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*Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 23, No. 4. (Summer, 1997), pp. 868-893.

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*Critical Inquiry* is currently published by The University of Chicago Press.

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# “Ce n’est pas le Pérou,” or, the Failure of Authenticity: Marginal Cosmopolitans at the Paris Universal Exhibition of 1855

Natalia Majluf

My mother Frenchified me in Peru, and France Latin Americanized me.<sup>1</sup>

—ALFREDO BRYCE ECHENIQUE

When I arrived in Paris in 1949 I realized two things: that I didn’t know how to paint and that I was Latin American.<sup>2</sup>

—FERNANDO DE SZYSZLO

Latin American cosmopolitanism is not a form of uprootedness, nor our nativism a provincialism. We are condemned to search in our land, an other land; and in the other, our own.<sup>3</sup>

—OCTAVIO PAZ

An early version of this paper was presented under the title “Defining National Painting: Francisco Laso’s *Inhabitant of the Cordillera of Peru* at the Paris Universal Exhibition of 1855” in the session “Drawing on the Past: Pre-Columbian and Native American Imagery, Sources and Issues in the Modern Arts” at the forty-seventh International Congress of Americanists, New Orleans, 8 July 1991, and later in my dissertation, “The Creation of the Image of the Indian in Nineteenth-Century Peru: The Paintings of Francisco Laso (1823–1869).” I would like to thank Beverly Adams and Katy Siegel, whose suggestions, even at a distance, helped me to formulate the ideas presented in this essay. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own.

1. Alfredo Bryce Echenique, *Permiso para vivir (Antimemorias)* (Barcelona, 1993), p. 20.

2. Fernando De Szyszlo, “Reflections with Fernando De Szyszlo,” interview with Ana María Escallón, in Mario Vargas Llosa et al., *Fernando de Szyszlo* (Bogotá, 1991), p. 27.

3. Octavio Paz, “José Guadalupe Posada y el grabado latinoamericano,” *Los privilegios de la vista: Arte de México*, vol. 3 of *México en la obra de Octavio Paz* (Mexico City, 1987), p. 188.

The recent spate of exhibitions of Latin American art in the United States and Europe has prompted widespread discussion about the manner in which that art is represented and explained. For Latin American art has always been received with ambiguity and unease in international contexts. The crucial site of contention centers invariably on the status of a Latin American identity, or of where and how a specifically Latin American difference can be found.<sup>4</sup> In fact, since the nineteenth century, Latin American art has been subjected to a deceptively simple critical strategy: in order to be acceptable in international circles, Latin American art must be made different, for when found to be familiar, it is defined as derivative.<sup>5</sup> In either case artists from Latin America are effectively placed on the margins—outside or beneath the culture of the West. It is true, and perhaps inevitable, that much Latin American art is decidedly unlike art produced in large metropolitan centers, but even that difference is framed through the artistic mediums and categories of the modern West. It would be useless to attempt to subsume under one definition the extremely heterogeneous nature of cultural production in the various regions that make up “Latin America.” Within the “fine arts” tradition, however, it would be safe to say that since independence in the nineteenth century, Latin American art has mostly been the product of cosmopolitan artists, bona fide citizens of the West.

The movement of artists and intellectuals from Latin America to metropolitan centers (and usually back) increased dramatically after independence from Spain in the early nineteenth century. Claiming one of the main promises of the Enlightenment, young Creole Americans traveled to Paris, London, and Rome not as exiles or emigrés but as cosmopolitans, as participants in a world culture. Whether in commerce, science, or the arts, they sought inclusion and equal participation in an international community. The excitement of liberation and discovery simultaneously gave way to a more questioning and critical attitude. Soon these cosmopolitans became aware of the vertical nature of their relationship to European centers, of unequal development, and of their peripheral position in the international community. They became aware of their paradoxical position as marginal cosmopolitans.

4. Among the many critical accounts of these exhibitions and the debate they generated, see Mari Carmen Ramírez, “Beyond ‘the Fantastic’: Framing Identity in U.S. Exhibitions of Latin American Art,” *Art Journal* 51 (Winter 1992): 60–68.

5. See Gerardo Mosquera, “Presentación,” in *Ante América* (exhibition catalogue, Bogotá, 27 Oct.–20 Dec. 1992), pp. 12–16.

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But the marginalization of the cosmopolitan is not brought about similarly in different spheres of activity. This is why the term *cultural dependence*, borrowed from economic neocolonialist theory, is not always useful or particularly precise. As I will argue, in the visual arts the marginalization of the Latin American cosmopolitan has been effected primarily through one particular discourse, that of cultural authenticity. For the Latin American cosmopolitan has no place within a discourse that privileges the organic relationship of the individual artist to an endogenous, pure, and essential culture.<sup>6</sup> Latin American cosmopolitans are expected to have an "other" language or an "other" culture, different from the culture of the modern West; but these cosmopolitans have no other culture, nor can they speak in another tongue. They have sought to be included as the same, but the international community has systematically rejected any sign of their sameness.

A reading of the reviews of any international exhibition of Latin American art within the past two centuries would reveal the presence of the discourse of authenticity as the primary frame of critical reference. Here, however, I want to focus on the criticism of the first showing of art from Latin America in an international context: the Paris Universal Exhibition of 1855. At that time, *Latin America* as a term to designate the region did not even exist, but its cultural production had already been categorized as derivative and its cosmopolitanism denied.<sup>7</sup> The Universal Exhibition of 1855 is also a particularly appropriate case to study because it took place at a moment quite similar to the present. Just as a stereotypical and hegemonic modernism has recently come under attack, so too the mid-nineteenth century saw the gradual displacement of the classical paradigm from its central position of authority. It was also a time, like today, when a diverse array of stylistic possibilities was being explored. Critics saw everywhere the signs of a pervasive eclecticism and framed and discussed it in a manner similar to the present pluralism. And it all took place in a world that, through increased communications and an expanding capitalism, was perceived as moving towards an inevitable globalization.

### *National Schools, Cosmopolitans, and the Blurring of Borders*

Unlike later world's fairs, the Universal Exhibition of 1855 had no natives on exhibit, no grandiose ethnographic and archaeological reconstructions. Latin American countries were represented, like other na-

6. See Neil Larsen, "Juan Rulfo: Modernism as Cultural Agency," *Modernism and Hegemony: A Materialist Critique of Aesthetic Agencies* (Minneapolis, 1990), pp. 49–71.

7. See Arturo Ardao's history of the term *Latin America* in his *América Latina y la latinidad* (Mexico City, 1993).

tions, in the industrial and the fine arts sections of the exhibition. Yet it is not surprising that the numerous studies of this event have failed to mention these Latin Americans, for only six works by three painters were exhibited out of a total of over five thousand works by almost two thousand artists.<sup>8</sup> Only two Latin American countries, Mexico and Peru, participated in the exhibition. This minor presence, however, would be countered by the symbolic importance they held within the exhibition as markers of cultural difference.

The exhibition satisfied a practical need for comparative criticism by offering an institutional framework for the discussion and evaluation of works of art from different regions. Although geographic determinism had had a growing presence in the theory of art since the eighteenth century, it would only be with the modern idea of the nation that the concept of national schools of painting would be effectively put to use. What had been scattered ideas before the exhibition were now given practical application and an institutional force. The early 1850s saw a growing number of art exhibitions in London, Brussels, Berlin, Dublin, and New York that showed works by artists from different countries; but until the exhibition of 1855, none had stipulated that artists participate as representatives of their nations.<sup>9</sup> Exhibition regulations explicitly stated that no product of a foreign country could be accepted without the prior authorization of the respective national official or committee.<sup>10</sup> Thus, in November of 1854, Francisco Laso and Ignacio Merino approached the Peruvian legation in Paris to inquire about their participation, which was subsequently arranged.<sup>11</sup> In the case of foreign painters, the national embassy became the intermediary between the artists and the exhibition organizers. Interpellating artists as representatives of national schools of painting, the exhibition was an important early attempt

8. See Patricia Mainardi, *Art and Politics of the Second Empire: The Universal Expositions of 1855 and 1867* (New Haven, Conn., 1987); Marcia Pointon, "From the Midst of Warfare and Its Incidents to the Peaceful Scenes of Home: The Exposition Universelle of 1855," *Journal of European Studies* 11 (Dec. 1981): 233-61; and Rachel Esner, "Regards français sur la peinture allemande à l'Exposition Universelle de 1855," *Romantisme*, no. 73 (1991): 103-12.

9. See Mainardi, *Art and Politics of the Second Empire*, p. 39.

10. See *Exposition universelle de 1855: Explication des ouvrages de peinture, sculpture, gravure, lithographie, et architecture, des artistes vivants étrangers et français* (exhibition catalogue, Palais des Beaux-Arts, Paris, May 1855), p. xvi.

11. Although official exhibition regulations left the choice of works to be exhibited to the national committees, the Peruvian legation official claimed that it was necessary, and preferable, that the artists submit their works to the French jury. See Francisco de Rivero, letter to the minister of foreign relations in Lima, 28 Nov. 1854, archive of the Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Lima. Record group "Legación en Francia," 1854, file 5-14/5, document no. 165. Although the interests of the Peruvian embassy had been centered on the exhibition of industries, Peru was ultimately only represented in the fine arts section. See also document nos. 80, 112, 122, and 137 for 1854 and document no. 50 for 1855, all in file 5-14/5.



the catalogue, are often confused, or at least difficult to find and distinguish."<sup>15</sup>

The idea of "national schools" implied the possibility of classifying art through the recognition of difference, but there was no significant difference precisely where it was most expected. There was disillusionment, even outrage, in the critics who surveyed the paintings sent by artists coming from supposedly exotic locales. As Edmond About stated, "those who counted on finding at the Exhibition picturesque information on unknown countries will be a bit disappointed in their expectations."<sup>16</sup> And of the countries represented in the exhibition, few were expected to be more exotic than Mexico and Peru. For over three centuries, these two names had been associated in the European imagination with fantastic stories of amazing treasures, strange peoples, and bizarre geography. Enlightenment thinkers gave these images new life when they turned to the Incas and Aztecs to illustrate their disputes. During the nineteenth century, travel books and journals helped popularize the findings of an emerging Americanist archaeology and ethnography; the texts were invariably illustrated with magnificent landscapes, fabulous ruins, and curious peoples and customs.<sup>17</sup>

It was in these countries, both geographically distant and symbolically exotic, that critics expected to more easily recognize the boundary lines of national schools. And because of these expectations, the character of the cosmopolitan artist sent to represent these newly decolonized countries was particularly disturbing to the critics. Peru's Laso and Merino were students of Raymond Quinsac Monvoisin and Charles Gleyre respectively,<sup>18</sup> and Mexico's Juan Cordero had studied in the Academy of

15. Claude Vignon [Noémi Cadiot], *Exposition Universelle de 1855: Beaux-Arts* (Paris, 1855), p. 20.

16. Edmond About, *Voyage à travers l'Exposition des Beaux-Arts (Peinture et sculpture)* (Paris, 1855), p. 64; hereafter abbreviated *V*.

17. For the famous Enlightenment debates on the nature of the New World, see Antonello Gerbi, *La disputa del Nuevo Mundo: Historia de una polémica, 1750–1900*, 2d rev. ed. (Mexico City, 1982); for the "rediscovery" of America in European travel writing of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, see Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York, 1992).

18. Merino exhibited a portrait of the Peruvian painter Francisco Masías, listed in the exhibition catalogue as *Portrait de M. J.M.*, and a painting of Columbus titled *Christophe Colomb et son fils recevant l'hospitalité dans le couvent de la Rabida (Espagne)*; see *Exposition universelle de 1855*, p. 170, cat. nos. 1652 and 1650. Both works are now at the Pinacoteca Merino of the Municipality of Lima. Merino also showed his *Resting Place of Peruvian Indians*, now lost, which was listed in the exhibition catalogue as *Halte d'Indiens Péruviens*; see *ibid.*, p. 170, cat. no. 1651. For descriptions of this painting, see *V*, pp. 64–65, and Pedro Escandón, *La industria y las bellas artes en la Exposición Universal de 1855: Memoria dirigida al excelentísimo señor Ministro de Fomento de México* (Paris, 1856), pp. 155–56. The painter from San Salvador, Francisco Cisneros (a pupil of Jean-François Gigoux), participated in the French section of the exhibition and was thus not discussed as an "American" artist; see *Exposition Universelle de 1855*, p. 281, cat. no. 2751.

Rome. All three painters had been sent to Europe on government subsidies to complete their artistic training. America, for centuries the site of projected utopias, dreams of gold, and exotic reveries, was represented not by "natives" but by cosmopolitan Creole intellectuals.

The artists from Mexico and Peru came to be perceived not as participants in a common culture but as the victims of progress. Referring to the Peruvian exhibition, Etienne Delécluze noted that with the exception of the Chinese, who had preserved the immemorial traditions of their art, "the most far-off regions, and those whose customs were strangest to us, upon receiving the civilization of Europe, have adopted all its tastes" (*BA*, p. 145). The notion of a technical progress informed critics' discussions of the visual arts, but what was perceived as a benevolent process in industry was unanimously questioned by the critics reviewing the fine arts section. Here, progress was not perceived as a clear and rationally controlled succession of events, nor as the expansive movement of an Enlightenment that would illuminate the farthest reaches of the world, but as an uncontrollable force that disturbed all difference.

As a gauge of contemporary trends, the exhibition was also a glimpse into the future, and many critics ventured to set forth their predictions of where the present advances would lead. Eugène Loudun pointed to "the spirit of universality which tends to efface distinct characters and to melt away all nuances in a yet undecided ensemble[;] these are the new conditions for criticism and for art."<sup>19</sup> Critics envisaged a process that was at once uncontrollable and inevitable, one that they could embrace or refuse but that they could not define or affect. Noticing the lack of differentiation, Louis Peisse wondered whether the entire world was not on its way to forming a single world culture and asked, "These [national] frontiers, must they also disappear under the levelling of the railways?"<sup>20</sup> The presence of the marginal cosmopolitan thus heralded a new and problematic state of affairs that the critics were quick to name: that of an impending process of homogenization. The future was a site where difference would be eradicated, where everything would be the same. The very possibility of such a homogeneous world was quickly rejected. A world without difference is impossible to classify and to order, and it is also devoid of hierarchy. The demand for cultural difference was thus deployed to counter the perceived blurring of borders of an expanding world culture.

In the face of cosmopolitanism, critics did not abandon national classification imposed by the exhibition but rather reaffirmed those categories, which they perceived as vanishing before their very eyes. In fact, in

19. Eugène Loudun [Eugène Balleyguier], *Exposition universelle des beaux-arts: Le Salon de 1855* (Paris, 1855), pp. 1–2; hereafter abbreviated *EU*.

20. Louis Peisse, "Beaux-Arts: Exposition Universelle," *Le Constitutionnel*, 25 May 1855, n. p. Among the works that also refer to this idea are Paul Mantz, "Salon de 1855," *La Revue française* 2 (1855): 22–23, and *EU*, pp. 206–7.

his review of the Universal Exhibition of 1855 Baudelaire, following Poe, defined the beautiful as the bizarre. He did so in direct support of variety and against the formula of progress that the exhibition propounded.<sup>21</sup> He was not alone. For Paul Mantz “the role of nationalities” was significant, for “an abdication of all originalities” would inevitably lead to “the suicide of art.”<sup>22</sup> Peisse expressed his hope that “the civilization of the economists will not extend its conquests to that point, and that, at least in the ethereal world of the spirit, of imagination and sentiment, she will leave to future travellers the piquancy of curiosity, the charm of the unexpected, the pleasure of surprise.”<sup>23</sup> This demand for difference was not simply a victory for romantic notions of cultural relativism, for the manner in which it was deployed to redefine France’s relationship to the rest of the world served to establish a new international hierarchy. The Mexican and Peruvian painters had exhibited their works as representatives of their nations, but they had also aspired to equal participation in a contemporary exhibition, as cosmopolitans, as members of a world culture. However, within the context of an exhibition that set down the borders of the nation, their works were forcibly tied only to the national and the particular. The exhibition interpellated them for the difference they could produce, framed them as others, and in so doing broke the spell of their identity as cosmopolitans. Subjected to this critical strategy, they found they had no place in the new hierarchy except as the transparent vehicles for exoticism or as simple appendages of an expanding French culture.

### *In Search of Lost Difference: “Local Color” and the Picturesque*

Of the painters from Latin America who had presented works at the exhibition, none enjoyed such critical success as Francisco Laso. In reviews of an exhibition of almost five thousand works, even a passing

21. See Charles Baudelaire, “Exposition Universelle 1855: Beaux-Arts,” *Curiosités esthétiques*, “*L’Art romantique*,” et autres oeuvres critiques, ed. Henri Lemaître (Paris, 1962), pp. 215–16; trans. Jonathan Mayne, under the title “The Exposition Universelle 1855,” *Art in Paris, 1845–1862: Salons and Other Exhibitions Reviewed by Charles Baudelaire*, ed. Mayne (Greenwich, Conn., 1965), pp. 124–25. The threat of homogenization pervades many of Baudelaire’s writings. For example, Constantin Guys, the “painter of modern life,” was a cosmopolitan, a “man of the world,” who devoted his time to the creation of extended inventories of the picturesque, whether in London, Turkey, or Spain. It is no surprise that he also lived in a world where Turkish women had adopted a “Parisian air” and where the crinoline threatened to displace the native dress of the women of Turkey (Baudelaire, “L’Artiste, homme du monde, homme des foules et enfant” and “Pompes et solennités,” secs. 3 and 7 of “Le Peintre de la vie moderne,” *Curiosités esthétiques*,” *L’Art romantique*,” et autres oeuvres critiques, pp. 458, 477).

22. Mantz, “Salon de 1855: X,” *La Revue française* 2 (1855): 608; hereafter abbreviated “S.”

23. Peisse, “Beaux-Arts,” n.p.

reference to a particular painting meant an acknowledgement of its importance. When the mere fact of being mentioned in the press implied recognition, Laso's painting *The Inhabitant of the Cordillera of Peru* (fig. 2) was reproduced as an engraving in *L'Illustration* and *Magasin pittoresque*, caricatured in the *Journal pour rire*, and discussed by most of the leading critics of the period. But this success came at a great cost. What was primarily valued in the painting was not the artist's ability but the fact that it satisfied certain demands for difference—that, even if only at the level of content, the painting could be claimed as an "authentic" work. The manner in which critics managed to make the painting conform to their ideals of difference produced a highly idiosyncratic reading of this painting, which is now generally known as the *Indian Potter*, a title it was given by the French critics in 1855. There would appear to be little difference between this popular if apocryphal title and the painting's official designation as *The Inhabitant of the Cordillera of Peru*,<sup>24</sup> but behind this apparently innocuous change in title lies a radical transformation in the reading of the painting.

The manner in which the French critics approached Laso's work cannot be attributed simply to French ignorance of a specific history or to the carelessness with which many of the reviews of the exhibition were written. For in such a case one would expect to find different readings, different interpretations, while in fact French criticism of Laso's work was unanimous. It is also not enough to state that the critics read in the painting what they were expecting to find. Their interpretation shows a struggle with the work, whose meanings and whose presence they managed effectively to circumvent. This was as much a confrontation with the painted work as with the categories that the exhibition put into play.

Laso painted *The Inhabitant of the Cordillera of Peru* specifically for the Universal Exhibition. It shows a single figure, dressed in black, who holds in his hands a pre-Columbian object. The symmetry of the composition serves to establish a relationship between the main figure, a symbol of the contemporary Indian, and the ancient object he presents to the viewer. The worn surface of the pot, broken at several points, presents a rupture with Peru's ancient past, which can now be represented only in the form of a ruin. But the ceramic vessel functions here as far more than a generic symbol of the pre-Columbian past. It is an image that has been carefully selected by the artist and placed at the very center of the composition. The vessel represents a prisoner whose hands are tied behind his back and bound by a rope around his neck; it is the image of a victim, con-

24. The painting's original title in French was *Habitant des Cordillères du Pérou*; see *Exposition universelle de 1855*, p. 170, cat. no. 1654. A *cordillera* is a geographical configuration formed by parallel ranges of rugged mountains, which are common only in America and Eurasia.



FIG. 2.—Francisco Laso, *The Inhabitant of the Cordillera of Peru*, 1855. Oil on canvas, 135 x 86 cm. Pinacoteca Merino of the Municipality of Lima.

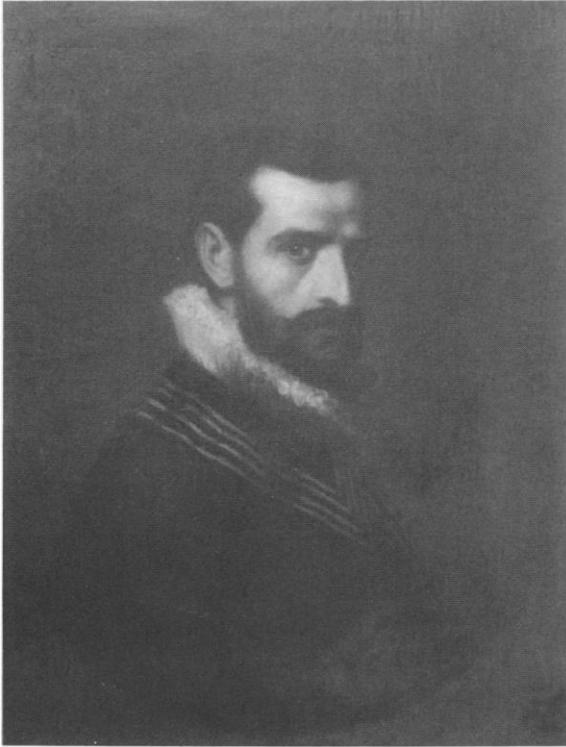


FIG. 3.—Francisco Laso, *Portrait of Gonzalo Pizarro, One of the Most Famous Conquerors of Peru, Brother of Francisco Pizarro*, 1855. Oil on canvas, 76 x 58 cm. Banco Central de Reserva, Lima.

strained, subjugated, and immobilized.<sup>25</sup> Held out by the main figure, and presented in a confrontational manner to the viewer, the pre-Columbian pot becomes an allegory of the oppression of the Peruvian Indian.<sup>26</sup> The bound prisoner represented in the ceramic brings ancient history into the present, but Laso leaves no doubt about the source of the Indian's domination. *The Inhabitant of the Cordillera of Peru* was accompanied in the exhibition by an imaginary portrait bust of Gonzalo Pizarro titled *Portrait of Gonzalo Pizarro, One of the Most Famous Conquerors of Peru, Brother of Francisco Pizarro* (fig. 3). By opposing the image of the Spanish

25. The ceramic represents one of the most common themes in the repertoire of Moche iconography.

26. See *Exposición conmemorativa Francisco Laso, I centenario (1869–1969)*, ed. Francisco Stastny (exhibition catalogue, Museo de Arte, Lima, July 1969), n. p., cat. no. 9.

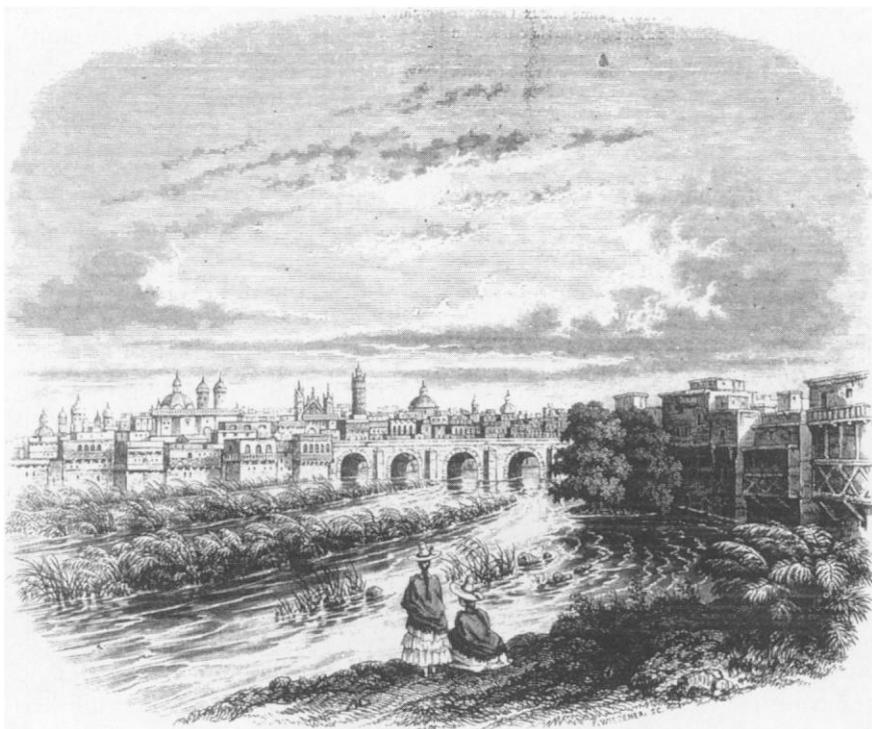
conqueror to that of the Indian, Laso established the historical origins for the oppression that *The Inhabitant of the Cordillera of Peru* condemns. The dialogue established between the two paintings, in which the narrative of history is implied but not directly represented, provides a powerful synthesis of Peruvian history.<sup>27</sup>

Through these paintings Laso attempted to represent the Peruvian nation in direct opposition to the forms of representation that, until then, had served this purpose. The images of Peru that circulated in Europe and Latin America had been created mainly through two techniques: the watercolor and the lithographic or engraved print. The watercolor was traditionally used by travelers and scientific expeditionists to Peru, but it had also become a popular form within the country by being placed in the service of *costumbrismo*, the Latin American counterpart of the picturesque. The dominant literary and pictorial mode of the region during this period, *costumbrismo* was the representation of typical scenes, sometimes presented in a satirical vein, sometimes through a pseudoscientific rhetoric of pure description. In either case, *costumbrismo* was based on direct observation and claimed to show a truthful portrait of society. The genre did not aspire to seriousness and rejected any historical reference; it claimed only to fix on paper a fleeting image of the present. *Costumbrista* watercolors became the picture postcards of Peru during the mid-nineteenth century, and they were avidly collected by foreign travelers to the country. These travelers, in turn, produced travel books or published accounts of their visit to the country in the popular illustrated journals of Europe (fig. 4). Like the *costumbrista* images they collected, the printed images with which they illustrated their travel accounts also employed a rhetoric of pure description. They favored general vistas and a profusion of detail, for the value of their images, as the credibility of their accounts, depended on their status as firsthand representations of an actually perceived reality.<sup>28</sup>

One of the few contemporary Peruvian discussions of *The Inhabitant of the Cordillera of Peru*, written by Laso's friend the poet Manuel Nicolás Corpancho, went to great lengths to show precisely how much the painter

27. The painting's original title, as listed in the exhibition catalogue, was *Portrait de Gonzalo Pizarro, un des plus célèbres conquérants du Pérou, frère de Francisco Pizarro*; see *Exposition universelle de 1855*, p. 170, cat. no. 1653. The complex associations evoked by these two works are discussed at length in Natalia Majluf, "The Creation of the Image of the Indian in Nineteenth-Century Peru: The Paintings of Francisco Laso (1823–1869)" (Ph.D. diss., University of Texas, Austin, 1995).

28. On the ideological underpinnings of the "effect of the real" and the picturesque in nineteenth-century European representations of the other, see Linda Nochlin, "The Imaginary Orient," *The Politics of Vision: Essays on Nineteenth-Century Art and Society* (New York, 1989), pp. 33–59. For the nineteenth-century obsession with realist forms of representation, see Marjorie Munsterberg, "The World Viewed: Works of Nineteenth-Century Realism," *Studies in Visual Communication* 8 (Summer 1982): 55–69.



(Vue de Lima, capitale du Pérou.— Dessin fait à Lima, en 1844, par M. Max Radiguet (r).)

FIG. 4.—Max Radiguet, “View of Lima, capital of Peru.—Drawing made in Lima in 1844.” From *Magasin pittoresque* (1846).

deviated from that picturesque mode.<sup>29</sup> In order to do this, Corpancho emphasized Laso’s status as a history painter and the seriousness and elevated nature of his art. Although Laso’s paintings avoid the traditional gestures of narrative history painting, they nevertheless belong to that genre. The artist deftly manages pictorial rhetoric to announce his elevated intentions. The hieraticism of the figures, their rigorous frontality, and the restrained range of colors point to the allegorical ambitions of Laso’s painting. The simplicity of both compositions offers no distractions to the viewer, and the main figures appear as the only objects of our gaze.

Yet it is not mainly through the incorporation of history that Laso rejects *costumbrismo* and the picturesque. *Costumbrista* watercolors and il-

29. For Corpancho, Laso’s character reveals a “most pronounced genius for historical painting,” which contrasts with the kind of painting of “scandalous colors” preferred by Peruvian audiences (Manuel Nicolás Corpancho, “Exposición Universal: D. Francisco Lazo,” *El Heraldo de Lima*, 12 Dec. 1855, p. [3]).

lustrations of travel accounts generally ignore the presence of the viewer because, in order to be credible as images of a preexisting reality, they must exist independently from their audience. Laso's paintings, on the other hand, confront the viewer directly, for *The Inhabitant of the Cordillera of Peru* and the *Portrait of Gonzalo Pizarro* return our gaze. Any illusion of transparency is thus immediately dispelled. The rejection of the conventions of picturesque representation are carried to extremes in *The Inhabitant of the Cordillera of Peru*. Although the presence of traditional dress might imply a documentary approach to painting, the lack of color counteracts such a reading. Whereas picturesque representations tend to open up a vista, allowing the viewer the illusion of unmediated access to a particular scene, Laso's painting closes off any such possibility. The main figure fills up the frame, and the polished, almost solid surface of the flowing black poncho serves to seal off and deflect any suggestion of transparency. Nothing could be further from the picturesque than the imposing black contours of the main figure, emerging dramatically against the light, almost unmodulated background. Like an emblem, the figure stands in a purely pictorial, abstract, and nonreferential space.

The critics who reviewed Laso's works at the exhibition saw neither the symbolic charge of *The Inhabitant of the Cordillera of Peru* nor its relationship to the imaginary *Portrait of Gonzalo Pizarro*. Their reviews focused primarily on *The Inhabitant of the Cordillera of Peru*, which they read in a radically different manner than that which I have established. The figure holding the ceramic vessel was identified as a potter, whose function was reduced from that of an allegorical figure to that of a simple artisan.<sup>30</sup> One critic suggested that the ceramic was his "masterpiece . . . maybe even a family portrait" (*V*, p. 65), while another simply exclaimed, "this man makes ceramics, and he is the king of creation."<sup>31</sup> Only the painter Ernest Charton, who had recently visited Peru and who was acquainted with pre-Columbian art, realized that the ceramic vessel had not been created by the figure holding it. Nevertheless, no knowledge of pre-Columbian art is needed in order to realize that this ceramic, which bears the traces of the passage of time, is not contemporaneous with the figure holding it. Yet even a critic with as much firsthand knowledge as Charton failed to appreciate Laso's allegorical intentions. Charton created a narrative in which the figure holding the ceramic is an amateur archaeologist or grave digger who has recently discovered the ceramic in an ancient tomb, and concluded his discussion by saying that the importance of the

30. See, along with those critics quoted in the text, *BA*, p. 146; Escandón, *La industria y las bellas artes en la Exposición Universal de 1855*, pp. 156–57; *EU*, p. 88; A. J. du Pays, "Exposition universelle des beaux-arts," *L'illustration, journal universel*, 29 Dec. 1855, pp. 426–28, esp. p. 428; and Charles Perrier, "Exposition Universelle des Beaux-Arts: Écoles secondaires d'Europe et d'Amérique," *L'Artiste*, 5th ser., 23 Sept. 1855, p. 46.

31. Valleyres, "Exposition des beaux-arts: Souvenirs d'un spiritualiste," *L'illustration, journal universel*, 29 Dec. 1855, p. 442.

painting lay in the way it presented "all that is original and even picturesque in the national costume."<sup>32</sup>

This manner of reading Laso's work was not limited to written criticism. The engraving of the painting that appeared in the popular weekly *L'illustration* constitutes as powerful an act of transformation and interpretation as any of the written accounts (fig. 5).<sup>33</sup> Where the painting rejected the rhetoric of description through the elimination of superfluous detail, the engraving multiplied the folds of the black poncho, found nonexistent muscles in the hands of the main figure, and added a number of elements to the pre-Columbian pot. The impenetrable solidity of the black surface was pierced by the engraver's thin cross-hatched lines, which also blurred the monumental contours of the main figure, merging and dissolving it into the background. Where the figure represented in the painting lacks any obvious Indian features, the engraver Indianized him by flattening the nose and enlarging the lips. While the ceramic shows the worn look of an ancient object, the engraver transformed it into a gleaming pot recently out of the oven, and he also misunderstood the purpose and meaning of the rope around the neck of the figure. The downcast look of the figure in the ceramic was transformed into a blank, outright stare, the sour gesture of the mouth into a smile, and its bound pose became a meaningless squat. Even the subtle shading of the background was enhanced and turned into a dramatic chiaroscuro, evoking a narrative space absent from the actual painting. All intended meaning was eradicated, all reference to history obliterated. What remained was the beautiful image of an artisan, and the painting was denied the right to signify beyond the level of the picturesque. *The Inhabitant of the Cordillera of Peru* became the *Indian Potter*.

The painting's allegory of oppression was reduced in the engraving to the genre of the picturesque, the very category from which Laso had tried to distance himself. But even more important than the demotion of the work within the still-imperative hierarchy of genres was the fact that it was read as a transparent representation of a viewed scene. There is nothing short of extraordinary in Delécluze's description of the painting as a young man, dressed in black, who "holds in his hands an earthenware bowl and stands out against a blue sky"—thus transforming, through his narration, the abstract background into a landscape (*BA*, p. 146). The critics looked through the frame and projected the topoi of

32. [Ernest Charton], "Les Arts au Pérou," *Magasin pittoresque* 24 (Mar. 1856): 102. Although the article is not signed, it can be safely attributed to Ernest Charton, an artist and journalist who had recently been in Peru and whose brother, Édouard Charton, was the director of the journal in which the article appeared.

33. The engraving by A. Marc appeared in *L'illustration, journal universel*, 29 Dec. 1855, p. 428. This engraving was also reproduced in *El Correo de ultramar, parte literaria ilustrada* 7, no. 159 (1856): 44. Another version, apparently by the same engraver, appeared in *Magasin pittoresque* 24 (Mar. 1856): 101.



FIG. 5.—A. Marc, “Peruvian school.—Inhabitants of the Cordilleras, painting by Mr. F. Laso.” From *L'illustration, journal universel* (1855).

travel writing; they were transported to a distant land where they encountered a young Indian man, a potter, and they even constructed natural scenery for this exotic figure to inhabit. They looked through the layers of paint, as if the work were a window onto the brute reality of “Peru.”

Laso’s painting was returned to the context of travel illustration, and it is no small coincidence that *Magasin pittoresque* and *L'illustration*, where

Laso’s painting was discussed and reproduced, should have also been the two most important French journals for the publication of travel accounts. Charton, who wrote on Laso’s painting, was not only a brother of the founder of both these journals but also a travel writer whose drawings of South American scenes were often reproduced in *Magasin pittoresque*.<sup>34</sup> The success of these travel accounts depended on their ability to transport readers to distant and exotic sites as if those places were immediately present. The rhetoric of description, the profuse detail, and the vistas that opened out from the pages of journals and travel books helped to sustain that illusion.

Critics were attracted to those paintings that allowed them to be similarly transported to foreign lands. Thus Merino’s *Resting Place of Peruvian Indians* impressed the critic About, who found its “frankly exotic” subject the equivalent of “*un bon chapitre de voyage*” (V, pp. 64, 65). Yet the other works exhibited by Merino, his *Portrait de M. J.M.* and the historical painting *Christopher Columbus and His Son Receiving Hospitality in the Convent of Rabida (Spain)*, were simply ignored by the critics, in the same way in which Cordero’s *The Adulterous Woman* (1853) and Laso’s *Portrait of Gonzalo Pizarro* went unacknowledged. These works were passed over because even when they represented scenes taken from national histories they refused the transparency of the picturesque. They not only offered no “surprises” to the critics, but they seemed to engage more directly the conventions and practices of contemporary European painting. Critics refused works where they recognized pictorial conventions, such as those associated with portraiture or history painting, or where they discerned an iconography deriving from the standard repertoire of the European painter. By reading Laso’s *Inhabitant of the Cordillera of Peru* as the representation of a viewed scene, the critics had ignored precisely those pictorial conventions that defined Laso’s work as an allegorical painting. They thus denied the aspect of elaboration, the thought of the painter, the ideas the artist had imparted to the work. In their search for difference, critics looked not at the paintings on exhibit but at the distant lands they could be made to represent. If the signs of the exotic had to be sought somewhere outside the pictorial frame, it was because the paintings themselves were found to be devoid of significance.

### “Ce n’est pas le Pérou,” or, *Pictorial Inauthenticity*

Ultimately, Laso’s painting was valued for what was perceived as its “Peruvian” content. For, critics claimed, there was in his works no such

34. Charton, for example, published drawings of South American scenes in the following issues of *Magasin pittoresque*: 20 (Jan. 1852): 32; 32 (Oct. 1864): 356–57; and 39 (Aug. 1871): 249.

thing as a "Peruvian" form, a distinct type of "Peruvian" painting. While the critics had managed to evoke difference in some of the works of the marginal cosmopolitans, they had failed to find authenticity. Laso, Merino, and Cordero were repeatedly denigrated for making use of a kind of painting that was not properly "Peruvian" or "Mexican." The legend under Bertall's caricature of *The Inhabitant of the Cordillera of Peru* in the *Journal pour rire* read, "Why does this Inhabitant hold a moneybox? Doubtless to indicate how much his country is rich in cash. That much is true; but, for painting, *ce n'est pas le Pérou*" (fig. 6).<sup>35</sup>

"Ce n'est pas le Pérou" is an old French expression of disillusionment that evokes the riches for which Peru was famous and that had excited the European imagination since the conquest.<sup>36</sup> By using this exclamation, Bertall placed Laso's failure precisely in the context of the expectations of difference. Laso's painting lacked an "authentic" language, one that could be perceived as unique to Peru. Yet as a marginal cosmopolitan, trained in the European pictorial tradition, Laso had no other, or different, language that he could use.

But Laso's pictorial language was not simply not Peruvian; more important, it was identified as French. Taxile Delord wrote, "the two Peruvians who represent modern art in the country of the Incas have found the climate of Paris more favorable than that of Lima for their paintings; they make Peruvian painting 'rue de Grenelle' and 'rue des Martyrs.'"<sup>37</sup> And Mantz insisted:

May we then traverse the ocean, and approach a virgin land where academies have not yet had the time to acclimatize. But, alas! *peine perdue*, pointless voyage! America has nothing to teach us. There is,

35. Bertall [Charles-Albert D'Arrould], "Le Salon dépeint et dessiné par Bertall," *Journal pour rire*, n.s., 25 Aug. 1855, caricature no. 11720.

36. Bertall's reference to Peru's riches simultaneously evokes the economic boom the country experienced during the mid-nineteenth century as a result of guano exports. Peru had a world monopoly of this natural fertilizer; France, along with England, was an important market for this product.

37. Taxile Delord, "III: Exposition des Beaux-Arts—L'École Espagnole," *Le Charivari*, 2 July 1855, n.p. The critic refers here to the addresses of the two Peruvian painters as given in the exhibition catalogue. Virtually the same criticism of the Peruvian artists was expressed by Delécluze: "il est bien difficile de démêler ce qu'il y a de péruvien et d'euro-péen dans les productions des deux artistes du Nouveau-Monde" ("it is quite difficult to distinguish between what is Peruvian and European in the productions of the two artists from the New World") (*BA*, p. 146). Another critic was even more pointed:

Quant aux États-Unis, au Pérou et à la Suède, au Danemarck et à la Norvège, ils ont qu'une importance secondaire due à la singularité des types; et le plus souvent le nom seul de leurs oeuvres en fait toute l'originalité, car bon nombre de ces exposants exotiques sont tout simplement des habitants de la rue Bréda et des étudiants des galeries du Louvre et du Luxembourg. (As for the United States, Peru, Sweden, Denmark, and Norway, they have but a secondary importance due to the singularity of types; and more often than not only the name of their works provides originality, for

no doubt, in the small Peruvian exhibition the portrait of an *Inhabitant of the Cordillera*, a delicate and sober painting by M. Francisco Laso; but M. Laso is a young pupil of Gleyre; he obeys our methods. . . . Even further afar, in the United States, a similar scene attends us, and we have but to reassert the absence of a national painting . . . France smiles to their advantage, and many of our masters have today in the New World, if not intelligent imitators, at least warm supporters.<sup>38</sup>

Like Mantz, other critics disqualified the work of marginal cosmopolitans by noting, in passing, who their—mostly French—teachers had been. Where the style used by the marginal cosmopolitan was traceable to a French source, it could only be characterized as an illegitimate possession, as a theft. For cultural authenticity could not be borrowed; it was, in fact, nontransferable cultural property. National schools were expected to be able to generate, autonomously, distinctive styles to reflect the "genius," the "spirit," and the "character" of its people. This character could be variously established by a philosophic tendency, geographical determinants, or political traditions. Imitation was everywhere rejected. Thus, the English painters, "too proud to imitate," were acclaimed for the distinctive character of their works. Whether that national quality was agreeable to any particular critic was of secondary importance, for even if they created "ugly" works, at least it was "an ugliness of their own" (*EU*, p. 3). Imitation could only be acceptable if, as in the case of the Flemish painters, it involved copying the style of an older national tradition. As Lou-dun asserted, "the poor are those who borrow" (*EU*, p. 7).

Since the means of representation used by the marginal cosmopolitans were perceived to have been taken from others, it could not serve to establish the national difference that the critics sought. Subject matter, as we have seen, was where this difference came to be located, and artists were expected to depict the distinctive scenes and images of their nation. It is not surprising that Delécluze should have succinctly defined the "derivative" nations as "picturesque schools," as nations that could only achieve difference through the presentation of anecdotal customs and characteristic scenes (*BA*, pp. 195, 194). Nature, and not painting, became the prime marker of difference. Cordero's large religious painting *The Adulterous Woman* was thus dismissed on the grounds that he had failed to represent the Mexican nation. No great effort was expended on arguing against the painting on purely pictorial terms; it was quite enough to state that he was not "Mexican," that he was not an authentic

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a good number of these exotic exhibitors are quite simply inhabitants of the rue Bréda and students of the galleries of the Louvre and the Luxembourg.) [Claudius Lavergne, *Exposition universelle de 1855: Beaux-Arts* (Paris, 1855), p. 8]

38. Mantz, "Salon de 1855: IV—Italie—Espagne—Amérique," *La Revue française* 2 (1855): 168.

1621



GABINET DU MEDECIN

11720

**Habitant des Cordilières du Pérou, par Francisco Laso.**

Pourquoi cet habitant porte-t-il une tirelire! C'est sans doute pour indiquer combien sa patrie est riche en numéraire. Ceci est vrai; mais, pour la peinture, ce n'est pas le Pérou.

FIG. 6.—Bertall [Charles-Albert D'Arnould], "Inhabitant of the Cordillera of Peru, by Francisco Laso." From *Journal pour rire*, n.s. (1855).

painter.<sup>39</sup> Reflecting the demands made by the French critics, Pedro Escandón, the official Mexican representative at the exhibition, criticized Cordero severely, declaring that the artist's work could pass for the product of any nationality but that it could not pass for that of an "American."<sup>40</sup> Escandón expressed his regrets that Mexico had been unable to send a painter "to represent our men and our splendid nature."<sup>41</sup>

Laso's *Inhabitant of the Cordillera of Peru* had also been turned into a sign of Peruvian nature. Any indication of the presence of the pictorial language used by the cosmopolitan artist was effectively circumvented. Critics eliminated the individual artist, passing over the cosmopolitan in order to satisfy their expectations of difference. A cosmopolitan like Laso could at best serve to transcribe, like the travel writer, the images of the nation. If his language could not be made different, it had to be ignored. The signs of Laso's presence as a painter, for example the organization of the composition or the facture of the paint, were simply invisible to the French critics. The dichotomy thus established between the subjects represented in the painting and the forms of representation used in their depiction later became a staple in discussions of Latin American art. In fact, it has also marked the critical fortune of Laso's works in Peruvian art history. Thus, while admiring the artist's interest in the representation of local subjects, Peruvian art critics have decried Laso's use of a "European technique" as proof of his cultural alienation, indeed of his failure to produce a national painting.<sup>42</sup>

Thus the marginal cosmopolitan could serve, at most, as an intermediary between European viewers and the authenticity of the nation. In 1879, the Colombian literary critic José María Torres Caicedo summed up the problem of a Latin American literature by simply stating that "our

39. For example, Delécluze wrote, "un seul ouvrage . . . est de la main d'un Mexicain, car je n'oserais affirmer qu'il ait été peint au Mexique" ("only one work . . . is by the hand of a Mexican, for I would not dare maintain that it was painted in Mexico") (*BA*, p. 134). Lavergne wrote, "encore est-ce là un Mexicain bien authentique? Nous n'oserions l'affirmer" ("still, is this a truly authentic Mexican? We would not dare assert it") (Lavergne, *Exposition Universelle de 1855*, p. 43).

40. "Puede pasar el Sr. Cordero por un pintor italiano, alemán ú otro, pero no español ni americano" ("Mr. Cordero may pass for an Italian painter, a German or any other, but not for a Spaniard or an American") (Escandón, *La industria y las bellas artes en la Exposición Universal de 1855*, p. 155).

41. *Ibid.*, p. 157.

42. For example, the painter José Sabogal characterized Laso as a "European" painter (José Sabogal Dieguez, *Obras literarias completas*, ed. Ignacio Prado Pastor [Lima, 1989], p. 403). For Sebastián Salazar Bondy, Laso "learned well the technique of European art and tried to find in subject matter a characteristic style [*un estilo propio*], as is demonstrated in his *Saint Rose of Lima*, without, however, attaining his aim" (Sebastián Salazar Bondy, "La pintura peruana contemporánea," *Una voz libre en el caos: Ensayo y crítica de arte* [Lima, 1990], p. 45). See also his discussion of Laso in "Los que intentan vencer el complejo," where he discusses Laso's "European technique" as a major obstacle in the achievement of a national painting (Bondy, "Los que intentan vencer el complejo," *Una voz libre en el caos*, p. 263).

literature is original with respect to the description of objects, imitative in all the rest."<sup>43</sup> Effectively internalized, this definition pushed Latin American countries to place emphasis on the ethnographic sections of later exhibitions, defining the national through the presentation of natural and archaeological specimens as metonymic fragments of the nation. In succeeding Universal Exhibitions, contemporary painting by artists from Latin America would continue to be shown in the buildings devoted to the fine arts, but this would cease to be the primary space for the representation of the nation. Separate pavilions, in the ethnographic sections of the exhibitions, presented pre-Columbian artifacts and samples of natural history directly to the public. The illusion that the materials presented were "authentic" elements of a national culture depended on the idea that they offered unmediated access to the nature of those nations. Difference, the specificity of each Latin American nation, came to be framed primarily outside of contemporary artistic production.

### *Marginalizing the Cosmopolitan*

The demands for authenticity made of the Peruvian and Mexican painters had placed their works on the margins of contemporary painting, but also in a secondary position with regard to French art. The same comparative context that rejected the cosmopolitanism of the Latin American artists served simultaneously to locate France at the very center of the international artistic scene. Proof of French artistic supremacy was found primarily in the marginal cosmopolitans. For Loudun, the Universal Exhibition was

like a gallery of mirrors where one can follow all the movements of the ideas of the times; but the clearest, the most faithful and the most gripping is the French exhibition: in the works of the foreigners one finds the representation of the same ideas, but it is a pale representation, a reflection; the light comes from us. [EU, p. 11]

France was not simply a place, like Rome was at midcentury, where artists gathered in a common project of learning from past works; it was an international center that dictated style and established the trends of artistic progress. France was presented as a model and as such had to precede its imitations. This temporal priority was expressed through the biological metaphor of the ages of man but also by analogy to the pedagogic process. The development of the "secondary" national schools, and especially that of the "young" Americas, was compared to the training

43. José María Torres Caicedo, "La literatura de la América Latina" (1879), appendix C in Ardao, *América Latina y la latinidad*, p. 162.

process of the art student. Like the youthful French students of the Academy, marginal cosmopolitans learned by copying the "masters"; but these were no longer to be found in the consecrated schools of the past, available equally to all artists, but in a contemporary school, now firmly localized in a determined country, as the property of a specific people. France was superior because it was perceived as being copied or imitated by others.<sup>44</sup> France did not copy others; only others copied France.

These demands for authenticity, which had defined the criticism of the exhibition, were not equally applied. In fact, France would claim center stage for the very reason that it evaded a national classification. No critic, for example, demanded that French artists represent only French landscapes or customs. Symptomatically, critics never defined the French school by drawing on examples from the large number of contemporary regionalist painters. Nor was there a unanimous opinion on what precisely made French art "French." The victory of France in the arena of art, critics claimed, was due to the eclecticism that defined its school. This eclecticism, however, must not be confused with the painting of the *juste milieu*,<sup>45</sup> nor with a benign kind of cultural relativism in art criticism. Eclecticism, furthermore, did not have exactly the same implications in the context of French affairs as it did in an international context.<sup>46</sup> French artistic hegemony was defined in clearly expansionist terms. For Loudun, the "capital fact" of the exhibition was that while

all nations represent their own genius . . . only one nation has a general character, France. She is not confined within her borders . . . she does not represent the citizen of this or that country, she represents man. Thus the other nations are only confined within themselves; their action expires within their frontiers. [EU, p. 10]

France now became a model, not through the abdication of all difference, but because it could assimilate all difference. In his review of the

44. In classical academic theory, copying and imitation had been largely synonymous terms. Copying was a standard teaching procedure in the visual arts but one that was perceived as allowing for significant personal difference, which left a margin for the expression of a student's creativity. Within the discourse of originality, however, copying was devalued and was no longer associated with creative potential. See Richard Shiff's rich discussion of the usage of these terms in nineteenth-century art theory in his "The Original, the Imitation, the Copy, and the Spontaneous Classic: Theory and Painting in Nineteenth-Century France," in *The Anxiety of Anticipation*, ed. Sima Godfrey, special issue of *Yale French Studies*, no. 66 (1984): 27-54, esp. p. 28.

45. As Albert Boime does in his *Thomas Couture and the Eclectic Vision* (New Haven, Conn., 1980). See Charles Rosen and Henri Zerner, "The *Juste Milieu* and Thomas Couture," review of Boime, *Thomas Couture and the Eclectic Vision*, in *Romanticism and Realism: The Mythology of Nineteenth-Century Art* (New York, 1984), pp. 111-29.

46. Patricia Mainardi has summarized the French critics' conclusion by stating that "eclecticism led to universality, and universality led to superiority" (Mainardi, *Art and Politics of the Second Empire*, p. 70). Eclecticism alone, however, did not establish French superiority.

exhibition, Baudelaire, borrowing Hegel's metaphor of Spirit as a light born in the Orient, culminating in the West, concluded that "it is true that France, by reason of her central position in the civilized world, seems to be summoned to gather to herself all the ideas, all the poetic products of her neighbours and to return them to other peoples, marvellously worked upon and embroidered."<sup>47</sup> For Baudelaire, as for most of the French critics at the exhibition, the emphasis in painting now lay in the process of elaboration of a reality, the ability to give it form. For Maxime Du Camp, France maintained "a certain superiority of facture," and other critics repeatedly emphasized France's supremacy in style and execution, that is, in the formal aspects of painting.<sup>48</sup> Mantz, who had complained about the increasing homogeneity of international artistic production, saw the solution to the emerging chaos not in "an abdication of all originalities" but through "unity in merit, but not in the manner . . . identity of efforts, but not in facture" ("S," p. 608). The means of representation, the style, now determined the value of art. The "secondary" schools were thus marginalized through this new standard of value, for it was their "borrowed language" that had been criticized.

In valuing the means of representation, the expression of the individual artist was simultaneously privileged. Increasingly perceived as the mediator between nature and representation, the individual artist came to acquire a previously unknown importance in artistic discourse.<sup>49</sup> Critics discussed the French school on the basis of their readings of contemporary French "masters," usually Ingres and Delacroix, whose individual retrospectives within the French exhibition formed one of its central attractions. Conversely, the emphasis on the subject of painting as the source of originality in the "secondary" schools effectively served to eliminate the creative potential of the individual artist. The works of the marginal cosmopolitan had been read as unmediated presentations of foreign lands and, as a consequence, the individual painters had inevitably been made to disappear.

The manner in which cosmopolitanism was rejected and demands for difference were deployed had effectively helped to support a new hi-

47. Baudelaire, "The Exposition Universelle 1855," p. 127; "Exposition Universelle 1855," p. 220. For Hegel's discussion, see G. W. F. Hegel, "Introduction: Reason in History," *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge, 1975), esp. pp. 196–97.

48. Maxime Du Camp, *Les Beaux-Arts à l'Exposition Universelle de 1855: Peinture—Sculpture* (Paris, 1855), p. 397. This emphasis on *métier* gained a particular relevance in the opposition between a "philosophic" painting of ideas said to characterize German art and the more "materialistic" French art. See Esner, "Regards français sur la peinture allemande à l'Exposition Universelle de 1855," esp. pp. 105–10.

49. See Shiff, "The Original, the Imitation, the Copy, and the Spontaneous Classic," pp. 28, 35–38. In a less convincing fashion, Mainardi has analyzed the manner in which the Universal Exhibitions of the Second Empire helped to articulate the modern concept of art as individual expression. See Mainardi, *Art and Politics of the Second Empire*, esp. pp. 65, 196.

erarchy of pictorial production. The creation of “secondary” schools was destined to stop a threatening movement, for the presence of the marginal cosmopolitan created an important tension within the discourses of the exhibition. Latin American cosmopolitan painting, for example, as a lesser or secondary manifestation of French painting, could possibly come to compete with the French masters on their own terms. The biological metaphor for culture that could proclaim the Italian school in a state of decadence and relegate the “young” Americas to success only in a constantly deferred future presented France with a persistent threat: the possibility that the French school could also fall into decay and lose its privileged position in the present. A temporal priority thus became, at this early stage, the necessary precondition for international artistic superiority. For even if the very presence of the “young” Americas could make Europe anxious, the marginal cosmopolitan, delayed in the periphery and in the timeless essence of the nation, could not very well dictate representation for a changing world. The notion of an *avant-garde* now acquired a very particular inflection. In the conclusion to his review of the exhibition, Mantz characterized France’s superiority by claiming its precedence, its temporal priority over other schools. “It is not necessary for those who march the first to slacken their pace,” he concluded. “What is needed is for those peoples falling behind to hasten and strive to catch up with the *avant-garde*” (“S,” p. 608).

The criticism of the exhibition thus inaugurated a new geographic and temporal hierarchy based on a double standard of value. Whereas in the foreign schools this value was based on the degree to which the painter realized an “authentic” national ideal, for the French painters value could be framed only by evading the discourse of authenticity. The arguments through which French superiority was framed were applied, inversely, to define the marginality of the foreign cosmopolitans. The elements selected to define French superiority in the fine arts—a temporal priority, the emphasis on the individual artist and on expression, and the privileging of form over content—are, through no small coincidence, the very elements that were emerging to define a discourse of artistic modernism. But the discourse of authenticity demanded that the artist express a collectivity and not himself, it valued content over form, and it required that artists paint an unchanging essence, a national “core.” By not allowing foreign artists to trespass the border, by fixing them within the confines of the nation, by forcing them to represent its essence, they simultaneously placed them outside of the discourse of modernism.

Over the last decade, an unprecedented number of art exhibitions have been held in the United States and Europe that claim to represent the art of Latin America. In order to explain this phenomenon some have ventured into the vagaries of international politics, others to the fluctuations of the art market, and still others to the growing presence of

immigrants from Central and South America in metropolitan centers. The celebrations of the quincentenary of Columbus's "encounter" with the New World also launched more than one exhibition, including the show organized by the Museum of Modern Art in the summer of 1993 in New York, Paris, and Seville. Yet everyone would agree that the current debates on multiculturalism have served to open the doors of the international art scene to an artistic production that had previously been largely marginalized.<sup>50</sup> When Latin American art is incorporated into the practice of multiculturalism it comes to be represented, almost inevitably, as an "other" culture. And to the extent that these were exhibitions of the fine arts that showed works created mostly by cosmopolitan artists living and working in metropolitan centers, the "otherness" of these artists is open to question.

Global hegemony, instant communication, postmodernism, and late capitalism—all largely characterized around the issues of transnational cultures—are said to represent a new or different moment for cultural production. But, as we have seen, modernism too was forged in a moment of European cultural expansion and an increasingly international sphere of communication. Then, as now, the figure of the "other" and demands for difference emerge as powerful counterforces to the processes perceived to be at work in the eradication of heterogeneity. Sameness continues to be perceived as a threat. The current moment of pluralism thus engages the many figures of radical otherness with little anxiety; yet it too finds difficulty in accommodating the cosmopolitan. Multiculturalism frames cosmopolitans as others; postmodernism celebrates them precisely for being derivative.<sup>51</sup> Some values may have changed, but the categories through which the art of the marginal cosmopolitan is explained remain in place. The marginal cosmopolitans, figures not of otherness but of absolute sameness, continue to be kept at bay, and thus remain unacknowledged.

50. See especially Ramírez, "Beyond 'the Fantastic.'"

51. For the place of Latin America in postmodern theory, see Nelly Richard, "Postmodern Disalignments and Realignment of the Center/Periphery," *Art Journal* 51 (Winter 1992): 57–59. See also *The Postmodernism Debate in Latin America*, trans. Michael Aronna, ed. John Beverley and José Oviedo, special issue of *Boundary 2* 20 (Fall 1993). George Yúdice is among the most critical and questioning of the authors who have engaged the issue of Latin America's relationship to postmodernism. See especially his "Postmodernity and Transnational Capitalism in Latin America," in *On Edge: The Crisis of Contemporary Latin American Culture*, ed. Yúdice, Jean Franco, and Juan Flores (Minneapolis, 1992), pp. 1–28.

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- Page 1 of 1 -



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### [Footnotes]

<sup>4</sup> **Beyond "The Fantastic": Framing Identity in U. S. Exhibitions of Latin American Art**

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<sup>51</sup> **Postmodern Disalignments and Realignment of the Center/Periphery**

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