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Book notes

"It is worth asking why the national novels of Latin America– the ones that governments institutionalized in the schools and that are now indistinguishable from patriotic histories– are all love stories. An easy answer, of course, is that nineteenth-century novels were all love stories in Latin America" (Sommer 30).

This needs addressed... Why can't it be a chronological phenomenon and these novels exhibits characteristics beyond romance that have positioned them in the foundational canon. The linguistic/lexical contribution of these works shouldn't be overlooked

These novels were excluded from the first national literary histories. The "programmatic centrality of novels came a generation later [...] after renewed internal oppositions pulled the image of an ideal nation away from the existing state" (Sommer 30).

"each romance shares far more than its institutional status with others. The resemblances may be symptomatic of nationalism's general paradox; that is, cultural features that seem unique and worthy of patriotic (self)-celebration are often typical of other nations too and even patterned after foreign models" (Sommer 31).

The question I would ask then is how much similarity or difference do they actually display when compared with: 1. other writings at the time (story, poem, news, etc.) 2. other novels of equal standing from other countries

Sommer states that one purpose of her volume is to "account for the generic coherence

that individual readings will necessarily miss” (Sommer 31).

Nancy Armstrong is quoted in Sommer saying ”the formation of the modern political state– in England at least– was accomplished largely through cultural hegemony, primarily through the domestic novel.” Sommer continues ”this is possibly true for Latin America as well, where, along with constitutions and civil codes, novels helped to legislate modern mores” (33).

Sommer compares Foucault and Anderson whose books she says overlap the question of desire and patriotism as ”timeless and essential to the human condition” (33). These ideas intersect at their origin which each author claims to be the end of the eighteenth century (Sommer 33).

She notes that Foucault makes important insights but fails to acknowledge heterosexual exhibitionism, the novel, and the invention of modern states (Sommer 37).

Anderson in Sommer ”nationalism is not ’aligned’ to abstract ideologies such as liberalism or marxism but is mystically inflected from the religious cultural systems ’out of which - as well as against which- it came into being” (37).

sexuality and racism (38)

”Unlike Foucaults dour tracing of sexuality to a priestfood of moralizers and pseudo-scientists, Anderson locates the production of nationalism precisely in the space of our democratically shared imagination, the private spce of novels that links us serially and horizontally through a ’print community’ (Sommer 39).

Another reason to suggest that mining newspapers could provide insight.

Anderson ”doesn’t discuss the passions constructed by reading novels, or their ideal gender models that were teaching future republicans to be passionate in a rational and seductively horizontal way” (Sommer 40).

Sommer defines allegory as a "narrative structure in which one line is a trace of the other" but admits a more standard interpretation as "a narrative with two parallel levels of signification" (42).

Sommer notes that the foundational fictions are "philosophically modest, even sloppy" and also says that, with the exception of *María*, these novels "do not actively worry about any incommensurability between Truth and Justice" (45).

"foundational novels are precisely those fictions that try to pass for truth and to become the ground for political association" (Sommer 45).

can something of this difference be seen through topic modeling? Would *María* produce a more polemic list of discourses?

"If we 'know' from reading *Amalia* that Rosas was an unscrupulous dictator, our knowledge is to a considerable degree a political articulation of the erotic frustration we share with *Amalia* and Eduardo. And we feel the intensity of their frustration because we know that their obstacle is the horrible dictator" (Sommer 47).

"José Hernandez developed an already existing genre of politically conciliatory poems that, as Josefina Ludmer masterfully shows, constructed a national voice by appropriating the language of 'authentic' but notoriously shiftless Argentines for patriotic and economically rational projects" (Sommer 111).

1. Chapter 6

"*María's* canonical status is surprising, almost perverse" (Sommer 172).

"*María* neither projects futures nor finds any obstacle that it might hope to overcome" (Sommer 172). I disagree with this, depending on the rest of the article, I think it does make

subtle statements about obstacles and the future after all it was Efraín leaving to become a doctor, see ciudad letrada, that kills Maria... this is supported I think by a discussion between Efraín and his dad about his education in Europe bringing wealth and stability to the family

on the Hebrew aspect of the novel (to which Beckman has a different response) "I suspect that before 1867 the flamboyantly Hebrew name may have been as foreign as the converso father that chose it for his son" (Sommer 173).

It appears in Davies's corpora more prominently in the 1600's, disappears in the 1700's and grows steadily thereafter interestingly in the 1900's it appears predominantly in the newspapers. The Wikipedia Jew came to Colombia from Jamaica at the end of the 18th century and Judaism was made legal after independence, it also points out that the families were concentrated in the Cauca valley

"the problem is being Jewish, a double bind that becomes Isaac's vehicle for representing a dead end for the planter class" (Sommer 173)

"these novels demand a possible solution of failed romance (read also national progress and productivity)" (Sommer 174).

"it has no apparent political or social causality, no racial hatred, no regional conflicts" (Sommer 174).

Again, disagree, I think Isaac's subtle treatment of Colombian political and social dynamics is less apparent because it was written for a Colombian audience, even more specifically, an audience familiar with Cauca

180 - 182 Implications of the Cons/Lib divide mid-century and the fall of the 'plantocracy' "on a second reading at least, is about the end of an entire social system"

185-6 Jewishness in the novel and Colombia

"at one point Efraín indulgently, or disdainfully, explains his father's superstition as a

vestige of his Jewishness”

”Isaacs is most ambivalent in his description of María herself” (Sommer 192)

”Apparently, the narrator (and Isaacs), is caught between the poles of ethnic identification, unsure whether ”Jew” is a religious affiliation that one can convert out of or a race that is biologically and indelibly fixed” (Sommer 194).

Great connection to Chiaramonte and the discussion of the ethnic connotations of ”nation”

194 The discussion with Transito about white people riding horses

197 - Sexuality, María's illness as hysteria Efraín must choose between Domestic cure (sex) and conservative cure (restraint) he opts for filial loyalty Sommers analogizes this to Colombia's planter versus black conflict Efraín's ”caution or cowardice has everything to do with Colombia's national frustrations. The question for Isaacs class was whether to satisfy the blacks' and the liberal whites' desire for change, or to control those desires and forestall a racially mixed, possibly monstrous progeny” (Sommer 198).

through metonymy Isaacs displaces ”race riots for María's epilepsy” (Sommer 200)

the tale of Nay and Sinar takes it to metaphor ”as if Isaacs were purposefully pointing our symptomatic reading back to the obsessive experience he cannot mention (race riots)” (Sommer 200)

”Isaacs was not displacing one fearsome race for another more promising one in the interest of constructing a national myth. On the contrary; he seems to be saying that no myth of amalgamation is possible, because the patriarchal world he yearns for will not have it” ”he displaced the inassimilable black masses and the anachronistic planters onto his innocent but flawed Jewish heroine” (Sommer 202)

Works Cited

Sommer, Doris. *Foundational Fictions: the National Romances of Latin America*. Berkeley:
University of California Press, 1991. Print.