

This is Also the City: Urban Literature and Modernity in Colombia, 1920-1950

Benjamin Johnson

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

2016

© 2016
Benjamin Johnson
All rights reserved

ABSTRACT

This is Also the City: Urban Literature and Modernity in Colombia, 1920-1950

Benjamin Johnson

The Conservative party ruled Colombia from 1886 to 1930. During this period, a coterie of grammarians, poets, and theologians consolidated political power by appealing to literature as a form of rhetorical expertise. The Liberal party took power in 1930 and would hold it until 1946. Recent scholarship has argued that during this period Liberal intellectuals defended the political authority of literary expertise even as they endorsed a modernizing program. Although these charges of hypocrisy are well founded, they tell a limited version of the history of the so-called Liberal Republic, failing to take into full account the work of intellectuals at the edges of the Liberal party's patronage network. This dissertation considers a series of writer-journalists—including Luis Vidales, Luis Tejada, José Antonio Osorio Lizarazo, José Joaquín Jiménez, and Arnolando Palacios—who were active in Bogotá between 1920 and 1950. It examines their essays, chronicles, novels, and poems in newspapers and magazines, and less often in books, to argue that they elaborated a new function for literature in Colombia, appealing to the genres of urban journalism and the emerging discipline of urban sociology in order to transform literature into a form of social investigation.

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
1. Los Nuevos: Modern Culture and Crisis in Bogotá.....	22
2. José Antonio Osorio Lizarazo’s Mass Culture and the Liberal Republic.....	73
3. Crooked Cosmopolitans: The Chroniclers of the <i>Revolución en Marcha</i>	115
4. Espiral: A Publishing Experiment in the Age of Gaitán.....	158
Conclusion	192
Works Cited	197

Acknowledgments

Thanks to the Department of Latin American and Iberian Cultures and the Institute of Latin American Studies at Columbia University for the summer research grants.

Thanks to my advisor, Graciela Montaldo, and the other members of my committee—Carlos Alonso, Alberto Medina, Ana María Ochoa, and Fernando Degiovanni—for having challenged me to see my dissertation from new angles.

Thanks to Eunice Rodríguez Ferguson, Kosmas Pissakos, Jonathan Wolfe, and Luis Carlos Fernández for having cured many administrative headaches.

Thanks to Shirley Matthews, Seema Golestaneh, Ama Awotwi, and Sarah Lazur for having encouraged me to press on.

Thanks to Guido Herzovich and Felipe Martínez-Pinzón for having read early drafts of chapters. Their comments were a crucial guideline for later revisions.

Thanks to Guido, Felipe, Juan Cárdenas, and Craig Epplin for having submitted themselves to long conversations about my dissertation. Their questions pointed me in the right direction.

Thanks to my family and friends in New York, Columbus, Popayán, and elsewhere, for having kept my spirits up.

And thanks above all to my wife, María Alejandra Cárdenas, for having helped me in countless ways.

Introduction

In 1925, Germán Arciniegas founded the publishing house Talleres de Ediciones Colombia. He was a member of *los Nuevos*, a group of young modernizers who emerged along with avant-garde movements across Latin America, and he began to publish work by Colombian authors as part of the Nuevos's project of cultural renovation. Among the first titles he edited was *La cara de la miseria* (1926) by a 26-year-old journalist named José Antonio Osorio Lizarazo. The book was a compilation of chronicles that Osorio Lizarazo had written for *El mundo al día*, a tabloid newspaper, and was illustrated with stark, modernist etchings. The chronicles were about life in the poor neighborhoods of Bogotá. The first lines of the first chronicle, titled "El trágico gesto," made an epistemological claim about the Colombian capital that was the premise of the chronicles to follow:

También eso es la ciudad. Todas esas casas pequeñas, cuyas paredes de bahareque han visto morir de hambre a sus habitantes y los han impulsado al crimen, forman parte de la ciudad. Lo mismo que aquellas miserias que se recogen en los hospitales, en los asilos de incurables y de mendigos. Lo mismo que todos los entes amorfos que se mezclan con los habitantes de la urbe y pasean por las calles centrales, ocultando su impudicia bajo grasientos vestidos. (9)

Arciniegas made sure that *La cara de la miseria* was circulated widely. He was also a leader of the university reform movement in Colombia, and had cultivated correspondences with some of the most prominent Latin American intellectuals of the day. Enrique Gómez Carrillo, José Vasconcelos, Gabriela Mistral, Juana Ibarburou, and José Eustasio Rivera would praise Osorio Lizarazo's book, and on November 26, 1926, *El mundo al día* would publish a photogravure of the author titled "J.A. Osorio, cronista ponderado en Nueva York" (qtd. in Calvo Isaza, "Literatura y nacionalismo" 99).

This anecdote illustrates one of the major themes of this dissertation: the role of urban literature in the cultural modernization projects of the early-to-mid-twentieth century in Colombia. That a collection of urban chronicles published in a tabloid newspaper would be circulated throughout Latin America (and to New York) as an example of modern Colombian literature points to the need to study such writing more closely to understand how the cultural field changed in Colombia during the early-to-mid twentieth century. There has long been a critical consensus that the Colombian cultural field remained essentially static during this period. This consensus rests on the claim that the literary institutions of the era of the Conservative Hegemony, a period of rule by the Conservative party that stretched from 1884 to 1930, stayed intact until the mid-twentieth century. To be sure, some version of what José María Rodríguez-García has dubbed "the reactionary lettered city" survived the political crises of the 1920s and the Liberal governments of the 1930s and 1940s (a period known in Colombian historiography as the Liberal Republic). However, critics have focused too narrowly on what was recognized as literature during this period. The conservative character of the Colombian literary institutions is precisely why it is important to examine texts of dubious literary status,

such as Osorio Lizarazo's chronicles, to gain a sense of the cultural change of these decades in which the urban masses became a major political force in Bogotá.

The materials for this dissertation are drawn in large part from Colombian periodicals from the 1920s to the 1940s. Most of these texts have been absent from academic discussion; indeed, some of them have barely even been catalogued. As María Mercedes Andrade notes, "[t]he study of the press in Colombia is a field where much research still needs to be done" ("Limits of the Modern Nation" 144). Indeed, only a few reference volumes on Colombian journalism have been published, and they are both limited in their scope.¹ Nonetheless, this pattern is changing. Besides the recent research that I will present, a group investigation of cultural criticism in Colombian periodicals from the first half of the twentieth century is underway at the Universidad de Antioquia.² This dissertation, then, is part of a wider effort to incorporate cultural production from periodicals to the study of the intellectual history of Colombia.

Nearly all of the texts I study were first published in newspapers or periodicals, and they were addressed to the new middle classes in Bogotá with relatively little mediation from the Liberal and Conservative parties, which otherwise dominated public life in Colombia. Although they were beholden to commercial demands—i.e., to entertain readers—these texts show a wide range of literary experimentation and a careful attention to the everyday life of a city, Bogotá, which was quickly modernizing. Osorio Lizarazo's phrase "También eso es la ciudad"—which I have borrowed for the title of the

¹ See Cacia Prado (1968) and Vallejo Mejía (2006).

² The investigation is titled *El crítico de lo cultural en las publicaciones periódicas de 1900 a 1960. Una forma histórica del intelectual colombiano*. Preliminary findings from several of the participants have been published in the Spanish journal *Anales de Literatura Hispanoamericana*. See Agudelo Ochoa (2014).

dissertation—embodies their revelatory ethos. The work of these writers—chroniclers, novelists, poets, and satirists—discovers another dimension of a cultural modernity that has focused too much on the intellectuals nearest to the political elite. The new working and middle classes of Bogotá emerge both as the object and the intended public of this work, which strikes a sharp contrast with the rather hazy appearance of these classes in the more elite cultural production of this period.

Latin American Modernity

The argument of this dissertation builds on a tradition of thinking about Latin American cultural modernity that begins with Ángel Rama's interpretation of *el Modernismo*.³ Rama acknowledged that the material conditions for aesthetic autonomy, as conceived by French intellectuals in the nineteenth century, did not exist in Latin America; even at the end of the nineteenth century, the editorial industries and reading populations were too small for writers to support themselves by writing books. However, he claimed that this did not mean that the concept was not productive for Latin American intellectuals. He showed that writers such as Rubén Darío used the notion of aesthetic autonomy to create new identities for themselves as modern writers. Having been forced out of high-ranking state positions by professional specialization, and into the field of journalism, they built positions from which they began to challenge traditional intellectual hierarchies. Both their poems and the chronicles that they wrote for newspapers became spaces in which they commented on, or experimented with, different

³ See Rama (1970) and (1985).

sorts of modern discourses or experiences. These included aesthetic models from Europe, but also the more mundane experience of everyday life in a modern city. Rama thus shifted the debate about the *Modernistas* from the stale formal question of whether or not they were derivative of their European contemporaries, to the sociohistorical question of how they reflected the contradictions surrounding the concept of modernity at the periphery of the global capitalist system. And, on a material level, he turned the focus from books to the more quotidian medium of the periodical.

Rama showed that the *Modernistas*'s chronicles were not hackwork but rather texts in dialogue with their poetry. It was true that the *Modernistas* wrote their chronicles for a growing middle-class public, and that this obliged them to appeal to the presumed desires of these readers. But they did not submit to commercial demand entirely; they had strategies to assert their identities as independent writers as well. In short, the chronicle was a genre in which writers—many of whom came from the middle classes themselves—sought to carry out the difficult task of gaining cultural capital and appealing to a broad audience at the same time. Julio Ramos explored this tension in his book *Desencuentros de la modernidad en América Latina: Literatura y política en el siglo XIX* (1989). For example, he reveals the literary sophistication of the *Modernista* chronicles about new urban spaces. In Europe, the representation of the modernizing city had been carried out in the novel. However, in Latin America, the chronicle had assumed that social function at least until a book market emerged in the early twentieth century. Comparing the urban chronicler to the figure of the *flâneur*, as Walter Benjamin understood it, Ramos insisted even more than Rama on the literary importance of the chronicle, attributing it unique power to “process” the capitalist everyday: “Como forma

menor, la crónica, genéricamente imprecisa, posibilita el procesamiento de zonas de la emergente cotidianidad hasta el momento excluidas de los modos más estables de la representación literaria (o artística)” (Ramos 140).

Although the *Modernistas* are widely remembered for the exotic or fantastical aspect of their poetry, Rama, Ramos, and other critics have argued convincingly that these poets were deeply involved in the more mundane task of representing modern cities. Although this endeavor had an idealized element to it when the *Modernistas* were writing about Paris, Latin American chroniclers wrote increasingly about their own Latin American cities as the latter grew and began to follow the rhythm of consumerism. To be sure, criticism about the Latin American avant-gardes of the 1920s and 1930s has insisted on the importance of representing the new experiences of the modern cities in Latin America for the avant-gardes. For example, Rama proposed that the Latin American avant-gardes borrowed forms from their European counterparts in order to carry out “la corrección de los patrones literarios para que obedecieran al dictamen de la nueva realidad” of the modern city; indeed, “lo que fue la naturaleza para los prerrománticos, era ahora para los vanguardistas la ciudad moderna” (“Las dos vanguardias,” *Riesgosa Navegación* 210).

Peter Bürger’s classic theory, which proposes that the historical European avant-gardes were an attempt to lead art back to social praxis,⁴ was not applicable to the Latin American avant-gardes in that art was never autonomous in Latin America; thus, it follows that Latin American avant-gardes would not attack the institution of art with the same intensity as the Dada groups in Europe. In other words, critics have shown that cities themselves, as much or more than artistic (or merely literary) institutions, have

⁴ See Bürger (1984).

been the topic, and condition of possibility, of Latin American cultural modernization, both in its *Modernista* and avant-garde inflections. An important example of this research is Beatriz Sarlo's study *Una modernidad periférica: Buenos Aires, 1920 y 1930* (1988), which analyzes the cultural production of the 1920s and 1930s in Buenos Aires in close counterpoint with the social transformation of the city during the same period.

A key element of the relation of intellectuals to the city in this tradition is the concept of "massification." In his classic book *Latinoamérica: Las ciudades y las ideas* (1976), José Luis Romero theorized the rapid growth in Latin American cities over the course of the late nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century as the creation of "sociedades escindidas" (331) in which a normalized society and a population of migrants faced off. The gradual, though imperfect, blending of these two groups led to the creation of a new group, "the masses," in Latin American cities after the First World War. Although some Latin American cities grew much more than others, Romero argues that the effect of massification was felt even in smaller cities, such as Bogotá. As he notes, even "[c]iudades con 200.000 habitantes se sintieron masificadas y vieron su infraestructura superada por el crecimiento de la población" (329).

Massification affected intellectuals in at least three ways. First, as I mentioned above, it increased the size of the reading public, and thus created new opportunities for intellectuals to make a living writing for newspapers. Second, it increased the number of writers, as members of the growing middle class not only consumed literature but also produced it. And, third, populist political dynamics emerged, which to a large extent

removed intellectuals as mediators between the political class and the public.⁵ The intellectual history of this period, therefore, is characterized by an unprecedented social mobility, and requires the analysis both of how intellectuals displaced from the political elite defended their cultural capital and how new middle-class intellectuals went about building their own. This view of intellectuals as striving to accumulate cultural capital is borrowed from the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, who theorized art as a game in which agents compete for prestige. The field on which intellectuals play this game is governed by a logic, or rules, that determine each intellectual's possible moves. The field is structured by institutions, such as the market, the academy, or journalism, and by its relation to the ruling class. Bourdieu famously described intellectuals as "a dominated fraction of the dominant class" (*In Other Words* 145); he argued that intellectuals continued to depend on the largesse of the political and economic elites as much as they might critique the bourgeois social order that those elites commanded. In this dissertation, I will rely on Bourdieu's general theory of cultural production in order to illuminate the career trajectories of several intellectuals who operated in the gray area between literature and journalism⁶. This theory, of course, will be adapted to the peculiarities of the Colombian context of 1920 to 1950, which include the far-reaching power of the two major political factions, the Liberal and Conservative parties, over the cultural field in Colombia.

Recent research has drawn attention to the international social networks of Latin American intellectuals in the twentieth century. Martín Bergel and Ricardo Martínez

⁵ For more on the marginalization of intellectuals during periods of populist government, see Montaldo (2010).

⁶ For a thorough explanation of Bourdieu's theory, see Bourdieu (1996).

Mazzola, for example, have studied the prolific correspondence between intellectuals in different Latin American countries and the wide circulation of Latin Americanist magazines.⁷ Other recent research has proposed a regional frame for studying cultural production in Colombia. For instance, Olga Vallejo Murcia and Carmen Acosta have called into question the historical existence of a national literature in Colombia, arguing that intellectuals were largely isolated by geographical region until at least the mid-twentieth century.⁸ Both these supranational and subnational approaches seek to expand the vision of intellectual history beyond the national frame that has long been dominant in Latin American literary studies.

With this in mind, it is necessary to clarify in which sense this dissertation is about Colombia. I use this category primarily because it is the imaginative frame of the writers whom I will study here. Between the late 1910s and the late 1940s, the future of the Colombian nation was a major topic for the intellectuals in Bogotá. Moreover, many of these intellectuals had migrated to the capital during this period from other regions of Colombia. As I will explain in Chapters One and Two, it was a period in which the Colombian state expanded rapidly. During the 1920s, it was galvanized by foreign investments, loans and high market prices for its major export, coffee, and in the 1930s and 1940s, by the reforms of the ruling Liberal party. This is the same reason why the dissertation is centered on the intellectual history of Bogotá. Although Barranquilla and

⁷ See Bergel and Martínez Mazzola (2010).

⁸ See Vallejo Murcia and Acosta (2010). Their proposal rehearses the argument of Raymond L. Williams's study *The Colombian Novel, 1844-1987* (1991), which holds that Colombian literature was comprised of a series of "semi-autonomous" regional literatures that did not constitute a "post-regional" national cultural field until the 1960s, even though those regional literatures were capable of producing at least two national novels, *María* and *La vorágine*.

Medellín were more industrialized cities, Bogotá was at the center of the country's political project for national modernization. As Santiago Castro-Gómez has observed, “[a] partir de la exposición agrícola e industrial de 1910 quedó muy claro que Bogotá debía convertirse en ejemplo de progreso para todo el país, para lo cual sus dirigentes debían acudir a la nueva ciencia del urbanismo” (*Tejidos* 251).

Colombian Modernity

I have built my research on the broad foundation set by the Latin American scholars I have just discussed. However, this dissertation carries out a more active dialogue with a series of scholars who have focused on Colombian cultural production. For example, it engages at length with the work of Rafael Gutiérrez Girardot, who not only contributed to the re-orientation of Latin American literary studies toward social history but also to the re-orientation of Colombian literary studies more specifically. In the late 1970s, Gutiérrez Girardot wrote a long essay that attempted to determine the social functions of literature in Colombia during the twentieth century.⁹ In it, he proposed that the exaltation of ancient Greco-Roman and Hispanic culture by Conservative intellectuals during their party's long period of rule in the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century (1880-1930) had served to legitimize an authoritarian political project. He then made the more controversial claim that this same function continued to dominate cultural production

⁹ This essay was first published in the critical anthology *Manual de literatura colombiana* (1978-1980). Throughout the dissertation, I will refer to an expanded version of the essay that was published recently. See Gutiérrez Girardot (2011).

during the Liberal government from 1930 to 1946. He referred ironically to the Liberal cultural program of this period as “el retroprogreso.”

In what follows, I support Gutiérrez Girardot’s claim that the official culture of the first half of the twentieth century in Colombia had a reactionary character. However, I do not share his pessimism about cultural production on the whole during this period.

Perhaps Gutiérrez Girardot was not as pessimistic as he lets on; the polemical mode in which he wrote his essay, and his ambition to systematize nearly a hundred years worth of literature, obliged him to make sweeping judgments (although at least one of those judgments—his dismissal of feminism—is inexcusable¹⁰). At any rate, in this dissertation I argue that the work of writers at the margins of state patronage networks evidence a process of cultural modernization that is more dynamic than Gutiérrez Girardot suggests in his essay. In making this argument, I will depend on recent research that adds historical density to Gutiérrez Girardot’s thesis or that tempers its categorical claims.

José María Rodríguez-García’s book *The City of Translation: Poetry and Ideology in Nineteenth-Century Colombia* (2010) falls in the former category. Rodríguez-García agrees about the reactionary ideology of the dominant literary culture during the decades of Conservative Hegemony. However, he goes on to explain in detail the role of men of letters played in politics. He argues persuasively that they played a quite different role than men of letters as theorized by Ángel Rama in *La ciudad letrada* (1984). They did not seek to legitimize new institutions through “the production of constitutions, civil codes, educational tracts, geographical surveys, and national poems” but rather to undermine the power of positive jurisprudence altogether in the name of “an alternative,

¹⁰ For an example of Gutiérrez Girardot’s scornful attitude toward feminism, see *Ensayos de literatura colombiana*, Vol. I, p. 272.

natural constitution, whose latent existence they situated in Colombia's literature, Church doctrine, and folklore imported from Spain during the three centuries of colonial rule" (11). They claimed authority to re-interpret laws more than the power to make new ones, and tended to be grammarians, poets, or theologians rather than the lawyers and journalists who protagonize Rama's examples. Rodríguez-García opposes this "reactionary lettered city" (31) to the "Liberal lettered city" (76); these peculiarities of the Colombian case will help to explain the relative invisibility of the journalists/writers who figure in this dissertation.

Santiago Castro-Gómez, in turn, has argued that a capitalist imaginary eroded the Agrarian-Catholic ideology of the Conservative governments between 1910 and 1930. In *Tejidos oníricos: movilidad, capitalismo y biopolítica en Bogotá (1910-1930)* (2009), he shows that this period saw not only the rise of consumer capitalism but also modern forms of state domination in Bogotá. In a study that centers on newspapers and magazines, he shows that fantasies of modern glamour and speed became prevalent at the same time that state intellectuals began to worry about how to build a modern capitalist labor force in Colombia, which led to a notorious series of debates about race in Bogotá during the 1920s. He also argues that Bogotá became a space in which images of progress were displayed for the rest of the country. Castro-Gómez's focus on modernizing discourses causes him to lose sight of the older political and cultural forms as well as the critiques of modernity that were also a part of that period. However, he provides an important corrective to the notion that Bogotá was an anti-modern Catholic idyll until the twentieth century was well underway.

Another scholar, Ricardo Arias Trujillo, had already done something similar in his book *Los Leopardos: Una historia intelectual de los años 1920* (2007). Yet while Castro-Gómez performs a Foucaultian analysis of discourse, Arias Trujillo's investigation—as its title clearly announces—is an intellectual history, and it is restricted to the 1920s. More specifically, Arias Trujillo studies the consolidation of a group of young intellectuals, known as the Nuevos, during the 1920s (his reference to the Leopardos, a reactionary subgroup of the Nuevos, does not do justice to the larger scope of his study). Borrowing from Pierre Bourdieu's sociological method, he examines the ways in which the Nuevos gathered symbolic capital. In order to understand this process, Arias Trujillo carefully sketches the institutions and spaces that they frequented in Bogotá. For example, he shows that the newsrooms of Liberal periodicals and downtown cafés were key social spaces for the group. Jineth Ardila Ariza has also provided new insight into the history of the Nuevos. In her recent study *Vanguardia y antivanguardia en la crítica y en las publicaciones culturales de los años veinte* (2013), she traces the disintegration of the group in the latter half of the 1920s, showing that one of the causes was a disagreement about socialism, which was gathering force in Colombia during the same period.

Gilberto Loaiza Cano's monograph *Luis Tejada y la lucha por una nueva cultura: Colombia, 1898-1924* (1995) is also an important reference for this dissertation. It focuses on Luis Tejada, a member of the group of young Liberals who would comprise the Nuevos. Although Tejada died slightly before the group consolidated in 1925, he remains a key figure for understanding the Nuevos and, more broadly, cultural modernization in Colombia. Tejada wrote urban chronicles in the early 1920s and then, inspired by the Russian Revolution, turned to political militancy. Loaiza Cano shows that

both of these activities—writing urban chronicles and promoting radical politics—were challenges to the status quo of Colombian literary institutions. In this sense, Loiza Cano’s monograph lays the groundwork for my research on the volatile relation between urban writing, politics, and literary institutions from the early 1920s to the late 1940s.

Unsurprisingly, criticism about modernity in Colombia has focused on the debate surrounding the Nuevos in the 1920s. The polemical rhetoric of the avant-garde provoked responses across the cultural field that illuminated the main positions in the debate.

However, several recent studies on the 1930s have shown that this was also a period of dynamic cultural change even though most of the members of the Nuevos were absorbed into the state bureaucracy after the Liberal party won power in 1930. For example, Edison Neira Palacio’s monograph on the urban chronicler and novelist José Antonio Osorio Lizarazo, *La gran ciudad latinoamericana: Bogotá en la obra de José Antonio Osorio Lizarazo* (2002) reveals the ways in which his work was informed by the transformation of the urban space of Bogotá in the 1930s and 1940s. Neira Palacio argues that Osorio Lizarazo investigated the experience of the peasants who moved in massive numbers to the capital during this period. He reads Osorio Lizarazo’s chronicles and novels in dialogue with José Luis Romero’s aforementioned study of Latin American cities, *Latinoamérica: Las ciudades y las ideas*, and submits compelling evidence from both Osorio Lizarazo and Romero that Bogotá was undergoing an intense process of urban modernization. Although Neira Palacios sometimes reduces Osorio Lizarazo’s work to being a mere illustration of Romero’s theses, he provides an important correction to critics who have characterized the 1930s and 1940s as a period of cultural stultification because many of the Nuevos became state bureaucrats.

Renan Silva's book *República liberal, intelectuales y cultura popular* (2005) is another important revision of the same period. Silva argues that the Liberal governments of 1930-1946 elaborated the first modern cultural policy in Colombia. As he shows, the Ministry of Education developed cultural programs during this period in order to socialize the working classes. He thus shows that the state intellectuals of this period were not merely seeking to maintain their authority. They attributed a new function to culture that destabilized the social conditions on which the old literary institutions had been based. This is important for understanding the work of the writers I study in this dissertation even though they were only tangentially involved with the state.

Nonetheless, Felipe Vanderhuck Arias argues in a recent book (2012) that the demands of the Liberal patronage network weighed heavily on Osorio Lizarazo even though he made his living mostly as a journalist, which supports Gutiérrez Girardot's suspicion that the rules of the intellectual field had not changed much since the Conservative Hegemony. Few critics, in turn, have written about cultural modernity in relation to the years after the Liberal party lost power in 1946. To be sure, the political conflict was so intense during the latter half of the 1940s that cultural questions were pushed to the background. However, a recent volume edited by four art historians—Jaime Iregui, Diana Camacho, Liliana Merizalde and Gustavo Niño—has called attention to a semi-underground art scene in Bogotá in which problems of modern aesthetics continued to be debated.¹¹ This research has opened new questions about the role of writers in this scene, which I will address in Chapter Four.

¹¹ See Iregui, et. al. (2009).

María Mercedes Andrade takes a longer view of cultural modernity in Colombia in her book *Ambivalent Desires: Representations of Modernity and Private Life in Colombia (1890s-1950s)* (2011). In a series of close readings of Colombian novels and a fashion magazine that were written during the last decade of the nineteenth century or the first half of the twentieth, she links the trope of the bourgeois interior to anxieties about modernization of Bogotá. She proposes that both the retreat of male characters to the privacy of their homes and the flight of female characters to public spaces point to the gendered fears and desires that modernity provoked in the capital's social elite. Andrade's study is an important reference for mine in two senses. First, it illuminates new aspects of modernity in Bogotá through the study of non-canonical or obscure literary texts. Second, it examines the history of questions related to modernity in Colombia over the course of several decades.

Andrade has a chapter about novels by women that is particularly relevant to my project. In it, she argues that the female protagonists of these novels escape the strictures of elite domestic life in order to find a certain freedom in the streets and public spaces of a modernizing Bogotá.¹² In this dissertation, I look at a series of intellectuals who discovered similar forms of emancipation through writing about urban space. The dissertation thus examines a side of cultural modernity that has been discussed in studies such as Loaiza Cano's monograph on Luis Tejada or Andrade's book, but which has not received an extended analysis. It claims that this writing—which spans several genres, including chronicles, novels, and poetry—was an important space for literary

¹² The novels are *Las memorias de Marcela* (1934), by Manuela Mallarino Isaacs; *Viento de otoño* (1941), by Juana Sánchez Lafaurie (under the pseudonym of Marzia de Lusignan); and *Dimensión de la angustia* (1951), by Fabiola Aguirre.

experimentation and that it allowed for new subjects, including working-class men, Afro-Colombians, and women, to enter the cultural field.

Through this analysis, I seek to revise a prevailing critical narrative about the early-to-mid-twentieth century in Colombia. It was not a period of superficial, or even false, cultural modernization, so much as a period in which the most dynamic transformations took place away from traditional literary institutions. As a result, the evidence for these changes is often to be found in spaces of dubious literary status: for example, the back sections of newspapers, general interest magazines, or cheap novels.

I will now discuss the chapters that lie ahead in more detail.

Chapter Summaries

In Chapter One, I take up the question of the avant-garde in Colombia in the historical framework of Colombia's subsumption to the world economy during the coffee boom of the early decades of the twentieth century. For decades, critics have debated about whether an avant-garde movement took place during the 1920s in Colombia. The debate has centered on the Nuevos, a group of young Liberal intellectuals (with a few Conservative interlopers) who were journalists or students in Bogotá during the early years of the decade. It has persisted, I argue, because of the eclecticism of the group. Some members endorsed avant-garde values while others did not, which has allowed critics to take both sides of the issue. I propose instead to see the Nuevos, and their short-lived magazine, *Los nuevos*, as a modernizing project.

I borrow the notion of modernization from Beatriz Sarlo, who has distinguished between “revistas de ruptura” and “revistas de modernización” in her research on the Buenos Aires avant-garde (Sarlo 108-112). Like the Argentine magazine *Proa*, *Los nuevos* revolved around a commitment to aesthetic and political renovation, but one that was not pegged to any specific ideology. This interpretation will serve to explain how the group that produced the magazine could all speak in the name of the new, despite their many differences. In the second part of the chapter, I argue that the configuration of the Nuevos as a modernizing project broke up in the latter half of the 1920s. During this period, the Nuevos who maintained a concept of literature as an erudite practice rose to dominant positions in the cultural field while those who experimented with more democratic forms of writing were marginalized. I take this as evidence that the literary institutions of the era of Conservative Hegemony withstood the crisis of the early-to-mid 1920s. However, it also reveals the creation of a new class of intellectuals who made their living writing for periodicals in the capital.

In the remaining three chapters, I build on this analysis of the cultural field in Bogotá. In Chapter Two, I examine the controversial case of José Antonio Osorio Lizarazo, a Liberal journalist and novelist who was active in Bogotá from the early 1920s to the mid-1940s, and who made a name for himself writing naturalist chronicles and novels about poverty in Bogotá. Osorio Lizarazo is an example of the new type of writer who was able to make a living writing for the growing middle class in Bogotá, but who was not necessarily recognized as an intellectual. Other critics have suggested that the Liberal literary elite rebuffed Osorio Lizarazo because the social critique that he made in his novels denounced the conditions of their privileged status. Following Oscar Iván Calvo

Isaza's archival discovery that the latter group in fact tolerated Osorio Lizarazo's social critique rather well, I propose that the controversy surrounding him was largely due to his attacks on the literary elite for refusing to recognize the literary value of his work. I trace Osorio Lizarazo's complaints in his essays but especially in his novels, where he posits a homology between the exclusion of the urban poor from society and his own exclusion from the literary elite. Osorio Lizarazo's struggle to win literary recognition for his urban novels links him to a member of the *Nuevos*, Luis Vidales, who imported the rhetoric of the urban chronicle to poetry in order to challenge the narrow limits of the genre in Colombia. Toward the end of the chapter, I consider Osorio Lizarazo's polemical career as a political propagandist. I propose that the scandal about this work was not so much that he did it but rather that he revealed that he did such work, which added more force to his critique of the elitism of the Colombian cultural field during the Liberal Republic.

In Chapter Three, I study several writers who, like Osorio Lizarazo, lived in Bogotá and wrote chronicles during the 1930s and 1940s. However, these writers—José Joaquín Jiménez, Gilberto Owen, Emilia Pardo Umaña, and Enrique Restrepo—eschewed Osorio Lizarazo's solemnity, preferring a satirical mode. Their chronicles have received little attention from critics, and have never been studied together. With this in mind, I ask some basic questions about these satirical texts: what social function did they serve? Given that they were published in major Liberal newspapers, how did they relate to the political project of the Liberal Republic? And, finally, what sort of position did their authors have in the literary field?

Each of the writers studied satirized a different sort of mass culture. Jiménez spoofed tabloid crime reports; Owen, the international news cables; Pardo Umaña, the women's

page; and Restrepo, popular science articles. I argue that their ironic commentary served both pedagogical and political purposes. On the one hand, it taught the growing urban middle class in Bogotá to consume mass culture from a critical distance. On the other hand, it mocked elite fears about modernity. These fears included rampant crime, the decadence of literature, and the social mobility of women. And though the ostensible target of this satire was Conservative intellectuals, it also took shots at Liberals. Finally, I consider the relation of the chroniclers to the literary field. This relation, I argue, is structured by a gendered dynamic: Jiménez and Owen, who positioned themselves as humorists, assumed the stereotypical role of the female reader addicted to mass culture. Pardo Umaña and Restrepo, in turn, sought to be recognized as intellectuals, and disdained mass culture as feminine and frivolous.

The fourth and final chapter of the dissertation considers the cultural field in Bogotá after the Liberal party lost power in 1946. The history of this period has tended to revolve around the thesis that conflict between the Conservative and Liberal parties foreclosed all cultural activity. Militias from both parties had already begun to carry out attacks in rural zones in 1946, and after Gaitán was murdered in 1948, the conflict grew into a war. However, recent research has shown that the Conservative government did not persecute Liberal intellectuals as much as had been thought. If it denied them patronage and subjected them to censorship, it still allowed them to gather regularly, to publish books and magazines, and to exhibit art at galleries.

In this chapter I challenge a recent claim that this semi-underground Liberal intellectual scene was committed to the principle of aesthetic autonomy. Although that claim was true for some of its members, I show that other intellectuals including

Clemente Airó and Luis Vidales theorized and promoted very politicized forms of social art. As evidence, I turn to their work at *Espiral*, a magazine and publishing house. A survey of the works that *Espiral* published and reviewed in the latter half of the 1940s reveals a wide range of leftist fiction and non-fiction by young Colombian authors. I argue that this catalog suggests that the national social mobilization around Gaitán's populist movement had a deeper effect on literature than has been previously recognized. In my survey of *Espiral's* catalog, I pay special attention to Arnolfo Palacios's polemical novel *Las estrellas son negras* (1949).

Chapter One

Los Nuevos: Modern Culture and Crisis in Bogotá

In the early 1920s, a group of young intellectuals in Bogotá declared themselves the prophets of *lo nuevo*. Perhaps because they never elaborated a specific definition of “the new,” they would come to be known simply as *los Nuevos*. The literary production of the group would be characterized by a cosmopolitan aesthetic that owed much more to fin-de-siècle Latin American *modernismo* than to contemporary European or Latin American avant-gardes. This belatedness has served as justification for many critics to write off the Nuevos as the poor imitation of an avant-garde—as just one more example of what Juan Gustavo Cobo Borda has called, with scorn, Colombia’s “tradición de la pobreza.”¹³ However, other critics, such as Rafael Gutiérrez Girardot and Jineth Arzila Ariza, have insisted that the Nuevos nonetheless announced a process of cultural modernization in Colombia. Gutiérrez Girardot argues that the social conditions that made possible the emergence of *el modernismo* in other Latin American cities did not occur in Colombia until the 1910s, and therefore, the Colombian avant-garde was in fact produced by “el desarrollo dialéctico del modernismo literario y de la modernización social” (*Ensayos sobre literatura colombiana* 82). Arzila Ariza, in turn, proposes that the Nuevos were not so behind the times even though they exalted *modernista* values. She rests this claim on the premise that Latin American *modernismo* had strong aesthetic

¹³ See Cobo Borda (1980).

continuities with the continent's avant-garde movements.¹⁴

Gutiérrez Girardot, Ardila Ariza, and other critics such as Ricardo Arias Trujillo (2007) coincide on a key point: the Nuevos embraced modern aesthetic forms even though most of them were wary of the European avant-gardes. However, this insight raises some basic questions that have remained unanswered. For example, why were the Nuevos wary of the avant-gardes? Or why is there so little evidence of transculturation¹⁵ in their work? Also, the critical focus on literary-historical categories such as *modernismo* and the avant-garde leaves some of the Nuevos's most important work slightly out of frame—namely, the urban chronicles of Luis Tejada. In this regard, Gilberto Loaiza Cano's monograph *Luis Tejada y la lucha por una nueva cultura* (1995) is essential for understanding the process of cultural modernization that took place in Bogotá in the 1920s.

In this chapter, I examine a wide range of situations in which the Nuevos employed the concepts of *lo nuevo* or *lo moderno*. I read the Nuevos's interventions in the cultural field in close dialogue with social and political history in order to argue that they do not follow a coherent logic but rather constitute an eclectic response to the crisis of the cultural institutions that were established during several decades of rule by the Conservative party, a period known as the Conservative Hegemony. This chapter will also serve as the theoretical and historical foundation for the subsequent chapters of the dissertation. I will thus begin with a discussion of theories of cultural modernity in Latin

¹⁴ See Ardila Ariza (2013). Also, see Hubert Pöppel (1999 and 2000) for a similar reading.

¹⁵ Transculturation refers to a process by which popular culture finds expression in lettered culture. A term first used by the Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz in the 1940s, and advanced by Ángel Rama in the 1970s, transculturation is a concept that has been central to the Latin Americanist critical tradition, for which it has been a linchpin between culture and politics. For more on the history of the concept, see Montaldo (2004) and Arnedo-Gomés (2008).

America and the peculiar historical case of turn-of-the-century Colombia before preceding to my analysis of the Nuevos.

Cultural Modernity in Latin America

According to Ángel Rama, a new inflection in the cultural modernization in Latin America began with the general migration of writers from the State to the culture industry in the late nineteenth century.¹⁶ As liberal nation-states consolidated during this period, their administration became professionalized, and writers were squeezed out of the halls of power. At that point, writers had to find a new function for literature. When the writers ran the state, literature had served as rhetorical training. Expertise in literature, or grammar, was a mark of the intellectual superiority necessary to govern. Julio Ramos has called this the “civil function” of literature; those who practiced it belonged to what Ramos also calls the “Republic of Letters.” Now, if it was no longer good for training the political elite, what use did it have? Having found new employment as journalists, writers elaborated a new function for literature as spiritual sustenance, or spiritual consolation, as a sphere whose value was in its opposition to the mundane business of the state and the market.

However, the latter part of this affirmation, that the writers were above the market, was hard to sustain, because these writers now made a living selling their writing to newspapers and magazines. *Modernistas* fashioned themselves as cultural aristocrats, but they sold this fantasy to the middle classes in the Latin American capitals—to the

¹⁶ This claim appears throughout Rama’s work. See, for example, the essay “La modernización literaria latinoamericana” in Rama (1985).

new immigrants who turned to high culture as an identity badge for social distinction (Montaldo, *Ficciones culturales* 147). Modern Latin American literature, therefore, is defined by its relation to the masses. Whether it pretends to turn its back on them, as did the *modernistas*, or it engages openly with them, as did the avant-gardes, it must always appeal to them as readers.

The concept of autonomy shifts the discussion to a new frame. Rather than start with a question of literary form—for example, is this literature modern? Or, is this literature avant-gardeist?—we can start with the sociological question of whether intellectuals in Bogotá in the 1920s had the necessary social conditions to elaborate a discourse of autonomy. This question provides a clearer answer. Rafael Gutiérrez Girardot and Ricardo Arias Trujillo have already shown that the answer is negative; writers were not able to make a living working full-time for the cultural industry in Bogotá. There was no place for them outside of the elite of the Liberal or the Conservative party, whose sphere of action extended to the press, where the two parties controlled all of the major newspapers and magazines. Whether writers in Bogotá were positioned at a newspaper or the state, they were always working for one party or the other. In this sense, the literature published in Bogotá in the 1920s was not modern, even though it should be noted that political patronage was not unique to the Colombian avant-garde; Sergio Miceli has shown in a recent essay that the State and the social elite served as patrons to the Brazilian *modernistas*.¹⁷

Nonetheless, it is not true that literature in Bogotá simply continued to be the same. The social conditions of writers changed significantly during the 1920s. Colombia

¹⁷ See Miceli (2010). N.B.: *Modernismo* refers to the avant-garde movement in Brazil, not the fin-de-siècle movement, as in Hispanic American countries.

entered belatedly into capitalist modernity and both parties went into crisis as the financial apparatus of the state was re-modeled by the United States to facilitate its neo-colonial exploitation of Colombia. The prestige of literature as elite political training began to be replaced by the discipline of economics, yet writers could not find full-time employment in the local cultural industry. Writers found themselves in a vexing position. They had to re-imagine the function of literature in a situation of institutional crisis. In this chapter, I consider the literature and the literary debates of the 1920s in Bogotá with that task in mind. In other words, I will try to show the different ways in which the social function of literature was negotiated in the poetry, novels, and, above all, cultural magazines and newspapers, in a period in which the institutional support for writers—be it the state or the market—was in crisis.

For better or for worse, most of the writers in Bogotá defended the civil function of literature. Yet they could not simply make the same arguments as their predecessors about the value of a literary education in the middle of a general crisis. As we will see, they had to modernize the figure of the man of letters. Other writers proposed new functions for literature in Bogotá. However, these functions were ultimately utopian, because the institutions did not yet exist to sustain them. Despite this diversity of positions, we might nonetheless condense them in the figure of the émigré. As we will see, the intellectuals who vied to make a place for themselves in the political elite in Bogotá fashioned themselves as cosmopolitans, borrowing from the modernist imaginary. In these “posturas de emigrante” (qtd. in Ardila Ariza 178)—a phrase borrowed from one of the Nuevos, José Umaña Bernal—I will attempt to decipher the missed encounter between intellectuals and immigrants in Bogotá in the 1920s.

Conservative Hegemony and Modernity

Cultural studies provides a basis for understanding why traditional literary forms and styles persisted so much longer in Colombian literature than in other Latin American literatures. Critics from this tradition, building on Pierre Bourdieu's theory of the autonomy of French literature, correlate the autonomy of Latin American literature with the constitution of neo-colonial economic relations between Latin American and European states in the late 19th century. Latin American states responded to the sharp increase in the demand for exports by re-organizing themselves in more liberal formations. This process had two effects of particular relevance for writers. 1) It made economic expertise, rather than literary expertise, the preferred education for the political class. 2) The increase in economic activity brought massive waves of migration to big cities. The first effect deprived writers of their old jobs in politics, but the second effect provided them with new jobs as journalists. The writers of the late 19th-century found work writing for the new middle classes in the continent's big cities. According to Graciela Montaldo, Latin American writers would define their autonomy in opposition to the cultural industry that now employed them. In short, "[l]a autonomía estética parece ser, en realidad, el sistema de negociaciones de la estética con los requerimientos de las industrias culturales" (*Ficciones culturales* 81).

Following this argument, one reason that *fin-de-siècle* Colombian literature did not become autonomous—that it did not re-define itself as independent from politics—is because Colombia did not undergo a major liberalization of its economy. In the late 19th

century, the country still lacked a commodity desired by world markets (Safford and Palacios 235). Foreign migrants did not arrive in significant numbers to Colombia, and the population of its major cities was small in comparison to other big cities in Latin America (Palacios, *Between Legitimacy and Violence* 60). In short, the economic conditions for literary autonomy did not exist in Bogotá. Writers continued to work for the state and, even if they had wanted to write professionally, the local cultural industry was too small to provide them with full-time employment.

Nonetheless, the persistence of literary heteronomy in turn-of-the-century Colombia was not merely an effect of economics. Between 1884 and 1930, the Conservative party controlled the Colombian state. During this period—which historians refer to as the Conservative Hegemony—poets and grammarians rose to the highest ranks of political office. In a recent book,¹⁸ José María Rodríguez García offers a nuanced study of the relations between literature and power during this period. He suggests that the key moment of transformation occurred between 1885 and 1888, the years in which the Conservatives, led by Miguel Antonio Caro, a reactionary Catholic philologist and poet, dismantled the liberal reforms of the Olimpo Radical, a series of Liberal governments between 1863 and 1878. Literature played an important role in this antiliberal reaction, helping to re-frame political legitimacy in authoritarian, Catholic terms.

The most famous anti-liberal measures of the first years of the Conservative Hegemony were the ratification of a new constitution, in 1886, and the signing of a concordat with the Vatican, in 1887. Yet what impresses Rodríguez García is how much Caro and company were able to do without repealing some of Colombians' constitutional

¹⁸ *The City of Translation: Poetry and Ideology in Nineteenth-Century Colombia* (2010).

freedoms. By his estimation, the Conservatives managed to install a *de facto* authoritarian state even as they maintained most of the liberal-democratic laws on the books.

According to Rodríguez García, they managed to undermine the legal order by “paradoxically invoking the priority of long-standing *unwritten constitutions* and the discourse on natural rights over positive legislation, as if *ius naturale* (a convenient code name for Caro’s defense of religious doctrine) could preexist and make unnecessary the practice of politics and any other form of feuding” (XIX).

The Conservative Hegemony’s policies, with the help of the Catholic Church, reached to all levels of national society. The Conservatives transferred the administration of public education to the Catholic Church in the Constitution of 1886 and withdrew almost all state funding to primary schools. The state did underwrite and inspect secondary schools, but since high schools were attended almost exclusively by the children of the elite, this policy was ultimately anti-popular as well (Helg, *Nueva historia de Colombia* 103). This education policy ensured that many fewer Colombians learned to read in the last decades of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century. Nonetheless, the Church was also compelled to strictly monitor the literature that circulated in Colombia. One memorable artefact from this effort is *Novelistas malos y buenos*, a reference guide published in 1910 by Father Pablo Ladrón de Guevara (Silva 145) that censured the novelists that offended Catholic morality.¹⁹

¹⁹ This guide was re-published in 1998 by Editorial Planeta so that contemporary readers could marvel at its anti-modern vitriol. By way of example, here are a few lines from the entry on Vargas Vila: “Sentimos verdaderamente que sea de esta cristiana República este señor, de quien nos vemos precisados a decir que es un impío furibundo, desbocado blasfemo, desvergonzado calumniador, escritor deshonesto, clerófobo, hipócrita pertinazmente empeñado en que le compren por recto, sincero y amante de la verdad; egoísta con pretensiones de filántropo y, finalmente, pedante, estrafulario hasta la locura, alardeando de políglota con impertinentes citas de lenguas extranjeras; inventor de palabras estrambóticas y, en algunas de sus obras, de una puntuación y ortografía en parte propia de perezosos e ignorantes; aunque, en honor a la verdad, él no

It is important to keep in mind that members of the popular classes were not powerless to learn to read or to procure banned books. Indeed, the bile in Father Ladrón de Guevara's description of Vargas Vila is surely due at least in part to the authors' popularity in Colombia, where his novels and pamphlets seem to have circulated widely, despite being prohibited. Nonetheless, the official policies during the Conservative Hegemony give us an idea of the cultural institutions that existed in Bogotá at the beginning of the 1920s, which is the decade that interests me in this chapter. To add one more line to that sketch, I would also note that the state had no official popular cultural policy during the Conservative Hegemony. Although some Conservative intellectuals produced studies of regional folklore (Deas 50), they did not take it upon themselves, in the name of the state, to elaborate a notion of national popular culture. This role, again, was played by the Church, which fused national identity with religion: the essential element of Colombian identity was Catholicism. To be Colombian was to be Catholic. The first official notion of popular culture would not be developed until Alfonso López Pumarejo, a Liberal, took office in 1934 (Silva 16). We should be wary of the idea that the difference between Bogotá and the capitals of modern Latin American culture boils down to economics, as Arias Trujillo's otherwise excellent study *Los Leopardos* suggest.²⁰ Catholicism is a major element of why Colombian intellectuals lacked autonomy in the 1920s.

When coffee exports took off in the first decade of the 20th century, and the

la usa porque no sepa bien esa parte de la gramática, sino por hacerse singular" (139; qtd. in Urrego Ardila 45-46).

²⁰ As Arias Trujillo writes, "la evolución del intelectual latinoamericano, tal como lo analizan Rama y Henríquez Ureña, no coincide con el caso colombiano—en donde la disociación entre 'hombres de letras' y político sólo se produciría unas cuantas décadas más adelante—, quizá por las debilidades del desarrollo económico del país" (113).

Colombian state began to modernize its economic policy, the literary institutions of the Conservative Hegemony did not crumble. As Roberto Schwarz observed about late 19th century Brazil in his famous essay “Misplaced Ideas,” modern capitalism could function quite well in a society based on colonial social relations.²¹ While the Colombian economy underwent a profound liberalization (or “development”), Bogotá’s social institutions maintained the reactionary values of the Regeneration, slowing the arrival of new readers, consumers, and citizens to the public sphere.²² However, during the 1920s, the Colombian state expanded rapidly. On the one hand, it was flush with money. Besides the taxes it collected on coffee, it received a loan of more than \$200 million and an indemnization of \$25 million from the United States for having stolen Panama in 1904. On the other hand, the U.S. government sent an advisor—Charles “the Money Doctor” Kemmerer—to reform the national banking system in 1922. Between the increase in the state’s budget and the revamping of its financial system, the Conservative party entered into crisis—as did the Liberal party.

Why would both the ruling party and the opposition party go into crisis after the state received a financial windfall? It only makes sense if one takes into consideration the peculiar history of the two major political parties in Colombia. Daniel Pécaut explains this history in his book *Orden y Violencia: Colombia 1930-1954* (1987). Since the mid-nineteenth century, the commercial bourgeoisies in Colombia had managed to prevent the formation of an independent nation-state for fear that it would regulate and tax their business. In place of a state, the Liberal and Conservative parties were the institutions

²¹ See Schwarz (1992).

²² For more on the limits of the political reforms that accompanied Colombia’s economic modernization, see Erna Von der Walde (1997).

that organized society. The parties worked as vast patronage networks; political power, and all range of social benefits, depended on being plugged into the local network of one party or the other. Nonetheless, this system, which is known in Colombia as *el bipartidismo*, maintained one major feature of a republic: the parties competed for power every four years in elections. Despite the weakness of the State's institutions, control of the State provided one party or the other with major benefits, both economic and political. By the early 1920s, both the ruling Conservative party and the opposition Liberal party splintered as the state modernized: it was not clear how they could do so without losing their hegemony vis-à-vis the state.

Along with the crisis of the bipartisan system, the city itself began to change rapidly. While it is true that Bogotá's population was a sliver of the size of the largest cities on the continent, its inhabitants almost doubled in a decade, jumping from 140,000 to 240,000 in the 1920s (Arias Trujillo 12).²³ Also, more foreign commodities arrived to the national market, and modern media—cinema and radio—became a part of daily life in Bogotá. As modest as these changes may have been in comparison to those of bigger cities, they nonetheless marked Colombia's definitive entry into capitalist modernity, and signaled greater changes yet to come. Santiago Castro-Gómez puts this another way in his book *Tejidos oníricos*: Bogotanos adopted a capitalist social imaginary in the 1910s and 1920s despite the relative lack of material changes in their city. As we will now see, a general sense of imminent transformation informs the political and cultural movements of the early 1920s in Bogotá. In the following sections, I will focus on a group of young

²³ By comparison, Buenos Aires had 1.6 million people in 1914; Rio de Janeiro had 1.2 million in 1920, and Mexico City had 615,000 residents in 1921 (Richard M. Morse, *Trends and Patterns of Latin American Urbanization*, 435-440).

intellectuals in Bogotá who protagonized these movements.

The Explosion of the New in the early 1920s

The first avant-garde magazine in Colombia, *Voces*, began publication in 1918. A recent immigrant from Barcelona, Ramón Vinyes, founded it not in Bogotá but rather in Barranquilla. He and a group of young local intellectuals translated and critiqued the latest writing from the avant-gardes in Europe, which came in on cargo ships to the city's busy port on the Caribbean sea. *Voces* published a calligram by Apollinaire, an issue on the Italian futurists, and some of their own attempts at calligrams and other forms of avant-garde poetry. The only other group inspired by the avant-gardes at the time in Colombia was in Medellín. It makes sense, then, that only the group in Medellín, which was named the Panidas, responded to an attempt by the editors of *Voces* to make contact with like-minded intellectuals throughout Colombia. Indeed, the only intellectual in Bogotá who bothered to respond to the call for collaboration from *Voces* was Luis Tejada, a recently transplanted writer from Medellín. *Voces* commented indignantly on this silence from the capital in an editorial: “*Voces* quiere un acercamiento entre todos los que piensan y todos lo que pensamos. Antioquia es la única que ha correspondido al llamamiento. De Bogotá casi no hemos recibido nada. ¡Ni canjes de periódicos! Trivialísima galantería” (*Voces* 52).

It makes sense that avant-gardes would have appeared in Barranquilla and Medellín first. Those cities were more modern—bigger, more industrial, and in closer contact with Europe—than Bogotá. So why not study those groups if I am interested in the cultural

response to economic liberalism in Colombia? I focus on what happened in Bogotá because, despite the delay in its material transformation, it was still the center of politics in Colombia. It was still the main site where the structural relations between politics and literature were determined. Indeed, the importance of Bogotá to national intellectual life is apparent in the migration of many of the young intellectuals from the groups I just mentioned in Barranquilla and Medellín to Bogotá around 1920. Despite the fact that their cities were more modern in most senses, the avant-gardeists from Barranquilla and Medellín sensed that Bogotá was the key site for their projects in the early 1920s. So what drew these young intellectuals to Bogotá? The efforts by the coffee trade union and the United States to reform the economic administration of the state caused the ruling Conservative party, and their Liberal allies, to go into crisis. The parties's leaders did not know how to respond to the changes being imposed by the trade union and the U.S.

The excitement of the early 1920s in the capital was not merely because the city itself had finally begun a process of modernization. Although that was certainly a big part of it. The city started to undergo spatial and social transformations. As Castro-Gómez notes, the Bogotá of the mid-1920s was already “un ‘mundo’ muy diferente al Bogotá del siglo XIX” (76). But the excitement of the early 1920s was also due to the general impression that the state itself was on the verge of undergoing major changes. What else could it mean that both of the major parties were in crisis? The intellectuals from Barranquilla or Medellín had arrived to the site where the institutional relations between literature and politics might be reworked for the entire country. In that sense, Bogotá became a sort of experimental theater in which young intellectuals began to imagine new practices for a modern national society whose realization seemed imminent.

Luis Tejada was one such intellectual. Having arrived to Bogotá from Medellín in 1918, Tejada wrote *crónicas* for Liberal newspapers. Tejada avoided questions of poetry and grammar in his *crónicas* except to celebrate when they were done poorly. In “la poesía mala,” for example, he writes that “¡hay versos malos que son tan bellos!” (qtd. in Loaiza Cano 89). Tejada avoided the career ladder that literature could provide to an intellectual in Bogotá, preferring instead to celebrate a bohemian lifestyle of poverty. He also affirmed his identity as a *cronista* and as an observer of everyday life in opposition to the usual identity of *letrados* as poets concerned with eternal truths, giving himself the self-deprecating title of “el pequeño filósofo de lo cotidiano.” Tejada’s *crónicas* ranged from whimsical reflections on household items, in the style of Ramón Gómez de la Serna’s *greguerías*, to ironic readings of popular culture such as the *crónica* about bad poetry. In 1922, Tejada’s bohemian ethic took a radical turn. Inspired by the Russian revolution, he began to advocate for the organization of a Communist party in Colombia and to write *crónicas* with titles such as “Oracion para que no muera Lenine²⁴.” Tejada was unable to make lasting contacts with the small population of workers in Bogotá, but his performance of the role of a radical leftist intellectual in Bogota served as an example to other Colombian intellectuals of a new way of being.

Another young writer from Medellín who turned to *la crónica* as a way to re-imagine literary practice for a modern age was Luis Vidales, with the difference that Vidales transposed the aesthetic of the *crónica* to poetry. In the early 1920s, having also moved to Bogotá, Vidales began to publish poems written from the perspective of a *cronista* or

²⁴ Colombian intellectuals often referred to Lenin as “Lenine,” which they probably adapted from the French “Lénine.” As Loaiza Cano notes, “los filtros de las traducciones empobrecían la materia original, tanto como para que Lenin se conociera entre los entusiastas ‘comunistas’ con el nombre de Nicolás Lenine” (192).

flâneur, daydreaming as he walks around a sleepy Bogotá. The poems, written in free verse, seem to be dashed off on a scrap of paper when he stops for a moment at a café to rest, just like Tejada's *crónicas*. Indeed, in one of his later poems, Vidales even made the point of *literally* writing a poem from Tejada's perspective, by announcing that he was writing it from Tejada's old desk in the newsroom at *El Espectador* (the poem was also an elegy to Tejada, who would die of pneumonia at the age of 26 in 1924). Many of the poems that Vidales published during the early 1920s would be collected in *Suenan timbres*, a collection that was published in 1926 and which I will discuss below.

León de Greiff also practiced a new form of poetry in Bogotá in the early 1920s. Yet another transplant from Medellín, he was a cosmopolitan *modernista* of a sort that clashed with the chaste, neoclassical values of the Colombian modernism practiced by poets such as Guillermo Valencia. As outdated as *modernismo* may have been in other Latin American literary scenes, the Catholic milieu of Bogotá made de Greiff's allusions to pagan Scandinavian myths seem heretical and obscure to the point of hostility, even if he did continue to write rhyming verse.

The almost theatrical aspect of writers like Tejada's communism or Vidales and de Greiff's dandyism, were due in part to fact that their performances were done in anticipation of change, not based on actual modern conditions. They were the result of seeing Bogotá as a city on the verge of change, supposedly. Yet these writers quickly ran up against the material and institutional limits of the intellectual scene in Bogotá. Although the Liberal and Conservative parties were in crisis, and the state was already being reformed by the Kemmerer mission, only marginal spaces were available for writers such as Tejada, Vidales or de Greiff in the capital's magazines and newspapers.

This precarity helps to explain the common cause that such writers found with each other and with other young intellectuals, such as the socialist lawyer Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, when the aesthetic and political differences between them, in the context of a more robust leftist movement, would have probably kept them apart. The 1920s was a period when alliances formed and quickly broken when intellectuals realize that the new state might not have a place for writers in it.

An incredible anecdote about *El sol*, an ephemeral newspaper edited by Tejada and a socialist named José Mar, dramatizes this precarity. In 1922, Benjamin Herrera, a leftist candidate for president, walked into a café in downtown Bogotá and handed Tejada and Mar 800 pesos and an old hand-operated printing press. Within a month, *El Sol* went bankrupt and Tejada and Mar had to go back to their old jobs contributing to the Liberal daily *El Espectador* (Loaiza Cano 160). While it is impossible to verify the truth of this story, its function as a myth about the economics of literary production in Bogotá is nonetheless important.

In the context of this precarity, the communist Luis Tejada's celebration of de Greiff's *modernista* poetry makes more sense. Even so, it is strange to see a communist call a *modernista* "un verdadero revolucionario" because of his "insospechadas armonias musicales," as Tejada did in the pages of *El sol* (qtd. in Loaiza Cano 160). Already we can see here the difficulty that emerges if we try to think of the activity of these intellectuals as an avant-garde—the eclecticism of the groups that formed in Bogotá in the 1920s does not allow us to organize them around a certain set of aesthetic or political values. In 1923, one of Tejada's heroes, Leon Trotsky, would write that "[t]he Revolution cannot live together with romanticism [...] Our age cannot have a shy and portable

mysticism, something like a pet that is carried along ‘with the rest.’ Our age yields an ax” (qtd. in Gallo 111).

More importantly, to the degree that de Greiff or Vidales’s writing is “ornamental,” we discover in it a crisis of literary value that is not the same crisis that modernistas faced in the late 19th century. This crisis was similar to the one faced by the late 19th century modernistas, but different in one crucial aspect—the Colombian writers did not have a specialized print market available locally. As a result, de Greiff, Vidales, and other Colombian intellectuals could not re-invent themselves as autonomous intellectuals. Nonetheless, Colombian writers were obliged to re-imagine the value, or function, of literature, in the face of an employer (the state) that was now seeking economic administrators. I see the work of de Greiff, Vidales, and several other writers as a response to this problem, allowing us to trace new affinities and differences among writers who are usually divided into “old” and “new” generations of the “Centenarios” and the “Nuevos.”

The Arquilókidas: Destruction of the Status Quo

In July 1922, Tejada, de Greiff, and seven other young intellectuals from Medellín, Barranquilla, and Bogotá²⁵ published a series of attacks on Bogotá’s leading intellectuals in the newspaper *La república*, signing with the extravagant name “los Arquilókidas.” The attacks were conceived as judicial trials; the Arquilókidas judged

²⁵ Loaiza Cano counts nine members in the Arquilókidas: León de Greiff, Luis Tejada, Silvio Villegas, Hernando de la Calle, Ricardo Rendón, Rafael Maya, José Umaña Bernal, José Camacho Carreño, Juan Lozano y Lozano (*Las avant-gardeias literarias* 220).

each of the intellectuals to have egregious political or literary failings, and sentenced them to the guillotine. The general accusation was of obsolescence. The Arquilókidas argued that the group of older intellectuals, who were known as the Centenarios, were not up to the challenges of a new era. (The group was known as the Centenarios because they had arrived on the intellectual scene in Bogotá around 1910, about the same time as the centennial celebration of the national independence from Spain.)

The Arquilókidas's chosen method of execution, the guillotine, announced a desire to reset the calendar to Year One, as in the French Revolution. A desire to found a new order was a common trait of the literary and political avant-gardes that emerged in Europe in the 1910s and slightly later in Latin America. The idea of the avant-garde goes back to utopian movements of the 1840s in France, but the avant-gardes that inspired the Arquilókidas were much more recent. The Arquilókidas's vehement rejection of the old order calls to mind the work of the Futurists, the Constructivists, or Dada. These groups, which emerged in Europe during the first World War, or just before it, burst onto the cultural scene demanding new aesthetic or political orders. The force of their interventions was such that they converted *newness* into a cultural ideal. We might say that the French poet Apollinaire's command, in 1917, to "make it new," was the slogan of this movement. Although there were avant-garde movements as early as 1914 in Latin America²⁶, the "*annus mirabilis*" of the Latin American avant-gardes, as Hugo Verani aptly called it, was 1922 (qtd. in Schwartz 37). César Vallejo's *Trilce* was published; the Week of Modern Art occurred in Sao Paulo; *Proa* was founded in Buenos Aires; and

²⁶ The Chilean poet Vicente Huidobro published an early avant-gardeist manifesto titled "*Non serviam*" in 1914, and Jorge Luis Borges helped launch an *ultraista* movement in 1918 in Buenos Aires.

Actual, *hoja de avant-gardeia*, the magazine of the Estridentista movement, was launched in Mexico (Schwartz 37). It was also the year in which the Arquilókidas laid waste to the Centenarios in the pages of *La república*.

Gilberto Loaiza Cano has already noted the affinity between the Arquilókidas and the avant-gardes of 1922. In his words, Arquilókidas embodied “el rechazo a la tradición y la consecuente exaltación de lo original y lo nuevo; la oposición a la institución arte como signo de normatividad y autoritarismo” (*Las avant-gardeias literarias* 220). However, the Arquilókidas differed from other avant-gardes in one important aspect. Despite the tremendous negative force of their gesture, they lacked a manifesto—some sort of statement about what sort of new regime they wanted to install once the old had been destroyed. Other Latin American avant-gardes dreamed of new futures. Some, like the Estridentistas, imagined technological utopias. As the poet Manuel Maples Arce wrote in the first issue of *Actual*, “Es necesario exaltar en todos los tonos estridentes de nuestro diapasón propagandista, la belleza actualista de las máquinas [...]” (Schwartz 192). Others, such as the Antropófagos in Brazil, proposed a new *mestizo* culture that they figured as a form of cannibalism. As Oswald de Andrade famously punned, in English, in the “Manifiesto antropófago”: “Tupy, or not tupy, that is the question” (Schwartz 173). The insertion of the name of a Brazilian indigenous group into one of the most famous phrases in English literature gave an idea of the sort of subversive cultural program Andrade was proposing. These avant-gardes proposed a new set of values for cultural production in their countries. As Beatriz Sarlo notes, “lo nuevo es fundamento de valor” for the avant-gardes (98). The Arquilókidas may have drawn a line between the new and

the old intellectuals, but they did not outline any aesthetic or political values to define their idea of the new.

Loaiza Cano suggests that the Arquilókidas simply fumbled their chance at moving past negativity. “En los momentos de más agudo enfrentamiento,” he writes, the group “se sumió en silencios y vacilaciones hasta permitir el triunfo de la censura” (*Las avant-gardeias literarias* 220-221). Nonetheless, there are two reasons to think that the Arquilókidas only ever had negative intentions. The first is the identity of the group’s namesake: Archiloco was a Greek poet and mercenary famous for his ability to make enemies. By choosing to call themselves the Arquilókidas, the young intellectuals announced their desire to antagonize the Centenarios, but also to do so on the Centenarios’s own terms: ancient Greco-Roman culture. The second and more compelling reason is that the Arquilókidas neglected to propose a new order and used only the negative forms of the avant-garde because they couldn’t yet imagine a new place for themselves. A few years later they would regroup under the name of the Nuevos.

The Eclectic Modernizers

The Nuevos began to take shape in 1924. The group was mostly made up of former Arquilókidas and veterans of the student movement that had emerged in 1920 at the Universidad Nacional, in Bogotá, inspired by the university reform movement that had begun in 1918 in Córdoba, Argentina. Like the Arquilókidas, they were also caught in the atmosphere of excitement that a radical change was about to happen. The group also brought into its fold other young intellectuals, including the socialist lawyer Jorge

Eliécer Gaitán and the poet Luis Vidales. However, the Nuevos did not consolidate themselves as a group until they began to put out their own magazine, titled *Los nuevos*, in July 1925. Only five issues of the magazine were published, but that was enough to make them the center of attention among the capital's intellectuals.

The editorial message of *Los nuevos* was essentially the same as that of the articles that the Arquilókidas had published three years earlier. But the tone was different: the Nuevos were less confrontational. They wrote with some of the grandiosity of José Enrique Rodó's *Ariel*, which had been a major inspiration for the university reform movement. In their first issue, the Nuevos published a declaration in which they manifested that they were above writing a manifesto: "No vamos a lanzar un manifiesto ni a formular un programa. Diremos, simplemente, la razón de nuestra revista" ([“Manifiesto”] 1). The anti-manifiesto then went on to explain the Nuevos' ethos of non-commitment:

Los Nuevos constituyen una agrupación de carácter intelectual integrada por escritores que, atendiendo a razones más de pensamiento que de edad, se determinan naturalmente, dentro de la vida nacional, después de la generación que surgió en los días del Centenario[...]La Revista, por sí misma, no tendrá orientación ni carácter alguno. No queremos decir con esto que sea un órgano ecléctico, en el sentido filosófico del vocablo, ni que pretenda hacer surgir los principios de la misma contradicción. Será, simplemente, un índice de las nuevas generaciones, o para usar de una imagen apropiada, una especie de aparato de resonancia que recoja el eco del pensamiento nacional. ([“Manifiesto”] 1-2)

This anti-programmatic ethos would be repeated by the Nuevos throughout the rest of the decade. The important thing was not to define the new; it was to be open to it. The Nuevos stuck to this line with surprising discipline. Here is an example. In 1925, a Spanish *ultraísta* poet named Juan José Pérez Domench visited Bogotá. *Ultraísmo* was an avant-garde movement whose practitioners had a special interest in the metaphorical possibilities of modern technology. A member of the Nuevos, Luis Vidales, wrote a review of Pérez Domench's work on the occasion of his visit. Although Vidales himself would publish a collection of poems inspired by *el ultraísmo* the following year,²⁷ he did not praise Pérez Domench's poetry for its specific aesthetic values. Instead, he endorses the same idea of the new as the Nuevos do in their anti-manifesto. He denies that the new can be defined; it is rather an attitude or ethos that merely can be exemplified:

Siempre ha sido necesario ponerles un nombre a las cosas aunque los nombres de las cosas sean lo más pernicioso y fuera de razón que ha inventado la humanidad. Pero Pérez Domenech no es de los que se engañana con los “ismos”, y poca beligerancia les concede a los programas, que servirán para una manera de belleza pero no para todas las maneras de belleza [...] Pérez Domenech es solamente—y esto es todo—un poeta que quiere vivir su época, y que como poeta que vive su época, con maravillosa sugerencia y emoción, le da a la imagen nueva una forma nueva. (“Un poeta español” 6)

²⁷ Vidales published *Suenan timbres* in 1926.

The refusal of the Nuevos to define the new was of course a refusal to imagine the future. Felipe Lleras Camargo, one of the editors-in-chief of *Los nuevos*, spelled this out in the fourth issue of the magazine, in response to criticism from the Centenarios: “¿Nuestra labor? La hemos expuesto desde el primer día. No hemos lanzado un programa para el futuro, porque una generación en cuyo seno hay todos los gérmenes y se esbozan todas las tendencias no puede ceñirse a un cartabón determinado” (“Las dos generaciones” 156).

The Arquilókidas appropriated the form of the avant-garde to divide the intellectual field into camps of new and old, but they neglected to propose any new cultural or political program. The Nuevos present the same problem. We might follow David P. Jiménez in categorizing the Nuevos’s eponymous magazine as what Sarlo called “una revista de modernización” (*Poesía y canon* 89). In a study of the cultural scene in Buenos Aires in the 1920s and 1930s, Sarlo describes the magazine *Proa* as a “revista de modernización.” Indeed, her description sounds like it could fit *Los nuevos*, which also appealed to “un continuum ideológico-experiencial animado por el proyecto de conquistar a la sociedad y cambiarla estética, moral o políticamente,” and it operated in a “campo intelectual reducido donde las fracciones de izquierda y derecha son, por el momento, menos importantes que el eje de ‘lo viejo’ y ‘lo nuevo’ (Sarlo 108-112). However, we are left once again with the problem of the Arquilókidas. The Nuevos provide no criteria for the value of the new. Indeed, they were not even willing to commit to the timid program of condemning modernismo as an outdated aesthetic. Critics have looked at this period in Colombia’s cultural history assessing the Nuevos as a more or less noble failure of an avant-garde. In such interpretations, there is an attempt to find a

modern cultural response to economic modernization despite the Nuevos' curious refusal to define themselves in any way besides as "new." I however, argue that it is precisely that refusal that we should focus on if we want to understand the Nuevos as a response to the economic processes of the 1920s in Colombia.

The Retreat of the Mid-1920s

By the mid-1920s, intellectuals were less excited about the financialization of the Colombian state. Their hopes that it would open new opportunities for them had begun to fade. Those hopes were replaced by fears that the new authority of the economic administration would leave them without jobs. The Centenarios exploited these fears in their critiques of the Nuevos. They pointed out, with sarcasm, that for all their talk of being new, the Nuevos really only had literary credentials to their names, and in the new age, such credentials would not be worth very much. This put the Nuevos in the awkward spot of having to defend literary expertise as training for modern governance. Felipe Lleras Camargo made the case for literature in the pages of *Los nuevos*:

No sería de hecho una superioridad, juzgando con un criterio de universalización, el predominio de un aspecto tan de múltiples complejidades espirituales, el literario sobre una política, como ésta, política de ahora y de todos los tiempos en Colombia, política de caudillos oscuros, de complicaciones rurales y de modestas transacciones con el espíritu? ("Las dos generaciones" 157).

That Lleras Camargo's claim made for a very fine line between the new and old as far as the Nuevos and the Centenarios were concerned was not lost on the Centenarios. Indeed, one of the Centenarios skewered the Nuevos's pretensions during the short period that *Los nuevos* was published in 1925. Writing under the pseudonym "El nuevecito escritor," Luis Eduardo Nieto Caballero wrote a series of satires in which he painted the Nuevos as nothing more than brats. In his last article, which was published just after *Los nuevos* folded, the Nuevecito Escritor announces he is going to commit suicide, but not before repenting in the name of his comrades: "no tuvimos demasiada malicia sino demasiado arranque. Nos habían enfermado los libros comunistas, los libros dadaístas y los libros que contienen consejos tan absurdos como aquel de que a la literatura o a la política es preciso entrar por la puerta del escándalo" ("La muerte de los nuevos" 9). Nonetheless, the Nuevos would continue to make the case for literature as elite political training as the decade progressed. To do so, however, they would have to recur increasingly to the concept of violence, as we will see.

Carlos Uribe Celis divides the 1920s into two periods. He sees the period of 1923 to 1926 as a boom period, when Colombians were caught up in the transformative possibilities of so much money, and the period of 1927 to 1930 as when "el país empieza a cuestionarse sobre el verdadero contenido de las transformaciones y sobre el acierto de las inversiones." He refers to these periods with two phrases that appeared during the 1920s in Colombia. He calls the first period "La danza de los millones" and the second one "La prosperidad a debe" (27). I would say, however, that this second period of "la prosperidad a debe," begins slightly earlier for intellectuals. By 1925, intellectuals had begun to see that the economic transformation of the state envisioned by the United

States and the coffee trade union had not included a new place for them. It began to be clear that political liberalism, the seemingly natural complement of economic liberalism, was not happening along with the economic process. The Colombian State was not turning into a populist democratic state, but rather a public/private partnership in which the coffee trade union and foreign corporations would have the central role.

We can see an example of this absence in the fate of the mission of German education reformers that arrived two years after Kemmerer to Colombia, in 1924. Where Kemmerer had succeeded with little trouble in transforming the national banking system, the Germans gave up after a year and went home. Despite the reformation of the economy, the priests stayed in charge of the public schools, and Colombia continued to have one of the lowest literacy rates in Latin America. In 1918, only 32 percent of Colombians could read, compared to 73 percent of Argentines or 67 percent of Cubans, in 1925 (Helg 35). Although the literacy rate in Colombia were comparable to other countries with large rural populations, such as Brazil (30 percent in 1920) and Mexico (36 percent in 1925), Bogotá did not have enough readers who could buy the newspapers and magazines of the culture industry on a regular basis. One of the country's two most important newspapers, *El Espectador*, bluntly acknowledged this fact in 1923: "nuestros periódicos no pueden ser todavía lo suficientemente baratos para que estén al alcance de los obreros" (qtd. in Loaiza Cano 46). Intellectuals failed to see new opportunities opening up for them in the state or in the market. These negative prospects for the immediate future inspired different responses from intellectuals. In the following section, I will discuss three of those responses. The collective response of the Nuevos, followed by the response of two dissidents to the hegemonic response of the Nuevos, José María Vargas Vila and José

Eustasio Rivera.

As I have mentioned, the Nuevos responded to economic modernization by defending the civil function of literature. Rather than advocate for new literary functions, or a new state formation, the Nuevos responded to the new political reality of 1925 by moving to defend the political authority of literature that had been consolidated during the previous decades of the Conservative Regime. Historians point to the 1920s as the moment when men of letters were replaced by “hombres de acción,” or “el hombre financiero,” in Bogotá’s public sphere. Or to borrow Santiago Castro-Gómez’s more vivid image, by 1930s “La capital ya no era Atenas, ciudad estática y señorial, asiento de filósofos y poetas, como habían querido las elites letradas durante la segunda mitad del siglo XIX, sino Nueva York, lugar por excelencia de la circulación y el movimiento” (*Tejidos oníricos* 16). However, that is too simplistic of a description of the effects of economic modernization. The cultural change was not so sudden or so drastic. Castro-Gómez himself walks back the idea that ancient Athens had been replaced by modern New York. In a text co-written with Eduardo Restrepo, he suggests a more nuanced view:

Es cierto que la ideología clerical y los valores estético-políticos de la “República de las letras” continuaron teniendo gran incidencia durante las décadas 1910 y 1920, conservando incluso su hegemonía, pero también es cierto que fue en esas décadas cuando empezó a escenificarse en Colombia el *mundo ideal* de la forma-mercancía, aún antes de que el capitalismo industrial se convirtiera en la forma hegemónica de producción en el país (a finales de los años 30). (*Tejidos oníricos* 18-9)

By arguing that the Nuevos defended the values of the “Republic of Letters,” however, I am not seeking to denounce the Nuevos as imposters. I am not interested in arguing that they fail to be truly new, despite their claims to the contrary. What interests me instead is what it takes for the Nuevos to defend those values as a form of modern political authority. In this sense, I agree with this recent observation by Felipe Vanderhuck Arias:

No puede hablarse en los años veinte, ni durante las décadas siguientes, de la ‘quiebra de la Atenas sudamericana’, si por ello entendemos la pérdida del lugar central de la ‘cultura’ (en el sentido de ‘alta cultura’ o ‘cultura legítima’) en la construcción del dominio social y político, sobre todo en el nivel nacional. Podría hablarse, más bien, de una nueva definición de ese lugar y de los contenidos de lo que se consideraba legítimo en un nuevo contexto. (93)

The question, then, is how the Nuevos re-defined their erudition as a modern political value. Criticism about the persistence of the civil function—or more metaphorically, the Lettered City—in other Latin American contexts tends to involve a gesture of ideological unmasking. Such arguments refute the professed commitment of intellectuals to national-popular cultural values and reveal that their true motive has been to defend the authority of a lettered elite. This is not the case in Colombia. Lacking a national-popular state project, the Nuevos cannot sublimate their will to power as a search for national identity. Instead, they are obliged to justify literary expertise as a modern political credential on its own merits. The ideology of the Athens of South America obscured its dependence on

partisan violence. At the turn of the century the literary and political elite of Bogotá imagined themselves as wholly separate from the “violencia de las viejas hordas,” when in fact they were entirely dependent on the conflict between the two parties. The conflict socialized Colombians in the patronage system of one party or the other; if Colombians had turned to the state, rather than to one of the parties, for protection, the political elite would have needed a national-popular project or some other way to discipline the population. Now that the Nuevos sought to legitimize literature as a form of modern political training, they could not avoid legitimizing as well the partisan violence that was its condition of possibility.

The link between the partisan conflict and the civil function of literature is apparent in a column that was published in *El espectador* on June 1, 1924. In the column, titled “Glosario de la semana,” an unnamed author complains that economics is doing away with political journalism in Colombia. While he acknowledges that the partisan conflict—“la actividad partidarista más o menos envenenada, y dispuesta siempre a caer en la disputa personal”—had been too prevalent in Colombia’s newspapers, he denounces the appearance of the following:

[E]conomistas pendencieros, que se toman por arcángeles exterminadores, y juzgan que vulgarizando ciertas ideas científicas se les da muerte a los políticos doctrinarios. No, no hay que ser unilateral, ni la ciencia puede tener una intención homicida. La política tiene derecho a vivir, para no dejar que todo sea sumergido por una ola de mercantilismo sórdido. Pero no debe llenar todo el escenario, como

venía aconteciendo aquí, sino una parte proporcional de él. (“Glosario de la semana”)

The author then links this threat to politics to a threat to literature: “Al hablar de esta nueva actitud de la prensa, que naturalmente la acercará más al corazón del pueblo, tan desencantado de la vieja política, ocurre también preguntarse cuales causas disminuyen de la manera notoria y alarmante que vemos, la actividad literaria en Bogotá, y, según parece, en el resto del país.” The author does not go on to answer his question; he limits himself, rather, to lamenting the disappearance of literary culture from the capital.²⁸ This complaint, tied to a complaint about politics, as it is here, suggests that what the author is in fact complaining about is the diminishing political value of literary erudition.

Note the lengths to which the author of this column must go to distance himself from the “more or less poisonous” taint of the bipartisan system. The Nuevos faced the same problem. They had accused the Centenarios of having failed to stop the “violencia de las viejas hordas.” But now they needed to endorse partisan violence if they wanted to preserve the political prestige of their literary credentials. The solution they came up with was pretty ingenious. They proposed a modernization of the bipartisan conflict. Rather than eliminate it, they would push it to its apotheosis. Here is Felipe Lleras Camargo, one of the editors-in-chief of *Los nuevos*, writing in that magazine:

²⁸ “El fervor y la inquietud de hace quince o más años, han desaparecido casi por completo. No hay, in vivirían si las hubiese, revistas ni hojas exclusivamente literarias. No hay centros, no hay cenáculos, no hay tertulias. Hasta la charla accidental del café, que hace cinco años tuvo alguna importancia, se ha borrado de nuestros hábitos. Sigue, desde luego, habiendo vocaciones, amor al estudio, lectores asiduos y curiosos, pero todo eso aislado por una cruel arisquéz” (“Glosario de la semana”).

La política de los extremos es la única política de actualidad. De un lado está el impulso revolucionario que palpita bajo la indiferencia actual de las masas y del otro una formidable fuerza conservadora [...] Naturalmente quedarán grupos dispersos de espíritus más o menos eclécticos, que podrán darse el lujo de oficiar en aras de solitarios ideales [...] Y cuando las dos falanges extremas se enfrenten para la batalla definitiva se verá renacer el fervor cívico, que las actuaciones de unos partidos inactuales y de unos conductores miopes han logrado apagar. (“El momento político” 5).

This is one of the only passages in which a Nuevo predicts the future; it is telling that what he imagines is an apocalyptic clash (“la batalla definitiva”) between the parties. A similar idea of the modern age as a clash between opposite forces is evident in a comment by another Nuevo, Augusto Ramírez Moreno, also published in *Los nuevos*: “Juventud y Revolución no son hermanas gemelas. Yo reacciono contra esa afirmación ridícula o absurda. La Revolución y la Reacción sí son hermanas en el seno humano de la juventud” (19). Contrary to the assumption that the Nuevos sought to end the bipartisan conflict, passages like these suggest that they tended rather to imagine its re-invention, still in a mythical key, for a modern age.

At the same time, the Nuevos defended high culture more openly. Although they had identified themselves with the avant-garde, they denied accusations that they had ever sought to carry out its destructive literary program. In *Los nuevos*, Manuel García Herrero would write:

No se grite—como alguna vez se nos acusó—que nos proponemos instalar aquí el futurismo, el dadaísmo, el verso sin rima, sin reglas. Nó [*sic*]. No somos partidarios de escuela, ni nos proponemos iniciar ninguna tendencia. Para los profesores intransigentes del verso medido, esta afirmación desbarta sus argumentos. Las innovaciones hechas hoy no lo destruyen. Un soneto alejandrino puede contener las inquietudes de la época. (125)

The Nuevos's attempts to figure themselves both as modern and as the defenders of classical poetic meter produced some absurd images. Take, for example, Juan Lozano y Lozano's description of León de Greiff's poetry, in 1925, as a porcelain vase perched on a radio: "El arcaísmo viene de sí en los versos de De Greiff, y forma un originalísimo contraste con los neologismos del cuño del poeta. Es como en las casas elegantes, en donde para contrastar el efecto visual de la necesaria caja del inalámbrico, manos de mujer colocan sobre la caja un jarrón de Azulejos" ("Sobre 'Tergiversaciones'"). This ambivalent image of a radio contrasts sharply with the euphoric figurations of radio that we find, for example, in the work of the Estridentistas.²⁹

Such attempts to reconcile high culture and technology, or high culture and the masses, draw attention again to the difficulty that the Nuevos faced in trying to imagine a new role for themselves without a national-popular state project. In other Latin American contexts, intellectuals were able to employ a discourse of national culture to mediate between the disparate values of high culture, mass culture, and technology. In Mexico, for example, the Estridentistas's celebration of radio in the 1920s was inseparable from

²⁹ For more on the Estridentistas's fascination with radio, see Gallo (2005).

Alvaro Obregón's campaign to build a post-revolutionary state that incorporated Mexico's illiterate peasants. In Colombia, however, there was no such discourse to sublimate such conflicts. The attempts by Colombian intellectuals to do so inevitably failed. Consider, for example, the following appeal to the workers of Colombia, published in a newspaper in Bogotá in 1926: "Huérfanos de Lennine [*sic*]: hay una aristocracia superior a la de las venas azules: el reinado del arte [...] Rembrandt copió la lumbre de tu hogar [...] Schubert pasó por el camino [del obrero] [...] y el príncipe Valencia llegó al chocil [y] bebió con el obrero la copa Anarkos" (qtd. in Uribe Celis 103). Although this unsigned passage was probably not written by one of the Nuevos, it gives us an idea as to the reason why they continued to conceive of their relation to the popular classes in terms of the partisan conflict. If this appeal to the popular classes had been made in Mexico or Argentina, it would have been mediated by the concept of national culture, but the Nuevos completely lacked a national cultural discourse. In Colombia, no such mediation between high culture and popular culture existed.

The Apostles

The Nuevos broke with the manorial image of the Athens of South America in order to imagine a modern lettered elite. On the one hand, they made visible the hidden connection between such an elite and partisan violence. On the other hand, they were compelled to re-imagine the figure of the man of letters. The Nuevos wanted to show that men of letters could continue to handle the duties of administering a modern state. During the Conservative Regime, the image of the man of letters was exceedingly aristocratic.

He was curious about matters of poetry, grammar, and legislation, but he did not involve himself in the dirty business of war. The Nuevos, however, were drawn to more authoritarian men of letters. The figure of the poet-dictator allowed them to fantasize about how they might, as intellectuals, continue to constitute the political elite of Colombia.

One such figure that fascinated the Nuevos was Gabriele D'Annunzio.

D'Annunzio was an Italian decadentist poet who led a military force into the city of Fiume, in what is today Croatia, in 1919, and founded a proto-fascist state, of which he made himself dictator. In his study *Tradición y Modernidad en Colombia: Corrientes poéticas de los años veinte*, Hubert Pöppel notes that D'Annunzio was the most published foreign author in the literary journals of Bogotá in the 1920s. Although Pöppel does not attempt to explain the popularity of D'Annunzio, his passing description of the poet gives us an idea right away of why the Nuevos would have hailed him: “Es el representante de una imagen del poeta en extremo difusa, que se nutre de las fuentes del esteticismo exagerado, de los ideales romántico-modernistas del artista situado por encima de la moral de la sociedad, de una poesía que, sin embargo, tiene metas políticas (o de un poeta que influye políticamente) en una creciente ramificación del espectro social” (130).

Pöppel's description could double as a description of the Nuevos.

The story of D'Annunzio, the poet who had founded his own state, gave the Nuevos a way to fantasize about a modern state in which a heroic caste of men of letters would not be pushed to the margins of power. The protagonist of José Asunción Silva's novel *De sobremesa* had the same appeal. The passage of the novel in which José Fernández imagines himself as a dictator who reorganizes his tropical country, with its

“miles de infelices indios ” (353) so that he can go on writing and reading, would have been especially attractive to intellectuals in Bogotá in the mid-1920s. Figures such as D’Annunzio or Fernández gave the Nuevos (and the Centenarios, for that matter) a way to imagine a political and literary future for themselves.

However, the Nuevos not only searched for examples of this sort of heroic intellectual. They also set about creating them. For example, Germán Arciniegas would describe the transformation of Silva in an editorial column from 1928: “Silva es una encarnación del destino heroico de los artistas [...] El inmoló su vida antes que doblar su obra y reducirla a las mezquinas proporciones de un verso vulgar. Por una extraña inversión del criterio, que sólo puede apreciarse justamente a la distancia de los años, que se se creyó ligereza y capricho, fue profundidad y honradez espiritual en Silva” (“La razón de este homenaje” 1). An author who had a reputation as a frivolous dandy was thus remade into an uncompromising visionary. The Nuevos would appropriate not only Silva but also numerous other writers in their attempt to reinforce the idea that writers were *caudillos* or “apóstoles,” to use one of the group’s favorite terms of praise. The Nuevos were strategic with their readings. They appropriated the work of their own most progressive members, in an attempt to protect the authority of the literary institution. Two of the writers they championed in this way were Luis Tejada and León de Greiff.

As I have noted, Tejada wrote *crónicas* about Bogotá in the late 1910s and the early 1920s. His early *crónicas* were often playful speculations about life in a big city; his later *crónicas*, which he wrote after becoming a leftist militant, were more explicitly political. He died, at the age of twenty six, in 1924. The Nuevos’s readings of Tejada ignored both his ironic tone and his leftist views. They attributed a gravitas and academic

ambition to his work that it never had. Tejada himself had been wary of such writing. In 1922, he had declined to publish in a magazine that Arciniegas was editing because he could not bring himself to assume the “intención severa,” or solemn tone, with which it addressed its readers. In the same letter in which he declined Arciniegas’s invitation to contribute to his magazine, he went on to explain that he was different than most of the other Nuevos in other regards: he had never studied at a university; he had never been to Europe; he had never published poetry (“Una carta” 380). Indeed, Tejada’s writing had a democratizing ethos that the Nuevos were compelled to obscure in their many articles about him after his death.

The Nuevos’s celebration of León de Greiff was more straightforward. Although de Greiff had been close friends with Tejada and other socialists, his poetry lent itself to a reactionary appropriation: it was formally conservative, preserving *Modernista* meter, and though it eschewed the Hispanic and Catholic cultural references of the Centenarios, it continued to put a premium on literary erudition. (Indeed, de Greiff’s poetry has so many obscure references that an 800-page reference volume³⁰ was recently published in Colombia to assist readers who wish to tackle his poems.) De Greiff’s allusions to Norse mythology and his use of obscure old words and unwieldy neologisms, allowed the Nuevos to spin him as a cosmopolitan alternative to the Centenarios’s neo-classical aesthetic. However, their arguments that de Greiff represented a new aesthetic inevitably ended up in knots, as we saw in the passage that compared his poetry to a vase on a radio, and as we can see now in this inspired homage to de Greiff by Hernando de la Calle:

³⁰ See Macías Zuluaga and Velásquez Velásquez (2007).

León de Greiff salta por encima de Rubén Darío, o mejor, de sus motivos: deja la poesía de los salones, los iris de Aranjuez, los jardines de Versalles, la mundanería frívola, la galantería, la obra de entalladura de los frascos de Lenteric y de Cotty. Se inspira en Poe, bebe en Rimbaud y siente como Baudelaire: su símbolo es el buho, introspectivo, pensativo, misterioso, lineal. No ve simplemente con los ojos, ni oye apenas con los oídos, como los románticos, de los cuales desciende. Poda la retórica, contiene la emoción y la vierte en redomas preciosas, estilizadas, de infalible contenido. Solloza, pero no grita, tiembla, pero sin descomponer la belleza de la figura en gestos apopléticos. Es un solitario que obliga a la esfinge a cerrar su interrogante. Reduce la escala cromática y el diapasón a fórmulas seguras. Le da al cerebro la soberanía de todas las vísceras. Somete el verso al rigor de la música de Beethoven y lo complica con Wagner. De Greiff es una fuerza sometida al espíritu. Es un poeta que rige su arte por un sistema matemático, por un procedimiento de experto, que vive dentro de su época y que palpita con ‘ella’, por más que le veamos muy lejano en un país de brumas, inasequible y absurdo. (“La generación” 568)

Granted, the opposition of de Greiff’s cosmopolitan *modernismo* to the Catholic humanist *modernismo* practiced by poets such as Guillermo Valencia would not make much sense to an outside observer. In 1928, for example, a critic for the general-interest Argentine magazine *Nosotros* did a survey of Latin American literature. When he came to Colombia, he marveled at how conservative their literature was:

A pesar de esa innegable disposición de los colombianos para la poesía y de su alto grado de cultura, y tal vez por esto último, es la nación de Hispano-América más conservadora en literatura [...] entre Guillermo Valencia y de Greiff, hay una enorme laguna poblada de cisnes. ¡Todavía! El ave heráldica de Darío canta en acarameladas estrofas, hechas de alejandrinos o endecasílabos, sin haber ensayado el vuelo accidentado de cóndor andino, necesario para dar profundidad a la emoción y oxígeno a la poesía. (Suárez Calimano, “Los poetas representativos”)

Another strategy that the Nuevos used to capture expressions of the new that undermined their elitist project was to downgrade their status from literature to some less prestigious form of writing. This was the fate of Luis Vidales’s poetry. As I mentioned earlier in the chapter, Vidales began to publish poetry inspired by Tejada’s *crónicas* in the early 1920s. His poems, like Tejada’s *crónicas*, employed a casual tone and recorded fragments of thought or impressions of a *flâneur* wondering the city. And they avoided rhyme and standard poetic meter. The democratizing possibility of this sort of writing is evident from the imitations of his work that began to appear in newspapers in the mid-1920s. While de Greiff’s riffs on viking mythology were so exotic as to be inimitable, Vidales’s poems seemed to be simply notes jotted down by a clever observer of city life. The danger this posed to the civil function of literature was evident in the fact that some of Vidales’s imitators were women. In the mid-1920s, poems signed by “Las nuevas” and “Luisa Vidales” appeared in *El Espectador*; these are among the few examples of creative writing by women that were published in the misogynistic milieu of Bogotá

during the 1920s.³¹ Indeed, it is symbolic that a poem by Luisa Vidales would appear on the same page of the literary supplement of *El Espectador* as an essay by a member of the Nuevos mocking the political moderates of his generation as feminine. Borrowing a phrase from a colleague, José Umaña Bernal sentenced that these feminine moderates “quieren hacer de los partidos, no un concierto de voluntades, sino una alianza de vientres” (3).

The Nuevos’s strategy for discrediting this sort of poetry was to categorize it as humor writing. When Vidales’s collection *Suenan timbres* came out in 1926, two leading members of the Nuevos, Alberto Lleras Camargo and Jorge Zalamea, praised it for its comedy. Rafael Gutiérrez Girardot has pointed out the depoliticizing effect of this judgment: “Lleras y otro compañero del grupo, Jorge Zalamea, no repararon que el libro no era principalmente humorístico y que ese rasgo que ellos creyeron encontrar no estaba en él sino era el efecto que produjo su lectura a estos dos revolucionarios tradicionalistas” (77). In 1930, Vidales would be marginalized even further by Bogotá’s intellectuals after he helped to found the Colombian Communist Party. Although Vidales would continue to write literary criticism in the capital’s literary magazines, his poetry and his leftist political criticism would be ignored during the following decades.

The Possibility of Critique

³¹ One of the poems, titled “Sol menor,” was published with the following introduction: “Una distinguida e inteligente dama de Bogotá nos envía estos versos a la manera de Luis Vidales, apreciado colaborador nuestro para quien sin duda será muy grato el ver que su novísima manera literaria tiene imitadores no ya sólo entre sus contemporáneos sino también entre sus contemporáneas. **Luisa Vidales**, que le ha robado a su maestro hasta el nombre, se revela con estos versos digna discípula del joven poeta revolucionario, y funda de hecho otro grupo intelectual, llamado, aunque no fuera sino por su rótulo, a despertar el interés, la simpatía y la provocación de todos: el grupo de <<las nuevas>>” (Luisa Vidales 3; boldface in original).

As we saw, the Nuevos's figuration of the new contradicted the values of the new as articulated in other Latin American countries. Although they criticized the Centenarios for abstract reasons, they neglected to articulate a specific aesthetic or political critique. Their reluctance to offer such critiques, I have suggested, was a result of their inability to imagine a professional future for themselves outside of the existing institutions. The Liberal and Conservative parties's control of both the newspapers and the state made it difficult for intellectuals to give any content to ideas of autonomy. With that said, not every writer toed the line. As we just saw, Tejada, Vidales, and de Greiff did not submit themselves to the Nuevos's designs on power. However, as we also saw, the Nuevos still managed to appropriate their work. Yet even so, there were Colombian writers who did achieve a certain autonomy during the 1920s and who used it to critique the literary or political situation in Colombia. I will now turn to two such writers, José María Vargas Vila and José Eustasio Rivera.

Vargas Vila was born in 1860 in Bogotá. In the mid-1880s he began publishing novels that scandalized the city's Catholic censors. In 1899, he was obliged to leave Colombia after his attacks on the Conservative party and Conservative intellectuals had won him death threats. Nonetheless, along with José Martí and Rubén Darío, Vargas Vila became one of the first Latin American literary stars. The commercial success of his novels and pamphlets in Spain and Latin America won him a measure of critical autonomy. At the turn of the 19th century, Vargas Vila was one of the few Colombian writers who dared to criticize the imbrication of politics and literature in Colombia and to condemn U.S. imperialism. But the exceptionality of Vargas Vila's case underlines the difficulty of achieving critical autonomy for a Colombian writer during the decades of the

Conservative Regime. In April, 1924, Vargas Vila visited Colombia for a few days. He was working his way down the Atlantic coast of South America on a book tour and decided to make a stop in Barranquilla. While he was there, he granted an interview to one of the Nuevos, Rafael Maya, who happened to be visiting Barranquilla himself.

In the interview, Vargas Vila returns repeatedly to the problem of autonomy. He insists on making clear that he has made a place for himself from which he can exercise critical freedom even though he writes bestsellers:

Mis libros son leídos en todo el mundo. No soy, como se ha asegurado, un escritor para los bajos fondos sociales. Es claro que el pueblo me ama, porque ve en mí la encarnación de la Libertad, porque yo les he dicho la verdad a los tiranos, porque me he mantenido siempre derecho, como el asta de una bandera. Pero yo no soy un escritor para la muchedumbre.³² Bastaría, para comprobarlo, el ejemplo de mi vida. Yo soy el gran solitario. (*Sufragio* 296)

Vargas Vila also counts his distance from Bogotá as evidence of his autonomy. He suggests that even visiting the city might compromise his reputation. As the interviewer Rafael Maya notes, “nos dice que no va a Bogotá, porque teme que se le atribuyan aspiraciones políticas o que pretenda recoger la herencia de un general muerto recientemente.” Vargas Vila is much more worried about autonomy than his interviewer. When Maya asks him his opinion of the young intellectuals in Colombia, he replies that

³² Vargas Vila paraphrases the first part of Rubén Darío’s famous self-description in the preface of *Cantos de vida y esperanza* (1905): “Yo no soy un poeta para las muchedumbres. Pero sé que indefectiblemente tengo que ir a ellas.”

they borrow his style, but only to win plum government jobs. He might as well be describing the Nuevos, but Maya does not let on that he is bothered by the accusation of co-optation. Instead, he bristles that Vargas Vila had suggested that the Nuevos would imitate his polemical style: “Nosotros protestamos. ¿Entre la juventud quién lee o imita al señor Vargas Vila? Existe en Colombia un arte nuevo, sobrio y elegante, que nada tiene que ver con los tropos del autor de *Ibis*” (298). Vargas Vila’s interview is revealing in a few different ways. On the one hand, it suggests the great lengths to which a Colombian writer still had to go, in the 1920s, to make a claim of critical autonomy. On the other hand, it provides more evidence that “arte nuevo,” as envisioned by the Nuevos, was not a struggle for independence.

José Eustasio Rivera is another writer who responded to the economic modernization of the 1920s on terms that clash with the general terms of the intellectual class in Bogotá. Rivera had been a member of the Centenarios, but in the early 1920s he began to move away from the group. In 1921 he traveled to Manaos, on the border of Colombia and Venezuela with a government commission to map the area. While there he visited the rubber plantations of a U.S. corporation and was appalled by the exploitation of the workers there. He reported the abuses to the Colombian consul in the region, but the consul ignored his requests for an investigation. Over the next two years, Rivera wrote a novel based on this experience. *La vorágine* was published in November, 1924. The novel tells the story of a poet from Bogotá named Arturo Cova who takes a similar journey to the jungle. In *La vorágine* Rivera describes the violence of the new commercial activity of U.S. companies in Colombia. He contrasts this sort of violence with another sort of violence that Cova professes to love at the beginning of the novel

before he begins his journey from Bogotá. Here is the first line of the novel: “Antes de que me hubiera apasionado por mujer alguna, jugué mi corazón al azar y me lo ganó la Violencia” (7). What sort of violence is this? If the novel denounces the cowardice of the lettered class in Bogotá, might this abstracted, capital “v” violence allude to the bipartisan conflict that was the source of the lettered class’s political authority?

Rivera’s novel shows the effects of a state policy of acquiescence to imperialism and the inadequacy of the Colombian intellectual class to do anything about it. *La vorágine* thus served as a loud call to reform the Colombian state. It is no wonder, then, that both the Nuevos and the Centenarios would rebuke it as vulgar. Not only did they ignore the novel’s demand for reform, they disqualified it on the grounds that it contained stanzas of poetry. As strange as this disqualification may seem, it makes sense if one remembers how tightly linked literary expertise and political authority were in Bogotá in the 1920s. Rivera’s accidental poetry suggested that he had failed to master the form of the novel and thus the political critique contained therein could be ignored. Indeed, when Rivera challenged the former consul of Manaus to respond to *La vorágine*, the consul obliquely replied: ““Si un escritor quiere el progreso patrio, debe profesar el culto de Nuestra Señora de la Lengua” (qtd. in Ordoñez Vila 374).

Rivera’s attempt to use literature for a critical function in Bogotá in the mid-1920s ended poorly. He seems to have understood that this sort of literary project would force him to find a new way to support himself—that he would be rejected by the intellectual establishment in Bogotá and the bureaucratic jobs that they controlled. He tried to find autonomy in the national market but his efforts to jumpstart the Colombian literary market did not pan out. He took out ads himself in Bogotá’s newspapers and solicited

praise from critics—even going so far as to contact a French literary critic through the French embassy in Bogotá. But in the absence of a national publishing industry, Rivera tried to build commercial demand on his own. With so few readers in Colombia, he followed Vargas Vila and sought commercial success abroad. In 1928 Rivera moved to New York with a plan to improve his English, so he could translate *La vorágine* himself and then sell its rights to a film studio. (He would die there the following year of an aneurysm.) Both Vargas Vila and Rivera left Bogotá in search of the material and institutional conditions of literary autonomy. What happened to the writers who stayed in Colombia? In the following section, I would like to briefly survey some of the reactions among intellectuals to what we might call the missed encounter of politics and literature with economic modernization in Colombia in the 1920s.

The Reaction of the Late 1920s

By the late 1920s, the Nuevos had consolidated their positions as the next generation of intellectual elites in Bogotá. However, it was not clear what sort of political opportunities might be made available for them after the presidential elections of 1930. But for the time being they would bide their time working at the capital's partisan newspapers and magazines. The criticism written by the Nuevos at the end of the decade reveals the predictable tensions caused by their co-optation by the new financial elite. On the one hand, the Nuevos attempted to demonstrate that they were fluent in the new economic language. In his book about the 1920s in Bogotá, Uribe Celis observes that “El capital es un amigo exigente: requiere actitudes propias y entregas totales: hombres

nuevos” (37). Although the Nuevos did not abandon their literary sensibilities, they did begin to try out the new administrative language and to offer their support for Colombia’s new relationship with the United States. In July, 1928, for example, Arciniegas defended the oil trade agreement that Colombia had signed with the U.S. with an appeal to the rhetoric of the new: “Como miembros de la nueva generación, sin compromisos con los muertos, libres para apreciar todas las perspectivas de la historia, declaramos que el tratado con los Estados Unidos dio nacimiento a una nueva era de relaciones política con ese país” (“La cuestión del petróleo”).

The Nuevos’s eagerness to accommodate themselves in the new political era, however, did not stop them from balking at some aspects of the United States’s new role in Colombia. Thus, although the Nuevos had ignored Rivera’s denunciation of a U.S. rubber company in 1924, they reacted to the massacre of 300 striking workers at a United Fruit Company banana plantation in 1928. A magazine edited by Arciniegas, *Universidad*, published an essay by Gaitán arguing against a military tribunal for the soldiers who killed the workers.³³ The military then confiscated all copies of *Universidad* in Santa Marta. The usually even-keeled Arciniegas wrote an indignant editorial the following day calling for Colombians to wake up and realize that Santa Marta was in effect an autonomous military dictatorship.

Despite Arciniegas’s indignation about the censure of *Universidad* in Santa Marta, what jumps out about the Nuevos’s work in the late 1920s is how disconnected it is to the progressive political struggles of those years in Colombia. There was a radical separation between their cultural activity and popular movements such as the worker’s movement on

³³ See Gaitán (1929).

the Caribbean coast or indigenous struggles to reclaim their land. Indeed, the indigenous movement is a good example of this disconnection. In 1920, indigenous reservations were abolished in Colombia in the name of capitalism. According to the new law, the reservations constituted “un obstáculo al movimiento de la propiedad raíz, al libre comercio y al mismo cultivo de dichos terrenos” (qtd. in Uribe Celis 89). Indigenous people began to organize in the following years. One of their leaders from the southwestern region of Cauca, Quintín Lame, ran for congress in 1924.

After his defeat, Lame organized an armed movement to reclaim his tribe’s land in Cauca and Tolima. Nonetheless, Arciniegas published a book in 1929, *La melancolía de la raza indígena*, whose author claimed that there was no indigenous movement in Colombia in order to then argue that Colombian intellectuals should build from scratch a national cultural identity based on their indigenous groups. Ignoring Quintín Lame entirely, the author, Armando Solano, claimed that “nuestros incoherentes grupos étnicos, cuyas taciturnas unidades sobrevivientes no cuentan con ideas propias ni mucho menos con orientaciones que defiendan el tesoro que ellas representan y como adaptación” (116). Once again, the difference between these nationalist efforts and those of intellectuals in other Latin American countries of the time, such as Mexico, are almost beyond comparison.

I pointed out earlier that writers from around the country moved to Bogotá in the late 1910s and the early 1920s. I argued that this migration of intellectuals to the capital was motivated by the process of economic modernization that had begun in the Colombian state. There was a hope among intellectuals, I argued, that this process signaled a parallel process of political or literary modernization as well. By the late 1920s, however, these

hopes had diminished. Although economics replaced literature as the most prestigious political training, the literary-political complex (to paraphrase Dwight D. Eisenhower) of the Conservative Regime stayed intact. It is perhaps not surprising, then, that writers's attention turned away from the capital in the late 1920s. I would now like to take a look at two novels from the late 1920s whose authors sought out new possibilities for literary autonomy away from the capital.

Fernando González wrote the novel *Viaje a pie* in 1929. The novel tells the story of a walking tour that he took through the departments of Antioquia and Valle del Cauca. His journey is the occasion for a wide range of remarks on literature and politics. González's avoidance of Bogotá on his tour is not coincidental; he blames the intellectuals in the capital for the decadence of recent years in Colombia. By decadence he understands the cultural conditions of Colombia's economic modernization, in which everything is now imported—"importamos qué leer y quien nos preste dinero y quien nos lo gaste"—and Colombian intellectuals kowtow to U.S. technicians, who he refers to, in all capital letters, as "MÍSTERS" (11).

González's journey demarcates a space beyond that decadence. In González's narrative, rural Antioquia and Valle del Cauca lay outside the capitalist transformation of the country. To be sure, this space is populated by the social types of a conservative idyll: jovial priests and innocent peasants. But it is also a space in which González is free to wander and write. This freedom is represented in González's disregard for the rules of literary genre. Far beyond the jurisdiction of the grammar police in Bogotá, the narrator of *Viaje a pie* chats up a storm, never staying on one topic for long. He talks religion,

science, politics, and even, in the middle of a discussion of Stendhal's *The Red and the Black*, stops to outline advice on how to seduce a woman.

González's torrent of ideas and opinions is the opposite of the belabored texts of Bogotá's poets and grammarians. Indeed, González's self-identification not as a philosopher, but as "un aficionado a la filosofía," also contrasts with the scholarly pretensions of the capital's intellectuals. González celebrates the figure of the amateur in opposition to the figure of the scholar. González's turn both away from the capital and away from professionalism constitute one possibility for literature after the 1920s. Indeed, González would draw frequent attention to the amateur nature of his literary production in the 1930s during which time he published, at irregular intervals, a magazine titled *Antioquia* that he wrote, edited, designed, and financed by himself (the magazine also carried ads for his legal services).

José Félix Fuenmayor is another writer who re-imagined literary practice away from the capital in the late 1920s. Living in Barranquilla, he wrote *Una triste aventura de catorce sabios* (1928), the first science fiction novel ever to be published in Colombia. In the novel, Fuenmayor allegorizes his own role as an author who introduces a new genre of literature to his readers. The fantastic story that makes up the novel is introduced by a frame tale about an old man who goes to a bourgeois social club in Barranquilla. The old man begins to tell the story, but he is soon interrupted by a disagreement between two men who almost come to blows. The disagreement, it turns out, was about politics; each man represented one of "los dos partidos." But the crowd settles down even though the old man has trouble keeping their attention. The fable he tells is about a group of old sages who are rendered microscopic in size by a machine that one of them has invented.

However, instead of exploring the microscopic world, as might occur in an H.G. Wells novel, the sages dig a hole in the ground and spend the rest of the novel in one long bull session in which they bounce strange, pseudo-scientific theories off each other.

The discussion does turn serious for a moment, though just long enough for one of the sages to rebuke the national model of heroicism: “Yo te exhorto a que abrases un género de heroísmo contrario a aquel horrible de las hazañas marciales y que no alcanzarás por la sólo mecánica de tus brazos en un mandoble de barra. Te invito al heroísmo majestuoso y limpio de aguantar quieto; al heroísmo augusto y triste de conservarte siempre alegre” (49). Contrary to the Nuevos’s exaltations of caudillo intellectuals, Fuenmayor imagines the private utopia of a group of friends who hide away—literally underground—making up theories and fantastical stories together, with no concern for public recognition.

Science fiction is a genre dedicated to speculating about the future. Yet in *Una triste aventura de catorce sabios* Fuenmayor uses magical technology for another purpose: to create a space in which intellectuals can converse freely with each other about their most extravagant ideas. Just as the Nuevos repurposed a genre for imagining the future—the avant-garde—to re-figure the present, Fuenmayor uses science fiction to imagine a space for intellectual autonomy. But this modest utopia soon collapses. In a shocking turn, one of the sages, a “mago negro,” kills all the other sages. His motive is unclear. The novel ends after Fuenmayor describes the bloody corpses of the sages in detail.

Conclusion: The Uses of the New

In this chapter, I have examined the uses of the concepts of “the new” or the “modern” by Colombian intellectuals during the 1920s. I have described their attempts to legitimize their intellectual practices in the context of the crisis of the major political parties and intense economic modernization. This history has two stages. In the first stage, young intellectuals flocked to Bogotá in anticipation of the transformation of the Colombian state into a liberal-democratic state. In the second stage, intellectuals abandoned hopes for the immediate transformation of the state and searched for ways to re-found the value of their aesthetic and political practices. This analysis helps to explain some unusual aspects about the avant-garde in Bogotá, such as its lack of a utopian vision of the future, its celebration of partisan violence, and the prevalence of a proto-fascist ideology among the intellectuals who decided to stay in Bogotá and defend the civil function of literature. It also accounts for the flight, either literally or symbolically, from the capital by intellectuals who sought to establish other relations between literature and politics, such as José Eustasio Rivera, Fernando González, and José Félix Fuenmayor.

In the next chapter, I study the work of José Antonio Osorio Lizarazo, an urban chronicler and novelist who hovered at the edge of the Nuevos’s modernizing projects in the 1920s. As we have seen in this chapter, the representation of urban space and the use of the informal rhetoric of the urban chronicle by Luis Tejada and Luis Vidales were two of the most provocative strategies employed by the Nuevos. More than calls to partisan violence, these challenges to the literary standards of the Conservative Hegemony caused polemics among both Liberal and Conservative intellectuals. In the next chapter, we will

see how Osorio Lizarazo disturbed the Colombian cultural field—albeit for different reasons—after the Liberal party won control of the national government in 1930.

Chapter Two

José Antonio Osorio Lizarazo's Mass Culture and the Liberal Republic

The Colombian writer José Antonio Osorio Lizarazo (1900-1964) is a difficult figure to parse. He can come across as having had a split personality: On the one hand, he wrote many novels about urban poverty. On the other hand, he wrote propaganda for political strongmen across Latin America, including Rafael Trujillo and Juan Perón. Since the 1970s, critics have tried to revive Osorio Lizarazo's reputation as a novelist. He wrote a series of urban novels in the 1930s about Bogotá that are some of the very few representations of the daily lives of poor people of that period, and critics are eager to lend those novels sociological authority. For example, Juan Gustavo Cobo Borda, who wrote about Osorio Lizarazo that "Su mayor virtud es haber dado voz a todos esos seres sin apellido que durante la crisis de los años treinta cambiaron, radicalmente, el orden social" (93). However, Osorio's work as a propagandist poses a problem for these critics. In short, it is hard to reconcile Osorio Lizarazo as the voice of the poor, and Osorio Lizarazo as the voice of authority (or the voice of authoritarians, as it were). Indeed, the fact that Osorio Lizarazo wrote propaganda puts into some doubt whether he should be taken seriously as an intellectual at all.

In his book *The Total Art of Stalinism*, Boris Groys points out that the status of art that glorifies state power, such as Soviet socialist realism or Nazi art, is uncertain. It raises basic questions such as the following: "Are we really dealing with art here? Is it

even morally defensible to consider together with other artistic tendencies these movements—which have served repressive regimes and achieved hegemony through the physical elimination of their opponents?” (7). Although Osorio Lizarazo did not write fiction as part of a state-sponsored artistic movement, the fact that he wrote hagiographies of Trujillo or Perón has marked him with a similar stigma. Paraphrasing Groys, one could ask similar questions about Osorio Lizarazo. For example, is it morally defensible to study the novels of a man who wrote a vicious pamphlet against one of Trujillo’s detractors, Jesús Galíndez, after he was allegedly disappeared by the dictator’s agents in 1956?

Critics have tended to deal with this dilemma by dividing Osorio Lizarazo’s career in two stages. In the early stage—from the mid-1920s to the mid-1940s—he was an organic intellectual. The son of a carpenter, raised in a lower-middle-class neighborhood in Bogotá, he wrote novels that denounced the suffering of the city’s poor. In the late stage of his career—from the mid-1940s to the mid-1960s—he sold out. Having lost hope that real political change would come to Colombia, he was seduced by the power of dictators and the opportunity to make a comfortable living. This critical narrative, then, attempts to isolate Osorio Lizarazo as a social critic, that is to say, as a writer who spoke truth to power about the lives of the new urban masses.

However, there are two problems with this narrative. First, it distorts the timeline of Osorio’s career as a propagandist. Osorio Lizarazo began to work for *caudillos* at the very start of his career, in Colombia, in the 1920s, and continued to do so, off and on, for the rest of his life. Second, it attributes to Osorio Lizarazo an adversarial function that he did not really have. In recent studies, Óscar Calvo Isaza and Felipe Vanderhuck Arias

have shown that Osorio Lizarazo's exposés of poverty in Bogotá were well received by the Liberal governments of the 1930s.³⁴ This is not so surprising, considering that the Liberal party had won power in 1930 with a campaign to modernize the country. They did not have to maneuver much to adopt, or co-opt, Osorio's critique as their own. By the same token, Osorio Lizarazo was himself affiliated with the Liberal party. It is true that he did not belong to the inner circle of Liberal intellectuals, who ran the Ministry of Education, but he was still very much involved with Liberal newspapers and magazines.

In an attempt to move past this reading of Osorio Lizarazo, I would like to take a step back, and begin again by taking stock of his literary production. Besides the novels and the political pamphlets, Osorio Lizarazo wrote chronicles, historical essays, and popular biographies. Indeed, the bulk of his work is made up of texts in these journalistic genres—the most prevalent among them being the popular biography. The questions that will guide me here have to do with this large—albeit largely invisible—portion of Osorio Lizarazo's output. What happens when we include these texts in our assessment of his work? Could they offer another image of Osorio Lizarazo? One that would help us to see him outside of the opposition between the proletarian hero and the cynical lackey? In what follows, I argue that they offer instead an image of Osorio Lizarazo as a professional writer.

³⁴ See Calvo Isaza (2005) and Vanderhuck Arias (2012). And, to provide my own example of this phenomenon, consider that Osorio Lizarazo's social critique was celebrated in the introduction to an anthology of short stories published by the Ministry of Education in its *Selección Samper Ortega de Literatura Colombia (Tres cuentistas jóvenes, 1936)*. The introduction (which goes unsigned but whose author is presumably the anthologist himself, Daniel Samper Ortega) affirms that “[e]l dolor de los humildes no ha tenido en Colombia ecos tan amargos como los que alcanza en los libros de Osorio Lizarazo [...] Osorio Lizarazo penetra en el alma de los tristes, y la pone de presente por medio de fútiles detalles, tontos en apariencia, pero que sólo un gran novelista sabe desentrañar” (10-11). Osorio Lizarazo's Liberal colleagues did not seem to hesitate to celebrate his social critique, even when they were speaking in the name of the State.

The Tabloid Journalist

Osorio Lizarazo wrote for a tabloid newspaper, *El mundo al día*, from 1924 to 1929. *El mundo al día* was one of the first newspapers in Bogotá to have a modern printing press (Vergara Aguirre, “Crónicas Bogotanas” 207), and it used this advantage to appeal to a wider public, abandoning the political op-ed as the centerpiece of its daily edition in order to give prominence to entertainment genres. At *El mundo al día*, Osorio Lizarazo was one of the first writers in Colombia to be writing for a mass public. Also, he was practicing the new genres of the cultural industry, which are already being developed in big cities elsewhere in Latin America, the United States, and Europe. The historian Andrés Vergara Aguirre has noted the novelty of Osorio’s writing for *El mundo al día* in a recent article. He argues that Osorio Lizarazo was one of the first Colombian journalists to use a sensationalist style in his urban chronicles. However, it is also important to note that Osorio Lizarazo was one of the pioneers of the popular biography in Colombia.

In an article first published in 1943, the sociologist Leo Löwenthal observed that popular biographies had become prevalent in the newspapers and magazines of the United States and Europe starting in the 1920s. He suggested that these biographies were the cultural industry’s way of making history entertaining. According to Löwenthal, “A biography seems to be the means by which an average person is able to reconcile his interest in the important trends of history and in the personal lives of other people” (113). Osorio Lizarazo was among the first to take up this trend in Colombia. In short, Osorio Lizarazo became one of Colombia’s first specialized producers of mass culture while he

was at *El mundo al día*.

Over the following decades, Osorio Lizarazo would produce a tremendous quantity of such texts for newspapers and magazines in Colombia. However, he also wrote them for the State. The historian Richard Stoller has argued that one of the main goals of the Liberal governments in Colombia during the 1930s was to build the allegiance of the country's new urban masses to their party.³⁵ This was especially true after the election of Alfonso López Pumarejo in 1934, which another historian, Marco Palacios, registers as the moment when mass politics began in Colombia (*Between Legitimacy and Violence* 100). Part of the process of building this partisan allegiance was to appeal to the urban population through mass culture.

In a recent essay, Graciela Montaldo observes that the relation between politics and mass culture changed in Argentina during the period that spanned the two governments of the populist Hipólito Yrigoyen, that is to say, the second half of the 1910s and the 1920s. In her words, this period was marked by “el desplazamiento de la política hacia el centro de la cultura masiva” (*Zonas ciegas* 77). López Pumarejo may have been a somewhat timid populist in comparison to Yrigoyen, yet there was a comparable process in Colombia during the 1930s—that is to say, a movement of politics to the center of mass culture. And though the major parties had always commissioned propaganda for the popular classes, this appeal was new, in that it used the genres of commercial mass culture. Osorio Lizarazo was one of the go-to guys for the Liberal party when it came to producing this sort of propaganda. For example, he wrote biographies both of the Liberal forefather Francisco de Paula Santander and of several Liberal war heroes, militiamen

³⁵ See Stoller (1995).

who fought against Conservative partisans in one of Colombia's many civil wars since the mid-nineteenth century.

In other words, Osorio Lizarazo borrowed a lot from his commercial work when he wrote propaganda for the Liberal government. This makes sense, because his texts for the Liberal government were also commercial, in two senses. First, Osorio Lizarazo contracted with the state as a freelancer. The Ministry of Education or the editor of one of the Ministry's journals would hire him to write a book or an article. Second, the texts he wrote for the State were later sold commercially—at reduced prices, perhaps, but sold nonetheless. (This practice was not uncommon in Latin America in the 1930s. In a recent book chapter about Mário de Andrade's work for the Brazilian state, Álvaro Fernández Bravo notes that de Andrade had the state sell encyclopedias at a cheap price rather than give them away for free because that way it could use already existing commercial networks to distribute them, which in theory would put them in the hands of a much broader public.³⁶) There is no question that Osorio Lizarazo was committed to the Liberal political cause, but, to a large extent, his dealings with the party were those of an entrepreneur, or a professional writer. The party was his most important client. The most profit he ever made from a book in Colombia was from his biography of Santander, of which he sold a whopping ten thousand copies to the Ministry of Education in 1940 (qtd. in Vanderhuck Arias 81).

The Professional

³⁶ See Fernández Bravo (2007).

Osorio Lizarazo published so much that he gained a reputation among his colleagues for being prolific. The director of the National Library, Daniel Samper Ortega, would point this out in 1936. In an introduction to one of Osorio Lizarazo's short stories, included in an anthology for the Ministry of Education, Samper Ortega praised Osorio Lizarazo's indefatigable work ethic, both for publications in Bogotá and Barranquilla, where Osorio Lizarazo edited a Liberal newspaper between 1930 and 1934. As Samper Ortega put it, "En Bogotá y en Barranquilla, en diarios y semanarios, [Osorio Lizarazo] ha vendido cerebro, fatiga, [y] resignación, desde 1920" (13). Here, Samper Ortega alludes to Osorio Lizarazo's identity as a commercial writer in two ways. First, in his suggestion that Osorio Lizarazo has been "selling his brain" to newspapers and magazines, and, second, in his use of the phrase "since 1920," which we know, of course, from slogans such as "Budweiser: Since 1876."

Osorio Lizarazo reinforced the image of himself as a professional writer in a series of articles for Colombia's major newspaper, *El Tiempo*, in the mid-1930s. In these articles, Osorio Lizarazo complained about how difficult it was to make a living as a writer in Colombia. For example, he would make the following frustrated remarks in 1936:

En un ambiente como el nuestro, el periodismo es una válvula de escape para el afán de escribir, por más que, con algunas excepciones, el escritor resulte estrangulado por el afán cotidiano, improrrogable. No existe la profesión de escribir porque no tiene la necesaria recompensa económica y solo el periódico aproxima y nutre las posibilidades. El escritor perece, pero el hombre puede subsistir, aun cuando en circunstancias precarias. (Yo, por ejemplo, sería novelista si pudiera seguir las

inclinaciones de mi espíritu: pero he de ser periodista para ganarme la vida.) (“Delio Seravile,” *Novelas y crónicas* 416)

Even though there were very few Latin American writers who made a living writing novels—Ángel Rama has noted that it was not until the 1960s that this was possible for Latin American writers, and then only for a small minority³⁷—I would like to draw attention to the mere fact that Osorio Lizarazo discusses writing as a job—that is to say, as work that should be remunerated with *money*. This was a new way of talking about literature, and Osorio Lizarazo was, as far as I know, the first to do it in Colombia. He had counterparts, of course, in other Latin American countries, the most famous of whom was Roberto Arlt, who championed writing for the mass market as a way for intellectuals to liberate themselves from elitist literary establishments. Osorio Lizarazo was less optimistic than Arlt about journalists writing novels in their spare time as a sustainable model of literary production. Nonetheless, he had the same insight that literature did not transcend the sphere of commerce.

Later in his career, Osorio Lizarazo would condemn other writers for pretending not to care about money, and complain about the stigma he suffered for speaking the truth about it. “En algunos lugares el trabajador intelectual se obstina en mantener una actitud de desdén hacia las minucias de la vida que tanto inquietan al trabajador manual,” he wrote. “Sujeto a una serie de prejuicios y de ficción, está obligado a disimular sus quebrantos económicos y a mostrarse al margen de cuestiones que le son tan fundamentales como a cualquier otro ser humano. El trabajador intelectual que haga

³⁷ See Rama (1981).

ostentación de sus preocupaciones estrictamente humanas pierde categoría y autoridad para ejercer su oficio” (qtd. in Calvo Isaza 62).

The fact that Osorio Lizarazo operated in a system in which writers continued to depend on the patronage of political *caudillos* obscures the modernizing role that he played within that system. Osorio Lizarazo introduced an entrepreneurial ethos to the writing of propaganda that dispensed with pieties about personal loyalty. He was not afraid to break with a benefactor who he believed had slighted him, nor was he afraid to air his grievances in public. For example, after Osorio Lizarazo believed himself to have been marginalized from the dissident Liberal Jorge Eliécer Gaitán’s inner circle, despite having served three years as the editor-in-chief of the pro-Gaitán newspaper, *Jornada*, he wrote a withering behind-the-scenes account of Gaitán’s 1946 presidential campaign. This essay, titled “Aventuras de un gaitanista,” ran in *El Tiempo*, the most important newspaper in the country. Its publication marked the arrival of another commercial genre to Colombia: the political tell-all.³⁸

After Osorio Lizarazo’s rupture with Gaitán, he traveled to the Dominican Republic, at the behest of the Dominican ambassador to Colombia, where he began to write for the president, Rafael Trujillo, and in early 1948, he moved to Argentina, where he found employment with the Argentine president, Juan Perón. Critics often describe Osorio Lizarazo’s move abroad as an ideological decision, as an effect of his frustration with the liberal democratic system in Colombia. However, while his work for Trujillo and Peron is controversial, I would point out that, in a formal sense, it was essentially the same as what he did for a series of politicians—of whom Gaitán was the last—while he lived in

³⁸ As a measure of the novelty of this genre, it is worth mentioning that the first known use of the term “tell-all” in English dates to the mid-twentieth century (1954) (Merriam Webster Dictionary).

Colombia. That is to say, he wrote popular biographies of them, or historical essays that posited them as the culmination of a national-historical process that stretched back to the founding fathers—books with titles that could have been borrowed from popular magazines, such as the biography *Así es Trujillo* (1958).

By the same token, Osorio Lizarazo continued to contribute to Colombian newspapers once he left the country, and to write novels. We might, therefore, take Osorio Lizarazo at his word when he writes to a friend, in July 1949, that the main reason he has moved to Argentina was for its literary market. In Osorio's words, "Mi presencia en Buenos Aires se debe, primordialmente, al deseo de encontrar un centro de edición y distribución más amplio que el de Colombia" (qtd. in Calvo Isaza, "Biografías" 144).

Ángel Rama noted that, in the first half of the twentieth century, the "afán de profesionalizarse" of Latin American writers drove them to move around the continent, or to go to Europe or the United States, in search of "mayores posibilidades de difusión por contar con editoriales, revistas, grandes diarios" ("El Boom" 92-93). Osorio Lizarazo was no exception.

Granted, Osorio Lizarazo would go on to express his disappointment at the publishing opportunities in Argentina. In another letter, sent just two months later, he would write to a colleague in Bogotá that "Lo malo es que nosotros, desde allá, sufrimos un espejismo sobre las inmensas posibilidades publicitarias de Buenos Aires, que son mentira, porque aquí, lo mismo que allá, los escritores, los novelistas y ensayistas tienen que hacer sus propias ediciones: las editoriales sólo se ocupan de los libros de ganancia asegurada" (qtd. in Calvo Isaza, "Biografías" 144). Nonetheless, he stayed on in Buenos Aires, where he would publish two of his best-selling books. Both were about Gaitán, who recently

had been assassinated. One, titled *Gaitán: vida, muerte y permanente presencia* (1952), was a biography, and the other, *El día del odio* (1953), a novel about the riot that followed the leader's death. By the time he wrote them, Osorio Lizarazo seems to have dropped his grudge against his former boss, because both offer sympathetic portraits of Gaitán.

Also, Osorio Lizarazo may have helped to write another book—a huge bestseller—while he was in Buenos Aires: Eva Perón's autobiography, *La razón de mi vida* (1952). He never received credit for it, but in an unpublished autobiographical novel, titled *Barco a la deriva* (1963), Osorio Lizarazo's alter ego, Carlos Gutiérrez, reveals that he has written several chapters of Evita's autobiography, and there is proof in Osorio Lizarazo's archive that he was being paid by Eva Perón's foundation in the early 1950s. Also, Gutiérrez mentions that he served as Eva Perón's ghostwriter in another capacity: he answered the letters that poor people sent to her. Again, there is no proof that Osorio Lizarazo himself performed this role for Eva Perón, but the fact that his protagonist does so, in a novel that follows his own biography closely in many other aspects, invites speculation that he did.

After Osorio Lizarazo's death, in 1964, at the age of 63, there was a brief polemic about him back in Bogotá, in the back pages of a cultural journal, *La revista de Indias*. One critic dismissed his novels as resentful. Another critic defended his novels, yet attacked Osorio Lizarazo for having praised “tiranías abyectas por un plato de lentejas...o de grises dólares” (qtd. in Mutis-Durán XLIX). Already in this polemic we can see the terms that would define the debate about Osorio Lizarazo for the next fifty years. However, a decade before the polemic in *La revista de Indias*, in 1953, the Liberal

intellectual Hernando Téllez, writing in *El Tiempo*, offered an extended take on why Osorio Lizarazo was a disturbing figure for Bogotá's intellectuals. Téllez begins his comments by remembering the stir that Osorio Lizarazo caused in the 1920s, when he first came onto the scene in Bogotá. "Los literatos empezamos, desde esa época, a inquietarnos con Osorio," he writes. "Nos derrotaba a todos por su laboriosidad. ¿Pero nos satisfacían sus libros?" He continues to enumerate questions that Osorio Lizarazo provoked in the city's men of letters, before concluding that Osorio Lizarazo was simply *illegible*:

Los literatos empezamos, desde esa época [los años 20], a inquietarnos con Osorio. Nos derrotaba a todos por su laboriosidad. ¿Pero nos satisfacían sus libros? La *Casa de la vecindad* era casi una obra perfecta; *La cara de la miseria* no lo era. Tampoco *Garabato*. *El hombre bajo la tierra* entraba, como la primera novela mencionada, en el territorio de lo excelente. Pero resultaba, a la postre, desigual. Otros libros suyos, de intención política, no se ajustaban a la calidad de su talento de escritor. ¿Qué pasaba, pues, con Osorio? ¿Estaba en la literatura o estaba fuera de la literatura? ¿Era un escritor demasiado fácil? ¿Le faltaba el toque de gracia en el estilo? ¿Y cómo era su cultura? Además, siempre quedaba indescifrable el personaje, de vida enigmática, cruzada de extrañas aventuras sentimentales, de extrañas desapariciones, de extraños hundimientos en el silencio y el olvido, de extraños viajes casi interplanterarios de los cuales venía a saberse, al cabo de los tiempos, que el desaparecido estaba descansando de sus fragilidades físicas y de su [sic] debilidades intelectuales, en la sala de un

sanatorio, o a la sombra de una dictadura tropical, eventualmente benévola con su talento. ¡Qué personaje estupendo resultaba él mismo para sus propias novelas!

(“El día del odio,” *Novelas y crónicas* 693)

Curiously, Téllez mentions neither Osorio Lizarazo’s social critique nor his decision to write propaganda for foreign tyrants as the reasons that he unsettled Bogotá intellectuals. Instead, he mentions qualities that defined Osorio Lizarazo as a professional writer: his rate of production, the uneven quality of his texts, the dubious value of his cultural capital, and his geographical mobility.

To see Osorio Lizarazo as a professional writer—that is to say, as an intellectual trying to make a living in an emerging market of symbolic goods—involves challenging some received ideas about professionalization, especially the idea that professional writers operated in market spaces separate from the state. While neither the state nor the political parties controlled the print market in Colombia, they shaped the market in ways that are impossible to ignore when we consider the intellectual history of the first half of the 20th century. The career of a writer like Osorio Lizarazo shows that the Colombian state turned to producers of mass culture—to the writers of popular biographies, chronicles, and novels—to meet their own need to address mass publics. And, as Osorio Lizarazo’s later work in the Dominican Republic and Argentina shows, this was not a phenomenon restricted to Colombia. In an article about professionalization at the turn of the nineteenth century in Argentina, Alejandra Laera underlines that “muchos de los primeros escritores profesionales asumieron una posición en el marco del periodismo que les permitió cumplir una función intelectual que otros hombres de letras no podían

cumplir con la misma eficacia” (*Historia de los intelectuales* 518). Half a century later, in a new age of mass culture, Osorio Lizarazo would do the same thing.

Osorio Lizarazo: Inside or Outside of Literature?

The case of Osorio Lizarazo suggests a need to think more about the role of mass culture, and its producers, in the intellectual history of Latin America. For example, how did Osorio Lizarazo fit into the literary field in Colombia? His position, as a professional writer, was not clear, as we saw in the remarks about him by Hernando Téllez. If Roberto Arlt embraced his identity as a professional writer, Osorio Lizarazo was ambivalent. Although he boasted of being a new kind of intellectual, he lamented his exclusion from the traditional *letrado* elite. In what follows, I will examine the strategies that Osorio Lizarazo employed in pursuit of cultural capital from his ambiguous role as a professional writer. Key to this study will be Osorio Lizarazo’s chronicles and novels.

As I have mentioned, critics tend to mine his work for sociological and historical insights about Bogotá. This approach was endorsed by some of Colombia’s most prestigious literary critics, including Ernesto Volkening, Rafael Guitérrez Girardot, and Juan Gustavo Cobo Borda, and has dominated criticism about Osorio Lizarazo for the last four decades. As Santiago Mutis-Durán put it, “Osorio Lizarazo es *la forma más acabada*, la única, podríamos decir, de nuestra memoria de bogotanos de los años 20 y 30” (XI). Nonetheless, Osorio Lizarazo resists this reading in that he focuses so much on the anguish of his protagonists. This narrow focus tends to blur the city itself. These studies thus face the difficult task of inferring images of Bogotá through the nature of the

suffering of Osorio Lizarazo's characters, and their authors are obliged to play the role of social psychologists, diagnosing the traumas and disorders of a modern urban subject.

Calvo Isaza and Vanderhuck Arias have already provided excellent studies of Osorio Lizarazo's struggle to establish himself as an intellectual in Bogotá. In what follows, I will examine how this struggle informed his fiction and chronicles about poverty, paying special attention to the representations of writing and reading therein. First, I will show how Osorio Lizarazo appropriated elements from several modern discourses in order to represent poverty in Bogotá, and how he used this aesthetic to create a new position for himself within the cultural field. Second, I will argue that Osorio Lizarazo's work as a propagandist for the populist leader Jorge Eliécer Gaitán in the mid-1940s helped him to elaborate an even more polemical identity for himself as an intellectual. In my last chapter, I studied the intervention of a group of young intellectuals, the Nuevos, in the cultural field of Bogotá in the 1920s. It is important to review the basic elements of this cultural field, because it is the same scene in which Osorio Lizarazo will make his mark, albeit from a very different position.

Bogotá in Crisis

The defining condition of the cultural activity in Bogotá in the 1920s was crisis. The crisis was, in the first place, political. As the price of coffee rose in the 1910s, the US government began to develop a special trade relationship with its Colombian counterpart. However, in order for Colombia to be the primary exporter of coffee to a market as large as the United States, it would need to modernize certain aspects of its state. In 1922, a

mission arrived from the United States to reform Colombia's central bank. Also, the US government loaned the Colombian state approximately 175 million dollars, an astronomical sum at the time. These incentives and reforms put Colombia's political institutions into crisis. The Conservative party, which had been ruling the country for nearly half a century, was led by reactionary lettered men. Neither they, nor the Liberal intellectuals they had co-opted, knew how to respond to the United States's demands to modernize the state bureaucracy. This crisis was exacerbated by other demands for the modernization of the state: an increase in urban populations and labor conflicts that would worsen throughout the decade. As Maryluz Vallejo Mejía notes, the Catholic Church was insufficient as a modern political institution: “[a] mediados de la década de 1920, Bogotá era ya demasiado grande para que las tensiones sociales pudieran ser contenidas permanentemente por una organización de caridad bajo la dirección de un líder carismático” (*A plomo herido* 36). The Nuevos asserted themselves in the midst of this crisis. Using the rhetoric of the European vanguards, they positioned themselves as modernizers. They were the new men who could lead the modernization of the Colombian state, even if, on closer inspection, few of them had the technical expertise for such a task. Like their predecessors, they were almost all men of letters.

Osorio Lizarazo began his career as the Nuevos were in the process of positioning themselves in the center of the cultural field in Bogotá. Although he knew some of the members of the group, he did not belong to it. The Nuevos emerged from an earlier group of university students who had supported the pan-Latin American reform movement of the late 1910s. Many in the group had university degrees or grew up in middle class or rich families in Bogotá or Medellín. As I mentioned above, Osorio Lizarazo bore several

marks of social inferiority: he grew up in Las Cruces, a poor neighborhood in downtown Bogotá, failed to graduate high school, and was the son of a carpenter. Although Osorio Lizarazo did not fit the profile for the Nuevos, his work found a place in their campaign to bring “lo nuevo” to Colombia. It clashed with the Conservative Hegemony’s ideology on both aesthetic and political grounds. Aesthetically, it broke its pastoral aesthetic code and it replaced poetry, its preferred genre, with a genre borrowed from journalism, the urban chronicle. Politically, it made visible a population, the urban poor, that the Conservative governments excluded from political or even symbolic representation. As I mentioned earlier, in the introduction to the dissertation, Germán Arciniegas published a collection of Osorio Lizarazo’s urban chronicles for *Mundo al Día* as a book titled *La cara de la miseria* (1926). It makes sense that Arciniegas would have packaged Osorio Lizarazo’s chronicles as a book—and thus, as if through alchemy, transform them from journalism to literature—and circulate it as part of the cultural project of the Nuevos in the mid-1920s. However, the same reasons might help to explain why Liberal intellectuals did not embrace Osorio Lizarazo after their party took control of the state in 1930.

As I argued in my last chapter, the Nuevos ultimately acted to defend the state function of literature. They replaced a Catholic pastoral aesthetic with a cosmopolitan aesthetic, yet still defended the elite status of culture. This cosmopolitan aesthetic complemented the ideological project of a party that embraced the new financial role of the state in the age of coffee exportation. (The emblematic president of the Liberal Republic, Alfonso López Pumarejo, studied finance at university and was the son of a prominent banker.) Although the Liberal Republic was the first government in Colombia

to create cultural programs for the popular classes, it never failed to police the distinction between high culture and popular culture. On the one hand, high culture was cosmopolitan while, on the other hand, popular culture was rural folklore. This cultural scheme reflected the basic dilemma for Liberal intellectuals of how to incorporate the urban masses to society through culture without undermining the literary institution that legitimated them as political leaders.

Osorio Lizarazo's novels and chronicles did not fit easily into the Liberal Republic's project, for the same reasons that had made them appealing to the Nuevos in the mid-1920s, when they occupied an oppositional role in Bogotá's cultural field. Nonetheless, the Liberal party took as its mandate the incorporation of the growing urban masses into Colombian cities as its mandate when it assumed office in 1930. Although the party would fail to make good on this mandate, it was a key condition for Osorio Lizarazo's literary project. It opened up a new space for the representation of poverty in the public sphere. It also provided an opportunity for Osorio Lizarazo to assert his legitimacy as an intellectual.

The Aesthetics of Pain

As I mentioned above, Osorio Lizarazo lacked the social pedigree of the Nuevos. (In an unpublished autobiographical novel, *Barco a la deriva* [1963], he would accuse them of having been snobs.) Indeed, he was an improbable candidate to be an intellectual in Bogotá: a high school dropout, the son of a carpenter, and a tabloid journalist. However, he managed to fashion an aesthetic with which he staked a claim for status as a *letrado*.

This aesthetic was founded on the principle of the authority of experience. Osorio Lizarazo claimed for himself a special authority to represent the urban popular classes because of his proximity to them.

Osorio Lizarazo elaborated this idea in critical essays that he wrote about other authors. Although he did not explicitly compare himself to these authors, his descriptions of their work could serve as descriptions of his own novels. Maxim Gorky was one of these authors. Osorio Lizarazo praised the Russian novelist for fusing his own body with the social body of the masses. In an essay from 1946, he praised Gorky for making his body into a “laboratory” for the pain of the masses: “[d]e su propia carne hizo el laboratorio en donde medía la angustia del pueblo. No le inquietaba su miseria sino en el grado en que ésta le hubiera permitido conocer las ajenas miserias de masas innumerables” (547). He expressed a similar idea in an essay on Friedrich Nietzsche, whose greatness he explained as the sublimation of his own physical pain (“El dolor físico en la obra niezscheana” 522). In his essay on Gorky, Osorio Lizarazo posits that Gorky’s work at a variety of humble trades stood in for university learning. Indeed, he suggests that Gorky’s experience is all the more authentic because he did not do it in order to write about it: “Y cuando vivió su martirio, no lo hizo con fines de ulterior especulación literaria, para buscarse un tema o encontrar la orientación de la sensibilidad ante determinado fenómeno, a fin de hacer después una acertada descripción, sino por la insignificancia de su posición social, por las circunstancias en que se vio colocada su vida” (548).

In these passages, Osorio Lizarazo affirms realist values in order to legitimize his own practice as a writer without traditional credentials. His contact with human misery

gave him a special sort of knowledge. He made a similar claim about his contact with a bohemian demimonde in Bogotá. He found an argument for the legitimacy of this training in Henri Murger's famous book about starving artists in Paris, *Scènes de la vie de bohème* (1847-49). As Osorio Lizarazo wrote, "[l]a vida bohemia era un signo de capacidad artística y el libro de Enrique Murguer [sic] era la fuente perenne de donde se obtenían los modelos para establecer la ruta que convenía seguir" (qtd. in Calvo Isaza 80).

Although Osorio Lizarazo was unique in the cultural field of Bogotá, he had counterparts in other cities of Latin America. In her intellectual history of Buenos Aires in the 1920s and 1930s, *Una modernidad periférica*, Beatriz Sarlo discusses a group of poets who, like Osorio Lizarazo, used Russian or North European models to write about poverty. Indeed, her description of the poetry of Olivari or Tuñón could double as a description of Osorio Lizarazo's novels:

Es una literatura que no se origina en la melancolía de lo irrecuperable, tampoco en la mitificación del pasado, sino en una perspectiva cercana sobre el presente de las orillas como escena moral, social y psicológica. El poeta en el margen no es un observador que realiza un viaje hacia lo desconocido o lo diferente, sino un personaje colocado en la máxima proximidad topográfica y temporal. El margen aquí es tiempo presente. (186-187)

Likewise, the connection Sarlo draws between the topics of Olivari and Tuñón and their place within the Argentine cultural field illuminates Osorio Lizarazo's own strategy. As

she observes, “los marginados resultan tan interesantes para este núcleo de escritores recién llegados al campo intelectual porque pueden convertirse en personajes de un movimiento de reivindicación de nuevos territorios literarios propios y no abordados desde otras posiciones del espacio cultural” (184).

Nonetheless, the differences between the literary fields of Buenos Aires and Bogotá should not be overlooked. Most importantly, there was a much larger commercial market for books, and for print more generally, in Argentina. Lower-middle-class writers such as Raúl González Tuñón, Nicolás Olivari, or Roberto Arlt had opportunities to earn a living as literary entrepreneurs. Although the literary market in Argentina would not begin to reach a massive scale until the 1940s, when it replaced the Spanish publishing industry (disrupted by the Spanish Civil War [1936-1939]) as the primary Spanish-language publishing industry, it was large enough in the preceding decades to allow writers to establish a new relationship with readers, one that was mediated by the market, and which diminished the power of elite intellectuals to function as gatekeepers to the literary field. This new relation was crystallized by Roberto Arlt in his famous preface to *Los lanzallamas*, the second installment of his novel *Los siete locos*, in which he boasted that he could make a living as a writer, even though the work was “penoso y rudo” (5). This financial independence allowed him to laugh off the charge that he wrote poorly with the retort that “good” writers were condemned to obscurity—indeed, that many had no readers at all save for “correctos miembros de sus familias” (5).

Osorio Lizarazo lacked such a readership, along whose side he could thumb his nose at the snobs. A publishing industry would not appear in Colombia until the 1950s, and though the country’s major commercial newspapers enjoyed a fairly wide circulation, and

modern production, they continued to be under the control of the Liberal and Conservative parties, which obliged writers such as Osorio Lizarazo to seek out the protection of a patron within his party. Osorio Lizarazo condemned this system on numerous occasions, yet he also lamented his failure to take advantage of it. In his own words, he had failed to “avanzar por el ancho camino de las transacciones” (qtd. in Calvo Isaza 67) or “ser absorbido por la política” (qtd. in Mutis Durán LXXX). His frustration is evident in letters he wrote to his patrons in the Liberal party during this period. In a letter from 1942, for example, he asks Arciniegas to put in a good word for him with a prize committee. He is asking for his help, he writes, “pensando con vivo optimismo en que tú seas la mano que se me tienda para romper la colectiva indiferencia dentro de la cual he luchado sin descanso, en medio de estas breñas inaccesibles que son la ciudad natal.” And then he makes an even blunter request for Arciniegas’s patronage: “Pudiera ocurrir, mi querido Germán, que desde el lugar de tu victoria personal me amparases” (qtd. in Vanderhuck Arias 102).

This is not to say that Osorio Lizarazo was a pariah. He did publish essays in *La Revista de Indias* and other cultural magazines. However, as Vanderhuck Arias points out, Osorio Lizarazo never was paid in the one hard currency for intellectuals during the first half of the 20th century in Colombia: a good government job. Instead, he bounced from one minor bureaucratic appointment³⁹ to the next, and wrote propaganda for the

³⁹ Calvo Isaza has compiled the long list of jobs that Osorio Lizarazo held in the 1930s and 1940s: “Luego de dirigir en Barranquilla *La prensa* entre 1930 y 1934 [...] abandonó esa ciudad para asumir varios cargos públicos en el seno del gobierno de la República Liberal: relator de la Cámara de Representantes (1934), secretario privado del Ministro de Guerra (1937), secretario privado del Gabinete del Ministro de Guerra (1938), jefe de la sección quinta, del Ministro de Educación y secretario privado del Ministerio de Educación (1941), bibliotecario de la Contraloría General de la República (1943), revisor contador del Departamento de Asistencia Social del Ministerio de Trabajo e Higiene y Prevención Social (1944). Durante las décadas treinta y cuarenta estuvo adscrito a *El Tiempo* como redactor y reportero de

Liberal party. Writing propaganda was the intellectual dirty work of Colombian intellectual life. Osorio Lizarazo fed the constant churn of books, pamphlets, and editorials that the Liberal party sanctioned to glorify itself or defile its enemies. Among countless other texts, he wrote a defense of López Pumarejo's *Revolución en marcha* (*Ideas de izquierda: liberalismo, partido revolucionario* [1936]) and popular biographies of Liberal heroes ranging from the founding father Francisco de Paula Santander (*El fundador civil de la república [Santander]* [1940]) to the bandits José del Carmen Tejeiro and Antonio Jesús Ariza (*Fuera de la ley* [1947]). Indeed, this was the only sort of writing that ever brought Osorio Lizarazo any money in Colombia. His biography of Santander was his only book that had turned a significant profit. This came as a surprise to Osorio Lizarazo, who admitted in a letter that he had not put much effort into it. "Es lo único que me he da dado el trabajo intelectual...cuando menos trabajo desarrollé" (qtd. in Vanderhuck Arias 80).

Little historical research exists on the publishing industry or on reading in Colombia.⁴⁰ Thus, it is hard to say with certainty who actually read Osorio Lizarazo's novels. Calvo Isaza suggests that they would have appealed to readers from the popular classes—"lectores de las chicherías, las casas de vecindad, los talleres, los clubes populares, las industrias y las oficinas"—even though he admits that this sociological profile has yet to be confirmed (112). Although this is a logical supposition, a review of Osorio Lizarazo's fiction shows that he tended to see himself, or his subjects, as writing

manera intermitente desde 1936 hasta 1950. En esos años dirigió *El Diario Nacional* (1935), colaboró en *Acción Liberal* (1936), *Pan* (1937-1938), *Estampas* (1942), *La Razón* (1943) y dirigió el Radioperiódico Capitalino (1942); fue redactor de *Sábado* (1945), participó en la *Revista de las Indias* (1942-1947) y en *La revista de América* (1945 y 1950)" (122).

⁴⁰ See Vanderhuck Arias (70) for a list of articles on the publishing industry and the history of reading in Colombia.

in obscurity, without readers. The title of one of his biographical profiles makes this point succinctly: “Pablo Emilio Mancera, el hombre que durante 40 años publicó un periódico del que era el único lector” (*Novelas y crónicas* 326). This marks a sharp contrast with Arlt’s boast in the preface to *Los lanzallamas*, and underscores Osorio Lizarazo’s basic predicament as an intellectual in Bogotá. Despite the city’s growing population and the efforts of the Liberal governments to increase literacy rates, he could not make an independent living as a writer. His career depended on securing the patronage of the Liberal elite.

Allegories of Illegibility

Osorio Lizarazo dramatized his predicament in the novel *El criminal* (1935). The novel is about a young journalist at a tabloid newspaper in Bogotá. The journalist, whose name is Higinio González, lives in misery. His salary at the newspaper is so small that he can barely afford to rent a shabby room. His only hope, as he sees it, is that his boss will recognize his talent as a writer. Although his boss edits a tabloid newspaper, he is an intellectual. Indeed, he is “un esteta perfecto” (18). However, no matter how well he writes, González remains invisible to him. The problem, he decides, is his social class. His boss will not pay attention to him because he is poor. In fact, the only time the rich take notice of the poor is when they commit crimes. With this in mind, González reasons that he will have to “write” in order to be recognized as an intellectual. He then comes up with a plan: he will carry out a crime so sophisticated—“un crimen de vanguardia,” as he calls it—that Bogotá’s intellectuals will have no choice but to acknowledge his

intellectual superiority and welcome him as one of their own.

The plan is farfetched. For starters, González barely knows anything about vanguard art. An anarchist explained cubism to him one night at a tavern, but that is about it. Furthermore, González doubts that Bogotá's intellectuals would even know a vanguard gesture if they saw it. He considers burning down the National Library in Bogotá in order to create "un arte nuevo," but he desists because it would be incomprehensible to the intellectuals who might sponsor him. As he reasons, "la psicología de todos los incendiarios intelectuales precursores del arte nuevo, sólo sería analizada después de las dos generaciones, cuando surgieran los nuevos principios estéticos incontaminados con el pretérito, y el promotor no lograría obtener el beneficio inmediato que necesitaba" (229). Nonetheless, González elaborates a plan to kill his girlfriend in a way that he believes will reveal him as a vanguardist. He carries out the murder, but the press barely covers the crime, and reporters dismiss him as a vulgar criminal.

In this sense, González meets a very different fate than Remo Erdosain, the protagonist of *Los siete locos* (1931). In Arlt's novel, Erdosain conspires to take over the world. Although the conspiracy fails, he does get his wish to "'ser' a través de un crimen" (88). At the end of the novel, Erdosain seeks out a journalist—the novel's narrator, to whom Arlt refers as "el comentador"—to confess his crimes. Erdosain's confession, and subsequent suicide, will be front-page news on all the newspapers in Buenos Aires. Erdosain wins the notoriety that González, the protagonist of *El criminal*, craves. These novels reveal the difference between the cultural industries in Buenos Aires and Bogotá. Where Erdosain (and Arlt) could count on readers, González (and Osorio Lizarazo) could not.

In Osorio Lizarazo's first novel, *La casa de vecindad*, Osorio Lizarazo had articulated a similar complaint. An unemployed typographer narrates the novel. He tells the story of his recent life, beginning with his move, several months earlier, to a tenement house. He moved there because he could no longer afford to pay his rent. The novel, which was published in 1930, takes place in Bogotá. The story of the narrator's time in the tenement house is the diary of a slow descent into hell. The narrator is horrified by the vulgarity of his neighbors in the tenement house, but as his money runs out he finds it increasingly difficult to maintain his self-perceived distinction as a member of the middle class. The only relief that he finds is in writing his diary (the text that we are now reading) and in a nascent friendship with his neighbor, a young woman named Juana, and her small son. The narrator feels class solidarity with Juana; she also has middle-class manners, having learned them while working as a maid in the home of wealthy family in Bogotá. He also feels paternal affection for her. And, as it turns out, Juana is the daughter of a woman he used to love when he himself was a young man, which, according to the narrator, makes her almost his daughter. Eventually, the narrator finds a solution to his inexorable slide into poverty. He gives what little money he has left to his "daughter" Juana, so that she and her son may move out of the tenement house and have a shot at recovering a middle-class lifestyle. In other words, the narrator accelerates his descent, after having done everything to slow it, in order to save his "family." Having made this sacrifice, the narrator is no longer bothered that he will now have to wander Bogotá like "un miserable perro" (102), begging for alms.

Like Higinio González in *El criminal*, the protagonist of *La casa de vecindad* exists on the edge of literature. Typesetting, like journalism, is a sort of para-literary activity.

And, in *La casa de vecindad*, the narrator's virtues remain invisible. They only find expression in his diary, the most private of literary genres. In an ironic twist, the typographer in *La casa de vecindad* does get some readers, but they are readers of the wrong sort—readers who cannot help him get a job. In his own words, “Yo tengo, estoy seguro, mi tragedia escrita en la cara. Solo que no la descifran sino quienes pueden hacer mofa de ella y no quienes pueden ayudarme” (115). At any rate, the typographer begrudgingly acknowledges the intelligence of his popular “readers.” In a parenthetical remark elsewhere in the novel, he notes that “es asombrosa la capacidad que tiene el pueblo bogotano para darse cuenta en seguida cuenta completa de las cosas” (88).

Juana is the narrator's only sympathetic reader. She discovers his diary, in which she learns about all the sacrifices he has made so that she and her son might escape the tenement house, and her opinion of him is transformed. She tells him that he is “el único hombre bueno de la tierra. El único” (127). Nonetheless, Juana's correct reading does not help the narrator to get a job. In this sense, she is a poor substitute for the sort of reader the narrator really wants. Also, she anticipates the role that Higinio González's girlfriend Berta will play in one of the most pathetic scenes of *El criminal*, in which González takes her to a café so he has someone to whom he can “hablar en intelectual” (125).

To be sure, *La casa de vecindad* was a commercial failure. Of the 1000 copies that were published, fewer than 50 were sold (Calvo Isaza, “Literatura y nacionalismo” 80). In a letter to Osorio Lizarazo, the manager of the novel's publisher, Minerva, blamed the flop on Bogotá's bookstores having refused to stock it. The book ended up being sold in a single drugstore (Vanderhuck Arias 72-73), with the distance between the bookstore and the drugstore standing in for the symbolic distance between literature and mass culture.

In another novel, *Garabato* (1939), Osorio Lizarazo transposed the metaphor of illegibility to the realm of an early 20th century childhood in Bogotá. The novel tells the story of a boy, Juan Manuel Vásquez, who attends an elite public school for several years, but ends up dropping out after being tormented by his teachers and classmates because he comes from a poor family. As soon as he arrives to the school, Juan Manuel's classmates give him the nickname "Garabato," or "Scribble." Vásquez can enter the school only on the condition of erasing his identity—or rather by replacing it with a symbol for illegibility. Although Juan Manuel hates the nickname, he has no choice but to accept it. Eventually, he resigns himself to it, and even begins to sign his assignments with the nickname included: "Juan Manuel Vásquez, el Garabato" (82). Although the novel takes place in the 1910s, when the Conservative party was still in power, its continuity with Osorio Lizarazo's novels set in the 1930s suggests it is a critique of the Liberal Republic. And, more to the point, it is a critique of Osorio Lizarazo's place in it, given that the story of the novel's protagonist closely matches Osorio Lizarazo's own biography.

If *Garabato* discovers the origin of Osorio Lizarazo's plight in the past, *Barranquilla 2132* projects it to the future. The novel tells the story of Juan Francisco Rogers, an amateur scientist in Barranquilla who suspends his life in 1932 by putting himself in a deep freeze. One hundred years later, he is discovered and, after thawing, he returns to life. Back in 1932, Rogers had expected that future scientists would celebrate him as a genius if his experiment worked out. But in fact, in the Barranquilla of 2032, his discovery elicits only a passing curiosity in a few local journalists. Bewildered and dejected, Rogers drowns himself in the Atlantic Ocean. It makes sense that Osorio

Lizarazo would have set this science fiction novel in Barranquilla. It was the most modern city in Colombia at the time that he wrote the novel. Nonetheless, Osorio Lizarazo's personal project undermines his science fiction. As the novel advances, its speculations about the future are replaced by the documentation of Rogers's spiritual anguish. Its message is dystopian: one hundred years into the future, technological modernity will have only make the status quo worse.

Some of Osorio Lizarazo's alter egos do get noticed by their superiors, but only because these superiors want to steal credit for their work. In *Garabato*, for example, the editor of the school newspaper accepts an article from Juan Manuel, but then signs his name to it. In the unpublished novel *Barco a la deriva*—which Osorio Lizarazo wrote in the early 1960s, after having lived in Argentina for several years and worked as a propagandist for Perón—a similar fate befalls the protagonist, Carlos Gutiérrez, on a much grander scale. Gutiérrez is a Colombian writer who lives in Buenos Aires in the early 1950s. He writes some newspaper articles in praise of Perón's policies, and in short order the government offers him a job as a propagandist. His first major assignment is to ghostwrite an autobiography of Evita. After a short interview with Evita, he writes the book, and it goes on to be a bestseller. However, no one in Perón's government ever praises him or even thanks him for his work. Later he is assigned the task of answering the letters that Evita receives from poor Argentines. In *Barco a la deriva*, then, Carlos is condemned to live a phantom version of the life of a successful author. He writes a bestseller and answers fan mail, but only on the condition that his identity be erased.

Faltering Bodies

As I argued in the previous section, Osorio Lizarazo employs the metaphor of illegibility throughout his work to signal the social immobility of the poor, but especially his own immobility as an intellectual. In this section, I argue that this illegibility is rendered in the bodies of his characters. His characters tend to suffer from physical deformities or from disorders that cause them to lose control of their bodies. Their aberrational bodies signal their exclusion from a social order based on a notion of culture as civilized behavior.

Nowhere is the link between illegibility and physical aberration more evident than in the novel *Garabato*. In the last section, I argued that the novel's protagonist received his nickname, "Scribble," because he was poor, and thus "illegible" within the elitist space of the school. However, this interpretation passes over the more literal reason the boy, Juan Manuel Vásquez, receives his nickname: his puny body reminds one of his cruel classmates of a scribble. Vásquez's shame about his body is shared by many of Osorio Lizarazo's protagonists, who can never quite hide the scars of their social origin. Osorio Lizarazo's characters fail to achieve the facade of material well-being they need in order to have any chance at social advancement in Bogotá. In other words, they are failed simulators.

In the first half of the 20th century, as urban populations reached massive levels, intellectuals such as the Argentine hygienist José Ingenieros or the Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset fretted that members of the lower social classes were adopting the manners of the upper classes. This "simulation" made it harder to tell the social classes

apart. Osorio Lizarazo's characters take simulation as their credo. They believe that they must pass as middle class to have a shot at actually becoming middle class. However, tragically, they fail to pull it off. Their bodies bear the stigma (a word that appears repeatedly in Osorio Lizarazo's Catholic universe) of their poverty. For example, in the following passage from *Barco a la deriva*, Carlos Gutiérrez describes his failure to hide his poverty as a child in Bogotá:

Durante mi infancia fui [sic] siempre objeto de bromas y de burlas a causa de mis imperfecciones y de mi indigencia y traté de defenderme con actitudes de dignidad y de buenos modales, que resultaban visibles y fuera de lugar. Adquirí desde entonces la sensación de que mi voz tiene tonalidades discordantes, mis ademanes aparecen grotescos cuando pretendo que sean solemnes, mi sonrisa despierta la contagiosa hilaridad que provocaba la risa de Gwynplaine⁴¹, y mi comportamiento general no solo es inadecuado, sino que merece constantes censuras. (23)

In other cases, Osorio's characters gradually lose control of their bodies because of degenerative disease. In *El criminal*, for example, Higinio González begins to limp. He is diagnosed with syphilis, and he imagines, with the help of a borrowed book, the imminent ravages of the disease on his body. González takes perverse pleasure in speculating about the horrific forms his body will take on its path to destruction; his description of the disease's effects is so meticulous that it stretches to forty-four pages. He is most curious about what sort of monster he will be toward the end of his life. "No

⁴¹ Gwynplaine is the hero of Victor Hugo's 1869 novel *L'Homme qui rit* and the 1928 Hollywood adaptation, *The Man Who Laughs*, directed by the German expressionist Paul Leni.

seré ni siquiera una bestia[...],” he writes. “[I]ntentaré aproximarme las manos al rostro, al semi-rostro, untadas, acaso, de mis propios excrementos, que habrán salido de mi cuerpo sin sentir” (77).

In all of Osorio Lizarazo’s work, the poor descend this same arc, albeit at different speeds. First they devolve into animals,⁴² and then they mutate into monsters. This scale also followed a colonial racial hierarchy, with white humans at the top and black monsters at the bottom. In a chronicle from 1929, for example, Osorio Lizarazo sets up an opposition between “bellas y airosas damas de raza blanca o monstruosas biznietas de África” (qtd. in Neira Palacio 82⁴³). Degenerative diseases allow Osorio Lizarazo to show, at an accelerated speed, how poverty strips his characters of whatever meager cultural capital they have. In *El criminal*, for instance, when González fantasizes that syphilis will eventually cause him to lose control of his tongue, he notes that he will no longer be able to pronounce words such as “europeización” (69). That is to say, he will no longer have the minimum physical condition to utter words that might win him recognition as an intellectual.

The diseased or deformed bodies of Osorio Lizarazo’s characters drew attention to his own body. Like Higinio González, Osorio Lizarazo found out he had syphilis after developing a limp as a young man. This limp functioned as proof that he did in fact feel the pain of the poor. It was, as it were, a badge of authenticity for an intellectual who staked his claim to authority on his experience of misery. (In his later years, Osorio Lizarazo would wear a brace on his leg). It is not surprising, then, that so many

⁴² Sergio Ramírez Lamus lists Osorio Lizarazo’s animal metaphors in *Espectros de 1948: Osorio Lizarazo, Gaitán y el 9 de abril*, 159-162.

⁴³ Neira Palacio judges the quoted passage as evidence of Osorio Lizarazo’s “racismo invertido” (82). I am not sure why he qualifies the racism on display here as “inverted.”

intellectuals would mention Osorio Lizarazo's physical infirmity when they discussed him. In effect, his body was a part of his work. (Indeed, Mario Vargas Llosa would name a character based on Osorio Lizarazo "el cojo colombiano" in *La fiesta del chivo* [2000], his biographical novel of Rafael Trujillo.)

We might also interpret Osorio Lizarazo's image as a cripple in relation to his complaint about not being able to make a living on his own as a writer in Colombia. He resented having to depend on favors from the Liberal elite to get work, and his image invokes the figure of the beggar who exhibits his festering wounds on the church steps. Contrast this image with the virile self-image of Roberto Arlt, who, as I mentioned above, made his living writing for a large commercial audience in Buenos Aires. In his famous preface to *Los lanzallamas*, Arlt offers the following *ars poetica*: "Crearemos nuestra literatura no conversando continuamente de literatura, sino escribiendo en orgullosa soledad libros que encierran la violencia de un 'cross' a la mandíbula. Si, un libro tras otro, y 'que los eunucos bufen'" (6). Arlt figures the commercial writer as a boxer, and opposes him to the bourgeois intellectual, whom he renders a eunuch. Osorio Lizarazo, in turn, figures himself as a wretch, in implicit opposition to the healthy bodies of the Colombian elite—or, more specifically, in opposition to the Liberal party's leaders, whom of course were also known as *hombres fuertes*, or strongmen.

Other Proletarian Intellectuals: The Bohemian and the Superman

Osorio Lizarazo asserts that social mobility is impossible in Bogotá, and that the poor are condemned to beg from the rich, himself included. However, there are two

exceptions to this rule in his work. One is the anarchist Biófilo Panclasta and the other is the lawyer and politician Jorge Eliécer Gaitán. They were also poor intellectuals in Bogotá, but both were able to avoid Osorio Lizarazo's plight. A brief discussion of their place within Osorio Lizarazo's work will elucidate further his own role as an intellectual.

Biófilo Panclasta was a writer and anarchist. He was born Vicente Rojas Lizcano, in the department of Santander del Norte, in 1879. He lived in Colombia until the turn of century, when, after fighting in One Thousand Day War, between the Liberal and Conservative parties, he moved to Buenos Aires, where he became an anarchist. He would go on to live, and be imprisoned, throughout the world, including Russia. He eventually returned to Colombia and settled in Bogotá, where he met Osorio Lizarazo. Panclasta appears throughout Osorio Lizarazo's work, including in the novels *El criminal* and *Barco a la deriva*, and he is the subject of a condensed biography that he wrote for the newspaper *El Tiempo* in 1940.

Panclasta is a model of intellectual integrity for Osorio Lizarazo. He chooses to live a life of poverty rather than compromise his principles by working for the state, and thus achieves a sort of autonomy. The foundational moment, according to Osorio Lizarazo's biography, occurred when Panclasta was still a teenager. He had moved to Venezuela and gotten mixed up in politics. Juan Vicente Gómez took possession of the state, and he gave Panclasta an ultimatum: either work for him or go to prison. Panclasta, who still went by his given name in those days, chose prison: "y cuando lo puso a elegir entre el consulado de Venezuela en Génova, para comprarlo, y para comenzar a formar con él la cauda de intelectuales que después elogiaran su ferocidad y trataran de convertir en virtudes sus crímenes y el presidio, Lizcano prefirió el presidio." This moment,

continues Osorio Lizarazo, is “donde empieza la verdadera aventura. Aquí se hizo anarquista. Se llamó Panclasta. (Pan: todo. Clasta: destructor)” (364-365).

For Osorio Lizarazo, Panclasta’s refusal of the sinecure from Gómez is a heroic gesture. Although Panclasta will spend his life in poverty, Osorio Lizarazo does not render him as another of his poor devils. Instead, he makes him out to be the ideal bohemian intellectual, an itinerant hobo saint who would rather starve than compromise his principles. “[S]u condición,” writes Osorio Lizarazo, was “casi heroica, asombrosamente romántica y deliciosamente inconforme” (369).

Panclasta’s condition elevates him to a realm shared by Osorio Lizarazo’s other heroes. Indeed, he shares adventures with them. For example, according to Osorio Lizarazo, Panclasta escaped a Siberian prison with Vladimir Lenin; and later he befriended Maxim Gorky, who would baptize him “Biófilo”—“lover of life”—after watching him throw a starfish back to the sea in Italy. For Osorio Lizarazo, the globetrotting Latin American modernists are rich dandies. But Panclasta practices a lumpen cosmopolitanism closer to his sensibilities as an intellectual.

Nonetheless, Panclasta’s example is an unreachable ideal. Osorio Lizarazo cannot bring himself to embrace poverty as a space of intellectual independence. This failure is dramatized in the unpublished novel *Barco a la deriva*. In the novel, Osorio Lizarazo casts Panclasta as a sort of Nietzschean superman, who tries to convince the protagonist, Carlos Gutiérrez, that he should give up his bourgeois aspirations. He even goes so far as to sleep with Gutiérrez’s wife so that he will abandon her and get on with the business of changing his life. Yet the sacrifice is too great. Although Gutiérrez admires Panclasta, he is too afraid of suffering to be his protégé. With the figure of Biófilo Panclasta, then,

Osorio Lizarazo shows that poverty can be a source of autonomy, but only for the most radical of intellectuals. He celebrates the bohemian model, but also admits that he is not willing, or able, to make the sacrifices to live up to it.

Jorge Eliécer Gaitán is another anomaly in Osorio Lizarazo's work. Gaitán, of course, was the Liberal leader whose murder on April 9, 1948, set off riots that razed half of Bogotá and which exacerbated a civil war between Liberal and Conservative militias that had begun in the Colombian countryside in 1946. Osorio Lizarazo must have known Gaitán since at least the 1920s, when both of them were involved in the small scene of young intellectuals in Bogotá, and he worked for him when he ran for president in the mid-1940s, editing the newspaper, *Jornada*.

As I mentioned above, Osorio Lizarazo cut ties with Gaitán in 1946 and moved to the Dominican Republic to write propaganda for Trujillo, before moving to Argentina in 1948. In 1952, Osorio Lizarazo published a biography of Gaitán, titled *Gaitán: vida, muerte y permanente presencia*, which became a minor bestseller, as well as a novel about the riots on April 9, titled *El día del odio*. In what follows, I will focus on the biography. In *Gaitán*, Osorio Lizarazo tells the story of a poor intellectual who is very much like himself in terms of his social origin—he and Gaitán were born the same year, and grew up in the same neighborhood of Bogotá—but who managed to climb the social ladder. However, Gaitán's case does not weaken Osorio Lizarazo's pessimism about social mobility in Bogotá so much as stand as the exception that proves the rule.

In Osorio Lizarazo's version, Gaitán suffers the same sort of deprivations that he did as a child. If Gaitán had access to books, it was only because his father ran a used bookstore. However, while suffering cowers the young Osorio Lizarazo, it emboldens

Gaitán, and by the time he is an adult, he possesses nearly superhuman levels of will and ambition. It is only because of Gaitán's freakish drive that he manages to climb his way out of poverty. The odds were stacked against un-pedigreed intellectuals, who had to struggle just to make it as rank-and-file political hacks. In Osorio Lizarazo's words, "sólo a fuerza de coraje podían salir adelante para aumentar después el doliente censo del proletariado intelectual, indignos de confianza, o incorporarse a los diminutos menesteres de la política sin ideales propios, al servicio sucesivo de todos los vencedores" (46). Yet Gaitán's self-discipline never wavers. He lives as an ascetic, denying himself all pleasures in his pursuit of social advancement. In short, for Gaitán, "[t]odo fue abnegación, sacrificio y simulación" (85). Gaitán's demands on himself are so high, in fact, that he needs a stronger body to support them. He thus commits himself to a punishing daily workout: "Mientras todo el mundo se desperezaba con las sábanas, temeroso del friecillo bogotano, él trotaba cerro arriba, como si todo su ser mantuviese una tremenda aspiración ascensional" (215).

Throughout the biography, Osorio Lizarazo emphasizes that Gaitán was financially independent. He refused categorically to accept financial help from others, preferring to wait until he could earn the money himself. Even when he was the *jefe máximo* of the Liberal party, Gaitán continued to practice law so that he could pay for his own political campaigns. For Osorio Lizarazo, this independence was a key to his success. As he observes, "[o]tros han triunfado también, pero han tenido que recabar auxilios que después los atarían para el resto de su vida a una gratitud implacable, y estarían cohibidos para seguir sus rutas esenciales, porque en cualquier momento les enrostrarían aquellos socorros y les llamarían ingratos y desleales" (83). In Osorio's telling, then, Gaitán is a

self-made man. This incredible feat is what allows him to rise out of his social class and to inaugurate a new type of politics in Bogotá.

On the one hand, Gaitán proves Osorio Lizarazo's point about how hard it is to break into the intellectual caste in Bogotá. If it was hard for Gaitán to do, then it was impossible for mere mortals. On the other hand, though, Gaitán offered Osorio Lizarazo a new way to imagine his role as an intellectual. Osorio Lizarazo had dedicated himself to denouncing his lack of opportunities in the Liberal Republic, but in Gaitán he found the possibility of a new order.

In effect, Gaitán proposed to do what the Liberal leaders cynically feigned to do in order to win the loyalty of the popular classes. He really did seek to incorporate them to the political process through education and the democratization of high culture. To this end, Osorio Lizarazo takes care to inventory Gaitán's efforts to instruct Bogotá's poor from the time he was a university student. Osorio Lizarazo's characterization of Gaitán as an organic intellectual of the popular classes allows him to revise his position on writing propaganda. While he had long complained about it, he describes it in *Gaitán* as a form of altruism. He is compelled to do it because he believes in Gaitán.

In *Gaitán*, then, Osorio Lizarazo revises his authorial self-image. He makes himself out to be a noble servant rather than a wretch. Key to this switch is the notion that Osorio Lizarazo is no longer working to sustain the status quo but rather to transform it. In this regard, he and Gaitán are identical. Indeed, in the following passage, Osorio Lizarazo presents himself as an extension of the populist leader:

Gaitán tendría su chusma, pero nada más. Y no podría hacer nada con ella. Pero uno

de sus amigos más leales, cuyo afecto había comenzado en la infancia común, no vinculado a su gratitud por ningún beneficio ni empleo sino por la identidad de su ideología y por el paralelismo del proceso intelectual, y cuya vida, en un campo de acción limitado por la timidez y por la angustia, había sido una lucha interminable por la justicia, lucha que despertaba el recelo y menosprecio de todos los grandes, el escritor J. A. Osorio Lizarazo, fundó el 28 de mayo un seminario al que denominó ‘Jornada’, para el servicio del movimiento, aún cuando Gaitán pensaba que tal publicidad sería imposible[...]Gaitán desde la tribuna[...]y el silencioso escritor en su hebdomadario, dieron expresión a la abrumadora realidad que soportaba el angustiado pueblo. (244-45)

Nonetheless, this was not the first time that Osorio Lizarazo had imagined such a relation to a leader. In *Garabato*, he imagined a similar situation albeit in very different circumstances. When the protagonist of the novel, Juan Manuel, is still a boy, he spends some time in the country with his mother’s family. His grandfather, don Rodolfo, puts him to work on the farm, and he feels happy for the first time in his life. Don Rodolfo is a benevolent authoritarian. He establishes, and keeps, order, and Juan Manuel grows stronger by his side. At one point, Juan Manuel marvels at how much he has changed since he has been living in the country.

At his school in Bogotá, he notes, he had been like one of the oxen on the farm nicknamed “El Esclavo,” whose castration he had witnessed. On the farm, however, he gets to help out with the castrating. If it were up to him, he later comments, he would have never returned to Bogotá. He would have preferred to stay on the farm with his

grandfather, “ayudándole a castrar los terneros, a amansar los potros, a arar los campos, a recoger los frutos, adquiriendo con esta labor una felicidad más perfecta y visible que la de las investigaciones eruditas bajo la dirección de uno de esos santos sacerdotes que dirigían el colegio” (260). Juan Manuel’s discussion of his role on the farm anticipates Osorio Lizarazo’s description of his role in Gaitán’s campaign. He helps Gaitán to tame the People like he helped don Rodolfo to tame “El Esclavo” on his farm.

Osorio Lizarazo never imagines himself as an independent writer in the sense that Arlt did but rather as a noble strongman’s right hand. Nonetheless, Gaitán allowed Osorio Lizarazo to envision himself as a militant rather than a lackey. Although he would not address the masses through the market, he would help to cultivate them through a populist state. He was not only a noble servant to Gaitán; he was also a traitor to the bipartisan elite. This notion of betrayal as subversion would help Osorio Lizarazo to reconcile writing propaganda with a twisted notion of autonomy. Indeed, Osorio Lizarazo would re-write the history of his career in his novel *Barco a la deriva* as one of righteous subversion.

In the novel, the protagonist, Carlos Gutiérrez, describes himself as having “una estructura moral que me imposibilitó definitivamente para mostrarme servil ni adulator, y que me indujo siempre a mirar al poderoso como a un usurpador, como a un déspota, y a no humillarme ante él, aun cuando la vida me colocara bajo sus planes” (qtd. in Calvo Isaza 135). Osorio Lizarazo reinforced this identity in an editorial change to the manuscript of *Barco a la deriva*. During Gutiérrez’s first years as a journalist, he wrote under a pseudonym. In the typed manuscript, Osorio Lizarazo had chosen “Ariel” as the pseudonym. However, he later went back and changed it by hand to “Yago” (Calvo Isaza

62). While Osorio Lizarazo may have once simulated an aristocratic spirit, like that of Ariel in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (or in the more immediate referent of José Enrique Rodó's essay *Ariel* [1900]), he now finds in Iago, the treacherous advisor from Shakespeare's *Othello*, a more appropriate figure for himself. When Gutiérrez betrays Perón, Osorio Lizarazo presents it as a moral act by a writer who refuses to compromise his principles.

Conclusion

From the moment that Osorio Lizarazo appeared on the scene in Bogotá, in the early 1920s, he made his fellow intellectuals wonder whether what he did was on the inside or the outside of literature, and whether or not his cultural capital was legitimate. They neither rejected him nor accepted him, preferring to keep him at the edges of the cultural institutions of the Liberal Republic, such as the Ministry of Education or the journal *La Revista de Indias*. Osorio Lizarazo was, above all, a *strange* presence among Liberal intellectuals, as suggested by Téllez's repetition of the word "extraño" in the passage I quoted from his review of Osorio Lizarazo's novel *El día del odio*.

In this chapter, I have argued that Osorio Lizarazo was a new type of intellectual in Colombia. As a professional writer, he occupied an ambiguous position in the cultural field, and he exploited this position in order to critique the existing literary institutions but also to complain of his exclusion from them. In the second part of the chapter, I explored some of the ways in which Osorio Lizarazo responded to his predicament in his chronicles and novels. Although the strategies he used to improve his status, such as

appealing to experience as a form of expertise, were not uncommon in contemporary Latin American contexts, his “case” is unusual insofar that the lack of a specialized print market in Bogotá obliged him to seek the patronage of intellectuals in his political party rather than build a commercial readership. And while the Liberal governments of the 1930s and 1940s in Colombia took, as their mandate, the incorporation of the masses through cultural programs, Osorio Lizarazo denounced his exclusion from the elite cultural and political institutions of Colombia. In this sense, his work suggests that the effects of cultural democratization were limited during the Liberal Republic, if social mobility is a measure of such a program.

If the importance of Osorio Lizarazo in Colombian cultural history has been downplayed, it is not only because his writing did not conform to the conservative standards of its literary institution. It is also because Osorio Lizarazo reveals the partisan underbelly of the capital’s cultural field. Osorio Lizarazo’s career as a propagandist did not start after he left Colombia, but rather in the early 1920s. His steady production of pamphlets and books for the Liberal party—what might be called partisan mass culture—undermines any narrative of modernity as a process that somehow moved past the conflict between the Liberal and Conservative parties in Colombia. Critical attempts to separate Osorio Lizarazo’s later period as a propagandist from his body of work elide this fact. Future research on the intellectual history of the Liberal Republic might therefore continue to explore more ways in which the “minor” intellectuals reveal the contradictions of a modernization process in which political parties still dominated the cultural field.

Chapter Three

Crooked Cosmopolitans: The Chroniclers of the *Revolución en Marcha*

In 1934, Alfonso López Pumarejo was elected president of Colombia. According to the historian Marco Palacios, this moment marks “the creation of mass politics” in Colombia (*Between Legitimacy and Violence* 100). The 1920s had been marred by social and political crisis. Between World War I and the Great Depression, Colombia had enjoyed unprecedented growth because of a boom in coffee prices (Palacios, *Between Legitimacy and Violence* 51). The Conservative party, which had held power since 1886, failed to adapt to the changes wrought by the subsumption of Colombia to the world economy. One such change was a sharp rise in population in Colombia’s major cities. López Pumarejo, a member of the Liberal party, understood that the urban masses were a force that could not be ignored. He embarked on a program of social reforms in order to incorporate them into the cities, and to win their allegiance to the Liberal party. This program, which López Pumarejo called *La revolución en marcha*, was controversial among the political and economic elite of Colombia. Although they agreed that something had to be done about the new urban working class, many recoiled at efforts to make the country’s institutions more democratic. This controversy would build over the following decade and a half, and culminate in the assassination of the Liberal populist Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, in 1948.

What effects did the creation of mass politics have on intellectuals in Colombia? How did they respond to the transformation of the cities in which they lived? To date, the answers to those questions have been surprisingly dull. Conservative intellectuals reliably denounced the massification of Colombian cities as a sign of decadence; Liberal intellectuals, in turn, reliably toed their party's line about the importance of incorporating the masses to political and social institutions. The Liberals's tendency to stay on message was surely strengthened by the fact that nearly all of them were working for the government. Indeed, most were helping to run cultural programs at the Ministry of Education. López Pumarejo understood cultural dissemination to be a key part of incorporating the masses to the cities, and Liberal intellectuals were in charge of these programs. They had good reason, then, to avoid the controversy. Indeed, the urban masses are absent in large part from their reflections on the popular classes. Instead, the Ministry of Education's annual reports focused on the effects of their programs in rural Colombia, and its cultural journal, *La revista de Indias*, published research on regional folklore. As a result, the intellectual history of this period—to which historians refer as the Liberal Republic—fails to register any major disturbance. For example, Renán Silva's book *República liberal, intelectuales y cultural popular* (2007) argues that a new relation was forged between intellectuals and the popular classes during the Liberal Republic, but it concedes that the structure of this relation continued to be quite traditional, with the intellectuals leading the popular classes from elite positions within the state.

In this chapter, I argue that the age of mass politics in fact brought with it a more profound change in the relation between intellectuals and the masses. To prove this point, however, it will be necessary to expand Silva's understanding of who belonged to the

class of intellectuals. With that end in mind, I study four newspaper chroniclers who were active in Bogotá in the 1930s: José Joaquín Jiménez, Gilberto Owen, Emilia Pardo Umaña, and Enrique Restrepo. As chroniclers, they formed part of a cultural industry that was emerging in Bogotá along with the rise in the city's population. Perhaps because their mandate was to entertain a broad public, scholars of intellectual history have ignored them. However, the mandate to entertain did not strip their work of self-awareness. On the contrary, these chroniclers analyze mass culture at the same that they produce it. In their ironic treatment of mass culture, they seek the complicity of a new middle-class public and stake out new positions as intellectuals.

To understand the relation of these writers to mass culture, it is helpful to keep in mind the history of the chronicle. Although the genre had an important precedent in the *cuadro de costumbre*, it emerged in its modern form in Latin American newspapers in approximately the 1880s.⁴⁴ On its surface, the chronicle is a superficial commercial genre. According to Susana Rotker, it is “una suerte de *arqueología del presente* que se dedica a los hechos menudos y cuyo interés central no es informar sino divertir” (106). However, as she observed, following Ángel Rama and Julio Ramos, it is also a genre that poets staked out as an independent space for literature in the newspaper. In Ramos's succinct formulation, “La crónica, ligada a la historia del folletín, es el lugar que la literatura ocupa en el periódico. Es un lugar sujeto, en parte, a las exigencias de la creciente industria cultural. Desde ahí, sin embargo, la literatura enuncia con insistencia el proyecto autonómico—su utopía, valga la contradicción, institucional” (177). Most famously, *modernistas* such as Rubén Darío, Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera, and José Martí

⁴⁴ See González (1984) and Monsiváis (1981) for more on the genealogy of the chronicle.

used the chronicle to study capitalist culture. “Más que en ningún otro espacio discursivo de la época,” writes Ramos, “en la crónica la literatura enuncia, denuncia, los discursos que forman sus exteriores: la información, la tecnología, la racionalidad mercantil, la crisis de la experiencia en la cultura de masas” (178). This is a key point: the chronicle is not merely a genre that allows writers to affirm the authority of literature as a form of specialized knowledge but also a genre that is especially apt for picking up the frequencies of everyday modern life. To cite Ramos again, “la crónica, en tanto forma *menor*, posibilita el procesamiento de zonas de la cotidianidad capitalista que en aquella época de intensa modernización rebasaban el horizonte temático de las formas canónicas y codificadas” (112).

These remarks on the chronicle are useful for explaining why it rose to prominence in Colombia in the 1930s. The coffee boom of the 1920s, which brought with it an influx of foreign currency and commodities, transformed Colombian cities. There was a need to process new zones of the everyday life of capitalism. The importance of the genre would be registered by Darío Archury Valenzuela, one of the intellectuals who were in charge of the program of cultural dissemination at the Ministry of Education during López Pumarejo’s first term. In 1936, he edited an anthology of contemporary Colombian chronicles titled *El libro de los cronistas*. In the book’s introduction, he proposed that the chronicle was doing no less than registering the transcendence of the Latin American people to universal history: “Claro está que la crónica dispone de materiales menos transcendentales, más burdos, más accesibles y de menos altitud que la historia. De aquí que se pueda decir—talvez con menoscabo de la exactitud, pero nunca de la buena fe— que en cierto modo se está escribiendo historia nuestra casi desde el día en que el cronista

de periódico hizo su aparición entre nosotros como prelude de la fauna de los historiadores” (9). Later in the book, Achury Valenzuela would exalt the peculiar expertise of chroniclers: “Comentar el suceso cotidiano local o extranjero presupone en quien lo hace una base de conocimientos y de información que el público generalmente no sabe apreciar debidamente. El comentador vive en un constante estado de receptividad y de espera, dispuesto a vestir la noticia que se le da monda y desnuda con los parametros festivos de zumba o con la clámide severa de la crítica cejjunta” (147). Although Achury Valenzuela neglected to include any of the chroniclers I discuss below in his anthology, the publication of *El libro de los cronistas* suggests that López Pumarejo’s team at the Ministry of Education recognized to some degree the importance of the genre for their modernizing campaign.

Ramos emphasizes that the *modernistas* wrote for an increasingly massive readership. In another recent book, Viviane Mahieux argues that the Latin American chroniclers of the 1920s were even more sensitive to the fact that they were writing for a mass public. In her words, they “consolidated their writing personas through an acute awareness of their readership, responding to—and encouraging—an urban public’s growing state for leisure reading” (*Urban Chroniclers* 22). Mahieux sees this “accessibility” as one of “the characteristics of a thriving middlebrow culture” (159). She borrows the term “middlebrow” from Faye Hammill, who used it to distinguish an “intermediary field of literary production” (*Women* 7) between modernism and mass culture in early twentieth-century U.S. literature. In his influential theory of modernism, Andreas Huyssen characterized modernism as a reaction formation to mass culture.⁴⁵ Hammill’s addition of

⁴⁵ See Huyssen (1986).

a third term to Huyssen's opposition illuminates a style that borrowed from modernism and mass culture but which distinguished itself from both. Its most characteristic approach was parodic, and it "provided a vantage point from which high culture, popular culture, and middlebrow culture itself could be critically observed" (12).

Hammill affirms that middlebrow culture appeals to readers's desires for social distinction. As she notes, "[i]t addresses a reader who is literate in both high and popular culture, and who possesses or aspires to wit, discriminating tastes, style and current knowledge ("In Good Company" 128). The middlebrow had cross-class appeal, but as Hammill observes, it held special allure for the middle class. Mahieux follows Hammill in linking middlebrow culture to the middle class. She argues that "[t]he chronicle of the 1920s, like the self-fashioning of chroniclers as accessible intellectuals who both guided and identified with their publics, was inseparable from the articulation of an urban middle-class culture" (159). This claim holds true for the chronicles published in Bogotá in the 1930s. In a recent article, Ricardo López dates the formation of middle-class identities in Bogotá to the 1930s and 1940s.⁴⁶ To be sure, López Pumarejo's populism, timid as it may have been, was based on the ideology of upward mobility, which, as José Luis Romero observed, is "consustanciada con la sociedad liberal y el sistema capitalista" (386). The chronicles of Owen, Jiménez, Pardo Umaña, and Restrepo played a role in this process. In their brevity, irony, and eye for novelty, they constituted a form of modern culture that was missing from the official culture promoted by the Ministry of Education and from the late *modernismo* celebrated by the Nuevos. In what follows, I will review

⁴⁶ See López (2011).

some of the strategies these chroniclers used to figure modernity for middle-class Colombian readers and to build identities for themselves as intellectuals.

José Joaquín Jiménez's Crooked Cosmopolitanism

Jiménez began to cover the crime beat for *El Tiempo* in 1932. His basic duty as the newspaper's *cronista de policía*, or crime chronicler, was to summarize the daily police report. However, he did much more than write summaries. He narrated the crimes in melodramatic language and cracked sarcastic jokes about them. Also, he would often embellish his chronicles with guest performances by recurring fictional characters. Jiménez's chronicles became popular among readers of *El Tiempo*, and his duties at the newspaper soon multiplied. In 1934, he began to write chronicles about a broader range of urban topics. These chronicles followed the general rules of two traditional genres of the urban chronicle, the *cuadro de costumbres* and the exposé of poverty, but they were every bit as ironic as Jiménez's police chronicles. In late 1936 or early 1937, Jiménez abandoned journalism to work as a civil servant. He returned to journalism, in 1938, with a pseudonym that stylized his given name—"Ximénez." However, he worked more as a humorist than as a chronicler for the rest of his short career. (He would die of pneumonia, aged 34, in 1946.)

Criticism on Jiménez's wildly embellished chronicles is split into two camps. One group sees them as evidence that Colombian journalism was still in its amateur age in the 1930s. Daniel Samper Pizano makes this point succinctly. As he wrote in 1996, "en aquellos tiempos bohemios del periodismo colombiano esta clase de ingenios eran bien

recibidos y bien celebrados” (27). Felipe González Toledo, a crime chronicler himself, first made this point in 1956.⁴⁷ He noted then that while Jiménez was sending the Bogotá police chief on wild goose chases with made-up stories, urban crime was already growing into the menace we know today: “Fue algo así como el primer aliento, los primeros pasos de ese monstruo [el crimen], ese temible ‘Frankenstein’ que crece y se robustece, vive a su gusto y prospera en las grandes urbes modernas” (188). Besides Samper Pizano, Juan José Hoyos (1996) and Maryluz Vallejo Mejía (2006) borrow González Toledo’s interpretation of Jiménez (although none of them bother to cite him). Jiménez, then, was the last twinkle of the bohemian days of national journalism. According to Vallejo Mejía, professional crime reporting in Colombia would begin with González Toledo himself. His chronicles from the 1940s, which also took place in Bogotá, modernized the genre: “Por fin le dio un tratamiento riguroso y profesional, ajeno a las invenciones y lucimientos literarios que le imprimieron *Ximénez* y otros colegas” (231).

The dissenting opinion on Jiménez belongs to Andrés Vergara Aguirre, who has argued recently that Jiménez was already practicing a type of modern journalism. In his reading, Jiménez was a tabloid writer: he employed a sensationalist style to appeal to a growing readership of working-class readers. Like the European serial novelists of the 19th century, he sought to “conmover y entretener al lector, y sobre todo [...] jugar con sus miedos y su curiosidad” (Vergara Aguirre 210). However, Vergara Aguirre also describes Jiménez’s early chronicles as “bitter” (218), and compares them to those of his

⁴⁷ González Toledo, Felipe. “Cuando la crónica roja tenía que ser inventada.” The chronicle was first published in the magazine *Sucesos* (24 may 1956), and it was re-published in a 1994 anthology of González Toledo’s crime chronicles, titled *20 crónicas policíacas: Las memorias de un gran reportero sobre medio siglo de crímenes en Bogotá*. See González Toledo (1996).

dour contemporary José Osorio Lizarazo, whose work I discussed in Chapter Two. He suggests that Jiménez did not turn to “humor and irony” (218) until later in his career.

In what follows, I will build on Vergara Aguirre’s claim that Jiménez was writing for an audience that extended beyond the traditional elite, yet I will argue that Jiménez’s early work was comic rather than bitter. Jiménez did borrow strategies from the serial novel, as Vergara Aguirre suggests, but he did so ironically. To account for this irony, I will read Jiménez’s work in the tradition of the Latin American chronicle. Like the serial novel, the chronicle is defined by its mix of reporting and literature. However, it has a self-awareness about its status as a literary commodity that the serial novel lacks. In what follows, then, I will show how Jiménez struck the ironic pose of an urban chronicler.

Although Jiménez surely did tell “historias truculentas” in the style of serial novels (Vergara Aguirre 28), he did not seek merely to titillate his readers. He also tried to make them laugh. He sought their complicity as he used sensationalist genres, such as the serial novel, to mock the anxieties of Conservative intellectuals about modernization. To be sure, there was a partisan complicity between Jiménez and his readers. Even though Jiménez’s relationship with his readers was mediated by the commercial demand to sell more newspapers, it was not removed from the partisan identities that divided Colombian social life. Jiménez grew up in a Liberal family, and he was working for a Liberal newspaper (and, later in his career, for Liberal magazines). Although he was not beholden to the party in any direct way, his satire of Conservatives appealed to Liberal prejudices.

Mahieux notes that the Latin American chroniclers of the 1920s and 1930s insisted less on the autonomy of their literary practice than the *modernistas* had. She cites

the example of the Argentine chronicler and novelist Roberto Arlt, who made it a point of pride that he made his living as a writer. Jiménez went even further than Arlt to demystify his writing. He described it as a “folletón sin prejuicios ni pretensiones literarias” (*Crónicas* 14). And he defined himself in opposition to men of letters. In his words, he was nothing but “un cronista, un reportero vil, un escritorzuelo [...] estúpido e ingenuo” (qtd. in Vergara Aguirre, “Ximénez: tragicomedia de un reportero” 66). Jiménez’s frivolity was reinforced by the caricatures of him that sometimes accompanied his chronicles. The caricatures exaggerated the size of his nose and stretched out his tall and skinny frame. They gave him the awkward look of a teenager in the middle of a growth spurt. Jiménez added to his boyish image by claiming to be four years younger than he really was⁴⁸. He also alluded to his shoddy appearance in his chronicles. In a story about the cafés of Bogotá, for example, Jiménez recorded the surprise of a waitress after he asked her for an interview: “Una crónica?...mala apariencia de ‘periodista’ tiene usted, señor...Los que yo conozco son gentes serias, menos altas, un poquitín más morenas. Pero vaya! De la otra mesa me están llamando. Lo que quiera, pídale ya, y después hablamos...” (“Tabernas” 7).

Jiménez’s self-trivialization exempted him from the solemn duties of a man of letters. He did not have to carry the burden of instructing his readers. Instead, he addressed them with the conspiratorial mirth of a gossip. Here, for example, he fills in his reader on the latest news from the Bogotá underworld: “No sabe usted, lector, quien es el Gatillo? Nada menos que uno de los más conspicuos cacos de esta urbe, estafador, pendenciero

⁴⁸ Andrés Ospina discovered that Jiménez used to lie about his age while researching his biographical novel *Ximénez* (2013). According to Ospina, his parents altered his birth certificate when he was a child so that his date of birth would no longer fall before their date of marriage (37). The true year of his birth was 1911, not 1915.

prominente, hampón y pésima ficha” (“Ayer llegaron los cadáveres”). And Jiménez was always quick to anticipate the reader’s reactions. Here, for example, he imagines an incredulous reaction to the news that a woman had been attacked by her former lover: “¡Hola! preguntará usted lector amable. Pues sí, hirióla de gravísima puñalada en el flanco derecho” (qtd. in Vergara Aguirre, “Ximénez: tragicomedia de un reportero” 63). Yet that is not to say that there were not certain street smarts to be gained by keeping up with the crime beat. For example, in a chronicle dated December 8, 1934, Jiménez reported that an “asiduo lector” had almost—but not quite—escaped a mugging because he had recognized the attackers from one of Jiménez’s recent chronicles. Jiménez’s amused tone in many of his chronicles shows him to be at ease with his role as an entertainer.

Jiménez narrated the news as if it were a gangster film. For example, he once described a judicial court in Bogotá as “un cinema de crímenes y casos minúsculos en perpetua sucesión” (*Crónicas* 143). He imagined the rest of the city in the same way—as a theater playing crime films on an endless loop. Vergara Aguirre has shown that Jiménez borrowed ideas from Charles Dickens and the German novelist Bruno Traven.⁴⁹ However, he neglects to mention that Hollywood had a much larger presence in Jiménez’s crime chronicles than European novels. Jiménez borrowed from the melodramatic tropes of gangster films, which emerged as a genre in the early 1930s,⁵⁰ just as he was beginning his career, to narrate the crime of Bogotá. Indeed, Jiménez was writing for a public that was already in the habit of going to the movies. By the end of the

⁴⁹ See Vergara Aguirre (2011).

⁵⁰ Three foundational films of the genre—*Little Caesar*, *Public Enemy*, and *Scarface*—were released between 1931 and 1932.

1920s, several theaters had begun to operate in the capital, and they showed more than three thousand screenings a year, with an average of 1.5 million spectators, in a city whose population was a mere 300,000 (Álvarez Gallego, qtd. in Castro-Gómez 242-243).

Jiménez also borrowed from the sensationalist stories about organized crime in US newspapers. Indeed, he would suggest that crime in Bogotá was already as bad as the crime that *El Tiempo*'s readers saw in the movies or read about in the news cables.

Jiménez would use this trope many times. For example, in the following chronicle from 1934, he proposed that Bogotá's austere image needed an update. It was no longer "the Athens of South America," as an older generation of intellectuals, known as the Centenarios, would have it, but rather a "branch office of Chicago":

Bogotá vive hoy en un estado de completa inseguridad. Atracos a diario. Asaltos. Robos en las calles centrales y a pleno día. La audacia de los rateros osbrepasa [sic] los límites de lo intolerable. En la semana pasada, el presbítero Cerón, don Manuel Sánchez y otros muchos fueron víctimas de robos cuantiosísimos perpetrados en condiciones nunca vistas anteriormente en esta ciudad apacible y tranquila. Fuéa del título de Atenas Sudamericana, centenarista y gastado, Bogotá podría exhibir hoy, con respaldo eficiente para ello, el de Sucursal de Chicago, paraje feliz, paraíso de maleantes y gangsters. La policía o nada puede hacer, o nada hace. No hay servicio de vigilancia. El detectivismo apenas logra contrarrestar en un mínimo porcentaje la actividad de los cacos. Y sólo se tratara de robos comunes. Pero es el caso que nadie que tenga aprecio por su vida podrá, si así siguen las cosas transitar por las calles de la ciudad. Ayer no más, para

muestra, registráronse cuatro atracos y un asalto de primera categoría. Fuera de multitud de robos, estafas, asaltos pequeños, cuya relación nos llevaría una edición entera. (“Un audaz asalto” 1)

Jiménez populated the underworld of Bogotá with a cast of gangsters who rivaled Al Capone, Baby Face Nelson, and Pretty Boy Floyd in their flamboyance and audacity. Some of their names were Mediabola, Caremango, el Manchu, el Sietepelos, Cantimploro, el Curotieso, la Muelona Ojo de Chispa, Mascahuesos, and el Chiflamicas. However, his most famous gangster was Rascamuelas. Rascamuelas appeared in Jiménez’s crime chronicles numerous times between 1934 and 1935. He was a pastiche of the gangster antihero, and Jiménez made a running gag out of the police’s failure to capture him. Nothing was known for certain about Rascamuelas, but he was rumored to have been given his name because of a sinister habit—“un pequeño defecto, quizá indicio de degeneración psicológica” (“Verdadera banda de apaches” 14)—of filing his teeth. He was the “rey del hampa, apache feo y caballeroso, aventurero y estafador internacional”; “un Al Capone con su corte de gangsters, sus pistoleros, sus lujos y demás cosillas”; and a masterful mimic who, with nothing but a reversible overcoat, could disguise his identity and slip away from the police (“Un menor pereció triturado” 13).

Like the hero of a serial novel, or a film franchise, Rascamuelas kept returning for more adventures. Jiménez noted as much in a chronicle from January 1935. “¿Cuántas veecs [sic] nos hemos ocupado de Rascamuelas? Rascamuelas es un misterio. Una incógnita que no ha resuelto la policía. Rascamuelas más vale es una institución” (“José Vicente Ramírez” 3). A few inattentive readers, including the police chief of Bogotá, may

not have been in on the satire; according to Jiménez, the police chief, one General de León, had organized a raid to capture Rascamuelas on July 8, 1934.⁵¹ However, it is hard to believe Juan José Hoyos's claim that Jiménez's regular readers would have trusted the veracity of his chronicles "con una fe ciega" (11). Jiménez's sardonic tone suggests that he sought the complicity of readers, not to dupe them.

Another of Jiménez's invented characters, Rascamuelas, is the most extreme example of a type that appears often in Jiménez's chronicles: the "apache internacional" or the "maleante extranjero." Jiménez emphasized the sophistication of these foreign criminals. They practiced the most advanced criminal techniques and often knew several languages. This was a familiar narrative in Colombia in the 1930s. In the 1920s, "missions" of experts from the United States and Europe had begun to arrive in Colombia in order to assist the government in the modernization of its institutions (Uribe Celis 38). Jiménez's foreign criminals were the evil twins of these experts. In effect, they had come to Colombia to modernize its criminal institutions.

Jiménez suggested that such foreign agents hid out in the poor neighborhoods of Bogotá. The nightlife of these neighborhoods, then, was notable not only for its "barullo de pecados" but also its "viciado cosmopolitanismo" ("Estampas de la noche"). However, this crooked cosmopolitanism was not limited to criminals. The poet Juan Arana Torrol, who Jiménez profiled on April 27, 1935, also practiced a version of it. Arana Torrol had worn many hats in his lifetime: "Aventurero, trashumante, poeta, médico, loco, idiota, presidiario, ladrón, estafador y fullero. Periodista, apóstol, enviado celestial, gentilhombre, pordiosero, vendedor de específicos, sirviente de hotel, dueño de fonda."

⁵¹ See Jiménez, "Más de 100 maleantes."

Among his proudest memories was the time that he helped out Rubén Darío in New York. Arana Torrol had found Darío on the verge of starvation, so he bought him food and tried to find him help. “En recompensa, Rubén Darío le escribió un poema, en el cual lo llama su mejor amigo, su confidente, ‘lo único que me queda en el mundo’” (“Juan Arana Torrol” 7). Arana Torrol was also quite modern in terms of his productivity. In his sixty three years of life, he had already composed “9999 sonetos, 68 poemas épicos, 1700 calambures y 31 odas a la naturaleza,” plus a forty-volume autobiography in verse.

Crime was modernizing, and so was poetry. Writing under the pseudonym don Xavier Paradox,⁵² in December 1934, Jiménez imagined the effects of industrialization on the street poets of Bogotá. He presented these poets as a modernized version of the fin-de-siècle bohemians:

Con la hirsuta melena, la frente pálida, las manos exangües, las pupilas en trance de impasibles. Débiles, aturdidos por el discurso del maquinismo, ambulan en la noche bajo el barato auspicio de la luna, solitarios, en manadas miserables [...] Roen como escarabajos, sobre una fotografía desteñida de Enrique Mürger, la carcajada negativa de los días iguales, de las horas untadas de pesadumbres, de las noches sin amparo en el viciado ambiente de cafetín. (*Gilberto Owen* 246-47)

⁵² García Ávila and Cajero argue that don Xavier Paradox was Gilberto Owen. They have thus included his chronicles in their compilation *Gilberto Owen en el Tiempo de Bogotá, prosas recuperadas (1933-1935)*. However, their argument rests on the dubious claim that no one else could write that well at *El Tiempo* (“Owen escribe, como diría Cortázar, de sangre a sangre, pero sabedor del peso de cada palabra, del *ars combinatoria* que no se ve en ninguno de los demás colaboradores [de *El Tiempo*]”) (13). There is more evidence to suggest that don Xavier Paradox was Jiménez. The chronicles signed under the pseudonym are much more similar in style and theme to his work than to Owen’s, and one of them alludes to a certain author by the name of “don Xavier Ximénez” (Owen, *Prosas recuperadas* 249).

Indeed, these poets are so modern that they have embraced industrialization as a poetics and as a business model. For example, one of the poets, Manuel Peregrino Delezna, has invented a method for writing poetry based on arithmetic (246). He is waiting to hear back from “[u]n industrial de Boston” who is interested in commercializing his method. He is confident that he will strike a deal with the industrial magnate: “Ford se hizo millonario con los automóviles. La persona que acoja mis iniciativas se hará millonaria con los poemas aritméticos. ¿Necesita usted un poema? Nada más sencillo. Se fabricarían en tipos estandar, para uso común, y en modelos aristocráticos” (247).

Jiménez was not mocking modern poets here so much as he was their caricature by Conservative intellectuals. To be sure, the Conservative party boss, Laureano Gómez, would publish just such a caricature two years later in his newspaper, *El Siglo*. Writing under a pseudonym, he advertised a correspondence class, titled “Poesía moderna por correspondencia,” in which he offered to teach students to compose a poem like León de Greiff, the most celebrated poet of the avant-garde group Los Nuevos. The course would only cost “dos míseros pesos,” he explained, because “Ese estupendo poema modernista [...] se puede manufacturar en dos lecciones” (*Obras completas* 44). Gómez condemned “el maestro de las nuevas generaciones extremistas y desenfadadas, don León de Greiff,” for trying to impose a “*fácil facilidad* [...] en la literatura” (*Obras completas* 62).

Jiménez lampooned Conservative fears about the democratization of high culture. In October 1936, he covered the first book fair in Bogotá. Gaitán, who was mayor of Bogotá at the time, organized the fair and the books were discounted so that the city’s middle and working classes could afford them. In this chronicle, Jiménez happily confirmed the fears of Conservative fears about the bad taste of the lower classes in

Bogotá. He began the chronicle by summarizing the sales figures: “Folletines y novelas pasionales con gran demanda. Tres Quijotes vendidos. Los clásicos sin clientela” (qtd. in Silva 191) and went on to tell his readers about a bootblack who, for the modest price of four pesos, had bought *The Interpretation of Dreams* and *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* by Sigmund Freud, *Thus Spake Zarathustra* by Friedrich Nietzsche, and an introduction to dialectical materialism. Jiménez then wondered what the bootblack would do with such incendiary material. He mused that “[n]i el mismo lo sabe. Mañana irá a un sindicato. Repetirá los párrafos del señor Nietzsche. Hablará sobre la formación de las clases sociales y sobre la influencia de los sueños en su vida. Y todos sus compañeros quedarán escandalizados” (qtd. in Silva 191). Jiménez also took advantage of the occasion to take a poke at Liberals. He also noted in his report that not a single copy of *Cuatro años a bordo de mí mismo*, a modernist novel by Eduardo Zalamea Borda, one of the literary darlings of the Liberal Republic, had been sold. From his position outside of the realm of books, in the ephemeral pages of a newspaper, Jiménez was free to mock the literary pretensions of his colleagues.

However, Jiménez’s most acerbic satire revolved around another of his fictional characters, the hapless poet Rodrigo de Arce. In December 1934, Jiménez had begun to include poems in his police chronicles about suicides. He claimed to have found them in the clothing of the suicide victims. The poems were inevitably lugubrious, with titles such as “Balada de las manos ausentes” or “Balada de odiosas perras.” On April 21, 1935, Jiménez attributed one of these poems to an Ecuadorian poet by the name of Rodrigo de Arce. The following day, a man claiming to be de Arce visited the office of *El Tiempo*. He complained that he had never authorized the publication of that poem.

Indeed, it had been stolen from his home one recent night while he was out with “el gran poeta conservador Augusto Ramírez Moreno.” The man requested that *El Tiempo* not publish any more of his poems should they continue to turn up among the belongings of suicide victims. “No quiero adquirir reputación de poeta fúnebre,” he explained (“De Arce” 5). However, the newspaper did not grant his request.

A few months later, the fictional poet came forward again. He complained that his plight had worsened. Now the suicide victims were attributing poems to him falsely, and the poems were bad. In an exclusive interview with Jiménez, he revealed that he was an Ecuadorian tailor who had moved to “esta ciudad de poetas”—the Athens of South America—with hopes of advancing his literary career. But now that he had acquired a reputation as a “poeta fúnebre,” he had no choice but to retire. Jiménez explained his rationale: “Ha resuelto, dice, no componer más baladas. No será más cómplice de suicidios y tragedias. En verdad, don Rodrigo no tiene la culpa. Es la maldad de los hombres, la insanía de los pecadores, la que se apropia de la bondad de sus versos, los desencaja y disuelve, y los pone a cabalgar sobre el frío esqueleto de la muerte hacia yermos de eternidad” (“Don Rodrigo”).⁵³ In 1924, the Argentine avant-gardist Evar Méndez had predicated that Rubén Darío’s poems would fall to the level of popular ditties “que las Milonguitas del barrio de Boedo y Chiclana, los malevos y los verduleros de las pringosas ‘pizzerías’ locales recitarán, acaso, en sus fábricas o cabarets, en el pescante de sus carretelas y en las sobremesas rociadas con ‘Barbera’” (qtd. in Montaldo, *Zonas* 14). A decade later, Jiménez would grant the obscure poet Rodrigo de Arce a parallel fate.

⁵³ See “Don Rodrigo de Arce, poeta de suicida y hábil sastre.”

Rascamuelas, the suicidal readers of Rodrigo de Arce, and the bootblack at the Bogotá book fair were all parodies of the bogeymen that Conservative intellectuals invoked during the Liberal Republic. Jiménez mocked Conservative claims that López Pumarejo's program of cultural democratization was destroying the social order in Colombia. Jiménez was not alone in his efforts to skewer the Conservatives. A series of Liberal satirical magazines had emerged in Bogotá over the previous decade and a half, and Jiménez adopted their irreverent pose toward "the reactionary lettered city," as José María Rodríguez García has called the "literary-legislative institutions" (xix) that dominated Colombian politics during the early 20th century. Magazines such as *Fantoches*, *Guillotina*, *La Nueva Guillotina*, and *Anacleto* skewered politicians and intellectuals relentlessly, and their caricaturists carried out such bold formal experiments that Miguel Escobar Calle has called them a "vanguardia clandestina" (10).⁵⁴ That there was a space for such satire at the mainstream Liberal newspaper *El Tiempo* suggests a leftward shift in the Liberal party during the first half of the 1930s. However, *El Tiempo* would soon oppose the reforms of López Pumarejo's *Revolución en marcha*, and in 1938, Eduardo Santos, a member of the family that owned *El Tiempo*, would be elected president on an anti-reformist platform.⁵⁵

In 1938, *El Tiempo* appointed Jiménez the editor of a new humor magazine titled *Guau-Guau*.⁵⁶ While the magazine, which boasted Gilberto Owen as a contributor, would fold after only four issues (for unknown reasons) Jiménez would continue to focus on

⁵⁴ See González Aranda (2009) for more on the history of political caricature in Colombia during the first half of the twentieth century.

⁵⁵ Without a hint of irony, official historians would refer to Santos's term (1938-1942) as "la gran pausa" in the *Revolución en marcha*.

⁵⁶ Unfortunately, no copies of *Guau-Guau* still exist.

humor. Over the following years, he wrote more comedic sketches than urban chronicles. He marked this new identity by adopting a catchier version of his given name: he began to sign his byline simply as “Ximénez,” with an “x.” As “Ximénez,” he wrote plays, almanac entries, and even recipes. He continued to write about crime, but in genres that did not overlap with reporting. For example, in 1943, he wrote a short play for the magazine *Sábado* that was described as a “Comedia sentimental en que Gervasio Neruda se suicida y se desnuda delante de un policial.” The script was published on a humor page next to a comic strip and the winning entries from a joke contest. Also, Jiménez published it under the name of Rodrigo de Arce, whom he had transformed from an obscure reactionary poet into his authorial alter ego. In 1941, he wrote a parody of a detective novel for the magazine *Cromos* and used de Arce as his protagonist.⁵⁷ In 1944, he wrote another parody of a detective novel, but with the help of five other writers, including the former avant-gardists León de Greiff and Luis Vidales. Each writer was in charge of a chapter. The novel, titled *El misterio del cuarto 215 o la pasajera del hotel Granada*, was serialized in another magazine titled *Comandos*, and its convoluted plot revolved around the enigmatic death of a North American tourist, el señor Handkerchief, at a hotel in Bogotá.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ *El misterioso caso de Herman Winter (don Rodrigo de Arce, detective)*. *Novela policiaca* was published serially. See Jiménez (1941).

⁵⁸ For a detailed plot summary and analysis of *El misterioso caso de Herman Winter (don Rodrigo de Arce, detective)* and *El misterio del cuarto 215 o la pasajera del hotel Granada*, see Pöppel (2001), 67-80.

Gilberto Owen: Writing at the Margin of the World News

Gilberto Owen (1904-1952) joined the modernist group, los Contemporáneos, in Mexico City, in the mid-1920s, and published two novels: *La llama fría* (1925) and *Novela como nube o Narciso entre los espejos* (1928). In 1928, Owen moved to New York City, where he worked at the Mexican consulate. In the early 1930s, he published a book of prose poems, *Línea* (1930), and worked briefly at the Mexican consulates in Lima and Guayaquil, but he was fired from both posts after involving himself with local leftists. In late 1932, he found his way to Bogotá, where he procured a job as a translator for the newspaper *El Tiempo*. He would stay in the Colombian capital for a decade before returning to Mexico.

During his decade in Colombia, Owen published few poems, and no novels. Critics thus considered Owen's years in Bogotá as a lapse in his literary career. However, Celene García Ávila and Antonio Cajero have proposed recently, in the introduction to their anthology of Owen's chronicles for *El Tiempo* (2009), that Owen was much more than an "oscuro traductor de cables" (12) for *El Tiempo*. In the introduction to their anthology of Owen's work for *El Tiempo*, they point out that his translations, which he wrote between 1933 and 1936, were highly creative. As they put it,

[L]a traducción de cables noticiosos y las noticias del día no impidieron que su imaginación y su calidad creativa se enmarcaran en los límites de la realidad inmediata, sino que fue un reto: la ironía, la hipérbole, la paradoja, el dato

extraordinario; todas éstas fueran llaves que abrieron el crisol de la monda información llegada a sus manos como piedra pulida. (10)

Owen's translations included extensive commentary, speculative digressions, and even fictional dramatizations; García Ávila and Cajero peg them as "una versión moderna de la crónica modernista [...] la noticia se selecciona cuidadosamente y es la fuente principal para reescribir sobre ella otro texto, uno que enseña al lector cómo leer más allá de la superficie" (128). Although García Avila and Cajero's main concern is to establish the literary quality of Owen's chronicles for *El Tiempo*, they suggest that these chronicles should be read as an updated version of *modernista* chronicles and as a form of pedagogy. In this section, I argue that Owen differs from the *modernistas* in his commitment to mock modernity. He does not idealize it as a utopia; instead, he figures it as a factory of absurdity.

Owen did not write about the modern world so much as *the news* about the modern world. He embraced them as a form of entertainment. The poet Fernando Charry Lara recalls that Owen used to peruse the foreign press at a café in Bogotá, and that he was known to have the waitress there serve him *aguardiente* in his coffee cup (qtd. in García Ávila and Cajero 13). There is no way to confirm the truth of this anecdote, but even so it captures the sly figure that Owen cuts in these chronicles. It is as if he were reading the news aloud to a small audience at the café, and stopping frequently to speculate about one news item or another. As a full-time journalist, Owen had the liberty to opt out of the cultural program of the Ministry of Education. Indeed, he had little time for the folklorist research of the intellectuals at the *La revista de Indias*. "Cuando un cronista no tiene

tema, hace folklore,” he once wrote before launching into a parody of a folkloric study (234⁵⁹).

In what sense did Owen modernize the *modernista* chronicle? According to Julio Ramos, the chronicle emerged in Latin American newspapers in the early 1880s “como una vitrina de la vida moderna, producida para un lector ‘culto’, deseoso de la modernidad extranjera” (90). It traded in the glamour of modern life, and as such was “ligado a la ideología y a la forma del *viaje* importador (género popularísimo entre los patricios)” (90). Owen, in turn, drew attention to the fact that he was not reporting from New York but rather reading news cables in Bogotá. Owen’s column for *El Tiempo* had a series of titles. Two of those titles, “Al margen del cable” and “Fisionomía del cable,” underscored that he was writing about the cables themselves. Also, he pointed out, with arch amusement, that the news from the modern world had lost its glamour. Many of the cables coming in told stories of sensational crime. In this sense, Owen’s chronicles resembled his fiction. *Novela como nube o Narciso entre los espejos* is a parody of the ancient Greek myth of Ixion to the 20th century. Owen re-imagines the ill-fated Ixion as an artist who fails to find his place in the modern metropolis of Mexico City. The novel, like James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, finds much of its comedy in the discrepancy between the heroic model and banal modern reality. In his chronicles, Owen insinuated that there was a similar disconnect between the myth of modernity and its reality.

Furthermore, Owen understood that his public was not a cosmopolitan elite that desired modernity but rather a middle class that desired to be entertained. Mahieux argues that the Latin American chroniclers of the 1920s and 1930s differed from their

⁵⁹ The textual citations of Owen’s work in this chapter all refer to García Ávila and Cajero’s anthology. See García Ávila and Cajero (2009).

modernista forebears in that they wrote “*for* and *about* their city, describing a modernity that had already arrived, even if it was uneven, out of place, incomplete,” while the *modernistas* “had both desired and felt threatened by a modernity that they imagined elsewhere” (5-6). Owen’s position fell between these two poles. He wrote about a modernity that was elsewhere, but he did so from, and for, a city where modernity had already arrived. The Argentine writer Roberto Arlt would play a similar role a few years after Owen for the Mexican newspaper *El Nacional*. The title of his column, which ran from 1937 to 1941, was the same as one of the titles of Owen’s column: “Al margen del cable⁶⁰.”

Owen described the world news as a form of entertainment throughout his chronicles. In October 1935, for example, he imagined a bureaucrat in Bogotá reading news about the emperor of Egypt as he would a detective novel: “El burócrata trabajó la jornada matinal. Ingirió su almuerzo con estrepitoso apetito. Leyó el periódico. Se enteró de los últimos desastres sufridos por las tropas del Negus Negusti, por quien tiene un gran cariño y una profunda devoción, leyó cuatro o cinco páginas de una novela policíaca y miró el reloj [...] Sólo tenía el tiempo indispensable para trasladarse de su casa a la oficina” (149-150). The bureaucrat treats the emperor of Egypt like a favorite character in a serial novel. Owen admitted to reading the world news this way himself. For instance, in June 1934, he confessed that he was so worried about “la suerte oscura de un digno servidor de Su Majestad Hirohito, el pálido rey oriental, que había desaparecido misteriosamente de Nankin, en donde ocupaba el alto cargo de vicedónsul de su país,” that he had not slept for days (192-193). Owen may have been joking about his insomnia,

⁶⁰ See Arlt (2003).

but he was making a serious point about how people read the news. In a chronicle about another feature of newspapers, the classified advertisements, he suggested that their abbreviated form made them into an entertainment genre. The extreme compression of the narrative—according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, “tabloid” was first used as a term for compressed pills—obliged the reader to speculate about the missing details:

La lectura de un anuncio limitado, como una puertecita abierta a nuestra imaginación, nos hace descuidar lo sucedido para adentrarnos por el terreno infinito de lo que pudo suceder. Es como si, entre dos tangos, hubiera sonado en nuestro radio del S.O.S. de algún barco perdido e ignorado, juguete de la muerte en cualquiera de los siete mares. Y es como tener que quedarnos en nuestro cuarto, sin poder auxiliarlo, imaginando con angustia creciente la catástrofe, las voces de la tripulación, perdidas y como borradas por el oleaje, toda la confusión y el caos que conocemos por el cinematógrafo y por las novelas. (159)

Once again, Owen puts the newspaper on the same level as mass culture—as movies, novels, or popular music. Owen’s observation that a classified ad was like an emergency signal heard on the radio between two tangos was even more relevant for the world news than it was the classified ads. The cables might deliver tragic news, but readers still hoped to be entertained by them, as they did by tango songs, which of course offered their own tragic narratives. It did not matter that the cables were based on facts and the tangos on fiction. For the consumer of mass culture, the difference between fact and fiction was not important. All that mattered was that it be entertaining. Owen did not

blame the reader for this confusion. He attributed it to the tabloid form, as I mentioned above, but also to the melodramatic turns that reality could take. For example, in a chronicle published in May 1933, he pointed out the “paralelismo asombroso” between the plot of a novel by Theodor Dreiser and the story of a crime committed in Pennsylvania (123).

Owen showed that reading the news as literature was not necessarily a mindless activity. Indeed, it bore the imprimatur of the French author André Gide. In a chronicle from April 1935, Owen notes that Gide used to publish tabloid clippings in a monthly column that was picked up by “todos los diarios franceses” (114). After reading Gide’s “Chronique de fait divers,” he explained, “[n]os quedó la costumbre de recortar algunas veces historias casi fantásticas, de crímenes si no gratuitos, sí al menos ‘curiosos’ [...] nos gustaba ver la repetición de la misma historia con las variantes que el folklore respectivo o la estación les prestaba” (114). He saved the clippings because he liked to study the tropes of crime reports.

Owen recognized that his job as a translator at *El Tiempo* was to share news from the center of the modern world, but he balked at the implication that he was sharing news from a superior culture. In October 1935, he pointed this out in a chronicle about a Cleveland woman who kidnapped her boyfriend and had him delivered to her at the altar. He suggested that the single ladies of Bogotá had a lesson to learn from this story: “Acudid, señoritas, que es para vosotras. Formad corro y aprended los métodos matrimoniales de los países más adelantados” (137). Despite Owen’s sarcasm, he did play a pedagogical role for the readers of *El Tiempo*: he revealed that the world news could be read as literature. In this sense, he was the opposite of the traditional man of

letters, who took it upon himself to instruct the reader on how properly to interpret public affairs. Owen suggested that one could shirk that civic duty and read the news for fun instead. Owen's chronicles had much in common with Jorge Luis Borges's stories from the same period. During 1933 and 1934, Borges adapted a series of sensational crime stories from American and English sources for the Argentine newspaper *Crítica*. Like Owen, Borges described this creative act as a form of reading.⁶¹

Owen would quit writing chronicles by the spring of 1936. He abandoned his job at *El Tiempo* to open a bookshop in downtown Bogotá. The shop, which he named *1936*, after the year of its opening, sold English-language books and exhibited art. Owen advertised its opening in *El Tiempo*. The advertisement announced, in Spanish, the exhibition of a collection of "juguetes populares" from Mexico, and below, in English, it included the following message:

The Latest English and American Books. Visiting <<1936>> Bookshop and Art Exhibition, means quiet comfort in selecting, whole-hearted counsel when undecided, non-aggression when browsing.

Best of modern books, fine bindings, unusual. Art and Illustrated books.

Come in, if it is just to browse around. (312)

⁶¹ See the prologue to the 1935 edition of Borges's *Historia universal de la infamia*, a collection which includes Borges's adaptations of crime tales, for his remarks about writing as a form of reading (3).

A review of the bookshop would appear in *El Tiempo* the day after its opening. The reviewer, who identified himself as a friend of Owen, praised the shop's modest prices. He was also impressed by Owen's skills as a bookseller:

Hay que verlo, además, en su nueva función de vendedor, de hombre empeñado en atender al público. Se diría nacido para ese oficio, tales son sus amabilidad, sus dotes de persuasión, los recursos de su verbo para despertar curiosidad y para alabar lo que merece alabanza [...] Tiene tal gracia y tal simpatía para ofrecer los tesoros literarios escondidos en ediciones pulquérrimas, los juguetes mejicanos, los cuadernos para niños y otros objetos de escritorio y biblioteca, que nadie sale indemne, sino, como dirían los penúltimos, aliviados de algún peso. (312-313)

Perhaps Owen had acquired some of his skills as a bookseller at his previous job. As a chronicler, he had selected, and commented, on the English-language news, and as a bookseller, he provided a similar service. As chronicler, and later as bookseller, Owen immersed himself in the nascent Colombian cultural industry. A dropout from the Mexican diplomatic service, he re-invented himself in Bogotá as a cultural entrepreneur.

Pardo Umaña: The Recalcitrant Women's Columnist

Emilia Pardo Umaña (1907-1961) is another chronicler who was active in Bogotá in the 1930s and 1940s. She is remembered for having been the first female op-ed columnist

in Colombia and for having been a harsh critic of women's suffrage.⁶² However, her work has received little critical attention. Pardo Umaña began her career in 1934 as a society reporter at *El Espectador*. As a society reporter, she covered topics such as “urbanidad, etiqueta, buenas costumbres, defunciones, nacimientos, bodas, y algunos espectáculos” (Flórez Giraldo and Pérez P. 73). And, like Jiménez and Owen, she took an ironic distance from her news beat. However, she positioned herself quite differently than they did. While Jiménez and Owen struck arch poses, Pardo Umaña was more sardonic. In her recent book, Viviane Mahieux discusses Alfonsina Storni and Cube Bonifant, two chroniclers who published on women's pages in Latin American periodicals in the 1920s and 1930s. She suggests that “Storni and Bonifant shared an overt irreverence toward the very women's columns that they wrote, choosing to both exploit and mock the medium made available to them” in order to establish themselves in male-dominated intellectual fields (128). In this section, I argue that Pardo Umaña struck androgynous and aristocratic poses in order to build her cultural capital from the marginal space of the women's page at *El Espectador*.

Women's pages began to appear in US newspapers in the 1890s. The success of these pages “constituted one important factor in the expansion of daily newspaper readership, which doubled in the period from 1892 to 1914” (Sloan and Startt 286; qtd. in Whitt 38). These section opened a space for women journalists at newspapers. However, they often relegated them to staying there. Beasley and Gibbons note that

⁶² For more on the biography of Pardo Umaña, see Flórez Giraldo and Pérez P. For more on her anti-suffragism, see Velásquez Toro.

prior to the women's movement, most newspaperswomen were confined to jobs on women's pages and society sections of newspapers. These positions, which routinely paid less than jobs held by men, kept women out of direct competition with males. Women's pages reinforced the idea of separate spheres for men and women. Men ran the world: The news of their conflict, power, and influence dominated the front pages. Women took care of homes and children: The news of noncontroversial domestic and social pursuits appeared in the women's pages. (3; qtd. in Whitt 40).

A similar dynamic played out in Colombia in the early decades of the twentieth century. Newspaper editors conceded a space to women journalists, but only to attract women readers. The other sections of the newspaper were reserved for male journalists. To be sure, Mahieux's observation about Latin American women chroniclers in the 1920s holds true for Pardo Umaña in the 1930s: "the mobility of female chroniclers was [...] restricted in the layout of the publications in which their articulates circulated. Rarely could a female chronicler walk out of the feminine page to other sections of a publication without an anxious editor pointing out the unique status of her gender" (153). Pardo Umaña was published in the society section of *El Espectador* from 1934 to 1939. However, she began to write columns that ranged beyond the limited purview of her section as early as 1935. Her columns also began to appear with her name in the byline that year, even though, in an infantilizing touch, her last names were omitted.

The rise of "Emilia" corresponded with the masculinization of her authorial figure. Symbolically, her first signed chronicle (Flórez Galindo and Pérez P. 74) was a

defense of bullfighting that appeared under the ironic title of “Contra los toros.”⁶³ In the chronicle, she identifies herself as a bullfighting *aficionado*, a social role reserved for men. In another chronicle, she condemned the psychological torture of prisoners. But she finished the text with a curious postscript: “Última hora. A última hora hemos sido informados, por persona bien enterada, de que el sistema para obligar a los hombres a casarse es el mismo, sólo que mucho más lento. Tanto les preguntan—según me dicen—que si se casan, que acaban por decir que sí” (*La letra* 105⁶⁴). In other words, she distanced herself from the feminine role of the reformist do-gooder by tacking on a sexist joke to her column.

Pardo Umaña renounced her right to vote, but she protested her exclusion from other male privileges. In another early column, “La autoridad,”⁶⁵ she berated a police officer that had arrested her for getting her shoes shined at a plaza in Bogotá. Although she had not violated any law, the officer punished her for behaving like a man.⁶⁶ By the same token, Pardo Umaña mocked another columnist at *El Espectador* in 1937 for neglecting to recognize that women could be intellectuals. The columnist had argued that the current generations of Colombian intellectuals, known as the Centenarios and the Nuevos, were organized by their “edad psicológica.” He explained that the “edad psicológica de un hombre se averigua en la clase de zapatos que usa, en la manera de encender un cigarillo,

⁶³ The chronicle was published on March 4, 1935 (Flórez Galindo and Pérez P. 74).

⁶⁴ Unless otherwise noted, the citations of Pardo Umaña’s work in this chapter will refer to the anthology *La letra con sangre entra* (1984).

⁶⁵ “La autoridad” was published on March 7, 1936. It is included in the aforementioned anthology *La letra con sangre entra*.

⁶⁶ A similar anecdote about Pardo Umaña getting into trouble with the police for assuming a masculine identity appears in a recent book about El Automático, a café in Bogotá where intellectuals gathered from the late 1940s to the mid-1950s. One of the former members of the coterie at El Automático, Antonio Montaña, recalls that women were prohibited from entering cafés in Bogotá. Yet “[u]n día entró Emilia al Automático y llegó un policía: ‘usted se me sale de aquí’; ‘¿por qué?’; ‘es que ni siquiera hay baño para las señoras’; ‘ni importa, yo orino parada’” (*Café El Automático* 38).

de subir a un vehículo o de besar a una mujer” (85). In her column, Pardo Umaña complained sarcastically that he would bring up women at all, seeing that “nada tienen qué [sic] ver en el asunto” (85). In retaliation, she polled her female friends about the kissing style of the two intellectual generations and published the results.

On another occasion, another male intellectual accused her of being a dilettante. She readily agreed: “no soy una investigadora; me limito a comentar superficialmente la vida, los hechos y los sucesos, sin observar sus principios ni preocuparme de sus fines, como corresponde a una cronista moderna, que además es una curiosa y frívola mujer” (92). She had stumbled into writing, and she did it just for fun: “deportivamente, por casualidad y sin darle importancia mayor, empecé mi comentario diario, que no aspira a formar en las letras nacionales—con ni sin brillo—y deportivamente, aunque con amor cada día mayor, he seguido adelante” (92).

However, Pardo Umaña turned this dilettantism into a form of autonomy. She could say what she pleased because writing, for her, was a mere hobby. Pardo Umaña found a model for this leisurely pose in Oscar Wilde, whom she was fond of quoting. From the vantage point of a bemused aristocrat, she offered irreverent commentary on the cultural practices of Bogotá’s middle class. For instance, in 1937, she mocked the inflated rhetoric of obituaries, which, like the other sections of major newspapers, had been democratized to a certain degree:

Cierto que al noventa por ciento de los muertos, que no dejaron de su paso por la vida sino algunos vestidos viejos y algunos chismes malévolos, la necrología los valoriza mucho más de lo que jamás pudieran imaginar en sus delirios de grandeza, pero esta

mayoría beneficiada ni gana ni pierde. Representa dentro de la marea social a la clase media, a los seres insignificantes y buenos—‘se nace bueno como se nace rubio o moreno, de manera que es una estupidez jactarse de ello’— . (106)

Pardo Umaña was not the first woman chronicler to find such a literary model. In the 1920s, the Mexican chronicler Cube Bonifant had referred to herself as “una pequeña Marquesa de Sade” (Mahieux 143). Pardo Umaña prided herself on her ability to provoke a scandal. She was glad to report that a colleague had once defined her with the following formula: “‘No cabe mayor intolerancia, agresividad, mordacidad, ni capacidad de ruido, en menor volumen’” (107).

Pardo Umaña parodied the genres of the woman’s page with glee. In 1936, she began to write an advice column. She wrote it under a pseudonym, “la doctora Ki-Ki,” and dealt out advice to love-torn readers. Like José Joaquín Jiménez, she gave a sarcastic take on a mass genre. It should not come as surprise, then, Jiménez himself was a fan of Dr. Ki-Ki’s column. Many years later after her stint as Dr. Ki-Ki, Pardo Umaña would reminisce about it. In a 1956 newspaper column, she would recall having advised a reader to beat her rival over the head with a stick, only to have Jiménez turn around and report the crime in *El Tiempo*: “por consejo de la doctora Ki-Ki, fulana de tal le abrió la cabeza a sutana, de un garrotazo” (185). In another column, Dr. Ki-Ki told a reader to go throw herself into the Salto de Tequendama. Predictably, Jiménez published a chronicle about the reader’s frustrated suicide attempt. Pardo Umaña cited a passage: “En el momento de ir a arrojar al Salto de Tequendama, un agente detuvo a la señorita X. En la cartera llevaba el consejo, que mostró, por el cual la doctora Ki-Ki le decía que debía arrojar a

la catarata” (186). The chronicle also included one of Jiménez’s poems, which he titled “balada de la suicida frustrada.”⁶⁷

On another occasion, Pardo Umaña mocked a reader for having sent her a love poem. In a chronicle titled “¡Saludo a la gloria!,” she described the experience of having received, as a gift from a reader, an acrostic comprised of the letters of her name. She supposed that a certain politician must have felt the same way when he was given a certain pair of slippers. Pardo Umaña explained that, while attending a recent national exposition, she had come upon a large crowd in one of the pavilions. She describes the scene in the following passage:

Mucho trabajo y una gran labor de codos nos costó llegar a primera fila y poder ver. En una vitrina arreglada con laurel y con la bandera colombiana, de un efecto cursi hasta el límite máximo, estaban dos pantuflas bordadas con los colores de la bandera; en el centro, entre un óvalo de no me olvides, también bordados, se veía el retrato de un ilustre político, popularísimo, que para colmo de desventuras estaba visitando también la exposición. A nuestro lado un murmullo continuo de admiración parecía flotar:

—¡Eso sí es iniciativa! —¡Es que eso sí es de buen gusto! —Ni en Europa hacen cosa más cuca. —¡Y el bordado está perfecto! —Y se las van a obsequiar...

—Imposible, clamé imprudentemente olvidando el respeto por el entusiasmo ajeno; si le mandan eso lo matan.

—Sí, respondió una viejita con tono ingenuo, la emoción puede hacerle daño; tiene

⁶⁷ The publication date of these chronicles remains to be confirmed. Pardo Umaña did not provide any bibliographical information about them in her 1956 column, which is collected in Camándula (1984).

razón la señorita. Que le avisen antes de ir y le encarezcan la labor para que no lo coja desprevenido. ¡Pero cómo se verá de majo con sus pantuflas! (120)

This chronicle was published in 1937. The politician in the scene above is surely the president, Alfonso López Pumarejo. Despite the fact that López Pumarejo had carried out a series of populist reforms over the previous years, Pardo Umaña contends that he would be horrified by this popular expression of affection. She implies that López Pumarejo continued to be an aristocrat at heart even though he had been obliged to practice populism. Pardo Umaña's empathy for the president is revealing. She sees herself as another aristocrat who has been obliged to practice populism: as a chronicler, she must write for the vulgar masses. Pardo Umaña is aghast at the bad taste of her poet-admirer. She is also annoyed that he has misread her politics. The acrostic, which Pardo Umaña published as part of her chronicle, celebrates the chronicler as a feminist intellectual. Paraphrasing lines from the poem, Pardo Umaña refutes this praise: "Y no estoy dispuesta en absoluto a marchar a la redención, ni a tonificar el rejuvenecimiento, ni a ser coraza del intelecto femenino. En una palabra, no estoy dispuesta a cumplir mi misión sobre la tierra!" (122). Pardo Umaña notices that chroniclers and populists cultivate a similar intimacy with the masses, and she recoils at the effects.

El Espectador promoted Pardo Umaña's column to the editorial page in 1939. She was the first woman to have an op-ed column in Colombia. Like Storni and Bonifant, she had managed to establish herself as an intellectual from the marginalized space of a woman's page. In her new role, Pardo Umaña wrote bluntly about politics. Her criticism of the Liberal government eventually led to her dismissal from *El Espectador* in 1944.

She then took her column to *El Siglo*, the major Conservative daily. However, she was forced to flee to Ecuador after the editorial staff at *El Siglo* was accused of having been involved in a failed coup d'état against López Pumarejo, who was then serving his second term as president. Pardo Umaña was acquitted of treason, but she began to fade from public view. However, she did not stop writing. In 1951, she became the first Colombian woman to publish a detective novel⁶⁸ (Pöppel 126). Predictably, it was a parody.

Pardo Umaña's parodies of advice columns, etiquette columns, etc., in the 1930s, and now of a detective novel, show that she had studied these genres carefully. Her ambivalence toward mass culture reflects the difficult position in which she had been placed in the misogynistic cultural field of Bogotá. She could not simply write about anything; she had to negotiate with the expectation that she would write about women's topics. Even as she skewered the genres of the women's page, she engaged with them through critique. Her aristocratic and masculine poses also served to distance her from her designated role as a women's columnist.

Enrique Restrepo: The Middlebrow Nietzschean

Enrique Restrepo (1882⁶⁹-1947) wrote chronicles for *La Razón*, another Liberal newspaper based in Bogotá, in the mid-to-late 1930s. Like the other chroniclers I have discussed in this chapter, he offered an ironic commentary on mass culture. However, his

⁶⁸ See Pardo Umaña (1951).

⁶⁹ Bermúdez Barrera and Campis C. have recorded different birthdates than Loaiza Cano for Restrepo. Bermúdez Barrera and Campis C. say he was born in 1882; Loaiza Cano, in 1884.

commentary was much more bitter. Restrepo had been a major promoter of European modernism in Colombia, and as Huysen argues, modernism had been a movement *against* mass culture; it “constituted itself through a conscious strategy of exclusion, an anxiety of contamination by its other: an increasingly consuming and engulfing mass culture” (vii). In the late 1910s, Restrepo had edited the modernist journal *Voces*, in Barranquilla,⁷⁰ and in the 1920s he had written Nietzschean provocations for newspapers and magazines in Bogotá.⁷¹ In his columns for *La Razón*, Restrepo kept up his Nietzschean pose. He continued to condemn the masses and mass culture, even though he was now very much a producer of mass culture himself. If Jiménez, Owen, and Pardo Umaña offered the pleasures of mass culture at a safe remove, what sort of appeal did Restrepo make to a middle-class public? Perhaps he offered them the thrill—such as it was—of cultural distinction. He invited his readers to join him as he mocked mass culture from a position of cultural superiority. He thus expressed one of the characteristics of middlebrow culture: irony as a strategy to distance the author and the reader from mass culture.

Restrepo alluded to this complicity in “Visita del público.” In this chronicle, Restrepo imagines that a man, claiming to be “El público,” pays him an unexpected visit at home. Restrepo suspects he is an impostor because “El público jamás se antoja de encarnar en sujeto representativo. Es masa, y actúa en plural; es multitud aglutinada, bulliciosa.” Yet he decides to let him in anyway because he is a charming impostor. “El público,” he

⁷⁰ The Catalan emigré Ramón Vinyes is usually credited as the brains behind *Voces*, but Eduardo Bermúdez Barrera and René J. Campis C. have shown that Restrepo also played a major role at the magazine. See Bermúdez Barrera and Campis C.

⁷¹ See, for example, Restrepo’s book *El tonel de Diógenes (Manual del cinico perfecto)* (1925).

explains, was “un impostor original, guasón, de aquellos a quienes se puede recibir desprevenidamente” (*Con razón* 14). Restrepo does not describe himself in this scene, but the image on the title page of an anthology of his chronicles, published in 1938, of a man reading a book by a fireplace, helps the reader to imagine him.⁷² After a while, Restrepo relaxes his guard. He confesses to the “the Public” that he had been worried that he would disregard his chronicles. “The Public” puts him at ease. He assures him that a chronicler simply needs to take a good look at everyday life in order to keep his attention as a reader: “tú, cronista amigo, procura que los diminutos acontecimientos que te obligan, esas fugaces ocurrencias y esos hechos intrascendentes, se desnuden delante de tus ojos para que repares el contenido, que nunca es insubstancial” (17-18). In *El tónel de Diógenes (manual del cínico perfecto)*, his book of essays and aphorisms from 1925, Restrepo had suggested that the average reader was as dumb as a monkey (116). A decade later, he offers a more benevolent image: the public is a charming fraud with whom he condescends to have a chat.

An important detail about Restrepo’s personification of the public is its gender. Even though Restrepo, following Nietzsche, tended to attribute feminine characteristics to the masses, he personifies them as a man in this chronicle. He cannot bring himself to address women readers. As Huyssen notes, “[t]here is a powerful masculinist and misogynist current within the trajectory of modernism, a current which time and again openly states its contempt for women and for the masses and which had Nietzsche as its most eloquent and influential representative” (49). Restrepo’s chronicles are often exercises in such misogyny. Like his master, he invokes the wisdom of the ancients in

⁷² *Con razón o sin ella* (1938). Unless otherwise noted, the citations of Restrepo’s work refer to this anthology.

order to legitimize his disdain for women. In “La mujer que fue hombre,” for example, he claims that the Greek myth of Tiresias, which tells the tale of a blind prophet who was transformed into a woman after beating two snakes to death with a stick, may somehow explain his disgust at the news about a woman who had undergone gender-reassignment surgery. Likewise, in “Los filósofos y las mujeres,” Restrepo supports his thesis that women are intellectually inferior to men with misogynistic passages from the philosophers of the ages. In “Ellos y nosotros,” he riffs on a photograph, which is reprinted with the chronicle, of a chimpanzee with his arm around the shoulders of a little girl at the London zoo. He imagines that the chimpanzee and the girl are boyfriend and girlfriend, but that, as soon as the girl has grown up, she will leave him for the first man who comes along.

Restrepo rejects modern technology, including the newspaper, for its democratizing effects. In the chronicle titled “En sociedad con los autómatas,” for example, he complains that he cannot enjoy a symphony on the radio because he is too distracted by the thought that the medium connects him to people across the world: “Desde su butaca, en la apacibilidad del salón, lo pone [al oyente] en instantáneo contacto con la lejana Roma, con la aristocrática Viena, con la Moscú plebeya, con la Buenos Aires alegre, o con “La Voz de Soplavientos” (H J 4 B Z, departamento de Bolívar)” (129). And he suspects that the technology of modern production has had a similar effect on workers. In the same chronicle, he mentions a newspaper cartoon in which one electrician brags to another that they keep the lights on all year (“nosotros alumbramos todo el año”). Restrepo does not bother to explain the cartoon—he just wants to point out the arrogance of the electricians. To be sure, there is “una epidemia general, reinante ahora, que

consiste en confundir con Edison a todo peón trepafaroles, y con Bell a la modesta señorita telefonista. A fuerza de oirse adular, el remendón de alambres presume que, sin sus auxilios profesionales, viviría la tierra sumida en las eternas tinieblas. El voceador de diarios se cree fuente original de la información y de la cultura, propagador y diseminador de luces mentales” (115).

Nonetheless, Restrepo resigned himself to the idea that the massification of culture was an irreversible process. He even saw some good in it. When Gaitán became mayor of Bogotá, in 1936, Restrepo praised his campaign to raise the cultural level of the city’s masses. He believed that the masses needed to learn how to behave themselves in the city. “Porque lo que hace la fisonomía urbana, la fisonomía metropolitana, no es la multitud abigarrada. No son los trescientos cincuenta mil habitantes, un poco heterogéneos en sus trajes, en sus hábitos de aseo y de pulcritud, en su cortesía o en su descortesía, sino la forma decorosa como esa muchedumbre se aloja, se acicala, se pasea, se divierte o se aburre” (91-92). Even the snobbiest of intellectuals in Bogotá had to accommodate themselves to the new reality of mass culture in some way. Most of the Liberals took jobs with the Ministry of Education, but Restrepo did not. He found work writing for a newspaper, producing criticism of mass culture for mass consumption. And, to supplement his income as a journalist, he sold hats (Bermúdez Barrera and Campis C). It would be misleading to say that Restrepo was independent from the Liberal party. *La Razón* was a partisan paper. However, Restrepo was much closer to the market than most of his fellow Liberal intellectuals. His chronicles reveal a tension about mass culture that is obscured in the paternalist discourse of the intellectuals who orbited the Ministry of Education: it undermines the basis for the intellectual’s own claims to superiority.

Restrepo's attempt to model an aristocratic ethos for consuming mass culture was doomed from the start. He was obliged to meet the reader on the middle ground of middlebrow culture.

Conclusion

In an unpublished review from 1925, Walter Benjamin defended the value of illustrated magazines. Despite their ephemerality, or rather because of it, such magazines constituted important objects for research. In Benjamin's words, "To show things in the aura of their topicality is more worthwhile, is much more fruitful, even if indirectly, than showing off the rather, in the final analysis, petit bourgeois ideas of education for the masses" (qtd. in Leslie 118). In this chapter, I have made the same case for newspaper chronicles. The chronicles published in Bogotá in the mid-1930s reveal an important cultural transformation: the emergence of an urban middle-class culture. The chroniclers José Joaquín Jiménez, Gilberto Owen, Emilia Pardo Umaña, and Enrique Restrepo all responded to a new middle-class public in different ways. Jiménez and Owen ironically assumed the feminine role of the addicted consumer in order to stake out satirical perspectives on mass culture. Their addicted personas allowed them to turn reading mass culture into a game of the imagination, and they invited their readers to play along as they invented satirical fantasies that mocked elite fears about the masses or the tabloid items of the world news. Pardo Umaña and Restrepo took more acerbic poses toward mass culture. These poses were likewise gendered: Pardo Umaña took on an androgynous

persona in order to expand her authority beyond the topics of the women's page and Restrepo's critiques of mass culture were spiked with misogyny. The appeal of the latter two chroniclers was in part due to the class anxieties of their readers. Their snobbish disdain for the mass culture gave readers a model of how to consume mass culture themselves. The work of these four writers illuminates a side of López Pumarejo's *Revolución en marcha* that is hard to see in the reports of the Ministry of Education.

In December 1936, López Pumarejo put the *Revolución en marcha* on "pause." Pressure from the Liberal and Conservative elites and the Catholic Church led him to pull back on his reforms. And, in 1938, the centrist Liberal Eduardo Santos would replace him in the presidency. This reaction to the *Revolución en marcha* can be detected in the chronicles that I have studied in this chapter. Jiménez's and Owen's playful engagements with mass culture in the early-to-mid 1930s were published at the mainstream Liberal newspaper *El Tiempo* during a period of optimism among Liberals about a moderate populist program. Pardo Umaña and Restrepo's skeptical treatments, in turn, were published in the mid-to-late 1930s, when the Liberal elite had already soured on the *Revolución en marcha*. To be sure, Jiménez and Owen both left journalism in 1936, and when they returned to *El Tiempo* in 1938 neither of them returned to their beats as chroniclers. Jiménez became the editor of the short-lived humor magazine *Guau-Guau* and then began to have most of his work published on the newspaper's humor page. Owen became the editor of *El Tiempo*'s cultural magazine *Estampa*, where he edited and wrote articles about high culture. To be sure, Jiménez and Owen's moves away from the chronicle corresponded with the increasingly politicization of the concept of the middle class in Colombia. In the late 1930s and the early 1940s, Gaitán would claim the concept

for his own dissident populist movement. In the next chapter, I will take a closer look at the effects of Gaitán's rise on the cultural field in Bogotá.

Chapter Four

Espiral: A Publishing Experiment in the Age of Gaitán

Cultural historians remember the latter half of the 1940s as a period of collapse in Colombia. The institutional advances that had been made during the sixteen years of Liberal government between 1930 and 1946 (the so-called Liberal Republic) were largely abandoned after the Conservative power took back power in 1946 and the conflict between the two parties sharpened into a crisis. Indeed, this period, 1945-1950, tends to be remembered as the initial stage of a civil war between militias of the two parties that lasted until the mid-1960s. Even though partisan attacks had begun in rural parts of Colombia by 1946, the symbolic start to this war—which is referred to in Colombia simply as *La Violencia*—was the assassination of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán in Bogotá on April 9, 1948. Gonzalo Sánchez Gómez is one such historian. Sánchez Gómez identifies this date as the moment in which “el movimiento cultural es abruptamente interrumpido” (14). At a time when modern academic institutions were being consolidated in other Latin American countries, such as Mexico and Brazil, Colombia “entraba en un silencio cultural de casi dos décadas, entre 1945-1965” (15). The destruction of downtown Bogotá following Gaitán’s murder serves to illustrate Sánchez Gómez’s point; the city blocks destroyed in the riots of April 9, 1948, had held the newspaper offices, government agencies, and cafés where intellectuals had worked and socialized during the years of the Liberal Republic.

This narrative about the latter half of the 1940s is true as far as it goes. There is no question that the Conservative party reacted against a radicalized faction of the Liberal party, led by Gaitán, and that this conflict interrupted the reform of cultural institutions. However, the apocalyptic mode of this narrative obscures the fact that not every cultural process was annihilated by political polarization. For example, Brigitte König observed in a 2002 article that a group of modernist intellectuals gathered at the Café Automático in downtown Bogotá from the late 1940s to the mid 1950s. She linked this café to a series of cafés where Liberal modernizers had been gathering since the 1920s, starting with the Café Windsor (see Chapter One)⁷³. And, in 2010, several art historians at the Universidad de los Andes—Jaime Iregui, Diana Camacho, Liliana Merizalde, and Gustavo Niño—edited a book-length study of El Automático. Where König had sought to document a history of modern café culture in Bogotá, the editors of *Café El Automático: arte, crítica y esfera pública* investigated the cultural scene that was organized around El Automático, which became a daily gathering place for Liberal intellectuals after the café where they used to meet was destroyed during *el Bogotazo*.

Café El Automático: arte, crítica y esfera pública comprises testimonies from several former members of the coterie at El Automático and of critical essays about the importance of the café for the cultural history of Colombia. The latter group of texts varies between sociological and historical analyses. For example, Jaime Iregui analyzes El Automático in the framework of debates about Jürgen Habermas's theory of the public sphere. Following feminist critiques of Habermas's theory, which proposed that women

⁷³ Café-going also could be linked more broadly to the liberalization of Colombian society during the same period. As Camilo Sarmiento Jaramillo notes, cafés had begun to open in Bogotá at the turn of the nineteenth century but only became integrated into the daily routine of Bogotanos in the 1920s (100).

did not only participate in public life as readers but also in oppositional “counter-public spheres,” Iregui argues that El Automático—despite having included very few women in its meetings—functioned as a counter-sphere.⁷⁴ Iregui also suggests that the group at El Automático were marginalized enough from political life that they were able to develop aesthetic criteria free from the corrupting influence of the parties. Invoking an older tradition of modern art theory, he argues that the intellectuals at El Automático established a form of aesthetic autonomy. Liliana Merizalde, in turn, argues that El Automático functioned as a space where Liberal intellectuals collaborated on multiple editorial projects. She observes that an impressive number of publications emerged from these collaborations, including the oppositional newspaper *Crítica* and the cultural magazines *Espiral* and *Mito*.

In the last two essays, Gustavo Niño adds historical context to the testimonies provided in the first half of the book and Camilo Sarmiento Jaramillo argues that the innovative art and art criticism produced by members of the coterie at El Automático suggests that the café should occupy a major place in Colombian art history. As a whole, *Café El Automático* functions to refute the apocalyptic reading of the late 1940s of critics such as Sánchez Gómez. Although the book does not have a polemical tone, its contributors take specific issue with art historians who have dated the emergence of a modern art scene in Bogotá to the late 1950s. They emphasize that as much as a decade earlier key elements of a modern scene—the exhibition and sale of modern art as well as critical debates about it—were already forming at El Automático.

⁷⁴ For feminist critiques of Habermas’s theory, see Landes (1988), Felski (1989), and Fraser (1989).

In the previous chapter, I argued that the appeal of the Liberal government to the urban masses in the mid-1930s, a program known as *la Revolución en marcha*, corresponded with a new ironic posture toward mass culture by newspaper chroniclers such as José Joaquín Jiménez, who experimented with genres such as the *crónica roja* in the pages of major Liberal newspapers. In this chapter, I will read the cultural production of a small group of writers affiliated with El Automático in dialogue with the radical-popular mobilization of Gaitán's political movement. These intellectuals were involved with the editorial project Espiral, which was both the name of a monthly magazine and a publishing house. The driving force behind the project was the Spanish exile Clemente Airó, but the former avant-garde poet Luis Vidales, whom I discussed in Chapter One, was the editor-in-chief of the magazine for two years (1944-1946), and several other intellectuals played significant roles as well.

I agree with Iregui that the El Automático intellectuals consolidated an identity around the concept of autonomy. However, the Espiral group did so strategically, and in fact re-purposed the concept of autonomous art as a form of social investigation. Even as they were careful to avoid engaging in political diatribe, perhaps from fear that they would be censored by the government, they published texts that reflected on the transformation of Colombia by the radical-popular mobilization of the mid-to-late 1940s. With the intention of drawing attention to this mobilization, rather than its repression, I have referred to this period in the chapter title as "the age of Gaitán." I use this designation with the hope of keeping my distance from the nihilism of the *Violencia* specialists. The ideological opening of *el gaitanismo* did not shut down immediately following the assassination of its leader; the radicalization of the *gaitanistas* had lasting

effects throughout Colombia.⁷⁵ I seek to shine light on some of the effects that it had on cultural production, and thus I will emphasize—at least for the time being—the triumphs of *el gaitanismo* rather than its defeats.

In what follows, I will sketch the general contours of the Espiral project through a study of its magazine and several of the books that were published in its two publishing lines, Ediciones Espiral and Editorial Iquiema. I will pay special attention to the novel *Las estrellas son negras* (1949), by Arnoldo Palacios, because it was the most controversial of the texts published by Espiral, and thus illuminates with exceptional clarity the tensions produced by the Espiral project in the cultural field of Bogotá in the late 1940s.

El Automático

To understand Espiral's editorial project it is necessary to give a more detailed sketch of the scene at El Automático. After the Bogotazo, the government began to censor all Liberal publications, and it passed a law limiting the number of cafés, bars, and restaurants per block because they understood them to be the incubators of a radical sociability (Niño 87). In the following passage, Iregui paints a grim scene of authoritarian repression: “mientras se cerraban los periódicos, se creaban leyes para eliminar los cafés del centro de Bogotá y se perseguía a todos aquellos que de una u otra forma manifestaran posición crítica hacia el Estado que ignoraba los límites entre las ideas de arte y las de política” (26). This description might lead the reader to believe that El

⁷⁵ For more on the regional effects of Gaitán's movement, see W. John Green (2003).

Automático was a clandestine, or semi-clandestine, space. In fact, it operated in the open. Some of the café regulars had high public profiles, and it behooved the president, Mariano Ospina Pérez, to allow them to gather and to publish. It gave the impression that his government tolerated criticism and respected civil liberties.

Indeed, the leader of the *tertulias* at El Automático, León de Greiff, continued to be employed by the Ministry of Education after the Bogotazo, and according to the testimonies collected in *Café El Automático*, the café was located on the ground floor of the building where the Ministry of Education had its offices. In other words, the intellectuals at El Automático were not an underground movement. They had been marginalized from state institutions but not banished entirely from them, and their publications were censored but they were not banned outright (though some of them would be in the 1950s).

Nonetheless, the intellectuals and artists who gathered at El Automático were brought together by their exclusion from official patronage, and this negative condition allowed for a creative dialogue between disciplines that otherwise may not have been so intense. For example, three poets who were regulars at El Automático—Jorge Gaitán Durán, Luis Vidales and Jorge Zalamea—would become three of the most important art critics in Colombia (Sarmiento Jaramillo, “El Automático” 111). Although their interest in visual art did not begin at El Automático, it was fomented by the debates that took place there and the art that was hung on its walls. The intellectuals at El Automático were also able to put their internal exile to their advantage by re-inventing it as a form of autonomy. Iregui makes this point in *Café El Automático*. Borrowing the term “dissensus” from Jacques Rancière, he writes that “[e]n tiempos de represión y censura el

hecho de reunirse y exponer en El Automático constituía tanto un gesto artístico como uno de tipo político, no en el sentido tradicional del término sino en su acepción estética como ejercicio del disenso ante un orden establecido que restringe la autonomía y la libre expresión del pensamiento estético” (26).

Espiral and the Question of Autonomy

In many ways, the monthly magazine *Espiral* reinforced the program of autonomy described by Iregui. As I mentioned, the magazine was run primarily by Clemente Airó, a regular at El Automático. Airó grew up in Madrid. He arrived as a political refugee to Bogotá in 1940, at the age of 22, after having fought in the Spanish Civil War, and would spend the rest of his life there. In 1941, he founded a magazine with two other Spanish exiles that lasted until the following year. In 1944, he started *Espiral* with Luis Vidales, who edited the magazine until 1946. After a hiatus of two years, the magazine started up again with Jorge Rojas and Airó as co-editors-in-chief. True to its full title—*Espiral. Revista de Letras y Arte*—*Espiral* was dedicated to literature and art. It focused on Colombian writers and artists, but it also ran many articles and translations by European authors. The tone of the magazine was generally amenable, and it was illustrated with photographs or reproductions on nearly every page. Indeed, *Espiral* seems to have functioned in part as a trade magazine for the emerging national art and literary markets. For example, it promoted Bogotá’s new art galleries and ran editorials complaining about the lack of infrastructure for the commercial distribution of books in Colombia. It also was a steady publicity machine for its own books, advertising and reviewing its new

releases. It ran ads from a diverse set of patrons, including art galleries, bookstores, news radio programs, a beer company, the National Comptroller's Office (*la Controlaría general de la nación*), and a pastry shop.

Espiral presented itself as the agent of a civic mission to disseminate national culture; it was patriotic in a vague, non-partisan way. The bland advertisements that it ran for one of its publishing ventures, Editorial Iqueima, illustrate this position. Editorial Iqueima's logo was an abstract lizard, borrowed from indigenous art, and its slogan sounded blandly official: "Una Editorial dotada de cuanto es necesario para contribuir a la divulgación de la cultura colombiana." Its advertisements could include a photograph of some folkloric *estampa*—for example, a pre-Columbian statue or a colonial church—or a reproduction of a painting by the contemporary Colombian muralist Ignacio Gómez Jaramillo, and an expanded version of its slogan, which concluded with the following phrases: "Una organización de cultura que tiene a cooperar en la labor difusora del pensamiento colombiano. Principalmente dedicada a la publicación de los nuevos valores de la literatura de la república. Una contribución al desarrollo literario y artístico de Colombia en relación con América y el mundo."

Indeed, Rojas and Airó refused to weigh in on current events in national politics, even at a time—the late 1940s—when other periodicals, including cultural magazines such as *Sábado*, had turned their pages into fora on the bipartisan conflict. The editors insisted on their magazine's independence in their columns. In the June 1949 issue, for example, the unsigned editorial assured readers that *Espiral* was "constantemente preocupada [...] por el verdadero hacer artístico, por la sincera creación literaria y plástica, y completamente ajena a partidarios, a grupos o capillas, tan sólo teniendo en consideración esa labor

divulgatoria y de aplauso para el poeta, novelista, pintor, etc., que mediante su trabajo logra la producción de la obra, el equilibrio imprescindible, la encarnación plástica o literaria del tema” (“Veinticuatro números” 12). In other words, Iregui was right to claim that *Espiral* “no tenía carácter político” (26), in the sense that it refused to back a political party.

However, I would argue that the political intervention of *Espiral* extended beyond the negative gesture of refusing to take sides in the partisan conflict. Even as Airó, Vidales, and Rojas asserted the autonomy of the magazine, they attempted to open a new space for social critique within that concept. They did so in two ways. First, they aligned themselves with Vidales’s leftist re-theorization of the concept of autonomy. Second, they embraced the discourse of the crisis of Man. In a recent book, Mark Greif argues that a discourse about “the crisis of Man” emerged in the United States and Western Europe in the early 1930s. With the rise of Nazism, Soviet communism, and fascism, intellectuals proposed that Western civilization—“Man” himself—was under threat. It took as its task an investigation into the meaning of what it meant to be human, giving rise to a literary trend that Greif describes as “humanistic modernism” (131). The crisis of Man discourse was a universalist model whose prestige—as much as it may be forgotten today—helped the editors of *Espiral* to get books with leftist critiques of Colombian society past censors. In this section I will briefly discuss these two operations, beginning with Vidales’s re-definition of autonomy.

In the first issue of *Espiral*, in 1944, as a sort of manifesto, Vidales sketched out a general theory of art that had as its centerpiece a new definition of autonomy. This theory, which he had been developing since 1938 (Sarmiento Jaramillo, *Luis Vidales y la*

crítica del arte 43), was based on the division of art into two categories: individualist art and collective art. In individualist art, the human figure was the preferred topic. Vidales traced the origin of this art to the early modern period in Europe, and attributed its preference for the human form to the exaltation of the individual in capitalism. In collective art, in turn, the preference was for non-human and non-mimetic shapes, and repeating patterns. This type of art tends to be produced in non-Western societies, and it expresses a socialist, albeit not necessarily Communist, ideology. In its rejection of individualism, collective art was anti-capitalist. And in its rejection of capitalism, collective art was autonomous. This idiosyncratic definition of autonomy allowed Vidales to lump together art that ranged far and wide in history and geography. For example, both ancient Egyptian art and contemporary Cubism qualified as autonomous art. It also turned the modernist definition of autonomy on its head. No longer did the concept refer to art that was the expression of an artist working free from the pressures of the state or the market. Instead, it referred to the art that best expressed the collective values of the society in which it was produced. Vidales would elaborate this theory at length in his book *Tratado de estética*, which was published in 1945.

Although Vidales's theory of autonomy could be dismissed as eccentric and reductionist, my interest here is not to judge it on its theoretical rigor but rather to see it as an attempt to repurpose the concept of autonomy to leftist ends. As we will see below, Vidales would use this framework to attack critics of the popular mobilization following the assassination of Gaitán.

Another concept that was important for the intellectuals of Espiral was that of "Man." This was perhaps an even more malleable concept than "autonomy." The discourse of the

crisis of Man—like the discourse of “lo nuevo” in the 1920s, which I discussed in Chapter One—allowed for a wide range of concrete appropriations. At *Espiral*, it involved the research of social reality. In the editorial column published in the September 1948 issue, under the title “Alerta,” the editors defended themselves against unnamed critics who feared that they were abandoning their commitment to modernist aesthetics. They affirmed that their “interés por el Hombre” did not mean they would give up “los avances estéticos ganados” (12). It was their historical duty, as intellectuals, to take up social questions. As they put it, “[s]e pregona una más directa inquisitoria en los vientos, un buceo directo en el impulso de la sociedad” (12). They relied as well on two related universalist discourses that rose to prominence in the years following World War II: human rights and existentialism.

The discourse of human rights, which asserted that every human being deserves basic protections, gathered strength in the United States during the war, and was institutionalized globally in several major treaties after it. The most famous of these treaties was the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, ratified by the United Nations General Assembly in Paris, in December 1948. However, the first such treaty was the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man, adopted eight months earlier by the Organization of American States, at a conference in Bogotá that was interrupted, infamously, by *el Bogotazo*. Like human rights, existentialism had emerged during wartime. It tasked intellectuals with the duty to develop positions on difficult moral dilemmas facing a threatened human civilization, and carried the discourse of the crisis of Man in a non-metaphysical direction, borrowing from the secular discourses of social science, psychology, and Marxism. Jean-Paul Sartre was its major figure. Although

Sartre had been a Heideggerian before the war—his major Heideggerian tract *Being and Nothingness* had come out in 1943—he had become a more heterodox thinker by the end of it. His famous lecture “Existentialism is a Humanism,” delivered in 1946, provocatively defined humanism as a discourse of moral responsibility (Greif 66-89).

I have not found any critiques of Airó’s existentialism in the periodicals of the late 1940s. However, Álvaro Bejarano, a former regular at *El Automático*, did mention in his testimony for the book *Café El Automático* that Airó annoyed some of the members of the group so much that he was the topic of “discusiones recurrentes y álgidas” (50). In Bejarano’s words, “dudaban de su sinceridad y su postura de izquierda. [...] La frecuente presencia de Airó en *El Automático* exacerbaba los ánimos de León de Greiff quien no lo podía ver y le puso de apodo *el grajo*.⁷⁶ ‘Ese es *un grajo*’ decía y lo determinaba muy poco” (50-51). Although more evidence is needed about the relationship of Airó to the other members of the Liberal intellectual circle in Bogotá, it would not be surprising if Airó’s engaged ethos would have irritated de Greiff given his aristocratic detachment from politics.

Espiral as Radical Publisher

Espiral carried out a leftist program much more through its books than its magazine. As noted above, the official mission of the publishing arm of *Espiral* was hardly incendiary—it was simply to disseminate the work of Colombian authors. And, to be fair,

⁷⁶ “Grajo” means “rook.” However, it would have been an insult with a double meaning in Colombia, where “grajo” is also a term for the stench of an armpit.

some of the texts that Ediciones Espiral or Editorial Iqueima⁷⁷ published were quite modest in form and theme. For example, Eugenio Darío Pautt Herrera's *Mi hacha y tu cántaro*, a set of straightforward lyrical love poems, was published by Editorial Iqueima in 1948, and Anita Díaz's equally discreet collection *Arbol de luceros*, which included an elegy for the *modernista* and former Conservative presidential candidate Guillermo Valencia, was published by the same house in 1949.

However, Espiral was a radical publisher in two senses. First, it published many authors who were young, racial minorities, and/or women. Although very little research exists on the publishing industry in Colombia, it is safe to say that no literary publishing house had ever had a list of authors who were so diverse. The Ministry of Education had promoted the democratization of culture during the Liberal government from 1930-1946, but literary publishing had remained largely restricted to white men from major cities during this period. Second, Espiral published leftist critiques of social problems. Most of these critiques were novels, but some of them were sociological or historical texts. Also, it published its books in affordable paperback editions. For example, in July 1948, the prices of the titles in Espiral's catalog ranged from seventy-five cents to two pesos. (For reference, that month's issue of the magazine *Espiral* cost thirty cents.) These modest prices suggest that Airó was aiming to sell his books to a mass public.

In the following section, I will survey several of Espiral's publications from the late 1940s⁷⁸ in order to suggest that they enacted new forms of social imagination. First, I will discuss the novel *Los dos tiempos*, by Elisa Mújica, and then the novels *Yugo de neblina*,

⁷⁷ The question of why Airó separated his publishing house into two lines, Ediciones Espiral and Editorial Iqueima requires further research. Both lines seem to follow the same editorial criteria.

⁷⁸ For a brief general overview of Espiral's catalog, see Mengual Català.

by Clemente Airó, and *Tierra mojada*, by Manuel Zapata Olivella, before turning to Luis Vidales's political essay *La insurrección desplomada (El 9 de abril, su teoría, su praxis)*. I will conclude with an extended analysis of Arnoldo Palacios's novel *Las estrellas son negras*.

Espiral's Catalog

Editorial Iquema published Elisa Mújica's novel *Los dos tiempos* in 1949, when Mújica was thirty one years old. It narrates the biography of a young woman who lives in various locations—rural Santander, Bogotá, and Quito—and is a close observer of the social life around her. In an early review, published in 1950, Ernesto Volkening praised it as “uno de los libros más importantes que se hayan publicado recientemente” (*Ensayos* 215) but not without conceding that its greatest merits were not literary: “[n]o cabe duda de que en *Los dos tiempos* las cualidades del documento humano superan las del arte de la novela” (219). He described the novel as a social history of a rapidly changing world told from the perspective of a female consciousness. Monserrat Ordoñez and Mary Berg would describe the novel in similar yet more precise terms several decades later. Ordoñez (1987) claimed that the main theme of Mújica's work (Ordoñez's analysis included not only *Los dos tiempos* but also the two novels and two story collections that Mújica had published subsequently) was the social history of Colombia, especially discrimination against women and the damage caused by capitalism. Berg (1995) classified *Los dos tiempos* as a *bildungsroman*, and added that it was remarkable for “Su afán de indagar causa y efecto, con su casi obsesiva preocupación por la definición de lo que constituye la

verdad” (11). Notably, all three critics point to the strong element of social investigation in *Los dos tiempos*. However, this investigation did not point to the predictable theses about class exploitation that characterized social realist fiction.

Mújica elaborated a unique critical perspective in part by adopting an existentialist ethos. Her protagonist, Celina Ríos, is a lonely outsider who struggles with the question of what she should do with her life. Volkening recognized that Celina was caught in a “situación existencialista,” and recognized a novelty in this predicament: “al parecer, sólo se pertenece a sí misma y todo lo espera de su personalísima decisión. Así se realiza en ella un modo de vivir y de sufrir igual al que rige los destinos de millones de su sexo en Europa y los Estados Unidos, pero que para la mujer colombiana constituye una experiencia radicalmente nueva” (217-218). Mújica gave her female protagonist a freedom that had been reserved for white men in Colombia, just as Arnoldo Palacios would do with the black protagonist of *Las estrellas son negras*.

To be sure, Mújica carries out an impressive survey of women intellectuals in *Los dos tiempos*. After having felt stifled by the conservative milieu of Bogotá, Celina moves to Quito, where she observes the unification of leftist movements, known as the Glorious May Revolution, in 1944. During this period of radicalization in Quito, Celina befriends several women, including a Bolivian revolutionary, whom she studies carefully. Not all of these women are activists—one is a snobbish “hija adoptiva del Boulevard Saint German y vuelve constantemente la mirada para buscarlo a fin de que la visión la defienda del provincialismo, el mestizaje, los cuartelazos y los manglares” (157)—but they all reveal new modes of being, each of which is emancipatory in its own way. Although the revolution will be frustrated, Celina returns to Colombia enriched with

these “nuevas concepciones” and “voces diversas” (244). In this manner, *Los dos tiempos* addresses the *gaitanista* movement indirectly. From nearby Quito, it imagines the feminist possibilities contained in the revolutionary temporality—one of the two *tiempos* to which the title of the novel alludes—of a radical-popular mobilization.

Airó’s *Yugo de neblina* (1948) and Manuel Zapata Olivella’s *Tierra mojada* (1947) carry out social analyses based on similar principles as Mújica’s. Like *Los dos tiempos*, *Yugo de neblina* inquires into the existentialist dilemma of how to live a morally responsible life. The action revolves around a hotel. After a young couple kills themselves in one of the rooms, the staff and long-term residents speculate about their motives. These conversations turn into more philosophical reflections on suicide and the meaning of life, thus entering even deeper into the existentialist terrain of Sartre or Albert Camus, who had claimed that suicide was the one truly serious question of philosophy in his famous essay “The Myth of Sisyphus.”⁷⁹

Tierra mojada, in turn, tells the story of a family of Afro-Colombian rice farmers in the Sinú River Basin, a rural region of the Caribbean coast in Colombia. The dramatic core of the novel is the struggle of the Correa family to survive. Zapata Olivella dramatizes their predicament as a question of systematic exploitation; they are stuck on the lowest rung of a racist, capitalist system.⁸⁰ Marvin A. Lewis has noted that even though the protagonists of both *Tierra Mojada* and *Las estrellas son negras* believe that revolution would be the only way to change this system, neither of them acts upon it and

⁷⁹ See Camus (1991).

⁸⁰ Cedric J. Robinson argues persuasively in *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (1983) that capitalist systems of production are always racist. He proposes the term “racial capitalism” to call attention to this fact.

focus their energies instead on survival.⁸¹ At any rate, Zapata Olivella and Palacios, both Afro-Colombian, use Marxist critique to re-frame the representation of social life at the periphery of the Colombian national imaginary. They refute the ahistorical premises of the folkloric discourse that had been promoted not only during the Conservative Hegemony but also the Liberal Republic. However, the social analysis in *Tierra mojada* is more scientific than in *Las estrellas son negras*. Indeed, Zapata Olivella reinforced the interpretive authority of his novel by presenting it as a *novela de la tierra*. He even managed to get Ciro Alegría, the author of *El mundo es ancho y ajeno* (1941), one of the foundational works of the genre, to write the novel's prologue.

Besides his work for *Espiral*, Luis Vidales wrote for *Jornada*, a newspaper that was founded to support Gaitán's first campaign for president, in 1946. After Gaitán's death, Vidales wrote a series of articles for the newspaper that would be collected and published by Editorial Iqueima as *La insurrección desplomada (El 9 de abril, su teoría, su praxis)* (1948). The polemical topic of *La insurrección desplomada* perhaps explains why scholars of art and literature have ignored the book. At first glance, the book looks like a mere political pamphlet, and thus distracts from Vidales's image as a champion of the autonomy of art. However, a closer look reveals that Vidales's idiosyncratic understanding of autonomy was the basis of his critique of *El Bogotazo*. Airó's decision to publish it was not an aberration of the political crisis of 1948 but rather consistent with the logic of his editorial project as a whole.

⁸¹ See *Treading the Ebony Path: Ideology and Violence in Contemporary Afro-Colombian Prose Fiction*, 93.

La insurrección desplomada did not amount to a radical departure from Airó's general criteria in the sense that, even though it was a political critique, Vidales availed himself of the theoretical position that he had elaborated in the magazine *Espiral* and in his book *Tratado de estética* in order to impugn the first principles of the prestigious Liberal intellectual Luis López de Mesa, who had blamed the riots of *el Bogotazo* on the “debilidad de nuestros rasgos étnicos” (qtd. in Vidales 110). Specifically, Vidales borrowed the historical materialist critique he had made of Taine's positivistic theory of aesthetics; according to Vidales, Taine understood art as an expression of the geographical milieu in which the artist produced it, when in fact it was determined by economic and political history. Vidales repurposed this critique for López de Mesa, who had argued in his analysis of the Bogotazo that Colombia's geography had caused the racial degeneration of its popular classes.⁸² Vidales would go on to lament that this outdated idea continued to hold not only López de Mesa but also many other Colombian intellectuals in thrall, and to mock the quasi-official organ of the Liberal party, *El Tiempo*, for having anointed López de Mesa “el caballero de la sociología.”

In any case, Airó can not be accused of having toed an ideological line. His publishing catalog also included the novel *El 9 de abril* (1951), by Pedro Gómez Corena, which proposed that a Communist plot was behind the “nefasto asesinato del doctor Jorge Eliécer Gaitán” (5). Nonetheless, Gómez Corena's novel was still inscribed in the grey area between fiction and social investigation; according to Raymond L. Williams, it was “better read as historical document and essay than as novel” (50). The radical gesture of

⁸² For a study of geographical determinism in Colombian thought, see Felipe Martínez-Pinzón's forthcoming book, *Una cultura de invernadero: trópico y civilización en Colombia (1808-1928)*.

Espiral's catalog was not so much to be found in ideological arguments as it was in its embrace of writing that crossed generic divides. Against the reactionary tradition of defending the purity of literature—which, as we saw in Chapter One, was tenacious in Bogotá—Airó sought to contaminate it with history and sociology. In the novels of Mújica, Airó, Zapata Olivella, and in the essay of Vidales, a new sort of engaged social criticism emerged in the Colombian cultural field. This ethos, in turn, opened a space for writers who did not fit the mold for men of letters: women, Afro-Colombians, proletarians. The most extreme example, to which we now turn, is a novel from 1949: *Las estrellas son negras* by Arnoldo Palacios.

The Case of Las estrellas son negras

Palacios grew up in Cértegui, a mining town in the Chocó, a region on the Pacific coast bordering Panama whose population is almost entirely Afro-Colombian. Palacios's path to Bogotá was similar to the path of many other young intellectuals who had been arriving from the provinces since the 1920s. Palacios's father was one of the Liberal bosses of Cértegui, and his party connections would have helped Palacios to secure a spot at a high school in Quibdó and then again to win a scholarship from the Ministry of Education to finish the last few years of his secondary education in Bogotá. Palacios arrived to the capital in 1942, at the age of seventeen or eighteen. After graduating from high school, he enrolled in law at the Universidad Libre, a Liberal university that had opened during the crisis of the Conservative party during the 1920s. However, he dropped out and began to frequent the Café Fortaleza, the precursor of the café El

Automático, which Palacios would describe as the “punto de encuentro de los intelectuales en Bogotá” in the mid-1940s (*Cuando yo empezaba* 131), and to write for *Sábado*, a middlebrow cultural magazine founded in 1943 by two Liberals, Armando Solano and Plinio Mendoza Neira, whose slogan was “Semanario para todos, al servicio de la cultura y de la democracia en América.”

Palacios became a journalist during the years that the Colombian congress was debating whether to grant the Chocó recognition as a department. He campaigned for the Chocó, both promoting its resources, both natural and human, and appealing to a humanitarian argument: it would help to improve the extreme material poverty of its people. Despite this political aim, Palacios’s articles about the Chocó were more ethnographic than op-editorial: they described the basic features of the Chocó for readers who were presumed to have no prior knowledge of the region’s geography, demography, economy, government, customs, etc.; the state would recognize Chocó as a department in 1947. Palacios would re-work this ethnographic research in *Las estrellas son negras*, which was published by Editorial Iqueima in 1949.

The novel narrates a day in the life of a teenage boy who wanders around Quibdó, the capital of the Chocó, in a state of raw desperation. It registers, with an austere tone, what he sees and feels as he searches, first, for something to eat, and then, second, for the money to buy a ticket out of town. Seen through the boy’s eyes, Quibdó appears in febrile fragments. It is impossible to know what is real and what is his imagination; the boy, whose name is Irra—short for Israel and close phonetically to “ira,” or “anger”—is delirious from hunger. The novel is divided into four sections. The first, titled “Hambre,” narrates Irra’s experience as he stumbles about the city in search of something to eat. In

his eyes, the people he comes across in the street are so decayed as to be ghoulish; Irra registers with horror the effects of poverty on the people and on the urban space of Quibdó. In the second section, titled “Ira,” the protagonist’s craving for food transforms into anger. His resentment is directed generally at society, for being racist, but more specifically at the government for preferring white employees and for having denied him a scholarship so he could continue his studies. Eventually, Irra’s resentment turns into a desire to act. He considers a series of plans. These plans range from the most wild—assassinating the mayor of Quibdó in order to spark a revolution—to the most conventional—moving to Cartagena to work and study. However, just as he lacks the money to buy a few groceries, he lacks the money for a riverboat ticket to Cartagena. More desperate than ever, he seeks the aid of a shopkeeper who is known to be a pedophile and exchanges sex for the money he needs.

In the third section, “Nive,” Irra visits an old friend, Nive, to say goodbye. Although she is barely more than a child, Irra is surprised by a violent impulse to have sex with her. He does, though it is not clear that she has consented, or even understands what he is doing to her. In the last section, “Luz interior,” Irra prepares to leave for Cartagena. A fear that Nive is pregnant, and that he would have to marry her, is all the more reason for Irra to leave town. However, when he is already on the dock, getting ready to board the boat to Cartagena, Nive’s mother appears and tells him that Nive has died. Stunned, Irra falls into the river. When he emerges, to the laughter of the dockhands, he is a changed man. Suddenly, and without explanation, his anguish is gone; the Atrato river, it seems, has healed him with magic powers. Irra decides to stay in Quibdó, and hopes to have a

family with Nive, who may not be dead. As with the rest of the events in the narrative, it is not clear whether Irra's encounter with Nive's mother was a hallucination.

A critic by the name of L. A. Rivera noted how unusual *Las estrellas son negras* was in a review published in August 1949. He imagined that the public would be taken aback by the mere title of the book—never mind its contents—upon seeing it in the display cases of the bookstores along the Carrera Séptima, the main avenue of Bogotá.⁸³

Unsurprisingly, the novel received a strong response in the capital's literary press.

Several critics read it as an expression of the suffering of black people in the Chocó.

Rogelio Velásquez, a Chocoano himself and a researcher “licenciado en Etnología en la Universidad del Cauca” (*Cuando yo empezaba* 161), vouched for the accuracy of Palacios's representation of the poverty of the Chocó.

Few critics engaged with the literary elements of the novel. However, one who did was José María Restrepo Millán, who had mentored Palacios when he was still a high school student in Bogotá. He put the novel in a modernist lineage, suggesting that it borrowed elements from Panait Istrati, James Joyce and Richard Wright. He also pointed out that the novel narrated the tragedy of the Chocó “de modo contenido y objetivo, pero respetuoso, no frío como [Aldous] Huxley.” Nonetheless, Restrepo Millán, a classicist by training, distanced himself somewhat awkwardly from this part of his analysis. He offered that he was merely relaying the remarks of his daughter, with whom he had read the novel. As he put it, “Esto comentó mi hija Clarita en un alto de la lectura, y lo he escrito porque me parece que sintetiza un aspecto del concepto que de la novela se va formando la juventud moderna” (XXXI). Even though he was one of Palacios's biggest

⁸³ See Rivera (1949).

boosters, he struggled to endorse the modern aesthetic of his novel. Nonetheless, some of the most forward-thinking Liberal intellectuals of the day would choose *Las estrellas son negras* as the national prose work of the year. In a survey published in *El Tiempo* in January 1950,⁸⁴ intellectuals including Hernando Téllez and León de Greiff chose Palacios's novel.

In contrast, *Las estrellas son negras* received a vehemently negative response from two *costeño* modernists, Ramón Vinyes and Gabriel García Márquez. Writing from Barranquilla, in July 1949, Vinyes, the Catalan émigré who had edited the modernist journal *Voces* in the early 1920s (see Chapter One), wrote that *Las estrellas son negras* was so bad it was funny. He quipped that it should have been titled *Vida corta de un infeliz negro* (*Selección de textos* 503), and sentenced that naturalism was an outdated aesthetic that had been discredited “por el mismo Zola” (504). He was also annoyed by the passivity and the anonymity of the novel's protagonist. In his judgment, “La novela de Irra y ‘su negra estrella’ no pasan de ser la triste biografía de una individualidad sin individualidad, la existencia de un muchacho sin importancia” (504). García Márquez was just as harsh. Writing in a Cartagena newspaper in January 1950, when he was twenty-two years old, García Márquez blasted Hernando Téllez, who was an early champion of his fiction, for having chosen *Las estrellas son negras* as the book of the year over books by Germán Arciniegas and Jorge Zalamea in the *El Tiempo* survey. In his remarks about Palacios's novel, he hit the same notes as Vinyes:

⁸⁴ See “Arte y literatura en 1949.”

[C]uando apareció “Las estrellas son negras”, Téllez guardó un discreto y nada desconcertante silencio, cuya explicación creímos encontrar, una vez leída, en la calidad misma de la novela de Arnoldo Palacios. Sin embargo, estábamos equivocados. Téllez sólo aguardaba una oportunidad para decir su fría y ahora sí desconcertante verdad. ‘Las estrellas son negras’, con su gastado molinillo de resentimiento racial, su mediocridad técnica y la insignificancia humana de su protagonista, es superior en calidad literaria a ese limpio y depurado proceso del libro de Arciniegas o al inteligente y castigado testimonio de Zalamea. Por haberlo emitido Hernando Téllez, el concepto es casi una doble falta de respeto consigo mismo y con quienes escriben sobre la base esencial de saber escribir (*Textos costeños* 116).

Over the next two decades, nothing else was written about the novel. Nonetheless, *Las estrellas son negras* was published again in 1971, and African literature scholars in the United States discovered it. Over the course of the 1970s and 1980s, several of these critics argued that *Las estrellas son negras* is a work of the African diaspora.⁸⁵ For them, Irra’s rage was not merely a form of social protest but also an expression of black identity; Lemeul Johnson, for example, proposed that the novel, like a blues song, affirmed African-Americans’s will to survive tragedy (195). These identitarian readings of *Las estrellas son negras* would be reworked into a national frame by Mariela A. Gutiérrez, who argued in 2000 that “en *Las estrellas son negras*, por vez primera, el íntimo ser del negro colombiano, su psique, su personalidad, sale a relucir” (33). Her article followed a third edition of the novel, in 1998, by the Colombian Ministry of

⁸⁵ See Jackson (1976), Johnson (1982), and Lewis (1987).

Culture, which published it as part of an initiative to promote a multicultural national identity.⁸⁶ The novel was published yet again by the Ministry of Culture in 2010 as part of its *Biblioteca afrocolombiana*, a box set of nineteen Afro-Colombian literary works, with the same intention. This new edition included a prologue by Oscar Collazos, the recently deceased novelist and critic who is most remembered outside of Colombia for his polemic with Julio Cortázar and Mario Vargas Llosa, in 1969, about the duties of a writer in revolutionary times.

The title of Collazo's prologue, "Un clásico afroamericano," is somewhat misleading, because he does not attempt to place *Las estrellas son negras* in a tradition of African-American literature, or even Afro-Colombian literature, but rather argues that it is a great literary novel, and places it alongside Gabriel García Márquez's *El coronel no tiene quien le escriba* and Álvaro Cepeda Samudio's *La casa grande* in the canon of modern Colombian literature. In his analysis, Collazos makes points that are similar to those of Restrepo Millán (or Restrepo Millán's daughter Clarita, as the case might be) about the modernity of the literary techniques at work in *Las estrellas son negras*. First, he insists that the novel has a modern style; its narration is "lacónica como una cámara" (20). Second, the novel does not exist to illustrate a thesis about politics; nor is it a "simple expediente sociológico" (22). Instead, it creates a cast of characters who exist autonomously. And third, the novel's plot is surprisingly sophisticated. Collazos supports these reasons with comparisons not only to the work of Palacios's consecrated Colombian contemporaries, but also to the Norwegian novelist Knut Hamsun's classic

⁸⁶ In 1991, the Colombian state ratified a new constitution that recognized Colombia as a "pluriethnic and multicultural nation." For more on how state cultural policy would be re-oriented around this definition of national identity, see Ana María Ochoa (2005).

Hunger (1890), with which it shares a protagonist who is delirious from starvation⁸⁷.

Collazos does not challenge any critic of *Las estrellas son negras* directly. However, his insistence on the modern literary values of Palacios's novel may have been a response to Rafael Gutiérrez Girardot's remarks about it in the *Manual de literatura colombiana*, an important critical anthology that was published in 1988. Gutiérrez Girardot dismissed the novel as a homegrown version of socialist realism; in his opinion, Palacios was an author who worshipped at the "capilla" of the "Moscú tropical" (*Ensayos sobre literatura colombiana* 141).

Despite the controversy about *Las estrellas son negras*, it illustrates the basic principles of Espiral's editorial criteria. It stretched the meaning of Colombian culture to include Afro-Colombian culture, and it pushed modern Colombian literature toward social critique. Espiral refrained from discussing *el gaitanismo* openly—Vidales's book, *La insurrección desplomada*, being a major exception—but it nonetheless contributed to the process of cultural democratization that Gaitán had galvanized. Palacios's own presence in the intellectual field of Bogotá also reflected this process. He was Afro-Colombian and disabled (a case of polio in childhood obliged him to walk with a crutch) in a field dominated by middle-class white men. Tellingly, Palacios borrowed a trope from Gaitán to describe his position in a survey conducted by Manuel Zapata Olivella for a magazine in 1947: "Hablando 'gaitanísticamente', hay en literatura una oligarquía que cierra el paso al desconocido. Pero los pobres se rebelan también contra ella, conservando

⁸⁷ Collazos also claimed that two consecrated Colombian modernists, García Márquez and Eduardo Zalamea Borda (whose novel, *Cuatro años a bordo de mí mismo*, was the first Colombian narrative to employ the Joycean stream-of-consciousness technique), had approved of Palacios's novel. However, he was mistaken about García Márquez. Indeed, the text he cited suggests the opposite. It is the same review from which I have already quoted, in which García Márquez excoriates Hernando Téllez for having ranked *Las estrellas son negras* as the best Colombian novel of 1948.

sus escritos como un fuego de rebeldía. El escritor pobre quiere conservar su libertad, alejándose de los grupos, esperando el momento de darles una guantada” (*Por los senderos* 64-5).

Palacios had to contend not only with the racism of Conservative but also Liberal intellectuals, who often wrote about him in paternalistic terms. The following description of Palacios in the Liberal magazine *Sábado* is typical. At the time, he was already a regular contributor to the magazine; however, he was still presented as “El joven novelista de color, hijo de la ardiente manigua chocoana” and “un muchacho bueno, pobre, sencillo, laborioso y sonriente, en quien la crueldad de la vida no ha acidulado un solo instante la tranquila dulzura del alma. —Carece de pesos, de rencores y de enemigos” (*Cuando yo empezaba* 90). Other critics were impressed that someone like Palacios—“él que es chocoano, que es negro, que es inválido, que ha sido víctima de la discriminación racial”—had written a novel. He was “un ejemplo de superación humana” (*Cuando yo empezaba* 157).

Like the other novelists published by Espiral in the late 1940s, Palacios used new literary techniques to write about Colombian society. Despite the general brilliance of Gutiérrez Girardot’s history of Colombian literature, he was too quick to dismiss Palacios’s novel as socialist realism. Oscar Collazos took a more promising approach when he compared *Las estrellas son negras* to Knut Hamsun’s *Hunger* (1890). But while the protagonist of *Hunger* resigns himself to his misfortune because he believes God has preordained it, Irra believes that he is responsible for his own fate because God does not exist. Irra’s anguish about this particular sort of freedom invokes a contemporary referent rather than Hamsun: Jean-Paul Sartre. Palacios wrote *Las estrellas son negras* in 1948, at

the height of Sartre's prestige, and he shares some of the French intellectual's basic concerns. Indeed, the novel has clear echoes of Sartre's novel *Nausea* (1938). At the same time, Collazos's comparison of the narration of *Las estrellas son negras* to a camera's eye is accurate. Its austere representation of extreme poverty recalls the films of Italian neorealism. Both Palacios's novel and Roberto Rossellini's films belong to the postwar period, in which, according to the art critic John Roberts, there was a "widespread repoliticization of realist aesthetics" (6). Palacios carried out a similar project in Colombia.

To see this side of *Las estrellas son negras* requires one to leave aside for a moment the identitarian reading encouraged recently by the Ministry of Education (minus Collazo's introduction to the 2010 edition). Despite the differences that mark Irra—e.g., that he is poor, black, and from "el país exótico del Chocó," to borrow the title of one of Palacios's articles for *Sábado*—he is also an "unmarked 'modern man,'" to use a phrase from Mark Greif (130). He agonizes over the freedom to choose how he should live his life. Should he stay in Quibdó and help provide for his family? Should he move to Cartagena and try to get a university degree? Should he kill the mayor of Quibdó and incite a revolution? It is true that Palacios abandons these speculations in the last pages of the novel, and returns Irra to a prelapsarian world via a quasi-Christian river baptism. However, this turn of events is so jarring because it undermines the logic of the rest of the novel.

Even as Palacios observes the poverty of Quibdó, he insists on its modernity. For example, the national newspapers arrive every day on an airplane from Bogotá. Foreign magazines, in English and French, also reach Quibdó, as do Hollywood movies. And

even in Irra's delirious state, he takes the time to skim the newspaper at a café and to comment on a movie that is playing in a local theater. And though most people in Quibdó can only afford canoes, the state employees travel by motorboat on the wide Atrato river. The frequent mention of Cartagena reminds the reader who knows the geography of Colombia that the Caribbean sea, the busy international port of Barranquilla, and the even busier and even more cosmopolitan Panama Canal are not so far away. Here, Quibdó is part of the modern world. Indeed, the daily news echoes loudly in Irra's mind: an editorial in favor of a mainstream Liberal who has condemned a leftist upstart in his party (which was a clear reference to Gaitán), the lynching of a black man in the southern US state of Georgia, a headline with an unfamiliar term—"paneslavismo"—that catches his eye.

Another strategy that Palacios uses to figure Quibdó as a modern space is to focus on its urban aspects. He keeps his protagonist close to its small grid of buildings and streets, and away from the exotic mangroves that surround it. Palacios discussed this decision at a conference in Bogotá in 1998, almost fifty years after he had written the novel. He said then that with *Las estrellas son negras* he had wanted to address "[e]l problema del hombre en la ciudad, en este mundo moderno, complejo." However, this created a problem for him: "Quibdó no tenía industria, en Quibdó no hay obreros, en Quibdó no hay calles como en Bogotá o en Medellín, es una pequeña ciudad capital del departamento. Entonces cómo hacer una novela en un espacio tan reducido, en donde aparezcan la complicación y las complejidades de los personajes" (*Cuando yo empezaba* 139).

Palacios's comment that "the man in the city" is situated in "this modern, complex world" helps to explain why he would want to write an urban novel set in Quibdó, even though, by his own estimation, Quibdó was barely a city in the mid-1940s. The techniques and themes of the urban novel allowed Palacios to posit Chocanos as modern subjects. More concretely, it allowed him to insert the Chocó in a network of modern problems. For example, there is a scene in which Irra stumbles upon a crowd of people outside a house. Inside, he discovers a gruesome scene: the corpse of a man who has shot himself in the head. However, Irra does not inquire about why the man killed himself. He marvels instead at the bloody remains of the man's body. This scene borrows a trope of the urban novel: the modern city as a space pervaded by violence and alienation. The dead man, Irra recalls, is the same "viejo liberal" (69) he had seen alive earlier that day reading *El Tiempo* at a café and praising the editorialist who had condemned a politician who, though he goes unnamed, would have been recognizable to contemporary readers of *Las estrellas son negras* as Gaitán. Indeed, he was the same man who had been reading the newspaper in which Irra read the headline about the lynching of a black man in Georgia and another about pan-Slavism. Palacios does not marshal these details into an explicit thesis. Instead, he leaves them in ambiguous juxtaposition. He builds suggestive but oblique links between the violent suicide, the repudiation of Gaitán by mainstream Liberals, white terrorism against black people, and post-World War II geopolitics. He thus situates his protagonist, and the Chocó, in the wider modern world.

Palacios would have found it impossible to make this claim within the extant literary tradition about the Chocó, which took as its object a rural, premodern culture. Palacios's intervention in the *costumbrista* tradition of the Chocó manifests itself in the novel,

which continues to a certain extent to inscribe itself there. For example, it includes a glossary of local terms, and it reproduces phonetically the speech of the Chocoanos, save for that of the protagonist. In other words, one might think of *Las estrellas son negras* is an urban novel superimposed on a *costumbrista* sketch. However, this operation does not render the novel a pastiche. Instead, I would argue, it is one of the sources of its fascinating strangeness.

This effect is increased by the creation myth of *Las estrellas son negras*. The story goes that Palacios did not have a typewriter, so he wrote the novel on a borrowed machine at the Ministry of Education in downtown Bogotá. The only draft of the novel was at the office of the Ministry on the day Gaitán was murdered in April 1948, and it was consumed in the fire that destroyed the building during the subsequent riots. Nonetheless, Palacios sat down at the edge of the smoldering ruins and re-wrote the novel from scratch in three weeks. Although this anecdote is not included in the novel itself, it is repeated every time the novel is discussed, and thus in some way has become part of it. More than a curious anecdote, it reinforces the connection of the novel to Gaitán and the radical-popular urban movement that formed around him.

To be sure, the second publication of *Las estrellas son negras*, in 1971, occurred in the aftermath of the other major populist defeat in Colombian history. In 1970, former president Gustavo Rojas Pinilla, running as an independent and on a populist platform, was deprived of a victory in the presidential election after the two major parties colluded to change the vote count. Yet, unlike in 1948, the urban mobilization did not dissipate; instead, it was channeled into the creation of the M-19, an urban-centered guerrilla movement, which took its name from the date (April 19, 1970) of the fraudulent

presidential election. More research is needed to determine the relation between the edition of Palacio's novel and the defeat of Rojas Pinilla. However, it is suggestive that *Las estrellas son negras* was revived in historical conditions so similar to those of 1949.

The anecdote about Palacios's re-writing of *Las estrellas son negras* also functions as an allegory of the novel's status within Colombian literary history. The text was polemical for several reasons: it broke with high modernist conventions; it imagined revolution in the Chocó; its author was a working-class Afro-Colombian. As we have seen, its very status as literature was doubted even by some Liberal intellectuals. The anecdote emphasizes this precarious status. Palacios would tell a similar anecdote about his second novel, *La selva y la lluvia*. In 1949, he had moved to France and joined the Communist party. After almost a decade in France, he traveled to Moscow with the manuscript for *La selva y la lluvia*. The Soviet state would publish the text as part of a series of fiction in foreign languages in 1958. Yet it would never reach Colombia. Indeed, Palacios would go on to fear that *all* of the copies had been lost; many years later, he searched for it at the Library of Congress in Washington, DC, but failed to find it. The novel was re-published in Bogotá in 2010 only because a copy of it had eventually turned up in Germán Arciniegas's private library—Palacios had given it to him when they crossed paths in Europe decades earlier.⁸⁸ To be sure, an elderly Palacios would say at a conference in 2009 that he suffered from the fear that all of his work would suddenly vanish.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Enrique Santos Molano rehearses this anecdote in his prologue to the 2010 edition of *La selva y la lluvia*.

⁸⁹ A transcript of Palacios's presentation is included in the compilation *Cuando yo empezaba*. See "Sesión inaugural del XVI Taller de Escritores Universidad Central" in Palacios (2009).

In a recent study of the archive of the contemporary Cuban writer Reinaldo Arenas (1943-1990), Javier Guerrero observes that Arenas re-wrote many of his texts numerous times. Guerrero links this practice to Arenas's condition as a queer dissident; Arenas's re-writing, he argues, was an ethos of resistance against the official suppression of his work.⁹⁰ Guerrero's interpretation of Arenas holds true for Palacios as well. His marginal position in the Colombian cultural field is revealed in the anecdotes about the precarious material existence of his writing.

Conclusion

Critics have long assumed that cultural activity in Colombia was eclipsed by politics from the mid-1940s to the mid-1950s. However, the recent edited volume *Café El Automático* has confirmed that there was an active scene of Liberal intellectuals in Bogotá, and that this scene had a downtown café, El Automático, as its social hub. One of the contributors to the volume, Jaime Iregui, argues that this scene was defined by a commitment to aesthetic autonomy, i.e., a separation of art from partisan politics. In this chapter, I have examined the efforts of some of the members of the coterie at El Automático to take advantage of this autonomous position to elaborate a program of social critique that was, in its own non-partisan way, highly political. This program had at its center not El Automático but rather *Espiral*, a cultural magazine with a publishing arm. Over the course of the late 1940s, *Espiral* published and promoted a diverse group of young Colombian authors who appealed to contemporary intellectual discourses such

⁹⁰ See Guerrero (2015).

as existentialism and Marxism to analyze Colombian social realities. Through this editorial project, I have argued, *Espiral* examined, and to a certain extent embodied, the radical-popular mobilization around the figure of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán during the same period. In so doing, it expanded the limits of what counted as modern literature in Colombia. The controversy about Arnoldo Palacios's *Las estrellas son negras* suggests that this project was polemical among Liberal intellectuals. (Never mind Conservative intellectuals, many of whom refused even to recognize the novel as a legitimate literary form.⁹¹) It points to a need to revise a common critical narrative, which has it that García Márquez, Ramón Vinyes, Álvaro Cepeda Samudio, and other writers from the Caribbean coast—the so-called Grupo de Barranquilla—founded the modern novel in Colombia during the chaos of the civil war known as La Violencia. In light of the *Espiral* catalog, and García Márquez and Vinyes's vehement rejection of the *Espiral*-published novel *Las estrellas son negras*, by Arnoldo Palacios, this narrative is too pat. More broadly, the case of *Espiral* points to a need to revise the cultural history of the mid-to-late 1940s in Colombia. It was not, as Sánchez Gómez suggests, a period in which political crisis caused a “cultural silence.” On the contrary, it was a period in which crisis moved culture to speak in new ways.

⁹¹ For example, the Conservative critic Antonio Gómez Restrepo's multivolume *Historia de la literatura colombiana* (1938-45) barely includes any novels (Williams 44).

Conclusion

In the first volume of his autobiography, *Vivir para contarla* (2002), Gabriel García Márquez recounts the period during the mid-to-late 1940s when he was a law student and aspiring writer in Bogotá. He says that the capital of those years was “[l]a Bogotá lúgubre de los años cuarenta, todavía nostálgica de la Colonia” (301), up until the day that Gaitán was assassinated. García Márquez recalls his shock as he watched the destruction of downtown Bogotá by angry crowds that day; the spectacle made him see Bogotá, and the entire country, with new eyes. Indeed, he would mark April 9, 1948, as the day the twentieth century began in Colombia. García Márquez does not go on to explain this lapidary claim in *Vivir para contarla*, but it makes sense in the context of his literary project. Following *el Bogotazo*, García Márquez and other *costeño* intellectuals—the so-called “grupo de Barranquilla”—positioned themselves as the modernizers of Colombian art and literature. Over the course of the 1950s, they established this claim on a geographical dichotomy between the Caribbean coast and Bogotá. In short, the Coast was modern and Bogotá was not; the Coast was open to the new while Bogotá was a cloister of colonial nostalgia. In this scheme, *el Bogotazo* would be an expression of modernity itself, breaching the walls of the reactionary fortress.

García Márquez’s version of national history would be dominant in the Colombian cultural field by the 1960s. This was not merely a function of García Márquez’s prestige; it was also because his narrative was useful for the bipartisan government—the Frente

Nacional—that sought to restore oligarchic rule in Colombia. To consign the Bogotá of the first half of the twentieth century to a premodern past served to obscure the process of democratization that occurred there. The *costeño* version of cultural modernity did not have strong ties to any progressive political project; it was linked more to a vision of peace and stability. However, this argument rests on evidence largely drawn from literature as it is traditionally defined. As we have seen, a more flexible understanding of literary culture reveals a dynamic process of cultural transformation in Bogotá from 1920 to 1950. Urban chronicles, satirical pieces, and minor novels show an experimental ethos that is lacking in the texts of the most prominent literary intellectuals of this period. I have attributed this difference to the institutional position of the writers who produced this work; the writers who I have studied in this dissertation tended to make their living selling their work to the periodicals of Bogotá's cultural industry rather than performing the traditional *letrado* role of administering the State as a high-ranking official.

Using a wider lens to view literary production shows, for example, that much of the provocative force of the avant-garde group los Nuevos came from its engagement with the urban chronicle—limited though it was to Luis Vidales and Luis Tejada. And, as we saw in Chapter One, it was precisely the work of Vidales and Tejada that the other members of the Nuevos would obscure or undermine when, in the late 1920s, they were absorbed into the Liberal political elite. To be sure, José Antonio Osorio Lizarazo, the subject of Chapter Two, was another writer whose engagement with the urban chronicle put him in a similarly ambiguous relation to the modernizing project of the Nuevos. Although his chronicles served as an example of the modernity of Colombian literature when Germán Arciniegas published them as a book in 1926, he was unable to win much

recognition as an intellectual, even after the Nuevos were installed at the top of Colombia's cultural institutions. We also saw in Chapter Three that some of the most audacious literary work of the 1930s was done by José Joaquín Jiménez, an urban chronicler who made little effort to be legitimized by the literary establishment. Jiménez built a complicity with his readers that allowed him to take liberties such as inventing criminals in his police chronicles; this was made possible in part by his mandate to entertain them. And, in Chapter Four, we saw how Arnaldo Palacios recurred to the genre of the urban novel in order to carry out a political critique of the government in his home region of the Chocó. His novel, *Las estrellas son negras*, caused a polemic in the literary press because it challenged the definition of literature and—going by how much reviewers made of Palacios's identity as an Afro-Colombian—who was qualified to produce it.

Looking at non-canonical literature and literary journalism illuminates a dynamic process of cultural modernization. One aspect of this is the democratization of the cultural field. Granted, white men close to the political or economic elite continued to hold the dominant positions in the field. But other types of intellectuals emerged during the early-to-mid-twentieth century in Bogotá. For example, Palacios, an Afro-Colombian who found in the Liberal periodicals and cafés of the mid-1940s an entry point into the cultural field; Emilia Pardo Umaña, a young woman who became an important cultural critic in the mid-1930s after having begun her career as an editor of the women's page at the newspaper *El Espectador*; or Osorio Lizarazo, who grew up in the working-class Bogotá neighborhood of Las Cruces and was the son of a carpenter. Throughout this dissertation, we have seen how such figures worked to assert themselves in a lettered city

that had been built to exclude them. Their example shows that the cultural democratization was not merely a question of Liberal state programs, but also of an emerging cultural market. And that the latter sort of democratization had a much more volatile effect on Colombian intellectual life. It also puts into question the regionalist frame by which Colombian literature is often studied. As we have seen, many of the modernizing intellectuals in Bogotá had migrated to the capital from other parts of the country. Even writers with a strong regional identity, such as Palacios or García Márquez, were a part of the cultural scene in Bogotá during this period.

Nonetheless, much of the cultural production in Colombian periodicals from the 1920s to the 1940s remains unexamined. This dissertation is focused on material from mainstream newspapers and literary magazines, but its argument about cultural modernity would benefit from a larger body of evidence, including worker's newspapers and more from the tabloid press. As I have already noted, following María Mercedes Andrade, little research has been done on Colombian periodicals. Therefore, more investigation of written mass culture would provide a richer idea of how modernity was being imagined outside the sphere of official cultural production. So would more research on the involvement of Colombian intellectuals with cinema, radio, and other non-print mass media.

An understanding of the cultural modernization of the early-to-mid-twentieth century in Bogotá—the period that roughly spans the boom of Colombian “coffee capitalism” to the defeat of the popular mobilization around Gaitán—is necessary not only for understanding the social transformation of Colombia after its subsumption to the world economy but also for revising claims, such as García Márquez's, that Colombia did not

become modern until the event of *el Bogotazo*. Such claims, in light of the evidence of the cultural process sketched in this dissertation, are revealed to be more ideological than historical. Central to understanding cultural modernization, then, is a broader understanding of what constitutes culture—one that includes urban chronicles, novels, poems, and other texts that do not fit easily in the prevailing categories of literature.

Works Cited

- Achury Valenzuela, Darío. *El libro de los cronistas*. Bogotá: Editorial Minerva, 1936. Print.
- Agudelo Ochoa, Ana María. "Cuestiones literarias en la prensa colombiana: elementos para una historia." *Anales de Literatura Hispanoamericana* 43 (2014): 15-16. Web 10 Aug. 2015.
- "Alerta." *Espiral: revista mensual de artes y letras* Sept. 1948: 12. Print.
- Airó, Clemente. *Yugo de neblina*. Bogotá: Ediciones Espiral Colombia, 1948. Print.
- Altamirano, Carlos, and Jorge Myers. *Historia de los intelectuales en América Latina*. 2 vols. Buenos Aires: Katz, 2008. Print.
- Andrade, María Mercedes. *Ambivalent Desires: Representations of Modernity and Private Life in Colombia (1890s-1950s)*. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2011. Print.
- . "The Limits of the Modern Nation in *El Gráfico*." *Revista Hispánica Moderna* 60.2 (2007): 143-57. Print.
- Arciniegas, Germán. "La Cuestión Del Petróleo." *Universidad* 1928. Print.
- . "La Razón De Este Homenaje." *Universidad* Nov. 8 1928. Print.
- Ardila Ariza, Jineth. *Vanguardia y antivanguardia en la crítica y en las publicaciones culturales colombianas de los años veinte*. Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2013. Print.
- Arias Trujillo, Ricardo. *"Los Leopardos": una historia intelectual de los años 1920*. Bogotá: Universidad de los Andes, Facultad de Ciencias Sociales, Departamento

- de Historia, 2007. Print.
- Arlt, Roberto. *Al margen del cable: crónicas publicadas en el Nacional, México, 1937-1941*. Buenos Aires: Losada, 2003. Print.
- . *Los lanzallamas*. Buenos Aires: Compañía General Fabril Editora, 1968. Print.
- . *Los Siete Locos*. Buenos Aires,: Compañía General Fabril Editora, 1968. Print.
- Arnedo-Gomés, Miguel. "Notes on the Evaluation of Angel Rama's Concept of Narrative Transculturation and Fernando Ortiz's Definition of the Term "Transculturation"." *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies: Travesía* 17:2 (2008): 185-202. Print.
- "Arte y literatura en 1949." *El Tiempo*. Suplemento Literario. 8 Jan. 1950: 1.
- Bejarano, Álvaro. "El Automático, discusiones y grupos." *Café El Automático: arte, crítica y esfera pública*. Ed. Jaime Iregui, et. al. Bogotá: Universidad de los Andes, 2009. Print.
- Berg, Mary G. "Las novelas de Elisa Mujica." *Literatura y diferencia: Escritoras colombianas del siglo XX*. Jaramillo, María Mercedes, Osorio de Negret, Betty, Robledo, Angela Inés, ed. Medellín: Editorial Universidad de Antioquia, 1995. Print.
- Bergel, Martín and Ricardo Martínez Mazzola. "América Latina como práctica. Modos de sociabilidad intelectual de los reformistas universitarios (1918-1930)." *Historia de los intelectuales en América Latina*. Ed. Carlos Altamirano. Vol. 2. Buenos Aires: Katz, 2008. Print.
- Bermúdez Barrera, Eduardo, and René J. Campis C. "La Filosofía En Barranquilla: La Revista *Voces* Y El Caso De Enrique Restrepo." *Academia.edu*. Web. March 3 2015.

Borges, Jorge Luis. *Historia universal de la infamia*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Tor, 1935. Print.

Bourdieu, Pierre. *In Other Words : Essays Towards a Reflexive Sociology*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1990. Print.

---. *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996. Print.

Bürger, Peter. *Theory of the Avant-Garde*. Trans. Michael Shaw. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1984. Print.

Caballero, Lucas (Klim), et al. "El misterio del cuarto 215 o la pasajera del Hotel Granada." *Comandos* Sept. 9 to Oct. 14 1944. Print.

Cacua Prada, Antonio. *Historia del periodismo colombiano*. Bogotá: Sua, 1968.

Calle, Hernando de la. "La generación de los nuevos." *Universidad*. 16 June 1928: 565-68. Print.

Calvo Isaza, Óscar Iván. "Las Biografías De Nadie: José Antonio Osorio Lizarazo (1900-1964)." Mexico City: Escuela nacional de antropología e historia, 2005. Print.

---. "Literatura y nacionalismo." *Anuario Colombiano de Historia Social y de la Cultura* 36.2 (2009): 91-119. Print.

Camus, Albert. *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*. Trans. Justin O'Brien. New York: Vintage Books, 1991. Print.

Castro-Gómez, Santiago. *Tejidos Oníricos : Movilidad, Capitalismo y Biopolítica en Bogotá, 1910-1930*. 1. ed. Bogotá, D.C.: Editorial Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, 2009. Print.

Cobo Borda, J. G. *La tradición de la pobreza*. Bogotá: C. Valencia Editores, 1980. Print.

- Collazos, Óscar. "Un clásico afroamericano." Prologue. *Las estrellas son negras*. By Arnoldo Palacios. Bogotá: Ministerio de Cultura, 2010. 13-24. Print.
- Darío, Rubén. *Cantos de vida y esperanza, Los cisnes y otros poemas*. 1905. Print.
- Deas, Malcolm. *Del poder y la gramática y otros ensayos sobre historia, política y literatura colombianas*. Bogotá: Tercer Mundo Editores, 1993. Print.
- Escobar Calle, Miguel. "Prólogo." *Pepe Mexía: la caricatura en la historia*. Bogotá: Banco de la República. 59. Vol. 1. Print.
- Felski, Rita. *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics: Feminist Literature and Social Change*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1989. Print.
- Fernández-Bravo, Álvaro. "Museos, enciclopedias y mercado: notas sobre una hegemonía en disputa". Luis Cárcamo-Huechante, Alvaro Fernández-Bravo, and Alejandra Laera, eds. *El valor de la cultura: arte, literatura y mercado en América Latina*. Rosario, Argentina: Beatriz Viterbo Editora, 2007. Print.
- Flórez Giraldo, Lina Patricia, and Pablo Pérez P. "Emilia Pardo Umaña: Memorias De La Primera Columnista Colombiana." *Folios.27* (2012): 67-83. Print.
- Fraser, Nancy. *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1989. Print.
- Fuenmayor, José Félix. *Una triste aventura de 14 sabios (cuento fantástico)*. Barranquilla: Editorial Mundial, 1928. Print.
- Gaitán, Jorge Eliécer. "Condenados a los tribunales de guerra." *Universidad*. 12 Jan. 1929. Print.
- Gallo, Rubén. *Mexican Modernity : The Avant-Garde and the Technological Revolution*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2005. Print.

García Herreros, Manuel. "Las letras en Colombia." *Los nuevos* 4. July 1925: 115-27.
Print.

---, José Antonio Osorio Lizarazo, and Eduardo Arias Suárez. *Tres cuentistas jóvenes*
(*Manuel García Herreros, J. A. Osorio Lizarazo y E. Arias Suárez*). Bogotá:
Editorial Minerva, 1936. Print.

García Márquez, Gabriel. *Cien años de soledad*. Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1982. Print.

---. *Textos costeños*. Ed. Jacques Gilard. Bogotá: Ed. Oveja Negra, 1983. Print.

---. *Vivir para contarla*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002. Print.

"Glosario de la semana." *El Espectador* 1 June 1924. Bogotá: 1. Print.

Gómez, Laureano, and Ricardo Ruiz Santos. *Obras Completas*. Vol. I. Bogotá: Instituto
Caro y Cuervo, 1984. Print.

Gómez Corena, Pedro. *El 9 de abril*. Bogotá: Editorial Iqueima, 1951. Print.

González, Aníbal. *La crónica modernista hispanoamericana*. Madrid: J. Porrúa Turanzas,
1983. Print.

González Aranda, Beatriz. "Fantoches: sus antecedentes y el mito del poder de la
caricatura." *La caricatura en Colombia a partir de la independencia*. Exhibition
catalog. Web. 17 July 2015.

González, Fernando. *Viaje a Pie*. Paris: Le Livre libre, 1929. Print.

González Toledo, Felipe. *20 crónicas policíacas*. Bogotá: Planeta, 1994. Print.

Green, W. John. *Gaitanismo, Left Liberalism, and Popular Mobilization in Colombia*.
Gainesville: UP of Florida, 2003.

Greif, Mark. *The Age of the Crisis of Man*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2015.

Groys, Boris. *The Total Art of Stalinism : Avant-Garde, Aesthetic Dictatorship, and*

- Beyond*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992. Print.
- Guerrero, Javier. *Tecnologías del cuerpo: exhibicionismo y visualidad en América Latina*. Madrid: Iberoamericana, 2014. Print.
- Gutiérrez, Mariela A. “Arnoldo Palacios y el despertar psicosocial del negro chocoano.” *Literatura y cultura: narrativa colombiana del siglo XX*. María Mercedes Jaramillo, Betty Osorio, and Ángela Inés Robledo, eds. Vol. III. Bogotá: Ministerio de Cultura, 2000. Print.
- Gutiérrez Girardot, Rafael. *Ensayos Sobre Literatura Colombiana*. Medellín: Ediciones UNAULA, 2011. Print.
- Hammill, Faye. *Women, Celebrity, and Literary Culture between the Wars*. Austin: U of Texas P, 2007. Print.
- Helg, Aline. “La educación en Colombia, 1918-1957.” Jaime Jaramillo Escobar, ed. *Nueva Historia de Colombia 4*. Bogotá: Planeta, 1989. Print.
- Hoyos, Juan José. “Ximénez: vida y travesuras de un cronista judicial del medio siglo.” Prologue. *Las famosas crónicas de Ximénez*. By José Joaquín Jiménez. Bogotá: Planeta Colombiana, 1996. Print.
- Huyssen, Andreas. *After the Great Divide : Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1986. Print.
- Iregui, Jaime. “De esferas y contraesferas.” *Café El Automático: arte, crítica y esfera pública*. Ed. Jaime Iregui, et. al. Bogotá: Universidad de los Andes, 2009. Print.
- , Diana Camacho, Liliana Merizalde, Gustavo Niño. *Café El Automático: arte, crítica y esfera pública*. Bogotá: Universidad de los Andes, 2009. Print.
- Jackson, Richard L. *The Black Image in Latin American Literature*. Albuquerque: U of

- New Mexico P, 1976. Print.
- Jaffe, Aaron, and Jonathan Goldman. *Modernist Star Maps: Celebrity, Modernity, Culture*. Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2010. Print.
- Jaramillo Uribe, Jaime, et al. *Nueva historia de Colombia*. 11 vols. Bogotá: Planeta, 1989. Print.
- Johnson, Lemeul A. "The Dilemma of Presence in Black Diaspora Literature: A Comparativist Reading of Arnolfo Palacios' *Las estrellas son negras*." *Afro-Hispanic Review* 21.5 (2002): 190-199. Print.
- Jiménez Panesso, David. *Poesía y canon: los poetas como críticos en la formación del canon de la poesía moderna en Colombia, 1920-1950*. Bogotá: Grupo Editorial Norma, 2002. Print.
- Jiménez, José Joaquín. "Ayer llegaron los cadáveres de Richard Price y R. Glaser." *El Tiempo*. Print.
- . "Comedia sentimental en que Gervasio Neruda se suicida y se desnuda delante de un policial." *Sábado* 25 Sept. 1943, sec. "Teatro para leer." Print.
- . *Crónicas*. Biblioteca Popular de Cultura Colombiana, 1946. Print.
- . "De Arce, poeta ecuatoriano." *El Tiempo* 22 April 1935: 7. Print.
- . "Don Rodrigo de Arce, poeta de suicida y hábil sastre." *El Tiempo* 19 June 1935. Print.
- . "El misterioso caso de Herman Winter." *Cromos* Sept. 27 to Nov. 1 1941. Print.
- . "Estampas de la noche." *El Tiempo* 15 Jan. 1935 (approx.). Print.
- . "José Vicente Ramírez fue herido a bala gravemente." *El Tiempo* 4 Jan. 1935. Print.
- . "Juan Arana Torrol, enviado celestial." *El Tiempo* 27 April 1935. Print.

- . "Más De 100 Maleantes fueron aprendidos por la policía." *El Tiempo* 8 July 1934: 1, 13. Print.
- . "Tabernas, bodegones y chicas de café." *El Tiempo* 24 April 1935. Print.
- . "Un audaz asalto." *El Tiempo* 7 Oct. 1934. Print.
- . "Un menor pereció triturado entre dos buses ayer tarde." *El Tiempo* 1 Sept. 1934. Print.
- . "Verdadera banda de apaches hace estragos en la ciudad." *El Tiempo* 1934. Print.
- König, Brigitte. "El café literario en Colombia: símbolo de la vanguardia en el siglo XX." *Procesos Históricos* 1.2 (2002). Print.
- Landes, Joan. *Women in the Public Sphere: In the Age of the French Revolution*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1988. Print.
- Laera, Alejandra. "Cronistas, novelistas. La prensa periódica como espacio de profesionalización en la Argentina (1880-1910)." Carlos Altamirano and Jorge Myers, eds. *Historia de los intelectuales en América Latina*. Vol 2. Buenos Aires: Katz, 2008. Print.
- Leslie, Esther. *Walter Benjamin: Overpowering Conformism*. Sterling, Va.: Pluto Press, 2000. Print.
- Lewis, Marvin A. *Treading the Ebony Path: Ideology and Violence in Contemporary Afro-Colombian Prose Fiction*. Columbia: U of Missouri P, 1987. Print.
- Lleras Camargo, Felipe. "El momento político: la bancarrota política." *Los nuevos* 1925: 3-5. Print.
- . "Las dos generaciones." *Los nuevos* 1925: 153-57. Print.
- Loaiza Cano, Gilberto. *Luis Tejada y la lucha por una nueva cultura: Colombia, 1898-*

1924. Bogotá: Colcultura, 1995. Print.
- Lowenthal, Leo. *Literature, Popular Culture, and Society*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1961. Print.
- Lozano y Lozano, Juan. "Sobre 'Tergiversaciones' De León De Greiff." *El Espectador* 23 April 1925, sec. Suplemento literario ilustrado: 3. Print.
- López, Ricardo. "'Nosotros también somos parte del pueblo': Gaitanismo, empleados y la formación histórica de la clase media en Bogotá, 1936-1948." *Revista de Estudios Sociales* 41 (2011). Print.
- Macías Zuluaga, Luis Fernando, and Miriam Velásquez Velásquez. *Glosario de referencias léxicas y culturales en la obra de León de Greiff*. Medellín: Fondo Editorial Universidad EAFIT: Alcaldía de Medellín, 2007. Print.
- Mahieux, Viviane. *Urban Chroniclers in Modern Latin America: The Shared Intimacy of Everyday Life*. Austin: U of Texas P, 2011. Print.
- "[Manifiesto]." *Los nuevos* 1925: 1-2. Print.
- Mengual Català, Josep. "El exiliado español Clemente Airó y la literatura colombiana." *Negritasy cursivas*. 26 Dec. 2014. Web. 15 July 2015.
- Miceli, Sergio. "Vanguardias literarias y artísticas en el Brasil y en la Argentina: un ensayo comparativo." *Historia de los intelectuales en América Latina*. Ed. Carlos Altamirano and Jorge Myers. Vol. 2. Buenos Aires: Katz, 2010. Print.
- Monsiváis, Carlos. *A ustedes les consta: antología de la crónica en México*. México City: Ediciones Era, 1980. Print.
- Montaldo, Graciela R. *Ficciones culturales y fábulas de identidad en América Latina*. Rosario, Argentina: B. Viterbo Editora, 1999. Print.

- . "Transculturation and the Discourse of Liberation." *Literary Cultures of Latin America: A Comparative History*. Eds. Valdés, Mario and Djelal Kadir. Vol. 3. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004. Print.
- . *Zonas Ciegas: populismo y experimentos culturales en la Argentina*. Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2010. Print.
- Moretti, Franco. *Modern Epic: The World-System from Goethe to García Márquez*. Trans. by Quintin Hoare. New York: Verso, 1996. Print.
- Morse, Richard M. "Trends and Patterns of Latin American Urbanization, 1750-1920." *Comparative Studies in Society and History*: Cambridge University Press, 1974. 416-47. Vol. 16. 4 vols. Print.
- Mújica, Elisa. *Los dos tiempos*. Bogotá: Editorial Iqueima, 1949. Print.
- Neira Palacio, Edison Darío. *La gran ciudad latinoamericana: Bogotá en la obra de José Antonio Osorio Lizarazo*. New York: P. Lang, 2002. Print.
- Nieto Caballero, Luis Eduardo. "La muerte de los nuevos." *Patria: revista de ideas* 1925: 6-9. Print.
- Niño, Gustavo. "Contar el cuento." *Café El Automático: arte, crítica y esfera pública*. Ed. Jaime Iregui, et. al. Bogotá: Universidad de los Andes, 2009. Print.
- Ochoa, Ana María. "García Márquez, Macondismo, and the Soundscapes of Vallenato." *Popular Music* 24 (2005): 207-222. Print.
- . "Listening to the State: Culture, Power, and Cultural Policy in Colombia." *A Companion to Cultural Studies*. Toby Miller, ed. Blackwell Publishing, 2005. Web. 01 Oct. 2014.
- Ordoñez, Monserrat. "Elisa Mújica novelista: del silencio a la historia, por la palabra."

- Revista de Crítica Literaria Latinoamericana* 13.26 (1987): 123-136. Print.
- Osorio Lizarazo, José Antonio. *El criminal*. Bogotá: Renacimiento, 1935. Print.
- . *Gaitán: vida, muerte y permanente presencia*. Buenos Aires: López Negri, 1952. Print.
- . *La casa de vecindad*. Bogotá: Editorial Minerva. Print.
- . *Novelas y crónicas*. Ed. Santiago Mutis Durán. Bogotá: Instituto Colombiano de Cultura, Subdirección de Comunicaciones Culturales, División de Publicaciones, 1978. Print.
- . "Barco a La Deriva." Fondo antiguo. Fondo José Antonio Osorio Lizarazo, *IV 31*. Biblioteca Nacional de Colombia, 1963. Print.
- . *Garabato*. Bogotá: Laguna Libros, 2013. Print.
- . *La cara de la miseria*. Bogotá: Talleres de Ediciones Colombia, 1926. Print.
- Ospina, Andrés. *Ximénez*. Bogotá: Laguna Libros, 2013. Print.
- Owen, Gilberto, Celene García Avila, and Antonio Cajero. *Gilberto Owen en el Tiempo de Bogotá: prosas recuperadas (1933-1935)*. Mexico City: Universidad Autónoma del Estado de México: Porrúa, 2009. Print.
- Palacios, Arnoldo. *Cuando yo empezaba*. Ed. Álvaro Castillo Granada. Bogotá: Ediciones San Librario, 2009. Print.
- . *Las estrellas son negras*. Bogotá: Ministerio de Cultura, 2010. Print.
- . *La selva y la lluvia*. Bogotá: Intermedio, 2010. Print.
- Palacios, Marco. *Between Legitimacy and Violence: A History of Colombia, 1875-2002*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006. Print.
- Pardo Umaña, Emilia. *La letra con sangre entra*. Ed. Camándula. Bogotá: Fundación

- Simón y Lola Guberek, 1984. Print.
- . *Un muerto en la legación*. Bogotá: Kelly, 1951. Print.
- Pöppel, Hubert. *La novela policíaca en Colombia*. Medellín: Editorial Universidad de Antioquia, 2001. Print.
- . *Tradicón y modernidad en Colombia: corrientes poéticas en los años veinte*. Medellín: Editorial Universidad de Antioquia, 2000. Print.
- , and Amalia Salazar-Pöppel. *Las vanguardias literarias en Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Perú: bibliografía y antología crítica*. Madrid: Iberoamericana, 1999. Print.
- Rama, Ángel, ed. *El Boom En Perspectiva*. Mexico City: Marcha, 1981. Print.
- . *La ciudad letrada*. Hanover: Ediciones del Norte, 1984. Print.
- . *La crítica de la cultura en América Latina*. Caracas: Biblioteca Ayacucho, 1985. Print.
- . *La riesgosa navegación del escritor exiliado*. Montevideo: Arca, 1993. Print.
- . *Rubén Darío y el modernismo*. Caracas: Ediciones de la Biblioteca de la Universidad Central de Venezuela, 1970. Print.
- Ramírez Lamus, Sergio. *Espectros de 1948: J.A. Osorio Lizarazo, Gaitán y el 9 De Abril*. Cali: Archivos del Índice, 2007. Print.
- Ramos, Julio. *Desencuentros de la modernidad en América latina: literatura y política en el siglo XIX*. Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1989. Print.
- Ramírez Moreno, Augusto. "La orientación reaccionaria de la juventud." *Los nuevos* 1925: 18-20. Print.
- Restrepo, Enrique. *Con Razón o sin ella*. Bogotá: Editorial "La Razón," 1938. Print.

- . *El Tonel de Diógenes (manual del cínico perfecto)*. Bogotá: Ediciones Colombia, 1925. Print.
- Rivera, José Eustasio. *La vorágine*. Caracas: Biblioteca Ayacucho, 1976. Print.
- Rivera, L.E. "Una entrevista con Arnoldo Palacios." *Crítica*. 16 Aug.1949: 16. Print.
- Roberts, John. *Philosophizing the Everyday*. Ann Arbor: Pluto Press, 2006.
- Robinson, Cedric J. *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2000. Print.
- Rodríguez-García, José María. *The City of Translation: Poetry and Ideology in Nineteenth-Century Colombia*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010. Print.
- Romero, José Luis. *Latinoamérica: las ciudades y las ideas*. Sociología Y Política. 2. ed. México: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1976. Print.
- Rotker, Susana. *La invención de la crónica*. Colección Ensayo. Buenos Aires, Argentina: Ediciones Letra Buena, 1992. Print.
- Safford, Frank, and Marco Palacios. *Colombia : Fragmented Land, Divided Society*. Latin American Histories. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002. Print.
- Samper Pizano, Daniel. "El hombre que escribía poemas a los suicidas." *Credencial* 1996. Print.
- Sánchez Gómez, Gonzálo. "El compromiso social y político de los intelectuales." Latin American Studies Association Annual Convention, Miami. March 2000. Address. *Academia.edu*. Web. 15 Aug. 2015.
- Sarlo, Beatriz. *Una modernidad periférica : Buenos Aires, 1920 y 1930*. Colección Cultura y Sociedad. Buenos Aires: Ediciones Nueva Visión, 1988. Print.
- Sarmiento Jaramillo, Camilo. "El Automático: entre la literatura y el arte." *Café El*

- Automático: arte, crítica y esfera pública*. Ed. Jaime Iregui, et. al. Bogotá: Universidad de los Andes, 2009. Print.
- . *Luis Vidales y la crítica de arte en Colombia*. Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Sede Bogotá, 2010. Print.
- Schwartz, Jorge. *Las vanguardias latinoamericanas: textos programáticos y críticos*. Madrid: Cátedra, 1991. Print.
- Schwarz, Roberto. *Misplaced Ideas: Essays on Brazilian Culture*. Trans. John Gledson. New York: Verso, 1992. Print.
- Silva, José Asunción. *Poesía Completa; De Sobremesa*. Bogotá: Grupo Editorial Norma, 1996. Print.
- Silva, Renán. *República liberal, intelectuales y cultura popular*. Medellín: Carreta Editores, 2005. Print.
- Solano, Armando. *La melancolía de la raza indígena*. Bogotá: Librería colombiana, 1929. Print.
- Solano, Armando, and Hernando Mejía Arias. *Paipa, mi pueblo y otros ensayos*. Bogotá, Colombia: Banco de La República, 1983. Print.
- Stoller, Richard. "Alfonso López Pumarejo and Radical Liberalism in 1930s Colombia." *Journal of Latin American Studies*.27.02 (1995): 367-97. Print.
- Suárez Calimano, E. "Los poetas representativos." *Universidad* 14 Jan. 1928. Print.
- Tejada, Luis. "Una carta de Luis Tejada." *Universidad* 1928: 379-80. Print.
- Umaña Bernal, José. "La cruzada del nacionalismo." *El Espectador* 25 Nov. 1925, sec. Suplemento literario ilustrado: 3. Print.
- Uribe Celis, Carlos. *Los años veinte en Colombia: ideología y cultura*. Bogotá,

- Colombia: Ediciones Aurora, 1985. Print.
- Urrego Ardila, Miguel Angel. *Intelectuales, estado y nación en Colombia: de la Guerra de los mil días a la Constitución de 1991*. Bogotá: Universidad Central Siglo del Hombre Editores, 2002. Print.
- Vallejo Mejía, Maryluz. *A plomo herido: una crónica del periodismo, 1880-1980*. Bogotá: Planeta, 2006. Print.
- Vallejo Murcia, Olga and Carmen Acosta. "Consideraciones para la definición de la zona literaria colombiana." *Tradiciones y configuraciones discursivas: historia crítica de la literatura colombiana: elementos para la discusión*. Medellín: Carreta Editores E.U., 2010. Print.
- Vanderhuck Arias, Felipe. *La Literatura como Oficio : José Antonio Osorio Lizarazo 1930-1946*. Medellín: La Carreta Editores; Universidad Icesi, 2012. Print.
- Vargas, Germán, ed. *Voces, 1917-1920*. 3 vols. Barranquilla: Ediciones Uninorte, 2003. Print.
- Vargas Vila, José María. *Vargas Vila: sufragio, selección, epitafio*. Bogotá: Fondo de Promoción la Cultura del Banco Popular, 1984. Print.
- "Veinticuatro números." *Espiral: revista mensual de artes y letras* June 1949: 12. Print.
- Velásquez Toro, Magdala. "Condición jurídica y social de la mujer." *Nueva Historia De Colombia*. Vol. 4, 1989. 9-60. Print.
- Vergara Aguirre, Andrés. "Crónicas bogotanas inspiradas en la literatura extranjera, 1925-1945. Los casos de dos neofolletinistas: Osorio Lizarazo y Ximénez." *Lingüística y Literatura* 60 (2011): 205-20. Print.
- . "Ximénez: Tragicomedia De Un Reportero." *Folios* 1998: 61-67. Print.
- Vidales, Luis. *La insurrección desplomada (El 9 de abril, su teoría, su praxis)*. Bogotá:

- Editorial Iqueima, 1948. Print.
- . *Suenan Timbres*. Bogotá: Editorial Minerva, 1926. Print.
- . "Un poeta español, de la nueva escuela, en Bogotá." *El Espectador* 14 June 1925, sec. Suplemento literario ilustrado. Print.
- Vidales, Luisa. "Sol Menor." *El Espectador* 25 Nov. 1925, sec. El suplemento literario ilustrado: 3. Print.
- Vinyes, Ramón. *Selección de textos*. Ed. Jacques Gilard. Bogotá: División de Publicaciones, Subdirección de Comunicaciones Culturales, Instituto Colombiano de Cultura, 1982. Print.
- Volkening, Ernesto. *Ensayos*. Bogotá: Instituto Colombiano de Cultura, Subdirección de Comunicaciones Culturales, División de Publicaciones, 1975. Print.
- . "Literatura y gran ciudad." *Eco, revista de la cultura de occidente* XXIV. Marzo-abril (1972): 323-52. Print.
- Walde, Urbe Erna von der. "Limpia, fija y da esplendor: el letrado y la letra en Colombia a fines del siglo XIX." *Revista iberoamericana* 63.178-179 (1997): 71. Print.
- Whitt, Jan. *Women in American Journalism : A New History*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008. Print.
- Wilde, Alexander. *Conversaciones de caballeros: la quiebra de la democracia en Colombia*. Bogotá: Ediciones Tercer Mundo, 1982. Print.
- Williams, Raymond L. *The Colombian Novel: 1844-1987*. Austin: U of Texas P, 1991. Print.
- Zapata Olivella, Manuel. *Por los senderos de sus ancestros : textos escogidos: 1940-2000*. Ed. Alfonso Múnera. Bogotá: Ministerio de Cultura, 2010. Print.

---. *Tierra mojada*. Bogotá: Ediciones Espiral Colombia, 1947. Print.