**Beyond imagined communities: reading and writing the nation in
19th-century Latin America**

Sara Castro-Klarén and John Charles Chasteen (editors); The John Hopkins University Press, 2003, Baltimore and London; £17.00, ISBN: 0-8018-7853-5 (Pbk)

Dreams and realities: selected fiction of Juana Manuela Gorriti

Juana Manuela Gorriti, Francine Masiello (editor) and Sergio Waisman (translator); Oxford University Press, 2003, New York; £11.99, ISBN: 0-19-511738-7 (Pbk)

Beyond Imagined Communities is a collection of essays written by Latin Americanist historians and literary scholars looking at the mechanisms by which individual Latin American national identities emerged from the empires of Spain and Portugal. The common source is the chapter on Latin American nationalism, 'Creole Pioneers', in Benedict Anderson's ubiquitous book on national consciousness *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, New York, Verso, 1983, 2nd edition, 1991), which posits colonial administrative territories and the colonial periodical press as having been central to forming 'emotionally plausible and politically viable' future nations. The authors regard Anderson's model for Latin American nation building as historically unfounded but still a useful starting point for wider discussion. They contend that nationalist processes came into play after Independence (rather than in colonial times) in order to consolidate political legitimacy. They show the processes to be much more complex than testified by Anderson. The collection focuses on other influencing factors to contest Anderson's overly neat thesis from a number of different perspectives, discussing diverse and overlapping factors in the development of national consciousness, such as 'ethnic complexity', provincial and political identities, sociability, pedagogy, patriotic literature and myth-making, archaeology and the evocation of the pre-Colombian past, and the building of monuments and civil works. *Beyond Imagined Communities* does not, however, attempt to tie these threads into a cohesive alternative construction of Latin American nation-building.

This collection will be of use to those interested in the construction of national identity and identity politics. For consideration of gender and its intersections with culture and nationalism, readers are directed towards chapter 3 by historian Sarah C. Chambers, author of *From Subjects to Citizens: Honour, Gender, and Politics in Arequipa, Peru, 1780–1854*, [University Park, PA, Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999] Here, in 'Letters and Salons: Women Reading and Writing the Nation' Chambers states: 'Female sociability [...] was a cornerstone in the construction of national communities in Latin America'. She looks at the unpublished writing (letters) and social lives of three women, Manuela Sáenz (Simón Bolívar's mistress), Mariquita Sánchez and Carmen Arriagada, all of whom hosted literary salons, and analyses how they imagined their communities and

nations, and their role as women within them. Chambers also examines the effects of exile and political disaffection on these women's sense of national identity. She criticizes Anderson's reliance on the traditional notion of the public sphere which ignores the means by which women of the Independence period identified themselves with national communities, drawing attention to the 'intermediary social spaces between the public and domestic spheres' (p.56). By looking at women, disregarded (as are all subaltern groups) by the Anderson model of the formation of national identity, Chambers thereby points up its limitations. National identity cannot be accounted for purely by territory and newspapers; face-to-face social relations were equally formative. Friends and family, salons, societies and charitable organizations formed less abstract loyalties and networks. In addition, Chamber's vivid descriptions of these women and their many activities and intellectual interests call into question the inactive domestic stereotype of Creole elite women of the 19th century. Thus, she challenges histories such as Anderson's, which look solely for elite sites of male political and cultural power in which only men can shape events and exert influence.

A prominent figure in the post-Independence intellectual scene in Latin America was the hostess of literary salons, teacher, journalist and prolific writer, Juana Manuela Gorriti (1818–1892), who helped shape the national cultures of both her native Argentina and Peru, her country of exile. A celebrated Romantic writer in Argentine literature, *Dreams and Realities* is the first English edition of her collection of short stories, first published in 1865 in Buenos Aires. Gorriti's first published short story, 'La Quena' (the Indian flute), which appeared in the newspaper *La Revista de Lima* in 1845, is included. Born into the world of politics as the daughter of General José Ignacio Gorriti, an Independence hero, her family's Unitarian politics during a time of Federalist domination in Argentina caused its financial ruin and exile in 1831. A colourful character in her private life, she was married and separated from Manuel Isidoro Belzú (later president of Bolivia), had children in and out of wedlock, and travelled extensively.

Gorriti's stories are concerned with memory and history, themes both fashionable and important in today's political landscape. Women protagonists survey a landscape of war, fratricidal political strife, troubled ethnic relationships, exile and displacement. The tone is one of melancholy, and lovers are always ill-fated. Heroines are rarely passive, but unflaggingly virtuous while abuse and betrayal are gendered male. Here hallmarks of Romantic fiction take on Latin American characteristics: secret passages lead to hidden Inca gold, women disguise themselves in men's gaucho garb, indigenous children are abducted by bandits and journeys are made across the Andes. Francine Masiello's introduction situates Gorriti in the context of other 19th-century Argentine women writers such as Juana Manso and Eduarda Mansilla, and provides biographical and thematic information, with special attention to the theme of national memory. The edition provides useful footnotes which explain many fascinating historical, cultural, geographical

and linguistic references. A criticism must be made, however, of the unfortunate editorial decision to use modern-day US expressions such as 'mom', and 'cute', which jar in 19th-century Latin American narrative fiction.

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references

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Church and state education in revolutionary Mexico City

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Many people wanted to change the world in 1920s post-revolutionary Mexico. Supporters and opponents of the Revolution alike held up visions of an ideal nation and set about earnestly to create it. Both saw education as the lever to move the mountain. What is new and important about this book is that it is the first to take on the task of examining three complicating issues to understanding early post-revolutionary education in Mexico. First, how divergent were the educational methods and goals of ostensibly opposing church and state political camps? Second, how much of what was printed in the official curricula of either was implemented in the classroom? Third, given that the overwhelming majority of teachers, volunteers, and (at least among adults) the students, were female, what was the role of gender?

In order to answer these questions, Schell examines the federal state schools but she also looks at municipal and, importantly, Catholic education. She contrasts their curricula and goes on to distinguish between these printed blueprints and what was really going on in the classroom. She examines primary education, but also vocational and adult schools, and extra-curricular educational initiatives sponsored both by the government and the Catholic Church. Finally, she never assumes that a single standard was applied to both sexes, whether they were teachers, children or adult learners. The study is necessarily limited, covering only the first decade after the Revolution and the capital city. Even so, it is the only work of its kind and as such is extremely useful to anyone interested in post-revolutionary Mexico, issues relating to state-building, church–state relations, or Latin American women's history.

Chapter One gives a quick tour of the relevant historical background. The revolutionary goal of using education to achieve a patriotic, industrious, hygienic