

1

PART I

IRRESISTIBLE ROMANCE

por encima del distanciamiento del título, de la fortuna y del color de la piel . . . está la atracción de los sexos, el poder irresistible del genio de la especie.

—*Matalaché*, Enrique López Albújar

AN ARCHEOLOGY OF THE “BOOM”

When Gabriel García Márquez, Carlos Fuentes, Mario Vargas Llosa, and Julio Cortázar, among others, apparently burst onto the world literary scene in the 1960s, they told us categorically and repeatedly how little there was worth reading in earlier Latin American fiction.¹ Only now, they said, was the continent gaining cultural independence by Calibanizing the range of European traditions, mere raw material in purposefully naive American hands.² Content, perhaps, with this vindication of our scant information about Latin America, an English-language public hardly suspected the Boom's substantial pre-texts: a whole canon of great novels that elicited disingenuous dismissal by writers who anxiously claimed to be literary orphans at home, free to apprentice themselves abroad.³ This book is written for that unsuspecting public, and also for a generation of Latin Americans who, with justified enthusiasm for the Boom, may have taken the dismissal too literally.

Although some critics argue that the Boom was merely a promotional explosion, hardly a literary phenomenon at all, the new novels do show distinct family resemblances, enough in fact to produce a checklist of characteristics. These include a demotion, or diffusion, of authorial control and tireless formal ex-

perimentation, techniques apparently aimed at demolishing the straight line of traditional narrative.⁴ The epic subtexts about Latin American development that can be read back through the debris now become risible simulacra. If all this sounds like denial, it was. New novelists tried to laugh off the appeal of positivist and populist projects that had, by then, run aground and made history stumble when it should have been going forward. Looking back at Latin American history after reaching a precipitous end, to find that end no longer meant purpose, evidently produced giddiness. In several countries national productivity had in fact been rising from the middle of the nineteenth century to the populist period of Import Substitution Industrialization during World War II when, for a change, foreign powers were too busy to stunt local growth by supplying manufactured goods. But after the war imports flooded the markets again, and Latin American history no longer seemed progressive, no longer a positivist national biography of maturation that was overcoming some childhood or chronic illness. When Western Europe, but especially now the United States, was again free to meddle in Latin American internal affairs and to step up the production and exportation of goods, populist optimism waned. Along with it, the linear logic of economic developmentalism twisted into the deadend of perpetual underdevelopment, while patriotic storylines wilted into the vicious circles that Carlos Fuentes found typical for the new novelists.⁵

Yet the more they protested indifference to tradition, the more they would send me back to the persistent attractions that caused so much resistance. What was it, I would ask, about the notoriously obsolete programmatic brand of Latin American fiction that haunted the Boom? What burden of narrative habits or embedded assumptions could account for so round a repudiation? The attraction is practically visceral and is provoked, I believe, by a rather flagrant feature that has nevertheless gone unremarked. It is the erotic rhetoric that organizes patriotic novels. With each obsessive effort to be free of the positivist tradition in which national projects (were) coupled with productive heterosexual desire, a continuing appeal is reinscribed in the resistant Boom. The straight lines of "historical" novels can fairly be reconstructed from the efforts to bend them. What

would account for the tragicomedy of self-defeating repetition in, for example, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, or for the frustration and shame in *The Death of Artemio Cruz*, if not the bad fits between developmentalist assumptions and Latin American history? And we can deduce, for another example, that “positive” reality was a reigning literary ideal from the important departure that the proto-Boom style of magic realism represented.⁶

The Boom’s parodies, its fine ironies and playfulness, are the kind of endless denial that is bound to produce the opposite effect of an admission, so that its vicious narrative circles comment on a writerly frustration as well as on disappointments with developmentalism: the more national romance must be resisted, the more it seems irresistible. One way out of circles, it seemed, was the collapse staged by Mario Vargas Llosa at the end of *Aunt Julia and the Scriptwriter* (1977); an earthquake levels the baroque confusion between Vargas Llosa’s scandalously modern romance with a scriptwriter’s allegedly “realist,” ever-escalating, and mutually invading soap operas until the once multiple but now cumulative and mangled project falls on his, their, our, heads.

For those who survived this Boom, including most of its authors, it evidently was not the collapse of history. Time passes and pendulums swing. Some writers who had written circles around history in the sixties and seventies began to experiment with new versions of historical narrative.⁷ This return of a repressed tradition may arouse some curiosity about the fictions the Boom deliberately left behind, perhaps even a capacity to understand and to *feel* the passionately political quality of Latin America’s earlier novels. They had, among other things, the charm of promise that has since turned to bitterness at the perceived fraud. We may also notice that the Boom’s playfully pessimistic terms were largely accepted as literarily mature, which is perhaps to say flattering to a First World’s taste for the post-modern, the almost narcissistic pleasure of having one’s ideal notions of literature mirrored back.

My readerly paradox, taking denial as a symptom of unresolved dependence, would not only send me back to the foundational fictions that the Boom was resisting, but also to an

entire tradition of resistances. The paradox borders on a typical irony of writing (in) America, where successive generations may deny literary resemblances to the point that denial itself constitutes a resemblance. If the new novelists imagined themselves suddenly born into full maturity, other American writers had imagined the same.⁸ Jorge Luis Borges jokes about the repetitive circularity and the impossible pride of starting anew in “The Wall and the Books,” about the emperor of China who built the Great Wall and burned all books written before his reign only to sense that a future emperor would erase his epoch-founding work with another new beginning. Borges, the American writer, is evidently amused but also fascinated by a tradition written in erasures of the past.

To appreciate this countertradition of repeated denials, it is important to remember how epoch-making nineteenth-century “national novels” seemed for generations of readers. The concept of the national novel hardly needs an explanation in Latin America; it is the book frequently required in the nations’ secondary schools as a source of local history and literary pride, not immediately required perhaps but certainly by the time Boom novelists were in school. Sometimes anthologized in school readers, and dramatized in plays, films, television serials, national novels are often as plainly identifiable as national anthems. As for the foundational bonds between this literature and legislation, ties that seemed “unacknowledged”⁹ in Shelley’s England, they were no secret in Latin America. One stunning acknowledgment is the page-long list, by the turn of the century, of Hispano-American writers who were also presidents of their countries.¹⁰ A comparable list for lesser offices might seem endless. And despite important parallels, North American writers who were establishing a national literature might assume a metapolitical posture, an apparently disinterested critique that was rare for the South. Latin Americans seemed more integrated into partisan struggles and less available for transcendent social criticism.

By the end of the century, when economic prosperity and “scientific” state policies produced an intellectual division of labor, the literary pendulum had swung writers away from affairs of state. This tended to relieve literati from political re-

sponsibilities and freed them to develop the preciousness of *modernismo*, largely in poetry, or it exiled narrators to the pessimist borders of “naturalism.” But in 1941 when Pedro Henríquez Ureña delivered his now classic Harvard lectures on “Literary Currents in Hispanic America,” it was obvious that the pendulum had swung back to engagement for many of the continent’s writers. The younger generation was split between the poetic vanguard of Borges and early Neruda, who inherited the “splendid isolation”¹¹ of the modernists, and an exalted or rebellious neoromanticism that gradually led back to the “old habit of taking part in political affairs,”¹² though most of these writers seemed no longer to hope for political leadership. Typically, they wrote from a “nativist” or reformist opposition in order to sway opinion about, say, race relations or economic policy. Many dedicated themselves to reform through education, as had Domingo F. Sarmiento and the many positivist nation-builders who followed. Nevertheless, to cite only three examples of the tradition’s resilience after the premature eulogy in the Harvard lectures, by 1948 novelist Rómulo Gallegos became Venezuela’s first freely elected president; in 1962 novelist and story writer Juan Bosch won a landslide victory in Henríquez Ureña’s native Dominican Republic, and in 1990 Mario Vargas Llosa almost won a campaign for the presidency of Peru.

Henríquez Ureña’s periodization of committed, precious, vanguard and reformist writers is, of course, very rough. But like so much he wrote, a wealth of detail justifies the boldness. So I won’t presume to improve on his scheme, only to add that half a century later it seems that historical romances and romanticized history continue to burden a resistant tradition. By *romance* here I mean a cross between our contemporary use of the word as a love story and a nineteenth-century use that distinguished the genre as more boldly allegorical than the novel.¹³ The classic examples in Latin America are almost inevitably stories of star-crossed lovers who represent particular regions, races, parties, economic interests, and the like. Their passion for conjugal and sexual union spills over to a sentimental readership in a move that hopes to win partisan minds along with hearts.

To show the inextricability of politics from fiction in the his-

tory of nation-building is, then, the first concern of this study. I am certainly not the first to notice this connection. Leslie Fiedler, for one, uses it to launch his study of the ethical and allegorizing penchants in American novels.¹⁴ And more recently, Benedict Anderson pointed to the continuities between nation-building and print communities formed around newspapers and novels.¹⁵ However astute and provocative these analyses are, though, I cannot manage to make them suggest why Latin America's traditional novel is so relentlessly attractive.

My own suggestion constitutes the second concern here. It is to locate an erotics of politics, to show how a variety of novel national ideals are all ostensibly grounded in "natural" heterosexual love and in the marriages that provided a figure for apparently nonviolent consolidation during internecine conflicts at midcentury. Romantic passion, on my reading, gave a rhetoric for the hegemonic projects in Gramsci's sense of conquering the antagonist through mutual interest, or "love," rather than through coercion.¹⁶ And the amorous overtones of "conquest" are quite appropriate, because it was civil society that had to be wooed and domesticated after the creoles had won their independence.¹⁷ The rhetoric of love, specifically of productive sexuality at home, is notably consistent, taken for granted in fact, despite the standard taxonomies that like to distinguish foundational novels as either "historical" or "indigenist," "romantic" or "realist."¹⁸ It will be evident that many romances strive toward socially convenient marriages and that, despite their variety, the ideal states they project are rather hierarchical. Nevertheless, the question of degree and even of style will make all the difference in considering the mixed political and esthetic legacy of romance.

To paraphrase another foundational text, after the creation of the new nations, the domestic romance is an exhortation to be fruitful and multiply. Exhortation is often all we get though, along with a contagious desire for socially productive love and for the State where love is possible, because these erotico-political affairs can be quite frustrating. And even when they end in satisfying marriage, the end of desire beyond which the narratives refuse to go, happiness reads like a wish-fulfilling pro-

jection of national consolidation and growth, a goal rendered visible.

FLESHING OUT HISTORY

Romantic novels go hand in hand with patriotic history in Latin America. The books fueled a desire for domestic happiness that runs over into dreams of national prosperity; and nation-building projects invested private passions with public purpose. This was no simple matter of one genre giving the other a hand, because the relationship between novels and new states has a Moebius-like continuity where public and private planes, apparent causes and putative effects, have a way of twisting into one another. “(T)hese fictions have helped, from the very beginning, to shape the history which has engendered them,” as Djelal Kadir has put it.¹⁹ Romance and republic were often connected, as I mentioned, through the authors who were preparing national projects through prose fiction and implementing foundational fictions through legislative or military campaigns.²⁰

For the writer/statesman there could be no clear epistemological distinction between science and art, narrative and fact, and consequently between ideal projections and real projects. Whereas today’s theorists of history in the industrial centers find themselves correcting the hubris of historians who imagine themselves to be scientists, the literary practice of Latin American historical discourse had long since taken advantage of what Lyotard would call the indefiniteness of science²¹ or, more to the point, what Paul Veyne calls the undecidability of history.²² In the epistemological gaps that the non-science of history leaves open, narrators could project an ideal future. This is precisely what many did in books that became classic novels of their respective countries. The writers were encouraged both by the need to fill in a history that would help to establish the legitimacy of the emerging nation and by the opportunity to direct that history toward a future ideal.

Andrés Bello, the Venezuelan poet, legislator, grammarian, and educator who became one of Chile’s most important cul-

tural arbiters, suggested the necessary connection between fiction and history in an essay he called “Historical Method.”²³ The apparently conservative defender of standardized Spanish (whose widely adopted *Gramática* did more to preserve the continent’s coherence than did Bolívar’s political ambitions)²⁴ was polemicizing here against what others (mis)took as modern historiography. In their passion for progress, Bello alleged, young radicals like José Victorino Lastarria and Jacinto Chacón were leading themselves and their students astray by courting foreign models, French models in this case, which focused on the “philosophical” patterns of history.²⁵ To replace Spanish habits with French fads made no sense to the judicious old man. In France it might well make sense to develop a “scientific” history—meaning codifiable in predictable rules—on the basis of painstaking inquiry and documentation, the kind of preliminary work yet to be done for the Americas. Not that it was invalid to search for the “spirit” of events, but that it was inappropriate or hasty on a continent where even the most basic historical data were lacking. Instead, Bello supported a narrative option that would delay explanations until after the facts were in, perhaps indefinitely. “[W]hen a country’s history doesn’t exist, except in incomplete, scattered documents, in vague traditions that must be compiled and judged, the narrative method is obligatory. Let anyone who denies it cite one general or particular history that did not start this way.” Then the cautious chronicler does something daring: he advocates self-consciously personal (even self-interested) narrative over the pretense of objectivity. One writer’s worries, another’s colorful memories or fabulous legends, all seemed to deliver more autonomous and more accurate pictures than those offered by a still unformed “science” of history. “Do you want to know, for example, what the discovery of America was like? Read Columbus’s diary, Pedro de Valdivia’s letters and those of Hernán Cortés. Bernal Díaz will tell you much more than Solís or Robertson.”²⁶ It is easy to see that Bello’s endorsement of the narrative method in history could be construed as more than simply a defensive modesty that falls short of explanations. Without the presumption of scientific truthfulness, narrative had a freer hand to construct history from private passions. So, we can

extrapolate a paradoxical boldness from Bello's warnings: narrative becomes necessary, not only because the gaps in our historical knowledge make more "modern" methods unfeasible, but also because the filler can then be taken for an origin of independent and local expression. Perhaps this is why Bello's essay has been renamed and often reprinted as "Cultural Autonomy of America."

Other Latin Americans might have been reading into Bello's authorization of narrative in history when they went so far as considering narrative to *be* history; and several issued calls to literary action as part of the nation-building campaign. In 1847 the Argentine future historian, general, and president, Bartolomé Mitre, published a manifesto promoting the production of nation-building novels. The piece served as prologue to his own contribution, *Soledad*, a love story set in La Paz shortly after the wars of Independence. In that prologue, he deplores the fact that "South America is the poorest region in the world when it comes to original novelists." More than an esthetic deficiency, this signals social and political immaturity, because good novels, he says, represent the highest achievement in any nation. So, in the idealist spirit of enlightened reform that assumed rational legislation could effect rational behavior, it followed for Mitre that good novels could promote Latin American development. Novels would teach the people about their history, about their barely formulated customs, and about ideas and feelings that have been modified by still unsung political and social events. They would be what they already were in Europe and in Cooper's America: "a loyal mirror in which man contemplates himself as he is with all his vices and virtues, and which generally wakens profound meditation and healthy criticisms."²⁷ Then, with perhaps feigned but nonetheless fitting humility, Mitre offers his own story as a mere stimulus for others to write.

José Martí, another notable propagandist for nation-building novels—along with Alberto Blest Gana and Ignacio Altamirano to whom we'll return in chapter 6—admired European novels.²⁸ But Martí worried that their ironies and pessimism would do more harm than good at home.²⁹ America needed edifying and autonomous stories, the kind Manuel de Jesús Galván wrote for

the Dominican Republic (*Enriquillo*, 1882) and to which Martí responded in a rapturous letter: “How sublime *Enriquillo* is, so much like Jesus! And his *Mencía* is a bride more perfect than Fray Luis ever imagined! . . . This is no historical legend [Galván’s subtitle] but a brand-new and enchanting way to write our American history.”³⁰ By contrast, he fretted over the sorry state of literary dependence elsewhere in the Americas, in Mexico for example: “Can there be a national life without a national literature? Can there be life for local artists in a scene always taken up by weak or repugnant foreign creations? Why in this new American land should we live an old European life?”³¹

All this assumes that literature has the capacity to intervene in history, to help construct it.³² Generations of Latin American writers and readers assumed as much. But since the 1960s, since Latin America’s post-Borgesian Boom in narrative and France’s self-critical ebullience in philosophy and literary studies, we have tended to fix on the ways that literature undoes its own projects. This is, of course, a healthy antidote for our centuries-long habit of ignoring or dismissing the gaps and the absences that partly constitute literature.³³ To notice this shift in emphasis, though, is also to acknowledge that earlier writings/readings managed the tensions differently.³⁴ In the particular case of Latin America’s nineteenth-century “historical” novels, the nagging insecurities that writing produces only peek through the more patent and assertive inscriptions. Tensions exist, to be sure, and they provide much of the interest in reading what otherwise might be an oppressively standard canon. But what I am saying is that those very tensions could not be appreciated if the overwhelming energy of the books were not being marshaled to deny them. When the job of writing America seemed most urgent, the question of ultimate authority was bracketed in favor of the local authors. They didn’t necessarily worry about writing compensatory fabrications as fillers for a world full of gaps. Empty spaces were part of America’s demographic and discursive nature. The continent seemed to invite inscriptions.

Given this imagined lure to write and the enthusiastic responses just sampled, some critics have wondered at the late appearance of novels in Latin America. The most obvious rea-

son is probably the best one: Spain had proscribed the publication, and even the importation, of any fictional material in the colonial dispositions of 1532, 1543, and 1571. Whether for its own Catholic utopian vision of the new world, or for reasons of security, Spain tried to police the creole imagination. But the rapid repetition of edicts and the surviving records of a lively business in forbidden fiction show with what frustrated insistence Spain tried. The unwieldy, literally unmanageable bureaucracy of the empire was a network in Dr. Johnson's sense, that is a system of holes held together by a string. Administrative negotiations and economic deals regularly slipped through, along with fiction from Spain, including *La Celestina*, *Lazarillo de Tormes*, *Orlando Furioso*, *Amadís de Gaula*, *Belianís de Grecia*, *El Caballero del Febo*, *Comedias* by Lope de Rueda, most notably abundant copies of *Don Quijote* from its first 1605 printing on, and followed by books like the satire *Fray Gerundio de Campazas* (1758) by Padre José Francisco de Isla, the translator of *Gil Blas*.³⁵ There were also imaginative excesses written inside the colony, in texts that negotiate the ban on fiction by way of decorous paraliterary genres, including the travelogue, (auto-)biography, and history.³⁶

Defiantly fictional novels as such started to appear along with and as part of the movement for emancipation that was triggered in 1808 by Napoleon. His threatened arrival in Lisbon sent the Portuguese court packing to Brazil, where in 1822 the visiting monarch decided to go home and the creoles insisted on substituting him with their own emperor and their own empire. Napoleon's army did force the abdication of Charles in Spain; it exiled his heir Ferdinand VII, and gave the colonists a legitimate excuse to rebel. There was a venerable Spanish norm that granted her subjects local self-rule in the event of a failure in the monarchy. And through this handy Spanish framework, which was made to accommodate French and English republican philosophy, France's usurpation made Americans responsible—so they alleged—for popular sovereignty. What is often considered the first novel published in the Spanish-speaking New World was a good example of the cultural and political amalgam. *El periquillo sarniento* (1816, completed 1830) by Mexico's José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi has

a Spanish picaresque shape and an enlightened spirit, a book that seems to come at the end of a literary tradition running from *Lazarrillo* to Lesage rather than to initiate a new one. What was novel about Lizardi's work was the very fact that it was scandalously imaginative and that it earned a small but heterogeneous readership, despite the public's preference for short and informative newspaper articles over the books they associated with colonial power. Part of his writerly challenge was to create "a public who could not help liking his novel," as Umberto Eco says of Manzoni.³⁷

More modern novels, sometimes called romances, came at midcentury, after independence had been won (everywhere but Cuba and Puerto Rico), civil wars had raged for a generation, and newspapers had become the medium for serialized European and American fiction.³⁸ The local romances did more than entertain readers with compensations for spotty national history. They developed a narrative formula for resolving continuing conflicts, a postepic conciliatory genre that consolidated survivors by recognizing former enemies as allies.³⁹ In the United States, it has been argued, the country and the novel practically gave birth to each other.⁴⁰ And the same can be said of the South, as long as we take consolidation rather than emancipation to be the real moment of birth in both Americas. Perhaps, then, in addition to the colonial ban on fiction there was another reason for the late appearance of romantic novels; it is their pacifying project. National romances would have been politically and socially premature before the mid-nineteenth century. That was when leadership passed into the hands of young men who were trained to respect Natural reason in the postcolonial liberal schools. They were also trained to desire Nature's most passionate alliances in the novels they read so ardently.

ROMANCE REALIZED

After three centuries of Spanish imperial politics, inquisitorial Catholicism, and economic monopoly, Nature meant a general relief from counterproductive constraints. The wars of Independence, fought roughly from 1810 to 1825, were led by

American-born whites, the creoles who were routinely denied the best administrative jobs and often coveted business opportunities too. Private initiative had few outlets in the empire's unnatural "corporatist" state, in which groups rather than individuals were recognized in a rather strict hierarchy of color and caste.⁴¹ The new societies experimented with liberalism adapted from examples in Great Britain (Bentham was a great favorite), the United States, and also France; that is, they experimented with a representative constitutional government (constitutional monarchy for some) that banished the "artificial barriers" to individual initiative and expression. Latin American nation-builders, privileged as they were, selected what they would from liberalism. They wanted, for example, unrestricted international trade yet refused to abolish tariffs. They got rid of Spain's monopolies (sometimes to fall prey to England) yet held on to domestic cartels, land entailment, and coercive labor systems. For those who were typically called "Conservatives," liberalism often ended with the elimination of Spanish and Portuguese intermediaries. "Nevertheless, in the period from independence to the late nineteenth century, it did come as close as anything to serving as a dominant ideology," with the result that the area was far more egalitarian after independence than before.⁴²

In the third quarter of the century, as if synchronized, countries were clearing away the special privileges, including church rights to land and taxes, left over from the colony. Between 1851 and 1854, slavery was abolished in Venezuela, New Granada, Ecuador, Peru, Argentina, and Uruguay. Other countries (except for Brazil and Cuba) preceded or followed within a few years. The refusal of authoritarian habit and the increased private initiative might have added up to a loss of state power, but there were gains from appropriated church lands and jurisdictions, buoyant foreign trade, and from passing civil and business codes to regulate private decisions.

Another place to notice this peak of liberal reform and optimism is in the midcentury novels that were daring to realize the romantic and utilitarian dreams of the European genre. The Latin American elite wrote romances for zealous readers, privileged by definition (since mass education was still one of

the dreams) and likely to be flattered by the personal portraits that were all the rage in bourgeois painting and in narrative local color, the *costumbrismo* that became a standard feature of the novels. Perhaps as much in Spanish America as in the Spain that Larra spoke for, the function of costumbrismo was “to make the different strata of society comprehensible one to another,” that is to promote communal imaginings primarily through the middle stratum of writers and readers who constituted the most authentic expression of national feeling.⁴³ Identifying with the heroes and heroines, readers could be moved to imagine a dialogue among national sectors, to make convenient marriages, or at least moved by that phantasmagorical ideal. Despite their variety, the romantic conciliations seem grounded in human nature, variously interpreted in this optimistic period but always assumed to be rational and constructive. Erotic passion was less the socially corrosive excess that was subject to discipline in some model novels from Europe, and more the opportunity (rhetorical and otherwise) to bind together heterodox constituencies: competing regions, economic interests, races, religions.⁴⁴ In Europe too, love and productivity were coming together in the bourgeois household where, for the first time in the history of the family, love and marriage were supposed to coincide.⁴⁵ But America was Europe’s ideal, imaginary,⁴⁶ realm for the bourgeoisie’s project of coordinating sense with sensibility, productivity with passion. It was, to cite the specific example of Jeremy Bentham, a realizable utopia, the place where his reasonable laws (solicited by American admirers like Bolívar, San Martín, Rivadavia, and del Valle) could bring the greatest good to the greatest number.⁴⁷ This America aspired to a modernity metonymized from the other, Northern, America. And no one was more dedicated to the possibility than the transplanted Europeans whose dreamwork was making them American. Theirs was the space to fulfill the desires of a corrupt and cynical Old World, the space where domestic “novels” and ethico-political “romance” could marry.

We might remember that after winning independence, the creoles hoped for internal conquests. The uncompromising and heroic militarism that expelled Spain from most of America was now a threat to her development. What America needed now

were civilizers, founding fathers of commerce and industry, not fighters. Juan Bautista Alberdi, whose notes for Argentina's 1853 constitution became a standard of political philosophy throughout Latin America, wrote that, "glory has ceded its place to utility and comfort, and military heroism is not the most competent medium for the *prosaic* needs of commerce and industry" (as if to say the prose of domestic fiction should now replace grandiloquent epic verse).⁴⁸ He and Domingo F. Sarmiento agreed, if on little else, on the need to fill up the desert, to make it disappear. What sense was there in heroically reducing warm bodies to dead ones, when Alberdi pronounced that in America, "to govern is to populate."⁴⁹ Few slogans have caught on and held on so well as this one. Husband the land and father your countries, he was saying. They have already yielded and now they must be loved and worked.

Alberdi didn't stop at slogans. He glossed them with practical programs for increasing the population, not only through the immigration policies for which he is remembered but also through marriages between industrious Anglo-Saxons and Argentina's "army" of beautiful women, eminently equipped for the eugenics campaign to "improve" local and "inefficient" Spanish stock. In chapter 3 I'll return to the dalliance Alberdi prepares between affairs of the heart and affairs of state. During the twenty years that Alberdi was matchmaking through these political *Bases*, luring the sword-wielding Joshuas of Independence to reform their tools into Isaiah's ploughs, we have seen that novelists were also reforming one thing into another: valor into sentimentalism, epic into romance, hero into husband. This helped to solve the problem of establishing the white man's legitimacy in the New World, now that the illegitimate conquerors had been ousted. Without a proper genealogy to root them in the Land, the creoles had at least to establish conjugal and then paternity rights, making a *generative* rather than a *genealogical* claim. They had to win America's heart and body so that the fathers could found her and reproduce themselves as cultivated men. To be legitimate, their love had to be mutual; even if the fathers set the tone, the mothers had to reciprocate.

For barely more than a generation, roughly from 1850 to 1880, romances were projecting civil societies through patriotic