrilla fighter who arrives in the nick of time to save the honour of La Patria, his Mexican sweetheart. The following year *La*

Patria became the title of another play, by the poet Joaquín Villalobos, whose central character was an Indian maiden of that name aided jointly by Father Hidalgo and Minerva to defeat the French invaders.

Only Peru could approach Mexico's abundance of theatrical activity during this period, with two particularly outstanding playwrights, the conservative Felipe Pardo (1806–68), author of *Los frutos de la educación* (1829), and Manuel Ascencio Segura (1805–71), author of the celebrated *El sargento Canuto* (1839) and *Ña Catita* (1856). They represented two integral aspects of Lima society and both in their different ways foreshadowed Ricardo Palma's sharp but cynical observation (see below). Brazilian theatre had few really outstanding names in the nineteenth century, although in Brazil as elsewhere most well-known poets and novelists also wrote for the stage, including opera. One romantic playwright who deserves to be remembered is the founder of Brazilian comedy, Luís Carlos Martins Pena (1815–48), although the poet Gonçalves de Magalhães is, historically speaking, the true originator of Brazilian theatre. Martins Pena's comedies of manners – *Ojuiz de paz da roça* (1833, staged 1838) is the best example – though light and superficial, were also accomplished and entertaining. Unlike the theatre of the Spanish American republics, they were the product of a relatively stable society, where veiled criticism was not considered dangerous, and were based on a vigorous representation of all the social classes of Rio. Pena was very successful at giving the public exactly what it appeared to want. As Samuel Putnam rather cruelly puts it, 'His countrymen saw themselves and their daily lives in all their mediocrity mirrored in his creations, had a chance to laugh at their own reflections, and went away satisfied.'⁵

There can be little doubt, however, that despite its social importance, the theatre in Mexico, Peru, Brazil, or the rest of Latin America, was the least distinguished of the literary genres. Let us then turn to those other forms of literary expression, and in particular to the impact of the romantic movement in the continent. It is logical to remain with Brazil, since that country undoubtedly saw the most complete and 'European' version of the movement, although perhaps lacking some of the more dramatic features precisely because Brazil's relations with the outside world were generally less turbulent than those of most Spanish American nations. Independence was achieved with few heroics in 1822 (even the monarchy survived), which meant that the transition from neo-classi-

⁵ Samuel Putnam, *Marvelous journey: a survey of four centuries of Brazilian writing* (New York, 1948), 161.

cism to romanticism was less abrupt and much less contradictory than in Spanish America. As a result, Brazil's classicalist tendency has been more persistent over time, harmonizing more fluently in this period with a romanticism which itself was on the whole more sentimental and less agonized, with little to show in terms of revolutionary impulse. The various parts of fragmented Spanish America have been forced to speak to one another, in however sporadic and spasmodic a fashion, and this has produced an Americanist dimension more profound and enduring in that part of the continent than in Brazil, which has on the whole pointed largely in the direction of Europe, with few deviations. By contrast Brazil, itself of continental proportions, experienced a far more complex regionalist dialectic than most Spanish American nations.

The first flowering of romanticism in Brazil was in poetry, beginning in 1836, when Domingos José Gonçalves de Magalhães (1811–82), a member of the *Niterói* group resident in Paris, published there his *Suspiros poéticos e saudades*, while another, Manuel de Araújo Porto Alegre, who was also a painter, as we have seen, published *A voz da Natureza*. Gonçalves de Magalhães did not give himself over to the new virile romanticism of Hugo as much as to the sentimentality of the Chateaubriand who had written *Atala* and *Le Génie du christianisme*. An aristocrat abroad, his talents were largely imitative and much of his rhetoric remained arcadian rather than romantic, but his contemporaries felt that here in intention was a new poetry with its combination of religiosity and languorous scepticism, of exultation and melancholy.

Probably the greatest Brazilian romantic poet was Antônio Gonçalves Dias (1823–64), who produced four collections of poetry between 1846 and 1857 (the first prefaced with lines from Goethe and Chateaubriand), a drama *Leonor de Mendonça* (1847), and one of the earliest Indianist poems of Latin America, *Os timbiras* (1848) (the latter prompting Gonçalves de Magalhães to produce his own influential *Confederação dos tamoiós* in 1856). For many Brazilian critics this composer of opulent, pantheistic hymns to the tropics, at once nostalgic and assertive, patriotic, Americanist and Indianist, combining fluency and formal elegance, is the greatest of all Brazilian poets. Certainly he is the leading poet of Brazilian nationality, notably for his repeatedly quoted 'Canção do exílio', written in Coimbra: 'My land has palm trees,/ wherein sings the sabiá bird;/ he sings a sweeter note by far than ever here is heard./ Our sky has more stars,/ our bushes have more flowers,/ our forests have more life in them,/ more loves that life of ours.' Gonçalves Dias died in a shipwreck

within sight of land, retrospectively underlining the characteristic *saudade* of his great poems. His important 'O canto do guerreiro' is similar to Longfellow's *Song of Hiawatha*; other works even recall Hernández's later *Martín Fierro*. He is characteristic of Brazilian romanticism, but his greatness bursts its limitations to become, as so many critics have said, the first truly Brazilian voice.

After Gonçalves Dias, romantic *indianismo* and *paisagismo* gained momentum. The aristocratic background of many Brazilian poets permitted a more patriarchal, Hugoesque style than most Spanish Americans were able to adopt, within a generally nationalistic perspective. The Indian stood in reality for a defeated and largely eliminated culture, and was therefore quite safe to adopt as the basis of a nationalist myth. He is far more in evidence in Brazilian literature before 1870 than the negro, on whom the economy still largely rested. Landscape was another romantic concern, but genuine interest in the rural world and the real conditions of its inhabitants was glaringly absent. Instead a certain mysticism and fatalism, which many critics have chosen to see as a projection of some Brazilian national character, was much in evidence, a sense that God and nature had determined man's destiny within the vast cosmic expanse of Brazil. One of the most representative romantic poets was Francisco Adolfo de Varnaghen (1816–78), author of *Epícos brasileiros* (1843), editor of the famous anthology *Florilégio da poesia brasileira* (1850), and an important promoter of national historiography; another was the errant Luís Nicolau Fagundes Varela (1841–75).

However, a succeeding generation of romantic poets (it is customary for critics to speak of four such generations) were entirely lacking in any sense of religiosity. They formed the Satanic school, a 'lost generation', according to Samuel Putnam, writers of a 'homicidal literature', in Afrânio Peixoto's words,⁶ sufferers long before anyone in Spanish America from the *mal de siècle* or *taedium vitae* of decadent romanticism, much given to alcohol and other artificial paradises, for whom both nationalism and Americanism were empty concepts. The nearest equivalent in the Spanish-speaking countries would probably be the Mexican, Manuel Acuña (1849–73), who committed suicide aged 24 when the more normal tradition among young romantic poets in his country was to die for political causes. Most of these young Brazilian poets also died before their time. The most characteristic of them was the child prodigy of Brazilian romanticism, Manuel Antônio Álvares de Azevedo (1831–

⁶ Afrânio Peixoto, *Noções de história da literatura brasileira* (Rio de Janeiro, 1931), 161.

52), who was like Byron or Baudelaire at their most morbid. Called the 'poet of doubt', he proposed his own epitaph: 'He was a poet, he had dreams, he loved.' These writers were more individualistic and aesthetically oriented than their more complacent, patriarchal forerunners, though much of their work was in reality, as critics have pointed out citing one of Azevedo's best known works, a long dark 'night in a tavern'. Nonetheless, another of them, Casimiro José Marques de Abreu (1839–60), became one of the most lastingly popular of Brazilian poets as the author of verses for lovesick adolescents.

Quite a different phenomenon was another short-lived romantic poet, Antônio de Castro Alves (1847–71), Brazil's greatest social poet of the era and, for some, a finer poet even than Gonçalves Dias. He was known as a *condoreiro* or condor poet, of lofty wingspan and high ambitions, unmistakably Hugoesque in range but innately Brazilian in sentimental orientation. His first impact on public consciousness was in 1867 with his drama *Gonzaga ou a revolução de Minas*, based on the life of the great mineiro poet of the late eighteenth century, Tomás Antônio Gonzaga. Castro Alves's poetry was public and private by turns, declamatory and intimate, Hugoesque or Byronic. A mulatto from Bahia, he filled his work with compassion and tropical sensuality. Erico Veríssimo has justly said of him that while other romantic poets were picking at their own sores, Castro Alves attended to the wounds of his suffering compatriots, not least the black slaves, and the indignant 'O navio negreiro' remains his single best-known poem. *Espumas flutuantes* (1871) was the only collection in book form to appear during his lifetime.

Castro Alves reminds us that the nineteenth century was the century of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. It was also the century of *The Last of the Mohicans*. In Brazilian fiction the Indianist motif was represented most comprehensively and lastingly by the country's greatest romantic novelist, José Martiniano de Alencar. There had, however, been two memorable novels before Alencar's first triumph in the late 1850s. One was the famous *A moreninha* (1844) by Joaquim Manuel de Macedo (1820–82), a naive and touching novel still much read and loved by Brazilian women today, and the first truly popular work of Brazilian literature. The other, entirely different at first sight, was *Memórias de um sargento de milícias* (1853), by Manuel Antônio de Almeida (1831–61). At first reading the work appears to have been produced decades before its time, possessed of a startling objective realism; critics have noted, however, that its underlying impulse, though well-disguised, was romantic; it looked

back fondly through a *costumbrist* prism to the good old days of João VI's residence in Brazil at the beginning of the century. Another more visibly romantic novelist was Antônio Gonçalves Teixeira e Sousa (1812–61), a mulatto best known for *A Independência do Brasil* (1847), but also the author of novels of a kind then being written all over the rest of Latin America, after the style of Alexandre Dumas and Eugène Sue, with titles like *Fatalidades de dois jovens* (1856), or *Maria ou a menina robada* (1859). They were immediate precursors of Alencar's works, typical of the romantic movement in their obsessive emphasis on young lost lovers (with an exotic tinge always available through an emphasis on their racial differences), in the treatment of wild sylvan settings, and with a gothic frisson evoked by themes of incest, cannibalism or headhunting. A novelist influenced, like Alencar himself, by the more serious Walter Scott was João Manuel Pereira da Silva (1817–98). Like most other major Brazilian writers of the time, he was able to reside in Europe, notably Paris, for long periods, and there he wrote *Jerônimo Corte Real* (1839), set in the sixteenth century, and his *História da fundação do Império brasileiro* (1864–68).

José de Alencar, an aristocratic politician from a Pernambucan family, who also wrote a number of plays and much poetry, including the Indianist *Os filhos de Tupan* (1867), was, however, the unrivalled master of Brazilian romantic fiction. He set out, almost like a Balzac, to cover the entire range of Brazilian historical periods and themes. No novelist of the era from Spanish America can match his achievement in terms of breadth, narrative fluency and grasp of detail. Curiously, though, as in the case of Gonçalves Dias, it is for his Indianism that he is remembered today. Like Fenimore Cooper, with whom he is sometimes unconvincingly compared, he owed a large debt to Walter Scott, and as much to Chateaubriand, though he was more skilful than the latter in terms of detail and general management of action, and not inferior in his symphonic mastery of prose which is sonorous and rhythmical. Sentimental, platitudinous, but unmistakably accomplished, his works are probably the highpoint of nineteenth-century Indianism in Latin America and of the romantic novel as a whole, reminiscent of Hugo, Lamartine and Chateaubriand, with his powerful use of emotion, lyrical landscapes and high moral tone. In addition, he frequently used Brazilian popular idiom and regional themes. The best-known novels include *O Guarani* (1857), *Iracema* (1865), about a beautiful Indian girl who falls tragically in love with a Portuguese soldier, *O gaúcho* (1870), *Ubirajara* (1875), *O*

sertanejo (1875), and the posthumous *Lembra-te-de-mim* (1887). *O sertanejo* went further than his previous works in detailing popular customs, but these remained divorced from their true social and economic content. His characters were spiritual rather than social beings, and a novelist from a later era, José Lins do Rego, commented unkindly but rather appropriately that Alencar ‘moved them about as if they were trees’.⁷

Just as Brazil’s historical experience during the first three quarters of the nineteenth century was different from that of the Spanish American republics, so her romantic movement developed differently, both more complete and less dramatic than the movements in the sister states, where political and social upheaval produced a literature with more imperfections in which the passionate, affirmative and committed current in romanticism was stressed. Furthermore, there can be little doubt that the melancholy and misty religiosity of Brazilian romanticism derived from the aristocratic background of many of the poets involved, nor that its muted pessimism was shaped unconsciously by the fear that the social order which gave them their stable way of life, based as it was on slavery, was slowly but surely drawing to its end.

The romantic phenomenon, viewed as a movement, appeared earlier and more vigorously in Argentina than elsewhere. Indeed, such was the importance of Argentine literature up to the 1870s that, perceived through the standard histories, Spanish American literature as a whole can often seem to be almost reducible to the history of literature in that one republic, with even Mexico and Peru in subordinate roles. Echeverría, Mármol, Varela, López, Mitre, Sarmiento, Alberdi, Gutiérrez, gauchesque poetry: there appears to be an unbroken dialogue, a continuity, even in its conflictiveness, typical of western European literatures. Only Brazil’s less convulsive but even more organic development can compare in this regard. Indeed, it is arguable that Argentine and River Plate literature (with close ties to Chilean literature up to 1850) is one history, and that of all the other Spanish American republics another during this period. This is particularly striking because of course what was now Argentina had been a distant outpost, a zone of strictly secondary importance during most of the colonial period. Now, however, Argentina, with less of the heritage of Spanish colonialism and with its political and literary elites most strongly influenced by England and France, became almost inevitably the home of nineteenth-century Spanish American literature until the time of *modernismo*, which in Argentina

⁷ Quoted by Putnam, *Marvelous journey*, 148.

came curiously late perhaps precisely because that nation had its own authentic literary-social trajectory to develop.

It was in Argentina where a number of enduring themes in Latin American cultural history emerged most emphatically. Thus, in Argentina, from the very start, the opposition between a civilized Europe and a barbarous America was established, with Buenos Aires perceived as a far-flung outpost of civilization marooned in a savage, empty continent. The theme is well expressed in an 1843 poem by L. Domínguez, 'El ombú', which laments the unmarked grave of 'one of those brave men/ worthy of glory and fame/ who, because they were born out here/ left no memory of their name'. Such concepts are essential to an understanding of the Argentine literary mentality to this day. The perceived emptiness encouraged the development of two further themes, both of them conducive to a romantic cast of mind – solitude and distance – and both appear even in the titles of some of Latin America's great works of literature. They are themes which have emerged wherever white Europeans have settled vast areas with sparse aboriginal populations (Australia comes particularly to mind). Rómulo Gallegos, in all the novels he wrote about the previous century, above all *Canaima* (1935), evoked that 'unfinished world' of Genesis, a world not only uncompleted by God but by man: uncharted, unsettled, undeveloped, unknown. The entire continent awaited exploration by the emotions and the senses – the project of romanticism – and by scientific empiricism – the project of positivism – though not ideally, perhaps, in that order. Unfortunately intellectuals tended to act as though each of the new nations really was as empty as it seemed, a cultural vacuum, a ghostly blank sheet of paper bequeathed not by Spain or Portugal but by the French Enlightenment, on which they could write whatever future they saw fit. The *conquistadores* had dreamed of El Dorado; nineteenth-century intellectuals dreamed of utopias. They were bitterly disappointed in those early decades and nowhere more so than in Argentina, where the expectations were highest. The dilemmas were acutely perceived by the brilliant young thinker and writer Juan Bautista Alberdi (1810–84), at that time a journalist who modelled himself on the Spanish writer Mariano José de Larra. In 1838 Alberdi wrote:

The revolution has taken us abruptly out of the arms of the middle ages and has placed us quite unprepared alongside the nineteenth century. These two civilizations have married in our country, but they live ill-wed, as one might expect. The young century, sparkling with elegance and youthful energy,

cannot but smile ironically all the while at its silly, decrepit and ridiculous wife. Such heterogeneous arrangements are to be found in every situation, in every misadventure of our society.⁸

The leader of the rebel intellectual generation in post-independence Argentina, founder of the *Generación Joven* and the *Asociación de Mayo* in 1837 and 1838, and author of the seminal *Dogma socialista* (1837), was Esteban Echeverría, who wrote the first self-consciously romantic poems in the Spanish language. He had spent the period 1826–30 in Paris, during the years of Vigny's *Cinq mars* (1826), and Hugo's *Cromwell* (1827) and *Hernani* (1830), and then almost literally imported the movement back into Argentina with his other baggage. In Europe he had read Schiller, Goethe and, above all, Byron, realizing that the new movement was, in Pedro Henríquez Ureña's words, 'a spiritual revolution which paved the way for each national or regional group to find its own expression, the complete revelation of its own soul, in contrast to the cold, ultra-rational universality of classicism'.⁹ Although Echeverría had little instinct for poetry, his temperament undoubtedly predisposed him to the new movement, as a fragment from his reflections, 'On my thirtieth birthday . . .' (1835), will reveal: 'Between the ages of eighteen and twenty-six my passions and emotions became gigantic, and their impetuosity, bursting all limits, shattered into fragments against the impossible. An insatiable thirst for knowledge, ambition, glory, colossal visions of the future . . . all these things I have felt'. In 1894 the critic García Mérou commented that the defining characteristics of Echeverría's works, typical of his generation, were 'the protests and complaints of those who aspire to a higher destiny, but fail to attain it'.¹⁰

On his return to Buenos Aires he found a nation wracked by the struggle between unitarians and federalists. Rosas, already governor of Buenos Aires province, was soon to become dictator. By that time Echeverría had published his poems *Elvira o la novia del Plata* (1832) and *Los consuelos* (1834), and was preparing his best-known poetic work, the narrative *La cautiva* (1837), about a passionate heroine who braves the dangers of the savage pampa in an effort to save her lover from bloodthirsty Indians. His real talent, however, as the remarkable and now classic novella *El Matadero* (1838) shows, was for vigour and clarity in prose writing, although in his own day he was celebrated particularly

⁸ 'Del uso de lo cómico en Sud América', *El Iniciador* (Buenos Aires), no. 7 (15 July 1838), quoted in Juan Carlos Ghiano, 'El matadero' de Echeverría y el costumbrismo (Buenos Aires, 1968), 69.

⁹ Henríquez Ureña, *Las corrientes literarias*, 121.

¹⁰ Ghiano, 'El matadero', 11

for his rather wooden and ultimately cerebral romantic poetry. This is characteristic of the entire era: until the end of the century Argentine critics remained convinced that national achievement in poetry was far superior to the quality of prose writing, whereas quite the opposite was actually the case. When the liberal revolution of 1839 failed, Echeverría's band were forced to flee, mostly to Montevideo. He devoted himself to his writings, a broken man – impotent rage, as we have seen, characterizes the literary work of most of the *proscritos* at this time – and died a year before Rosas was finally defeated at Caseros. His impact on his contemporaries was immense, and is visible in the early works of Juan María Gutiérrez (1809–78), whose *Los amores del payador* appeared in 1833, and equally in *Santos Vega* (1838) by Bartolomé Mitre (1821–1906), one of the great men of the century in Argentina.

In the year of Echeverría's death, one of his young disciples, José Mármol (1817–71), completed his long novel *Amalia*, parts of which had been appearing since 1844. It was the outstanding fictional work of the era, though other interesting novels were also being written: Mitre's *Soledad* (1847), *Esther* (1850) by Miguel Cané (1812–63), *La novia del hereje o la Inquisición de Lima* (1840) by Vicente Fidel López (1815–1903), and Gutiérrez's *El capitán de Patricios* (1843), most of them composed in exile and only published much later. They were mainly pale copies of Walter Scott, and Argentina's own lack of historical tradition made it difficult for writers far from home to produce convincing works of fiction based on such a model. The period also saw the emergence of Argentina's first important female novelist, Juana Manuela Gorriti (1818–92), who married the Bolivian politician Manuel Isidoro Belzú and produced a number of early romantic Indianist works such as *La quena* (Lima, 1843). Mármol's *Amalia*, however, was more interesting than any of its contemporary rivals. It is Latin America's first novel about dictatorship. Its one-word title, a woman's name, is characteristic of the era, with its hyperbolic individualism and the identity it presupposes between individual, nation and history. Unlike most romantic novels after Scott, *Amalia* deals with the immediate past, although, as Mármol explained in the prologue, it was written as if distant in time to make its point of view immediately accessible to future generations. It dramatizes the heroic struggle of two young men against Rosas's regime embodied in the Mazorca. The beautiful Amalia, a young widow, is the beloved of one and cousin of the other: all are children of heroes of the wars of independence. When first we see Amalia in her scrupulously tasteful

home, furnished entirely in European style, she is reading Lamartine's *Méditations*, whilst outside is Rosas's world of asphyxiating terror. Unfortunately, only the villains come alive – Rosas's depiction is unforgettable – whereas the heroes are aristocratic supermen whose idealized behaviour and eventual fate, despite some exciting episodes, leave the modern reader cold. As a document of the times, however, even in its ideological bias, *Amalia* is invaluable. By chapter five, Mármol has diagnosed his fellow countrymen as: 'ignorant by education, vengeful by race, excitable by climate . . . a wild horse rampaging from Patagonia to Bolivia, kicking out at civilization and justice whenever they try to put a brake on its natural instincts'. The image is suggestive, similar to Echeverría's view of Rosas's bloodthirsty supporters in *El matadero* and an anticipation of Sarmiento's portrayal of the gaucho in *Facundo*. Yet Mármol's own narrative clearly demonstrates that his fellow intellectuals were largely ignorant of the true condition of the Argentine Republic, which Rosas understood only too well. The caudillo's popularity with the lower orders was intolerable to the representatives of liberal civilization – whom he enraged still further by dubbing them 'filthy, savage unitarians' – and history incubated a long dialectic which would see the whole phenomenon repeated and magnified with the rise and fall of Perón.

Mármol had been imprisoned whilst still a student for distributing propaganda against Rosas, and it was in prison that he wrote his first poems, although most of his work was produced in exile. After being forced to escape from Montevideo also in 1844, Mármol began his Byronic *Cantos del peregrino*, often considered, despite its unevenness and imperfections, one of the outstanding works of romantic poetry in Spanish. The poet reflected as he sailed the stormy seas: 'Glory longs for bards, poetry for glories,/ Why is there no harmony, voice and heart all gone?/ Europe sends forth no more lyres nor victories,/ Songs died with Byron, glories with Napoleon'. Mármol's annual poetic maledictions against Rosas, written each 25th of May from exile, have become anthology pieces and count among the most violent diatribes ever written in the language ('Savage of the pampa vomited by Hell . . ./ Ah, Rosas, we cannot celebrate May/ without sending you our dread, eternal curse'). Unlike Echeverría, Mármol lived on to respectability in more peaceable days, renounced writing and became, like so many famous Argentine writers after him, director of the National Library.

Clearly, one of the principal reasons for the intensity of literary activity

among nineteenth-century Argentines was the intensity of the nation's political life, and in particular the bitterness of a whole generation of intellectuals who felt cheated by the Rosas dictatorship of their right to rule. Argentina was therefore an early and leading producer of writers from exile, writer politicians and political writers, a seemingly permanent Latin American phenomenon ever since. Most of the great authors of the century, accordingly, were also great journalists. In 1852 Mitre, in *Los Debates*, quoted Lamartine's famous dictum:

Each age has its own dominant, characteristic passion: a source of life, if well understood, a source of death when unrecognized. The great passion of our time is a passion for the future, a passion for social perfectibility. The instrument of this passion for bringing about a moral world is the press, the prime civilizing instrument of our epoch.

Mitre, of course, would later found *La Nación* (1870). Many of the writers who had opposed Rosas would gain power after his demise, above all Mitre himself (president, 1862–8) and Domingo Faustino Sarmiento (president, 1868–74). Sarmiento's ideological adversary, Alberdi, the 'citizen of solitude', as Rojas Paz called him in a celebrated biography, never attained real power but his *Bases* were nevertheless instrumental in the elaboration of the 1853 Constitution.

As we have seen, the exiled Argentine rebels took refuge mainly in Montevideo, until Rosas besieged it, and then in Santiago de Chile. It was there, in a much more stable, prosaic and conservative environment – already characteristically a home of realism rather than romanticism – that the famous polemics of 1842 took place, between Andrés Bello and Sarmiento, over the appropriate form of a Latin American linguistic identity, and between Sarmiento's friend Vicente Fidel López and Bello's disciple José Joaquín Vallejo, 'Jotabeche' (1809–58), over romanticism in literary creation. The debates soon became generalized and moved on to overtly political ground, when Sarmiento began to equate grammar with conservatism of every stripe. José Victorino Lastarria (1817–88), a leading Chilean intellectual for the next forty years, was one of the prime movers of the debate, declaring that literature should be 'the authentic expression of our nationality'. It was at this time also that Francisco Bilbao (1823–65), author of the explosive *Sociabilidad chilena* (1844), and Vicuña Mackenna were making their mark in the Santiago intellectual milieu, where most young men were still under the distant spell of Fígaro, the great Spanish poet and journalist Mariano José de Larra. Bello, who had perhaps not expected such buffetings in the Chilean capital, retired

wounded from the fray and set about preparing his famous *Gramática* (1847). Once the tutor of Bolívar, although less of an influence than the passionate Simón Rodríguez, he had lived in London from 1810 to 1829, editing epoch-making magazines and composing his famous poems, and had then moved to Chile, where he had become the first rector of the university and perhaps the most widely and consistently enlightened writer in Spanish in the nineteenth century: his contributions to law, literature, criticism and philosophy were all outstanding, and he was the dominant influence in the cultural reorganization of the Chilean republic. Such Latin American patriarchal sobriety as he and Olmedo represented, was as much British as Hispanic. Bello even managed to domesticate Hugo when he translated him later in life.

Sarmiento is at first sight Bello's polar opposite, except in his breadth of achievement. He remains one of a handful of undeniably great literary figures of nineteenth-century Latin America, despite the fact that he almost never wrote works of a purely literary character. He was not interested in following 'models', for 'inspiration' was one of the wellsprings of his existence; at the same time, like Echeverría, he was more comfortable writing about political and philosophical concerns, however passionately expressed, than imaginative literature, and he wrote exclusively in prose. So important is he that the dates of his birth (1811) and death (1888) are frequently used as the boundaries of the Spanish American romantic movement as a whole, especially since the year of his death coincides with the publication of Rubén Darío's *Azul*, the inaugural work of *modernismo*. *Facundo: civilización y barbarie* (1845), produced in exile in Chile, although primarily a work of sociology or 'essay in human geography', is one of only a handful of nineteenth-century works that can still be read for pleasure today. In it a personality imbued with the romantic spirit of self-affirmation is able to identify itself with the present and future of a national territory and, paradoxically, to sound more like the dictator and gauchos he is almost literally loving to hate, and less like that idealized cerebral world of European culture which, the more he exalts it, the more ethereal and unreal it sounds and the more abstract and unsatisfying his text becomes. Most astonishing of all is Sarmiento's certainty: he really seems to *know* that the future belongs to him (Rosas's downfall is accurately predicted in the text), and is palpably talking about a material world over which he intends to take power. At the same time, there is nothing aristocratic about him: he uses the concept of civilization as a club with which to beat

his enemies, not as a fan to waft away the unpleasant smell of the masses. His works have none of the abstract distance with which writers like Martínez Estrada, Mallea or Murena would gaze on that same territory a hundred years later. Sarmiento was a dreamer, but also an intensely practical man. He was profoundly interested in the natural sciences (transformation and cultivation of the land) and in education (transformation and cultivation of the people). He founded the first teacher training school in Latin America in Santiago in 1842, and that capital's first serious newspaper, *El Progreso*, in the same year. When Bello argued for a renovated classical mode of language at this time, Sarmiento retorted that 'a correct purist style can only be the fruit of a completely developed civilization', and himself wrote vigorously and spontaneously, like the self-taught romantic he was. He gives the characteristic note to Spanish American – as opposed to Brazilian or European – romanticism: the epic of challenge, construction, achievement. Indeed his texts, vigorous as they are, are only a pale reflection of his continuously active, tempestuous life. There were many tragic figures in the period after Spanish American independence, as we have seen: Heredia, Melgar, Echeverría, Acuña. And there were plenty of sentimentalists, for example, the Colombian Jorge Isaacs, who was really more like a Brazilian of the era. But Sarmiento is the true man of his century. Byron, then, becomes less relevant after the 1840s, except to Brazil's Satanic Generation; even Chateaubriand becomes secondary, though still enormously important – especially in Brazil – and the inspiration of a number of seminal works. The fundamental figures are Victor Hugo in poetry and drama, and Walter Scott in narrative fiction.

If Sarmiento was a man of the future, at a time when other romantic writers had set out to portray the landscapes of the continent in poetry, or to depict the types and customs of its inhabitants, part of the contradictory romantic impulse was to the past. Walter Scott and Washington Irving had initiated the tradition of the historical romance, which Dumas and Sue had continued and, by vulgarizing it, made one of the most enduring forms of popular literature. Its true significance is sometimes misunderstood, however. When the romantics exhume the past it is not always from a merely conservative impulse of nostalgia; it can also be to provide their own post-mortem on it, in which case they are rewriting history according to the bourgeois view of the world. Similarly when they divine the soul of the people in myth and folklore, it is to take possession of that excessively fluid and combustible mass by represent-

ing it. In the prologue to his romantic novel *Soledad* (1847), Mitre remarked:

South America is the poorest part of the world in the matter of original novelists. This is why we should like the novel to put down deep roots in America's virgin soil. Our people are ignorant of their history, their barely formed customs have not been studied philosophically. . . . The novel will popularize our history, taking hold of the events of the conquest and colonial period, and our memories of the wars of independence.

Fifteen years earlier Heredia had written a prescient *Ensayo sobre la novela* (1832) on the relation between history and fiction, in which he drew an essential distinction between the historical novel and the sentimental novel.

Thus the development in nineteenth-century Spanish America of two sub-categories of the historical romance, the *leyenda* and the *tradición*, may not always correspond to the more conservative wing of romanticism, as was normally the case in the European context. The lapse of the Spanish realist tradition after the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and the absence of either a satisfactory historical tradition or of a national store of myths, legends and popular traditions, left the Latin American writer in each new republic in a position where there was no choice but to improvise. If his instincts were concrete, he would turn to the *cuadro de costumbres*; if mystical and sentimental, to the *leyenda*, usually a narrative in prose or poetry about the mysterious past, some local religious miracle or strange natural phenomenon. Eventually the tendency would find its classic expression in the *tradición*, a genre invented by the Peruvian Ricardo Palma. Although the Latin American historical novel proper derives mainly from Scott, Dumas and Sue, the *cuadros de costumbres*, *leyendas* and *tradiciones*, all embryonic forerunners of the short story, were modelled primarily on the works of Spanish writers like the Duke of Rivas, Larra and Zorrilla (the 1843 anthology *Los españoles pintados por sí mismos* was the highpoint of the movement), and only in the more accomplished cases on the critical realism inherent in the French *roman de mœurs*. Although these Spanish writers were aristocratic by birth or inclination, the genres they developed underwent important modifications when transplanted to American soil. At the same time, it is true that each work must be examined on its own specific terms: some were modern in spirit, but archaic in subject matter; others appeared to be exploring contemporary customs, but from a reactionary standpoint. The search for national authenticity often degenerated into mere pictur-

esqueness or local colour and moral superficiality. Where contemporary realist fiction (Balzac and his imitators), which came late both to Spain and Latin America, would attempt to typologize and individualize at one and the same time, *costumbrist* writers would tend to typify and stereotype, and although they frequently reproduced the dialect and idiom of popular culture, their intention was often to satirize and caricature whilst avoiding true social comment and overlooking misery and oppression.

It is not surprising that the *leyendas* and *tradiciones* are to be found primarily in the more traditional 'colonial' regions of the former Spanish empire. Two of the pioneers, for example, are Guatemalan: José Batres Montúfar (1809–44), known as 'Don Pepe', creator of the influential *Tradiciones de Guatemala*, whose best-known book is the very entertaining *El reloj*, reminiscent of Byron's lighter work; and Antonio José de Irisarri, best known for his semi-autobiographical *El cristiano errante* (1845–7), who had shown himself a master of satire and slander in similar short pieces. Other Guatemalans worthy of mention are Juan Diéguez Olavarri (1813–66) and José Milla y Vidaurre ('Salomé Jil', 1822–82), author of *Don Bonifacio* (1862), a narrative in verse, *La hija del Adelantado* (1866), and the famous *Historia de un Pepe* (1882), in which the tenacious influence of Scott, Dumas and Sue was visibly giving way – at last – to other more realist models at the close of the romantic era.

Mexico produced many accomplished exponents of the romantic historical novel, but none of them achieved either true greatness or genuine continental significance. Manuel Payno (1810–94) was one of the first, with the novel *El fistol del diablo* (1845), and also one of the longest-lived, spanning the entire romantic period and beyond. The poet Juan Díaz Covarrubias (1837–59) wrote the characteristically entitled *Gil Gómez, el insurgente o la hija del médico* (1858), in the year before he was executed by the forces of reaction. Vicente Riva Palacio composed a series of lurid novels about the Inquisition, with titles like *Calvario y tambor* (1868) or *Monja y casada, virgen y mártir* (1868). Since Riva was such a close collaborator of Juárez, his works were nationalist, anti-Spanish and anti-clerical in orientation, with definite symptoms of a nascent desire to recuperate the indigenous past. In Mexico the dialectic between civilization and barbarism was from the beginning viewed in terms far more complex and ambiguous than in the Río de la Plata. The Indian question was never couched in such simplistic and dramatic terms as in Argentina, and the redemptionist current was visible rather earlier than in Brazil. Ignacio Ramírez, 'El Nigromante' (1818–79), while not a

novelist, was a seminal literary figure of the era; but the greatest influence of all on Mexican literary life in the Reform period and after was Ignacio Altamirano (1834–93), himself an Indian like Juárez, author of the romantic *costumbrist* novel *Clemencia* (1869), the nostalgic and much loved *La Navidad en las montañas* (1871), and the adventure novel, *El Zarco* (written 1888, published 1901), a tale of banditry set in the early 1860s. The theme had already been broached in *Astucia* (1866) by Luis G. Inclán (1816–75), and was treated again in Payno's lastingly popular *Los bandidos de Río Frío* (1891). As in Spain, the bandit is a favourite figure in Mexican fiction, not only because, like the pirate, he was exalted by the romantics, but because he corresponded to a significant social reality. Altamirano, however, was more important as a cultural promoter than as a novelist. He it was who initiated the famous *Veladas Literarias* late in 1867, inviting all the leading writers and critics of the time; and who in 1869 founded the magazine *El Renacimiento*, which began the conscious search for a national culture and a nationalist literature. Mexico had 'still not heard the Cry of Dolores', in her literature, proclaimed Altamirano, and his call for national renovation was to echo down the following decades and into the 1920s, although Altamirano himself was really one of the last of the romantics rather than the transition to something genuinely new.

Cuban romantic fiction was passionate, as one might expect of novelists convulsed by the conflicting pressures of Spanish colonialism at its most ruthless and the national struggle for liberation. Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda (1814–73), who spent most of her turbulent life in Spain, wrote *Sab* (1841), a courageous if sentimentalized abolitionist novel, one of the first American anti-slavery works since Lizardi's *El periquillo sarniento*, which contains a memorable condemnation of the system. Anselmo Suárez Romero (1818–78) began his novel *Francisco* in 1832, but it was published, posthumously, only in 1880. It told the story of two slaves in love who commit suicide when that love cannot be realized, a plot typical of the romantic era and repeated with numerous variations both in Cuba and elsewhere. Similar in its orientation (and in its publishing history) was Cuba's best-known nineteenth-century novel, *Cecilia Valdés o la Loma del Ángel*, by Cirilo Villaverde (1812–94), begun in 1839, finally completed only in 1879 and eventually published in 1882. In nineteenth-century Cuba writers could never be confident that their works could or would be safely published.

The greatest writer of prose fiction in nineteenth-century Spanish

America, though a late arrival – confirming the thesis that it was only around 1870 that the romantic movement there found its definitive focus – was the Peruvian Ricardo Palma (1833–1919), creator of the *Tradiciones peruanas*, which he began to produce in embryonic form in the 1850s but only published regularly between 1870 and 1915. He is a nineteenth-century classic, at once characteristic and unique, whose masters are really Cervantes and Quevedo and whose irony allows him both to preserve and to undermine colonial tradition. Faintly anti-aristocratic and anti-clerical, attacking injustice with humour and satire rather than denunciation, Palma's stories are consistently entertaining, communicating the love of their author for his native city, warts and all, with a subtle mix of everyday language, Spanish proverbial sayings and Peruvian vernacular dialogue. Manuel González Prada called them a 'bitter-sweet falsification of history', whilst Eugenio María de Hostos protested that so much erudition should go to waste on mere diversions in which the critique of colonialism was almost invisible. Nonetheless, Palma's works clearly imply a shift from the early *costumbristas*, who at bottom were in reality providing a critical parody of the new classes emerging after independence. The *leyenda*, predecessor to the *tradición*, had been an unmistakably romantic form, treated in verse by Zorrilla and in prose by Bécquer within peninsular tradition. Palma's *tradición* was in effect a combination of the *leyenda* and the *cuadro de costumbres*, radically updated in the direction of the short story, which in Brazil appeared through Machado de Assis as early as the 1860s but in Spanish America did not properly emerge until well into the *modernista* period. His works helped to recover, albeit in a distorted mirror, a lost colonial past, laid the bases of a national literature, and, indeed, became a precursor both of Borges's incomparable 'fictions' and of the so-called magical realist current in twentieth-century Latin American narrative. He evidently hoped that his fictionalized historical fragments would actually *become* Peruvian 'traditions', connecting national history and folklore through the genre of literary romance. In the introduction to his early *tradición*, 'Un virrey y un arzobispo', first published in 1860, he had written:

In America traditions have hardly any life. America still has the freshness of the recent discovery and the value of a fabulous but as yet barely exploited treasure. . . . It is up to our young people to ensure that traditions are not lost altogether. This is why we ourselves pay such close attention to tradition, and to attract the interest of the people, we think it appropriate to clothe each historical narrative in the garb of romance.

Palma's first series of definitive *Tradiciones peruanas* appeared in 1872. He later became an important member of the literary establishment and long-time director of the National Library from 1884 to 1912.

What the *legendistas* had been attempting to solve with their newly developed genre, and what Palma did partially resolve, was the problem of finding an American form for American subject matter. As the Peruvian was composing his small literary jewels, the Colombian Jorge Isaacs (1837–95) managed to find a persuasive mould for the romantic novel, just before it finally became entirely archaic. The result was *María* (1867), the most successful of all Spanish American romantic works. It is a novel in the line of Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, Bernardin de Saint Pierre's *Paul et Virginie*, Lamartine's *Graciela*, or Constant's *Adolphe*. The most direct influence on Isaacs, however, was Chateaubriand: the characters of the novel themselves spend much time reading *Atala* and *Le Génie du christianisme*, fittingly enough, for in later Spanish American fiction many a heroine can be found, bathed in tears, reading *María*, which remains a powerful force today in popular fiction, drama and cinema. A close Brazilian equivalent is Alfredo d'Escagnolle Taunay's enduringly popular *sertão* romance *Inocência* (1872). With Chateaubriand in mind, Efraín, the narrator of *María*, says of his beloved that 'she was as beautiful as the poet's creation and I loved her with the love that he imagined'. In reality the novel was largely compensatory. Isaacs had mismanaged the family estate El Paraíso (which has the same name in the novel) after the death of his father during Colombia's plague of civil wars, and wrote most of it in a tent high in the tropical forests at a camp called La Víbora, earning a living as an inspector of roads. The work combines the nostalgic adolescent purity of one branch of romanticism with the willed desire for innocence of the liberal sector within a landed, slave-owning aristocracy. The result is a tropical pastoral symphony, gentle, tragic, tearful: objectively false but emotionally true. What was new was that Isaacs had based his novel not on other works of literature, as one might imagine, but on largely autobiographical experiences and on a real setting, the beautiful Cauca valley, whilst ruthlessly suppressing all but the most indirect social dimension to the work. (Isaacs, a converted Jew and embattled landowner, a liberal and a conservative by turns, was heavily involved in civil and military campaigns, but there is no trace of such things in the novel.) As the Colombian critic, Mejía Duque, has said, 'for thousands of readers *María* goes on living with the

warmth common to the sweetest dreams and the most tenacious myths'.¹¹

It was at this time that *Indianismo*, that version of historically inclined romanticism which exalted the Indian of the pre-conquest era whilst ignoring his contemporary descendants (the movement which defended them would begin later and be called *Indigenismo*), reached its zenith in Spanish America, as it had somewhat earlier in Brazil with Alencar. It may seem paradoxical that Spanish Americans were only able to achieve in the 1870s what French novelists had done in the wake of the Enlightenment, but that is how long it took them to distance themselves sufficiently from their own reality to achieve aesthetic perspective – and then only to see their American compatriots as distantly in time as the Europeans had in space almost a century before. It is a still more striking fact, as we have seen, that until the very last years of the century the Indian was given a heroic role only in countries like Brazil, where he was not the major social 'problem', or like the Dominican Republic, where he had long before been exterminated. Lins do Rego would later comment caustically that 'Alencar, by way of fleeing Brazil, sought out the jungle; by way of escaping from the Brazilian, he discovered the Indian'. Certainly the Indian who appears in nineteenth-century Latin American literature is invariably the childlike noble savage of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, used as a symbol of liberation after nineteenth-century independence, and not the downtrodden and malnourished figure who has worked on virtually feudal estates up and down the continent to this day. As Henríquez Ureña said, the living Indian was not considered poetical.

In 1879 the Ecuadorean Juan León Mera (1832–94) published his celebrated exoticist novel *Cumandá*, subtitled 'a drama among savages', which was full of sexual titillation including the almost obligatory danger of incest between unwitting relatives, and set among the head-hunting Jivaro Indians of the Amazon jungle. Like *María*, this was a late-flowering, voluptuous bloom, a highpoint of American Indianism. In the Dominican Republic, meanwhile, the conservative José Joaquín Pérez had produced a series of narrative poems, *Fantasías indígenas* (1877), exalting the Indians of the early colonial period, whilst between 1879 and 1882 Manuel J. Galván (1834–1910) published his long novel *Enriquillo*, set in the same period, and now recognized as one of the great historical

¹¹ Jaime Mejía Duque, 'Jorge Isaacs: el hombre y su novela', in Mirta Yáñez (ed.), *La novela romántica latinoamericana* (Havana, 1978), 373–442 (p.442).

works of the last century for its grasp of detail and its progressive critical perspective. In 1888 the Uruguayan Juan Zorrilla de San Martín (1855–1931), published *Tabaré*, the most famous verse narrative of the nineteenth century, about the son of a Spanish woman and an Indian chief. Zorrilla, both Catholic and romantic, mourned the passing of the Indian race through his tragic romance, but without conviction; his verse, however, already showed traces of the symbolist current which distinguished Darío's *Azul*, published that same year. Zorrilla later became the 'national poet of Uruguay' and was commissioned to write his *La epopeya de Artigas* in 1910 for the independence centenary.

Romanticism, as we have seen, launched first an Americanist, and then a Nationalist project, but succeeded on the whole only in producing a narrowly provincial, descriptive literature which rarely advanced beyond Spanish *costumbrismo*. Very late in the day, writers like Alencar, Isaacs and Mera brought the movement to its highest artistic point, but at the cost of carefully excluding all traces of social or historical realism. It was in the 1870s, and more particularly in the 1880s, that romanticism began to bifurcate into a realist narrative strand arising out of the *cuadro de costumbres* and historical novel, and a more rigorously specialized poetic strand in which the emotional exuberance of romantic poetry and the carefully chiselled artifice of the *tradición* combined to produce a more precise, musical and artistic modernist movement. Before this moment, the outstanding works, like Echeverría's *El matadero* or Sarmiento's *Facundo*, had been strange, anarchic creations, frequently a product of unforeseen hybridizations and fusions. One of the greatest of all such works was the gauchesque poem, *Martín Fierro* (1872) – with its sequel, the *Vuelta de Martín Fierro* (1879) – by the Argentine writer José Hernández (1834–86). Although it is customary to categorize gauchesque poetry separately, it is clear that this River Plate phenomenon is a nativist current among others, and part of the romantic impulse to commune with the spirit of the folk. It emerged very early – with the first manifestations of romanticism itself, during the emancipation period – and not in the latter part of the nineteenth century with *Indigenismo* and other such movements. This can be explained by the precociousness of Argentine and Uruguayan romanticism, which from the start saw the rural songs and music of the gauchos as adaptable to art literature, in the same way that the *romances viejos* had been imitated by urban poets at court in sixteenth-century Spain. Gauchesque poetry, accordingly, was written not by gauchos but by educated city dwellers.

Its origins, however, lay back in the eighteenth century, in oral tradition, and it was Bartolomé Hidalgo who, at the time of independence, captured it for written literature and history, reminding Argentinians and Uruguayans of the gaucho contribution to the defeat of the Spaniards and giving permanent impetus to the *criollista* tendency. After all, the existence of the gaucho, however much Sarmiento and his contemporaries may have considered him a barbarian, made it all the more easy to render the Indian invisible to literature, before he was finally exterminated at the end of the period under review.

It was Hilario Acasubi (1807–75) who most decisively perceived the potential in the gaucho theme for producing a national literature based on rural life, with rustic speech and popular songs. His best known works are *Paulino Lucero*, begun in 1838 and full of anti-Rosas sentiment (not at all characteristic of the real gauchos), and *Santos Vega* (1850, published 1872). Even more urban in its perspective was *Fausto* (1866), by Estanislao del Campo (1834–80), a city man who, on returning to Argentina from exile, saw in the rural gaucho a somewhat comic symbol of Argentine nationhood. The work recreates an ingenuous gaucho's impression of Gounod's *Faust*, which had recently been performed in the celebrated Teatro Colón, then in its first decade of operation. Del Campo's poem is sophisticated, entertaining and very characteristic of Argentine literary tradition.

Unlike most important Argentine writers of the nineteenth century, Hernández himself had been a *rosista* until Rosas fell in the poet's eighteenth year. He had also led the life of a gaucho, and in 1882 he published a knowledgeable *Instrucción al estanciero*. He was for much of the time at odds with post-Rosas Argentina, not least during the presidency of Sarmiento. His poem, *Martín Fierro*, is a popular epic with an individual voice, one of the greatest achievements of romantic poetry in Spanish. Like *Don Quixote*, it manages to evoke the landscapes in which it is set without actually needing to describe them. Hernández is so closely attuned to gaucho culture that the reader is persuaded by the picturesque dialect he invents for his narrative, even though, as Borges has remarked, no gaucho ever spoke as Martín Fierro does. The poem provides an implicit critique of the direction being taken by Argentine society and, indeed, of the Europeanized writers who were setting the pace. Hernández, instead, evokes the solitude and extension of the pampas, the everyday heroism of its inhabitants, and the simple Hispanic romanticism of the horse, the road and the horizon, all framed by a song

sung to guitar, which would have so many literary miles to travel in both South and North America over the century to come. It is the single most important work of Argentine literature, viewed from the nationalist perspective. Leopoldo Lugones in 1913 called it the 'Argentine national epic'. At the same time, its elegiac quality is clearly evident, for the freedom of the prairies had been increasingly circumscribed by the advance of civilization and private property since independence. Moreover, it was the gaucho, and the rural population in general, who were to suffer most directly from the wave of immigration which, when the poem was composed, was only just beginning. Hernández' definitive expression of a gaucho nationalist mythology retrospectively re-emphasized the importance of Sarmiento's *Facundo*, as well as of other gauchesque poets since Hidalgo, and prepared the ground for Gutiérrez's *Juan Moreira* (1879) and Güiraldes's *Don Segundo Sombra* (1926).

From the 1860s, then, the age of realism had slowly begun to dawn in Latin America. Even Hernández' sober and stoical gaucho demonstrated that. Men still looked back with envy or nostalgia to the heroic days of the independence era, but for the most part were beginning to feel that such heroics were not for them. If romanticism, on the whole, seemed to have been a partially negative reaction to the rationalism of the Enlightenment, realism demonstrated anew the Enlightenment's decisive contribution to the shaping of the western mind, and the growth of industrialization and urbanization in Europe had reinforced the trend. The result in Latin America was a fairly unproblematical development out of the historical and *costumbrist* modes of romanticism into realism or, more frequently, its variant, naturalism. One might even say that these schools were the more cosmopolitan, more specifically urban counterpart to a *costumbrism* that had been – and, in the many areas where it continued to flourish, still remained – unvaryingly provincial, leading to a further distinction to be made when we reach the twentieth century, between a regionalism which is the attempt by city-based novelists to rehabilitate life in the interior from within a progressive perspective on artistic nationalism, and a *criollismo* which embodies the conservative impulse to keep both society and literature very much as they are for as long as possible.

Looking back, the independence and post-independence periods set the national rather than continental patterns for Latin American culture. It

was not only a time of passionate upheaval followed by national introspection – imposed partly by willed choice and more by immovable circumstance – but also one when the integration of the independent republics into the rapidly evolving international economic system had still barely begun. Although the period 1780 to 1830 had seen many Latin American intellectuals travel to Europe (and the United States), few other than Brazilian aristocrats were able in the decades after 1830 to gain first-hand experience of the continent whose philosophical ideas and artistic modes they nonetheless continued, inevitably, to adopt and imitate. This is perhaps the true explanation for the aridity and alleged ‘inauthenticity’ of much Latin American artistic expression between the 1820s and the 1870s (with the partial exception of Brazil): not so much that the European forms did not fit Latin American reality, as is usually said, though this certainly remains an important theoretical consideration; more that the Latin American writers and artists themselves were not fully able to inhabit those forms; and if through lack of lived experience, they could not master foreign forms, they were hardly likely to be able to apply them to their own autochthonous reality with any conviction. This dual character of their inauthenticity derived from a two-fold failure of assimilation. The more ‘authentic’ a Latin American artist actually was – that is, the less he was affected by Europe – the more inauthentic his works were likely to seem, with occasional exceptions like José Hernández. The decisive sea-change would come only after *modernismo* (*parnasianismo* – *simbolismo* in Brazil) from the 1880s to the 1910s, because for the most part that movement merely reversed the process: with the improvement in communications (which itself derived from the closer integration of Latin America into the international economic system) writers became more proficient with the tools of literature – language and ideas – by sharing the experiences of the Europeans they were bent on imitating, but were for the most part too alienated from their own reality, either because they actually lived in Europe or were, sometimes literally, dying to go there, to apply the new tools to native materials. The latter process got fully under way only in the 1920s. Having said this, it is important not to repeat the commonplaces of most criticism of Latin American art by dismissing implicitly or explicitly all that does not conform to ‘European’ taste in literary and artistic expertise and production, particularly since so many of the shortcomings perceived in that art derive precisely from the effort to mimic those distant models. Moreover, European art itself would

look very different if its story were told without reference to the concepts of 'masterpieces' or 'works of genius'. Latin America's historical reality has always produced Latin America's proper cultural expression: if so much of that art, particularly in the nineteenth century, now seems to have deformed or disguised Latin American realities, then that in itself is a Latin American reality for which artists alone cannot be held responsible. If critics or historians are 'disappointed' by what they find in the art and literature of Latin America of this period, it behoves them to explain what they were expecting to find, and on what assumptions. Even more than in other contexts, it is their task and their duty to grasp the movement and direction of Latin America's cultural history, which has always been, for every artist, at once a search for personal, national and continental self-expression which will lead the way from a colonial past to some freer, better future. Nowhere are the hopes and disillusionments of that quest better exemplified than in the early national period.