7 Nationality and the "Indian" Novels of José de Alencar

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Cooper's Leather-stocking series was read most attentively and fruitfully not in Europe but in other parts of the Americas, where a collection of Spanish colonies and the single Portuguese one were pupating into nations and, like the United States, creating national literatures. They too, looking for autochthonous subjects, found the opulent scenery and the original inhabitants sanctioned by the European discourse of the exotic and began to fashion from them a way of representing a non-European identity. Cooper showed that it could be done and was admired for it.¹ His works were aligned with European examples of how to use exotic materials and seen as patterns for adapting a discourse of the exotic to the production of an American literature of nationality.

The Cooper with whom other American literatures of nationality established an intertextual relationship was strictly the creator of the Leather-stocking. Neither his sea novels nor those in which he conducts an acerbic argument with his contemporaries were taken as models. Certainly the choice in Notions of the Americans to assert national identity by opposing exoticism, its assumption that the power relation on which

¹ According to Doris Sommer Cooper's "Latin-American heirs . . . reread and rewrote him" (Foundational Fictions, p. 52). The Argentinian Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, indeed, "copied" Cooper (p. 65).
the exotic rests can be renegotiated through a shortcut that avoids it, does not enter the repertoire of these other literatures of nationality. The material these literatures do absorb, moreover, is organized differently from the Leather-stocking series, just as The Last of the Mohicans treats cultural material differently from Les Natchez. The variety of possibilities the literatures actualize indicates at the same time their contingency and their dependence on protonational cultures already being elaborated during colonial times. Thus the "Indian" novels of the Brazilian José de Alencar illustrate a different use of the exotic from Cooper's, arising from a different polity, engaged in different internal and external power relations, and shaping a different national image.

Unlike Cooper, who for most of his life was a private, though well-known citizen, José de Alencar (1829–1877) lived as a public figure: he was a journalist, state representative, minister of justice for two years under the Brazilian emperor Pedro II, and an active participant in the public life of the new independent Brazil. As a shareholder in one of the country's first railroads (Alceu Amoroso Lima, "José de Alencar," pp. 55–56), he had a direct interest in Brazil's internal and external economic affairs, and he rounded out his participation in public life as a novelist, dramatist, polemicist, and critic, who, like Cooper, considered it a civic duty to found a recognizably Brazilian literature. Brazilian critics agree that he succeeded; regardless of how each judges Alencar's works, nearly all describe him as preeminently, primarily, radically the writer of a literature of nationality.

For example, though the series sees civilization as Christian, Natty rejects churches and religious organization, preferring the forest as the best place of worship—a far cry from Atala's defense of Jesuit colonization, the only form of social organization the novel details.

Alencar explains his motives in Como e porque sou romancista (Why and how I am a novelist) and "Bênção paterna" (A father's blessing).

See, among others, Afrânio Coutinho: "Alencar created Brazilian fiction, propelling it in the right direction, that of a search for the expression of the nationality" (A tradição afortunada, p. 99); T. A. Araripe, Jr. "The undecided novelist determined then to be Brazilian" or "Iracema is the most Brazilian of our books" (José de Alencar, pp. 18, 194); Machado de Assis: "[Iracema] is also a model for the cultivation of an American poetry that, please God, will be reinvigorated by works of such superior quality" (Review of Iracema, p. li). Fábio Freixeiro, quotes the obituary for Alencar in the Diário oficial, a publication whose main function is to record government business and activities, to the effect that he was "the first Brazilian man of letters" (Alencar, 36). Nelson Werneck Sodré links Alencar's success in his enterprise to his continuous popularity (A ideologia do colonialismo, pp. 43–59) and adds, "Alencar always intended to create a Brazilian literature, and to that end he wanted to change the process of literary composition in form and content, by choosing Brazilian motifs" (p. 53).
nation's history and geography with his novels; he wrote plays for a stage still mainly dependent on imports, he proposed to create an appropriate variant of the Portuguese language for a truly Brazilian literature, which he justifies in his “Carta ao Dr. Jaguaribe.”

For examples and justification, he looked abroad, adapting and transplanting themes and structures developed in other dramatic, novelistic, even operatic traditions by writers such as Alexandre Herculano, Chateaubriand, Cooper, Balzac, Dumas, and Rossini. Resorting to a common strategy for claiming authority, the critic Décio de Almeida Prado inserts Alencar in a literary series that extends from contemporary European works back, “in the specific case of comedy, at least as far as ancient Rome,” and he identifies him as the “perfect” author in whose work to trace “Brazilian thought concerned with urgent local problems” (p. 27). Alencar's novels do not present great literary or philosophical problems: they are an American offspring of Montaigne and Rousseau, Chateaubriand and Bernardin de Saint-Pierre. They improve on the works of “Indianists” such as Gonçalves de Magalhães and Gonçalves Dias—Alencar’s harsh criticism of Magalhães notwithstanding—and they elaborate literary ideas made popular in Brazil by the visiting French critic Ferdinand de Dénis, who, a generation before Alencar, had written that “every nation, so to speak, secretes a literature in accordance with the genius of its people” (Antônio Cândido, Formação 2:315). Prado is not looking for the direct influence of particular authors or works on Alencar, though Alencar himself called upon Plautus, Aristophanes, and Molière in defense of his choice of characters. Nevertheless, insofar as he adapted European forms to the culture around him, Alencar became the definer, chronicler, defender, and at times critic of some of the central cultural tenets of his own nation. He justified the creation of a literature of nationality by appealing to a European literary

5For a discussion of Alencar’s formulation of a national identity in works for the stage, see Flávio deAguiar, A comédia nacional.
6In the autobiographical sketch Como e porque sou romancista, Alencar says he learned French so he could read Balzac; he also read Chateaubriand (p. 30). He looked for models abroad and set himself the task of creating national equivalents.
7Specifically, he defended his choice of a slave as the central (comic) character of O demônio familiar, for which, among other things he was attacked by the abolitionist Joaquim Nabuco (see Afrânio Coutinho, ed., A polêmica Alencar-Nabuco, pp. 135, 120; quoted by Prado, “Os demônios familiares,” p. 48). Flávio Aguiar studies the role of Alencar in the creation of a Brazilian theater. Both Aguiar and Prado address Alencar's treatment of what Prado calls “the central problem of nationality,” slavery (p. 46), abolished only in 1889. It is a vast and important subject, beyond the scope of the present work.
tradition and to theories about literature as an expression of national character proposed, as we have seen, by Schlegel and other German historians and philosophers.

To a large extent Alencar followed the early romantic program, as Antônio Cândido outlines it, "the establishment of a literary genealogy, the analysis of the creative capacity of autochthonous races, and [the use of] local aspects as stimulants to the creative imagination" (*Formação* 2:317). In the series of newspaper articles in which he criticizes Magalhães's Indianist epic *Confederação dos Tamoios* (*Cartas sobre "A confederação dos Tamoios"*), Alencar develops the directives he then followed in writing the first of his "Indian" novels, *O Guarani*. He planned the novel to be more than an adventure romance along the lines of *Atala* or *The Last of the Mohicans* and assigned it the dual program of showing how one writes the true Brazilian national epic and how the new nationality differs from the European civilization where it originated and from which it received its language and ideas. According to Antônio Cândido, Alencar fulfills his purpose; he defines

the literary universe of the Brazilian writer, and classifies three families of themes, which correspond to three moments of our social evolution: the life of primitive man; the historical formation of the colony, characterized by the contact between Portuguese and Indian; contemporary society, which in turn comes under two aspects: the traditional life of rural zones and the life of the big cities, where the vivifying contact with the leading peoples of Western civilization frees us from the narrowness of our Portuguese heritage. (*Formação* 2:362)

This summary attends to the necessary implication of a literature of nationality, that it arises in relation to other, extranational cultural formations; it also marks one difference between the North American and Brazilian cases. Brazilian literature arises in a multiplicity of relations— with Portugal, a colonial power devalued itself relative to other European cultures; with those other cultures themselves, England, France, Germany; and with the United States, a postcolonial culture still under construction. These multidirectional relations coincide with, though they may not cause, a Brazilian tendency to bypass (or co-opt) dualistic oppositions one of whose terms must be eliminated. Yet this eclecticism may also be seen as an early and constitutive example of the characteristically Brazilian creation of a national cultural identity out of
a patchwork of "influences" that refuses nothing and transforms everything.\(^8\)

Meanwhile, at a time when the ability to adopt and adapt cultural forms from the metropolis was considered a sign of increasing national cultural competence, the unusual congruence between how Alencar saw himself and how he was seen by his public and most of his critics allowed him to function as a kind of cultural prism, refracting the light of his place and age. This is not an idle image, though I do not use it as those contemporaries might have wished, for the character of any given time is made up of differences and contradictions, their interaction more representative than any individual trait. The work of Alencar, like that of many writers who receive both popular and critical approval, has such incongruities.

In most of his novels and plays Alencar fictionalizes the present or the recent past of the nation, in the city or the backlands, but in the three Indian novels—*O Guarani, Iracema*, and *Ubirajara*\(^9\)—the question of nationality occupies a central position. At issue is not how the nation presents itself to itself but what constitutes its core and its difference.\(^10\) Almost inevitably, Alencar alights on what was already becoming the commonplace definition of national character—that Brazilians are the unique and fortunate combination of three races. Silviano Santiago calls the notion the "value of hybridism" ("Roteiro," p. 5), and it winds its way through any examination of national history, culture, or letters, any attempt to define a distinctive Brazilianness. Envisioning a Brazilian national literature, Alencar asks: "What can it be other than the soul of the fatherland, which migrated to this virgin soil with an illustrious race, was impregnated with the American sap of the land that sheltered...

\(^8\) Roberto Schwarz proposes such a view in "Nacional por subtração," where he urges us to look for a Brazilian culture not in what remains after subtracting what is not "original" (especially considering the destabilization of that concept by Derrida or Foucault, whose ideas are also imports to Brazil) but in the relationship it establishes among the elements that constitute it.

\(^9\) Critics have disputed the classification of Alencar's novels. Wilson Martins prefers to see *O Guarani* classed with the historical works rather than with *Iracema* and *Ubirajara*, the Indianist ones (*História da inteligência brasileira*, 3:65). I agree with Martins that *O Guarani* is a "novel of nationality" (3:60), but I group it with those that have Amerindian protagonists (calling it Indian rather than Indianist), for all three address the question of national character and foreground history, endogamy/exogamy, and the relation between story and book, oral and written.

\(^10\) David Haberly says that Alencar's "Indianism was simply a logical and effective strategy in the struggle to create a meaningful and complete national history, to establish a consciousness of national separateness and worth, and to defend that new identity against powerful cultural pressures from abroad" (*Three Sad Races*, pp. 32–33).
it, and becomes richer by the day as it makes contact with other peoples and suffers the influx of civilization?" ("Bênção paterna," p. 697). The idea appears in literary criticism as well as in literature: in the section on romanticism of his História da literatura brasileira, Silvio Romero explains that the purely white Brazilian, an ever rarer phenomenon, would be hard to tell from his or her European ancestor; to preserve the distinction from that ancestor, "it is indispensable to agree that the type, the perfect incarnation of the genuinely Brazilian person, as produced by biological and historical selection is, for the time being, in the vast class of mestizos of all kinds, in the immense variety of their colors" (p. 214). The notion informs the work of Gilberto Freyre, whose success at home and abroad indicates the acceptability, if not the truth, of his formulation: "There arose in tropical America a society whose structure was agrarian, whose economic development was based on slavery, and whose population was a hybrid of white and Indian at first, with the subsequent adjuncture of Negroes." He traces this tendency toward the interpenetration of populations back to the Portuguese, "an undefined people, between Europe and Africa" (Casa grande e senzala 1:5, 6). Thus the difference between Brazilian and European lies in a similarity between Brazilians and one kind of European, and the discontinuity of American history is continuous with a sector of European history; it is as if differences, like color, exist only in the form of gradation. Like Romero, he concludes that "every Brazilian, even the whitest, blondest, has in his soul and in his body . . . the shadow, or at least the hint of Indian or Negro."

It is necessary to stress for a North American culture that has been placing ever greater value on the distinctions between populations of different origins (or "ethnicities") that these remarks by Freyre, Romero, and scores of others are neither derogatory nor exculpatory. Just as practice is often at odds with national ideals of justice and equality for all in the United States, however, a national ideology that makes every Brazilian embody the harmonious conjunction of all human races does not necessarily guarantee social, political, or economic equality and harmony. The dicta of Romero and Freyre, statements of both essence

11 The figure is not quite coherent, but it is unusual: the land is virgin, as one can by now expect, but it is the European soul that is "impregnated."

12 See Freyre, 2:395. This view of Brazil is current outside the country as well. Pereira mentions almost two decades' worth of UNESCO-sponsored studies of "our inter-ethnic experiences" (Cór, profissão e mobiliade, p. 17).

13 Pereira's study, for instance, documents racial discrimination even in one of the most "open" fields of activity, radio broadcasting. In general, the view of Brazilian
and value, say what Brazilians like to think about themselves and what they see as good about themselves. The belief in the positive value of hybridism, implying a distaste for definite distinctions and a search for the harmonious combination of heterogeneous elements, constitutes one of the great arguments in the literature of and about Brazil. The vicissitudes of the belief create tensions in literature and thought, and its setbacks are viewed with sadness, as evidence that it is difficult to achieve ideals in an imperfect world, or viewed with indignation, but not seen as a reason to abandon the ideal. Similarly, in North American literature, liberty, and individuality remain ideals that determine action and ground judgment no matter how often they are defeated. The great image of Ahab tied to the whale or of Jim tied up at the Phelpses warn against oversimplification or self-satisfaction but do not convey despair.

As Alencar went about translating into literature the gamut of Brazilian life, earning the epithet "our little Balzac" from Antônio Cândido, society as racially harmonious is under challenge by sociologists, historians such as Emilia Viotti da Costa, and literary critics such as Robert Schwarz or Flávio Aguiar. Many point out the harm done to the Brazilian polity not only by the institution of slavery but also by the consistent masking of its debilitating effect on Brazilian culture and economy. The record of the actual relations between settlers and original inhabitants shows, as it does in the rest of the Americas, the destruction of autochthonous cultures. There has recently been a spate of studies on cultural contact in Brazil, with particular emphasis on the African contribution, much of it implicitly or explicitly opposing the ideology of racial harmony with the facts of African slavery and the enslavement or purposeful destruction of Amerindian populations. But even the most indignant studies often end up documenting not only the common brutality of conquest and slavery but also the difference of the Brazilian experience, particularly in the extent to which non-European elements have been integrated into a general Brazilian culture. A good sample of such studies appears in the essays of Escravidão e invenção da liberdade, edited by João Reis, which deals with the history and presence of Africa in the state of Bahia. But one should also heed warnings about an equation between mixing populations and mixing cultures: as Rodolfo Stavenhagen maintains in "Siete tesis equivocados sobre América Latina," the wide distribution of cultural traits from different populations within American nations does not necessarily entail either harmonious or equitable relations between their representatives. As for relations between Portuguese and Indian in Brazil, it is, in effect, an unusual legal feature that the marquis of Pombal granted "special benefits . . . to white settlers marrying Amerindians." See A. J. R. Russell-Wood, "Preconditions and Precipitants," p. 9. Russell-Wood also states that "miscegenation became a characteristic in the evolution of Brazilian society" but notes the difference between policies toward Indians and those toward the population of African origin, barred from official positions by "purity of blood" regulations (p. 11).

14 Antônio Cândido, Formação, 2:229. See also José Montello, "Uma influência de Balzac." Haberly, referring to Alencar's own assessment (in José de Alencar, Romances ilustrados, pp. 165–67), notes that "during the last years of his life, Alencar wanted to believe that he had set out from the very beginning to create the Brazilian novel, working in four subgenres: the aboriginal novel, the historical novel, the novel of urban life, and the novel of rural life" (Three Sad Races, p. 35).
he wrote not only about how his country explained itself to itself but also how it contradicted this self-view in enunciation or in practice. Discussing Alencar’s urban novels, Roberto Schwarz observes that Brazilian literature displays a certain characteristic incoherence, a discontinuity between thought and plot, a lack of cohesion that results when writers try to incorporate the latest ideological trends of the more powerful and more developed nations into national literary works and social and political analyses, twisting and bending national reality. Writers influenced from abroad either radically misread the national situation or, Schwarz sees it, develop an almost inevitable critique of foreign ideas. Thus, for instance, Brazilian literature came to present European liberalism as one among several possible stances toward reality rather than, following the European view, as the most correct way of interpreting the world and organizing empirical data. In Europe liberalism concealed the conditions of burgeoning capitalism, but in Brazil, where the economy depended on slavery and work could not therefore represent an ethic, liberalism did not conceal a thing; it did not address an existing situation but simply became an idea to dress the fashionable. 15

Schwarz’s account turns an incongruity into an advantage. 16 The radical criticism of Western ideologies entailed in their misapplication turns into farce the tenets that gave European romanticism and realism their high seriousness. Similarly, Augusto Meyer notes another discontinuity of the inevitable “existential” stance of Brazilian literature in general, Alencar’s in particular, which arises from the realization of the tenuousness of all efforts, including the literary to recover the vast emptiness of the nation with words and fictions (A chave e a máscara, pp. 45–58). For Meyer, something like Schwarz’s necessary incoherence is a necessary estrangement: like Iracema in Alencar’s eponymous novel, all Brazilians are strangers in their own country—the Indians made so by contact with the Europeans, the Europeans and Africans made so by contact with the land. Antônio Cândido, dealing with the same phenomenon, observes the development of a “literature of roguery” (“Dialética da malandragem”) defined by discontinuity in characterization, in which a “realistic” set of familiar secondary characters is peculiarly at odds

15 See Roberto Schwarz, Ao vencedor as batatas, esp. chap. 1, “As ideias fora do lugar” (Ideas out of their places), pp. 13–28. He specifically mentions the ideas contained in the Declaration of the Rights of Man, transcribed into the 1824 Brazilian Constitution (p. 14).

16 In “nacional por subtração,” Roberto Schwarz notes the advantage of this reasoning for nationalistic psychology and pushes beyond it. In the end America stands again as a redeeming criticism of Europe.
with the more modern, "realistic" protagonists of nineteenth-century novels, who appear ridiculous and out of place as they wrestle with the problems that give their European counterparts the look and feel of real life.\textsuperscript{17} Thus while changing some of the traditional value judgments about Alencar's work, and recontextualizing some of its thematic material, the newer Alencar criticism aligns itself with the old in considering his works an accurate expression of Brazilian reality, if only because incongruities within and outside the text appear in such close correspondence. The incongruity hypothesis of this newer criticism also gives an unexpected twist to the old argument about how much an American literature of national definition owes to foreign formal and thematic models. The hypothesis makes it possible to accept the power of European cultural forms in the creation of a national literature while denying the subjection of the latter to the former, casting doubt not on the power itself but on its effectiveness. Accepted, the dominant discourse proves inadequate, and its inadequacy in turn sanctions a national discourse. In fact, this sanction applies to the point of greatest threat to cultural independence, namely, to the difficulty of transforming the awkward "copy" into another "original." The exotic can then become an instrument of appropriation while declaring its independence from a defining external discourse.

This argument for appropriation could also be made about Alencar's Indian novels, where the novelist toils not in Balzac's but in Chateaubriand's fields, where he deals with the past and not with the contemporary urban scene on which Schwarz bases his analysis. There Alencar creates myths of national origin. Cooper foregrounds the occupation of the land, the clearing of forests and building of towns, the relation between the natural world and that of culture, and his most memorable character functions first in his capacity as "scout" on the borderlands between the two. Alencar, however, foregrounds the relation between populations, addressing the problems of hybridism, not of separation. In that choice, he reverses both Cooper and Chateaubriand, introducing an incongruence in the logic of their fictions at the precise point where they affirm the ultimate victory of the European and the impossibility of compromise. Recounting the first phase of colonization—when Portuguese scouts took Indian women and established relations with their tribes, persuading some to settle around the new forts and trading

\textsuperscript{17}Schwarz, in \textit{Ao vencedor}, chap. 2, builds on Antônio Cândido's analysis in \textit{Formação}, 2:218–32.
posts to help defend them against French and Dutch incursions—
Alencar links it with the European view of the unspoiled inhabitant of
the New World as a hope for redemption of a cruel and decadent
civilization. 18

When he addresses the second phase of the history of white-
Amerindian contact, the implications of his treatment veer away from
those of his models. In the second phase the Portuguese began to settle
into farming communities, enslaving the original inhabitants of the land
and killing them when they resisted. 19 The Amerindians died in captiv-
ity, refused to work, and fled into the dense, distant forests. Later,
at least in settled parts of the newly independent nation, where few
Amerindians were left, the stresses of contact were attenuated. It was
possible to take Amerindians for heroes of nationality: their refusal of
slavery became a prefiguration of independence. It was as if they too
had signed with their blood and sealed with countless bodies the “Inde-
pendence or Death!” the first emperor, Dom Pedro I, is supposed to
have shouted as he declared an end to the ties linking Brazil and Portu-
gal. 20 Historical events thus reinforce the literary tradition but also trou-
ble it, for they couple with death the heroism that should bring the
new nation and its people to life, and they make responsible for that
death those who should have been redeemed in the new nation.

With European ideas and Brazilian historical facts Alencar’s Indian

18 Freyre speaks of Portuguese “use of native populations, especially women, not only
for work but also as an element in the constitution of families” (1:23). The “taking”
of Amerindian women and the “persuasion” of tribes were mostly but not always
forceful; there are reports of women who allied themselves with the settlers of their
own volition or to signify their tribe’s alliance, and since certain tribes were tradition-
ally inimical to others, they could make common cause with the other’s enemy. Con-
versely, every Brazilian schoolchild learns about João Ramalho and other pioneers
who went to live with Indian tribes, became prominent among them, and facilitated
contact between them and later settlers. Pedro Calmon documents the story of Mar-
tim Soares Moreno, the historical settler who appears as the hero of Alencar’s Tracema
and who was caught by a Portuguese expedition, together with the Indians Poti and
Jacauna, and not immediately recognized as being non-Indian since he was “naked
and painted like them” (História do Brasil, 2:36).

19 This was not, of course, the only way in which Amerindians were approached, but
the Jesuits’ attempt to settle them into autonomous agricultural communities did not
play a significant role in the literature of nationality, which concentrated on the
secular aspects of colonization.

20 Cavalcanti Proença writes in José de Alencar: “There is no point in asking . . . why
Indians never became slaves . . . they fled, died, rebelled, or were incompetent
slaves . . . The nationalist spirit saw in this only the love of liberty and an example
that it took to heart when it severed ties with the metropolis, making it into a lesson
and into the heritage of the native land” (p. 50).
novels help define and strengthen a national ideology of identity and value. His assertion that this new and valuable Brazilian identity is a composite of European and Amerindian is accepted. His Indian protagonists still give their names to newborn citizens, and *Iracema* has gone through more than one hundred editions in the first hundred years since its publication. But as it develops, the idea of a heroic nation formed by a great but decadent European people revitalized by American purity becomes less clear and simple. It has to incorporate the violence against the land and the rejection of the real Amerindian, and it has to make itself readable in a world that does not automatically see as good the harmonious blending of heterogeneous elements. Each of the three novels under discussion centers on the beneficial marriage of different nations, but the conditions for these unions and their unhappy consequences deny the overt message that the merging is possible or desirable. The dream of virtue and differentiation from Europe in Alencar's novels becomes fuzzy under scrutiny. This fuzziness gives some of the incongruity Schwarz notices in the urban novels even to his Indian novels, and their use of historical and social data makes them less a veil over nothing than a complex record of the interaction between a mythical and a historical definition of a nation.

Like histories, Alencar's Indian novels tell myths of origin. As in the Leather-stocking series, their order of composition is at odds with their chronological order, as Santiago mentions, though he ascribes the non-chronological composition to Alencar's increasing knowledge about Indian life, language, and customs ("Roteiro," p. 5). *Guarani*, first published as a serial in 1857, is set at the beginning of the seventeenth century, when towns were beginning to grow and whole families, rather

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21 Plínio Doyle, "Pequena bibliographia de *Iracema*." Freyre reprints a drawing of "A Fonseca Galvão, whose father, out of nativism, changed the family name to Cara­peba" (1:cxiii). Proença, illustrating both Alencar's popularity and the common resort to Indian associations to signify identification with the land, mentions a list of daughters of immigrants called, for instance, Ingeborg Iracema Rann, Iracema Mueller, Iracema Jaeger, etc. (see "Transformar-se o amador na coisa amada," p. 238). A well-known São Paulo family of German origin called itself Muller Carioba, the Indian word Carioba signaling their commitment to the land of immigration and their desire for acceptance.

22 "To regenerate is the destiny of America within the destinies of humanity," said José de Alencar (quoted by Proença in *José de Alencar*, p. 42).

23 Some such evaluation underlies even negative assessments of Alencar's achievement: the anonymous author of "José de Alencar," in *Movimento brasileiro*, objects to Alencar's excesses but agrees that "America . . . has to continue on this path of fusion of cultures and infuse the resulting amalgam with its known new spirit." The writer concedes that Alencar's "falsified Indian becomes an ideological reality" (p. 5).
than just isolated settlers, began to establish residence in the new colony; it is an action-packed, fairly traditional romantic novel in the vein of Scott, mixing historical and fictional characters. Ubirajara, the last of the three, published in 1874, is set in the time before the arrival of the Portuguese. With its elaborate footnotes reflecting Alencar’s extensive reading about Indian customs and language, it claims factual accuracy, and conducts a running polemic against old travelers and chroniclers who, Alencar charges, misunderstood and misrepresented what they had seen; yet both its action and its characters are fictitious. Iracema, published in 1865, is set around 1603, when the Portuguese were founding the first forts and villages in what is now the state of Ceará. Substituted a “legend,” it is also a myth of place, telling how certain topographical accidents received their names—what stories give them meaning—and expressing a “Brazilianness” rooted in the land, its beasts, flowers, and voluptuous fruits, its seductive force and frailty. As in O Guarani, some of the characters of Iracema are historical, but they are better known than those of the first novel; indeed, the white settler and the Indian hero of the war against the Dutch are familiar to every schoolchild. These permutations of the historical and fictional, the variations on known literary formulas and the invention of new ones, and the backward movement in time are some of the more explicit ways Alencar deals with the disjunction between ideology and historical or social fact. These incongruities provide the tension and help guarantee the appropriateness of the three novels.

A moment’s return with new knowledge to the large armchair where Jane Tompkins read Cooper (and I read Alencar) in summers long past might bring to light an opposition between the conventional and the problematic in the two authors’ works, apparent in the difference between what memory retained and what present attention reveals. Thus, of the description of the Paquequer River which opens O Guarani, one remembers the water “leaping from waterfall to waterfall” into “a lovely basin, formed by nature . . . under curtains of lianas and wild flowers,” and “virgin forests stretched along the banks of the river, which flowed amid arches of verdure, their capitals the fans of palm trees” (p. 32). Closer attention shows, however, that what was remembered as a reference to unmodified nature actually refers continually to cultural codes that inform the work. Not only is the forest both temple and boudoir, reminiscent of Chateaubriand’s transposition of forest into architecture,

24 For a comparison of Alencar and Scott, see Araripe, pp. 46–47.
but as the river flows down the page, it is divided into three parts. At its head it is free and wild, like a coiled serpent, a running tapir, and a leaping tiger—conventional indicators of wilderness and nature, the snake recalling an ambiguously valued Eden, the tiger a generic non-European wildness to be found indifferently in India or among Indians, and only the tapir a specifically Brazilian nature. At midcourse the river is received into the lovely basin like a groom into a bridal bed canopied with lianas and wild flowers. At its mouth, where it enters the Paraíba River and comes closest to the colonial settlement of Rio de Janeiro, it is a vassal of the larger river, a “slave” who submissively suffers “the whip of its lord” (p. 31). The river runs from positively valued but nonhuman freedom to the negatively valued civilization at an outpost of the metropolitan government; from the purely natural sphere, which at least in the figures of serpent and tiger is hostile to human influence, where there is neither time nor story, to the sphere of Europe-imposed indignity, which the new nation has just escaped. At the basin is the middle ground: there a Portuguese gentleman has built his house; there Peri, the Indian, becomes a member of the household, and there he turns the bedroom of Ceci, daughter of the house, into a nest decorated with native feathers and plants, creating a space that parallels as nature-in-civilization the civilization-in-nature implied in the images of the river as groom, the basin as bed. From the very opening of the novel, Alencar prefigures the breach in the boundary between civilization and nature which in his culturally acceptable figuration defines the newness of the new land; created out of something like a chemical reaction, the new is the result of combination of heterogeneous materials. In his universe boundaries of place and even being are forever being crossed: the Paquequer leaps over the waterfall a tiger and lands in the basin a groom; Peri goes from forest to house, Ceci from house to forest when she flees with him at the end of the novel. The contact between the social order brought by the settlers and the order of nature they found gives rise to free elements that cannot be properly classified in accordance with either, which are the start of a new order.

25 Silviano Santiago, in “Liderança e hierarquia em Alencar,” calls attention to the same metamorphosis of the river but sees it as a change in relationship rather than in being. All the same, he considers the change an illustration of how Alencar engages in the task of both creating and codifying a “national consciousness” (p. 10).

26 Santiago contends that Alencar uses Indians as free elements because they are outside the hierarchical system of European origin imposed upon the new land, although one could also argue that their marginal position was unstable, threatened by enslavement, which would classify them at once at the bottom of the hierarchy; war, which would moot the question; or absorption.
But we also remember Cooper's Lake Glimmerglass, with its pristine, Edenic aura. Leather-stocking gasps when he first sees it, "so placid and limpid that it resembled a bed of the pure mountain atmosphere compressed into a setting of hills and woods." But here "bed" no more connotes culture than it would if Cooper were speaking of a bed of basalt or sedimentary rock: the simile does not take Glimmerglass out of the inanimate world. Any flights of fancy would in any case be quelled by the next sentence: "Its length was about three leagues, while its breadth was irregular, expanding to half a league," and so on through measurements and points of the compass (Deerslayer, p. 27). The description removes the lake from any metaphorical transformation, anchoring all expression indicative of feeling toward it ("sweep of the outline," "gracefully," "solemn solitude and sweet repose") to its presentation simply as an object in itself, with form, dimension, and direction. At the end of the passage, after it has delighted, within reason, the object is said to instruct: "This is grand!—'Tis solemn!—'tis an education of itself, to look upon!" the Leather-stocking exclaims (pp. 27, 28). That is, 'tis a teaching aid. It is a useless one, too, for Leatherstocking does not need that education, since his moral stand and his attitudes toward the land, the forest, the Indians are set and immutable throughout the series. Contrasting to him in disposition but equally impervious to the lake's lessons is Judith Hutter, who, from living there, "ought to be a moral and well-disposed young woman," yet, as Hurry Harry puts it, "has the vagaries" (p. 28). The lake neither suffers nor effects change. The political meaning attached to it is as slight as its moral influence. Only once is it included in political discourse, when we are told it may belong to the king, who, however, lives too far away to determine what really goes on around there; for all practical purposes Tom Hutter has possession of the place (p. 30). As Cooper's readers well and proudly know, the irregularity of ownership dissociated from possession will be set straight by historical developments. Within the novel, however, the lake will clearly not be affected by any of these historical events. In the course of the tale it is grave, temple, battlements, highway, and larder, but the transformations are always con-

27 Shirley Samuels finds in The Last of the Mohicans several such transformations of people and landscape into geometric and measurable abstractions; the effect is a violent blurring of the boundaries between the categories of the human, the natural, and the technological—the first and last falling into that of the cultural. Thus the novel becomes not a record of the impossibility of transposing (negatively expressed as blurring) boundaries but a dire warning against it.
nected with its use, never metaphorical; it never crosses any boundary into life, history, or culture.

Along the river in *O Guarani*, as around the lake in *The Deerslayer*, characters gather to enact a drama of national origins. The noble Dom Antônio de Mariz has established himself, with his lares and penates, on lands a couple of days' travel from Rio de Janeiro granted him for faithful service by the king of Portugal. In the wilderness, on the natural rampart of a rock beside a river, he has built a house for his family and retainers and lives like a feudal lord. He had moved from Portugal so he could be politically, if not economically independent of the colonial power, whose legitimacy he considers doubtful, the crown then being, for dynastic reasons, in the hands of the Spanish king. Alencar thus creates an ingenious compromise between loyalty to the metropolis and independence.

Dom Antônio has a stiff wife, a noble son, a beautiful blond, blue-eyed daughter, and an illegitimate daughter by an Indian woman. As the story begins, he receives into his house a noble young man, Álvaro, an appropriate suitor for his legitimate daughter Ceci. Attached to the household is the Indian Peri, who once saved Ceci's life and has since abandoned his tribe and his family. Peri is treated as a friend by Dom Antônio and Ceci, as an imposition by Mrs. Mariz and the half-Indian Isabel. With Álvaro, there also arrives a classically gothic Italian villain, the former monk Loredano, who, having shed his cassock and got hold of the map to a silver mine around the Mariz property, insinuates himself into the household and immediately starts subverting Dom Antônio's vassals, plotting his destruction, and lusting after the gentle Ceci.

The situation is eminently recognizable. Noble lords, heroic youths, helpless sweet maidens, and defrocked Italian villains are commonplaces of the European imagination, and novels featuring them enjoy the artistic status of, say, paint-by-numbers canvases. A good part of Alencar's achievement lies in the oddities he introduces into the commonplace, which suddenly acquires a double reference as it is used to make the new intelligible and familiar by clothing it in an old language and concepts. This is another way of viewing the incongruities that slip into works featuring transplanted cultural idioms. Dom Antônio is not just a noble lord: he is also both a loyal Portuguese subject and a rebel, having crossed the ocean to avoid bowing to the Spaniard on the Portu-

28 Cf. Philip Fisher's "fixed geography and small set of characters" of *The Deerslayer* (p. 73).
guese throne. His independence depends on and is protected by the new land, since he could not claim such freedom anywhere else. In this mixture of loyalty and autonomy one can read, with the hindsight of the novel's first public, a prefiguration of the great independence compromise, when the legitimacy of blood ties offset the illegitimacy of severing political links with the metropolis, when the son of the king of Portugal became the first ruler of a country newly independent form Portugal.

Alencar's characters embody some of the same established fictional elements as Cooper's—the dark and the blond maidens, the noble Indian, the concerned father, the romantic hero, the defining role of Christianity—but Alencar arranges them quite differently. Álvaro, the heroic youth, is just the sort James Fenimore Cooper likes to marry to his heroines, and at the beginning he is assigned to Ceci, tacitly accepted by her father, but then he falls in love with the dark and intense half-Indian Isabel, who feels for him the consuming passion only dark heroines can muster. The lovers are doomed to die their separate lovers' deaths, in accordance with convention, but it is not conventional that their relationship should replace the one between the blond heroine and the romantic hero or that their passion should meet with the approval of other characters or of the narrative voice. Ceci, for instance, who should be the injured party, is all blushing smiles and serious concern for their happiness when she learns about their love. Thus, while in one sense Isabel is like Cora, for she is of mixed ancestry, is unhappy, and must die, in another sense she is most unlike her. The accepted link with Álvaro indicates that the woman with a cross is not to be excluded a priori from the roster of those who will originate the population of the new nation. Her death, however, indicates that the conditions for her inclusion in the line of ancestors have not yet been created. The bitterness Isabel derives from her ambiguous position in the household and the death of the lovers are part of the pessimistic countercurrent to Alencar's racial optimism, though only Alencar would have permitted Isabel to die happy in reciprocated and finally guiltless love.

The blond maiden, Cecilia (called Ceci by Peri because in his language ceci means "to hurt," and by Alencar because he can then join in one name Christian saint and Indian sensibility), also seems a stock figure of sentimental fiction: her coloring, unusual and unexplained, is the first indication that her origin is in literature. She "was the goddess of this little world, which she lit up with her smiles, and cheered with her playfulness and her charming fancies" (p. 39). But Alencar modifies the
conventional purity of the stereotype by surrounding her with signs of voluptuousness and sensuality which hint at the link to be established between her and the fruitful land, and at the function she will ultimately fulfill. Here is how the villain of the story finds her:

Cecilia slept wrapped in pure white sheets; her little blond head lay on the finest lace, over which were spread her lovely golden ringlets. . . . Her shift had fallen open, half-showing a neck of the purest lines, whiter than the cambric around it, and the slight movement of her breath revealed, under their diaphanous veils, her delicate breasts. All of this was framed like a painting by the billows of a blue damask coverlet whose wide folds molded the girl's pure and harmonious outline on the transparent whiteness of the linen sheets. (P. 243)

Her innocence, underscored by the Virgin's colors of the blue coverlet and white sheets, is strong enough to stay the villain's hand for a crucial moment, but at the same time the overt sensuality of the tableau prepares the later scene in which she accepts and desires Peri as a man, thus making it plausible that she should, with him, populate the land.29 The sensuousness is, however, but a small oddity in the characterization, not unprecedented. The great oddity is the development of Ceci's relationship with Peri, which constitutes Alencar's first and most optimistic statement on the theme of hybridism as the defining trait of the new population in the new land.

Only the hero and the villain, Peri and Loredano, are not characterized in terms of the theme of hybridism. They are of a piece, unmitigated and relentless in their heroism and villainy. Their oddity lies not in their characterization but in the contexts they establish and in the oppositions they construct. Loredano's evil and Dom Antônio's or Alvaro's nobility are defined within an Old World context, according to the criteria of an old culture; their models are the Christian knight and the renegade monk of romantic fiction if not of medieval reality. But Peri, who is as intensely good as Loredano is intensely evil, is a product of the wilderness, where he is king. Appearing "like the beneficent genius of the Brazilian forests" (p. 136), he is the unspoiled natural man, and

29 Alencar rewrites the gothic in his characterizations of the villain as well as the passive and innocently sensuous heroine; it is not by chance that both Cooper (as Henry Nash Smith has shown in Virgin Land, chaps. 7–9) and Alencar have originated popular forms in their own literatures; they built on the historical novel and the gothic, which already addressed and reached a mass public.
in this context he is opposed to the Aimorés (counterparts of Cooper’s Mingoes), barbaric, savage Indians (pp. 269, 291) that besiege Dom Antônio’s house and represent the other, menacing face of nature. In other words, if Peri himself is of a piece, the opposition to him is a composite of the European and the Amerindian. Unlike Uncas, who, alone, stood up only to Magua, Peri is a worthy foe to both barbaric nature and depraved civilization. In each cultural construct, the elements from which self and other are constructed may be the same and arise from similar operations on similar data: like Cooper’s, Alencar’s good and bad Indians are only partly the product of direct study of Amerindian cultures; mostly they derive from patterns into which elements of early accounts were organized in Western imagination. Similarly, his heroes and villains echo many of the most accessible works of European fiction. But in his manipulation of the relations of characters with one another, Alencar attempts to broaden or, in any case, to modify these patterns and to create an as yet unexplored combination of elements, claiming it as characteristic of a nation that would and would not be part of the Western world.30

After a suspenseful sequence of events (Alencar knows how to end chapters just as the villain raises his hand to touch the sleeping virgin) in which Peri and the noble whites save one another’s lives several times, the novel arrives at its grand crisis: the Aimorés can no longer be turned back; Álvaro dies in Isabel’s arms after being wounded in a sortie against the besiegers; Isabel (imitating Atala’s gesture) poisons herself with curare inherited from her mother; and Peri is at his wits’ end because his scheme to defeat the Aimorés by poisoning himself, letting himself be captured and eaten, and thereby poisoning them has been thwarted. Peri (like Chactas, but for practical, not for spiritual reasons) finally decides to be baptized so that at least he will be able to carry Cecilia away and save her. Dom Antônio performs the sacrament by touching him on the shoulder: Peri is now Christian and a knight not only in substance but in form.31

30 Affonso Romano de Sant’Anna describes the patterns into which Alencar organizes his characters in a detailed structural analysis of O Guarani (see Andîse estrutural de romances brasileiros, chap. 3) but does not link them to models outside the work.

31 According to Wilson Martins, Peri is identified with Dom Antônio at this point and becomes “a Portuguese, Christian gentleman, without ceasing to be Brazilian and Indian,” in his person the perfect cultural hybrid and henceforth worthy of Ceci (3:67). Martins recognizes that the other Indian-white unions in the novels do not work out but does not conjecture about the reasons, saying only that they just did not take place at the “appropriate historical moment” (3:69).
He escapes in a boat with the sleeping Ceci, just as the Aimorés scale the defenses of Dom António's stronghold, and as the fugitives float down the river, the girl's father, the ruler of the Portuguese enclave in the Brazilian wilderness, shoots his gun into a powder keg and blows up the house and everyone in and around it. The successful white-Indian pair does find the necessary conditions for their relationship to succeed, which turn out to be the destruction of both white and Indian societies: Ceci's father allows her to flee with Peri only because there is no chance that he or any of the inhabitants of his house will be able to survive the attack of the Aimorés. Though hybridism is not preferable to death, death is the condition that makes it possible. This is the case even though the tone of the novel, the effort made to win the readers' sympathies for Ceci and Peri, and the sympathies the readers do accord them make their flight away from her house and into one another's arms seem not a desperate last resort but a desirable conclusion, the tragedy at their back almost worth it for the sake of the brightness and purity of their future. It is not the adolescent reader but only the older critic who asks whether Alencar, too, had his doubts when he wrote this Romeo and Juliet in which the lovers are preserved but the social structure around them must perish.32

In the forest Ceci sees her friend with new eyes, "the eyes of the soul." In her father's house he had been "an ignorant Indian, born of a barbarous race . . . a friend, but a slave friend." Her perception of his nobility had been contaminated by his subjection; but as he regains his freedom, he is "the king of the desert," and nature bestows on him the insignia of power: "The tall mountains, the clouds, the waterfalls, the rivers, the century-old trees were his throne, his canopy, his cloak and his scepter" (p. 378). She also sees him as the male and, implicitly, the possible mate; her innocence is no longer that of a child but that of a young woman; her unconscious attraction to him, which had dampened her enthusiasm for Álvaro, begins to show itself even to herself. She blushes and flutters and finally, in a displacement of meaning that once more introduces the suggestion of incest into the representation of extreme exogamy, calls herself his "sister." As for Peri, once he is back in the forest, he recovers all the power that had been his before he moved into the house of the Portuguese settler. He has also made an exchange, however: he has won the white woman and will become

32 On the similarities and differences between Cooper's and Alencar's treatment of love between youths of different ancestries, see also Haberly, Three Sad Races, p. 44.
the founder of a people, but his conversion to Christianity radically separates him from the tribe he used to lead.

On their second day away from the destroyed house, a great flood comes rolling down the river which, according to the original plan, would have carried Peri and Ceci to the city and civilization. Ceci unties their boat and sets it adrift, out of reach, because, she explains, "she had been raised in the desert" and "was a Brazilian virgin, not a girl of the court" (p. 389). As the waters rise, the girl and the Indian climb a palm tree; in its crown he lets his breath touch her face and she swoons, in one of those pretty scenes that suggest sexuality without shocking gentle female readers. He also tells her the story of Tamandaré, an Indian Noah, who survived a flood by climbing into the crown of a palm tree and who, once back on dry land repopulated the earth. She says they will die and meet in heaven with the little angels. As the book ends, he has uprooted the tree in a superhuman effort to free it from the rising waters, and they float toward the horizon. Though in her final speech Ceci mentions death and an eternity as Peri's sister, generations of readers and critics have disregarded the possible variant interpretation and resolutely read the ending as a promise and a definition of the new nation in the new world, child of Europe and America.

This preferred reading of the ending holds that Peri will be the second Tamandaré, that the issue of his union with Ceci will populate the new land, and that this union removes the flaws of both forest and civilization, since its precondition is the death of Loredano and the Aimorés, as well as Ceci's affirmation of her Brazilianness and Peri's Christianization. Their union promises improvement by differentiation and makes the New World, specifically Brazil, into the ideal place for achieving a harmony between differences which had always eluded other nations. Even leaving aside the ambiguity of the ending and the

Thomas Gladsky notes the similarity between the heroes charged with guaranteeing "the orderly transition of society from one generation to the next" ("The Beau Ideal," p. 46), all of them representing a "beau ideal" of the Jeffersonian "natural aristocrat" (p. 44), and laments that it was the figure of the Leather-stocking that prevailed, since this preference deprived Cooper of the opportunity to create a popularly accepted model of the beau ideal for America (p. 46). But the power of the writer to "create" a "model" is circumscribed by the available material, and its acceptability does not depend on the artist alone. Accepted or not, however, the representatives of the beau ideal are in effect charged by Cooper with founding an American society, and they stand in strong contrast to the Indian Peri—or Iracema—who receives the same charge, though on ambiguous terms, from Alencar.

See Araripe, p. 5: "Alencar's inspiration reaches its highest point . . . in Ceci's resolution to become Brazilian, a daughter of the desert."
dependence of this univocal interpretation on the same national ideology that the ending reinforces, however, one should note that the promised regeneration by combination of races takes place not in house, city, tribe, or any other European or Indian social organization but in the forest, which underlies social organization, and Christianity, which transcends it—and at the price of a catastrophe that eliminates barbarism together with civilization.

Alencar uses the forms of romantic fiction, the stereotypes of plot and characterization, to set up and then tame a radical utopian scenario in which harmony is predicated on destruction. He uses historical figures, such as Dom Antônio de Mariz, and the techniques of historical fiction to replace the narrative of history with that of desire: the only dead Indians are the bad Indians; the forest wins because even Dom Antônio, who is good but Portuguese, dies; but the good Dom Antônio wins too because his heroic death eliminates all the villains and because his child and his religion live on and form an alliance with the land where his independence led to his death. In searching for a proper expression of the originality and value of the new nation for which he writes, Alencar uses and transforms history and literature, creating a myth of things as they must have been to become what they are not, even in his day, and finding a language for his readers’ real dreams.

In Iracema, subtitled A Legend, Alencar gives a second account of the formation of the new people and the nationality. The title signals this purpose: Iracema, the name of the heroine, is a word Alencar invented following rules of word formation in the predominant Indian language along the Brazilian coast (p. 237 n. 2) but it is also an anagram of America. The work uses highly figurative and stylized language. The opening phrases—“Verdes mares bravios da minha terra natal, onde canta a jandaia nas frondes da carnauba” (“Wild green seas of my native land, where the jandaia sings in the fronds of the carnauba”)—are the language of a literature that attempts to reproduce the rhythms and accents of the oral tradition, that strives for the distinctive poetry said to be the natural expression of the “primitive.” Thus the novel inscribes itself in the curious tradition marking the point in European literary history when civilization gave form to its civilized desire to be primitive, and the written word that aimed to be intelligible across communal

35 Silviano Santiago makes this point in “Liderança” p. 8; he refers to Afrânio Peixoto for the observation but gives no further details. Martins thinks it is ridiculous to attribute meaning to the anagram (3:220). Whatever Alencar’s intentions may have been, now that the anagram has been identified, it is part of the reading.
borders tried to recover its origin in, and assert its kinship with, a communal tradition that relied on speech and memory for self-definition and preservation. But Iracema also tries to address the new problem of how to tell the story of the encounter between Europe and what is truly non-European in a way that justifies both and devalues neither.

For his hero, Alencar chooses Martim, once again a historical figure, the founder of the first viable Portuguese settlement in what is now the state of Ceará, where Alencar was born. The tale itself is loosely based on historical events. A series of footnotes that anchor the poetic text to a reality of archives, annals, chronicles, and anthropological observations recounts and documents events, figures, and information about the original population of the region. But Alencar also rearranges the truths of these documents. For instance, the historical model of Martim disappeared for a few years into an Indian tribe: he was next seen, naked and painted, when he was captured with his tribal companions by a Portuguese expedition. It was only after this episode that he went back to the king’s service as settler. Alencar knows about the incident (he refers to it in Ubirajara, p. 240 n. 16), in the course of which a historical meeting between Martim and an Indian woman may have taken place, but by excluding from the legend the capture by the Portuguese and by making Martim’s adoption into Indian culture, paint and all, take place as a more or less private event involving only Iracema and his friend Poti, he emphasizes the difference between Indian and European. It is as if, although he was defending hybridism, Alencar did not want to consider the possibility of a protagonist’s complete loss of cultural identity. The cultural identity he envisaged for his actual readers could then, within the freedom of fiction, encompass the presence of disparate elements without any of the possible conflicts generated by disparity.

Martim’s character and adventures are only the frame of the tale, however; the focus is Iracema, and the argument her encounter with him. He surprises her asleep in the forest; startled, she shoots an arrow at him, which grazes his cheek; they are attracted to each other. She is described entirely in terms of native plants, birds, and animals: she is slender and pliant like the palm tree; her voice is like the murmur of the hummingbird; the touch of her body is sweet like the wild amaryllis and soft like the hummingbird’s nest (p. 44); she obeys her man’s summons like the native doe and suffers like a whole series of tropical plants pierced for their sap or torn from their bulbs. She is also the
daughter of the tribe's medicine man and the virgin who guards the sacred wood and knows the secret of ritual narcotic and hallucinogenic plants. In her self, her knowledge, and her ritual function, in her demand for a pledge of blood before she can be known, she combines strength and powerlessness, passivity in her sleep, aggression in shooting the arrow. She can act to induce sleep and dreams that subject Martim to her will, but in subjecting him, she becomes subject to the demands and logic of his story. She represents the land and signifies the harmony between her people and the natural world; in her, the land takes its toll from the invaders. The pull she exerts over Martim is the pull of the new land, and his disruption of that harmony is the disruption that settlement brings.

Iracema is pure (like every acceptable nineteenth-century romantic heroine), but her purity does not come from the suppression or the absence of passion. She is the “brown virgin of ardent love,” in opposition to the “blond virgin of chaste affection,” Martim’s childhood sweetheart (p. 266). The “blond virgin” never becomes an active character in the novel, but it is a sign of Alencar’s debt to established plot structures that he evokes her as a shadow to Iracema, completing the blond-dark pair of heroines characteristic of romantic fiction; once again, as he had in O Guarani, he transposes to the tropics the Rowena-Rebecca pair of Scott’s Ivanhoe. Once again, he reworks the implications of the pairing: Iracema’s relationship with the hero is desirable and fruitful. Nevertheless, history and ideology trouble the positive meaning at first ascribed to their union.

Having seen Martim and fallen in love with him, Iracema sets about seducing him with the characteristic generosity that centuries of accounts had ascribed to the land. She gives him a green potion to make him dream, intending it as a gift that would take him home to his blond beloved. At first it has that effect, but then, because it works to satisfy his true desire, it brings him back to the forest and Iracema. Later, on the last night he spends as a guest under her father’s roof, he demands another potion, hoping it will again bring him Iracema, whose chastity he respects as much as he does her father’s hospitality: he is a gentleman. She gives him the draught; he sleeps; he calls her name; she goes to him. She rises, as Alencar puts it, his spouse: there is a natural marriage, the consequence of desire, the effect of the powerful attractions and secret substances of the land. Neither of the spouses’ social groups sanctions the marriage. Iracema’s father had said that if she made love to the foreigner she would die, and Martim has to be uncon-
scious when they make love because otherwise he would be violating the code of conduct that makes him a worthy representative of his own people and justifies his presence among Iracema's. The wording of the passage, however, does not even hint at any authorial disapproval of either Iracema's or Martim's action. In part Alencar may wish to absolve Martim from the guilt of possession; in part the sequence of events expresses a male dream of perfect feminine compliance. Within the overt context, however, the "marriage" of Martim and Iracema defines and sanctions the genesis of the new man and woman of the tropics, born of nature and civilization but free of constraint.

The portrayal of Iracema's sexual availability brings together a complicated cluster of ideological implications. It accords with the earliest views of Amerindian women's freedom from the strictures of European sexual morality of which their nakedness is the scandalous sign. From the earliest accounts the scandal is counteracted in two diverging ways: by seeing nakedness as a sign of innocence or by noting that it is less seductive, and therefore less immoral, than the suggestive clothing of European women. At the same time, Iracema's initiative relieves the Portuguese settler of responsibility for a union that eventually leads to her destruction. Her action, positively valued by the narrative voice, promises a new encoding of behavior which avoids the constraints organizing sexual contact in the colonizer's society and purifies it by force of nature and truth. Nevertheless, Alencar cannot write outside of the system of signs, meanings, and values within which he and his audience live. So Iracema suffers a fate homologous to that of the passionate, dark heroines of romantic fiction: pregnancy and death. Her passion proves incapable of asserting itself against the demands of "man's work"—war and nation building—which take Martim away from her. Yet, there is a mediating term between these oppositions: the son of the doomed union between Iracema and Martim is not doomed, and the tale charges him with the future, both genetic and ideological, of the new nation.

In a recent discursive and critical turn, as consistent with present

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36 Jean de Léry declares: "But I will say that, despite opinions to the contrary, as to concupiscence provoked by the presence of naked women, the complete nudity of women is much less attractive than is commonly imagined. The adornments, cosmetics, frizzed hair, lace collars, bustles, overskirts and other fripperies with which women here among us embellish themselves and of which they can never get enough, cause incomparably more harm than the habitual nakedness of Indian women, who, however, yield to none in the matter of beauty" (p. 121). Montaigne echoes Léry's reasoning in his essay "Des cannibales."
ideological needs as past readings were with the needs of their times, *Iracema* has been viewed not as telling the story of the creation of a distinctive and independent Brazilian culture but as justifying and naturalizing the imposition of the metropolitan, Western, patriarchal culture on female, non-Western (more precisely, extremely western) persons of the new nation. In its more radical form, this reading strips the heroine of any power and authority Alencar had granted her and denies the differentiating role he had ascribed to her, once again assimilating Brazilian culture to the ideological structures from which Alencar sought to distinguish it. Nevertheless, this reading highlights another of the incongruities inherent in Alencar’s project: the interplay between the valuation of difference with which to characterize a separate, independently valuable Brazilian culture and the suppression of difference required by the ideological climate within which this aim is to be accomplished.

The marriages between white and Indian at the core of both *Iracema* and *O Guarani* seem to imply not only a relaxation of social constraints but also a weakening of all boundaries of being. The integration of Dom Antônio’s house into the rock where it stands fits into this pattern, as does Ceci’s decoration of her room with Peri’s gifts of feathers, straw, flowers, and stuffed birds, which turn it into a tropical nest; so, too, do the substitution, at the end of the novel, of the palm tree for the canoe and the constantly threatened absorption of Iracema into the natural world. Similarly, the lines between masculine and feminine become blurred: specifically, the men become feminized. Strangers in the realms where they are led by their women—Peri in the house, Martim in the forest—they go through a period of disorientation and lose some of the qualities that defined them in their own worlds. Both recover, so to speak, but with different results, since Peri’s reassumption of the title of king of the forest allows him to win and protect Ceci, whereas Martim abandons Iracema for the “masculine” pursuits of warfare and coloniza-

37 Glossing over differences, Ria Lemaire invokes Helen of Troy and the *Aenead* to establish continuity between *Iracema* and a misogynist classical Western literary tradition; she uses the proven tactic of reference to the classics to make of *Iracema* simply another retelling of the same old “awful reality” of real mistreatment of women (“Re-reading *Iracema,*” p. 71).

38 Regina Zilberman, in *Do mito ao romance* (chap. 9, pp. 141–52), stresses the absorption of Iracema into the context of the colonizer as emblematic of the fate of the “natural” elements of the new nation but does not deny the book’s continuing presence in the formation of the “myths” upon which Alencar, like other authors engaged in the same task, constructs a sense of national identity.
tion; the loss does not determine the destiny of the characters who suffer it.\textsuperscript{39} It is as if, with this blurring of differences, Alencar were toying with the creation of a true alternative to European culture, one that would fulfill the promise of renewal but would also demand a restatement of established distinctions between nature and culture, male and female. As is probably inevitable, these distinctions, which permeate the language, also invade the tale and limit the imagination. It is a difficulty inherent in the task Alencar originally set himself of writing history, of creating a usable past.

In \textit{O Guarani} the preconditions for the marriage that should signal victory for the ideal of renewal are catastrophic. In \textit{Iracema} the marriage does not destroy two peoples (though it triggers a war between the traditionally inimical tribes of Martim’s spouse, Iracema, and his friend Poti), but Martim and Iracema can live with each other only as long as they live apart from their cultures. The world they build together cannot last.\textsuperscript{40} It does for a while: they live idyllically in a cabin by the sea, and when she tells him she is carrying his child, he kneels at her feet and otherwise shows his delight. But she knows, and Alencar knows, that their sacrifices are not symmetrical—only the explosion of Dom Antônio’s powder keg could produce such symmetry—that she has become a stranger in her own land, whereas he can always go back to his job. She senses his restlessness and at one point counts the ways he no longer loves her:

When you walk in the high fields, your eyes avoid the fruit of the jenipapo and search for the cactus flower; the fruit is sweet but it has the color of the Tabajaras; the flower is white like the face of the white virgin. When the birds sing, your ears refuse to listen to the melodious notes of the graúna, but your soul opens to the call of the japim,

\textsuperscript{39} One should note that Alencar proposes the value of exogamy by the creation of two complementary pairings: Indian man and very white woman in \textit{O Guarani}; Indian woman and Portuguese man in \textit{Iracema}. Ignoring the earlier novel, Lemaire notes the paradigmatically oppressive pairing of the Portuguese man and the helpless Indian woman (p. 71 n. 4). Since Peri does not die, his relationship with Ceci might have strengthened Lemaire’s contention that male power is presented as overwhelming even racial difference. At the same time, that example would complicate her argument about the uniform subjection of the non-European.

\textsuperscript{40} Darcy Damasceno points out that the novel is not as idyllic as it seems, since all the encounters between Iracema and Martim include a moment of fear or rejection and most take place in a context of danger for the couple (“Alencar e \textit{Iracema}”).
because it has golden feathers like the hair of the one you love! (p. 294). 41

She knows too that she will die like the abati, a plant that withers as soon as it has borne fruit. Her first surmise is wrong, since Martim longs for work, not for a woman; but by the time her son is born, she is completely alone, and she calls him Moacir, “son of my sorrow.” 42 Soon after his birth she dies of loneliness and a broken heart in the arms of Martim, who has turned up to see how she is doing and who takes the son to be raised abroad.

But if Iracema has lost, that does not mean Europe will keep the spoils forever. In an epilogue set four years later, we learn that Martim returns to Ceará, filled with bitterness at his loss and longing for the beaches and breezes of the land where he had been happy (p. 303). He touches the earth where his wife lies buried, his sorrow melts into abundant tears, and his soul is made whole. He has come with an expedition, and they build a village, erecting a church near Iracema’s grave. The coastal Indians transfer their huts to the new settlement, and Martim’s friend Poti is baptized and given the name under which he becomes the hero of history books, the defender of the Portuguese colony against foreign invaders, operating the passage from Indian legend to white history—something Iracema could not do and Peri did not need to do.

At this perilous point of transition, contemporary discussion of a literature of exoticism heats up. Insofar as the relationship between Martim and Iracema reflects a power contest between colonizer and colonized, between written and nongraphic cultures, between the European self and the Amerindian other, it is possible to read Martim’s regret, Iracema’s persistence in the name and settlement of the land, and Poti’s alliance with the Portuguese against the Dutch as so many

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41 The Tabajaras are an Amerindian tribe. The graúna is a black bird. “Hair as black as the wing of the graúna” has become a poetic cliché, a capsule parody of Alencar’s style. There is no indication in the text that Martim longs for his former sweetheart; in this expression of Iracema’s jealousy Alencar reinforces the metonymy that allies her with Brazil by the implied metonymy with which she allies the blond girl with Europe.

42 Proença, in Estudos literários, points out that Iracema’s words at the birth and naming of her child echo those of Rachel giving birth to Benjamin (p. 53). Lemaire thinks the child’s name refers to Genesis and “the anathema God pronounced against Eve when she was expelled from Paradise.” (p. 72 n. 5). Alencar often finds classical and biblical parallels to Indian customs, forcing a revaluation of the Indian in relation to the classical and biblical ancestry of European peoples.
ways in which the non-European is repressed, buried, wrenched from its autonomous existence to become, at best, an appendix to colonization. In the actual novel, however, Martim’s regret indicates not only a more or less uncritical view of Iracema’s fate and his responsibility for it, an unwillingness to consider alternatives to his behavior toward her, but also a positive evaluation of her person, culture, and contribution. If Iracema’s seduction of Martim relieves the conqueror of responsibility for her fate and makes her responsible for the destruction of her people and eventually of herself, it also assigns her the power to act and refuses to place her in the briefly comforting role of absolute victim, from which the logical path to action and responsibility is difficult. If Moacir/Sorrow is brought up by his father in Europe, rather than by his mother in the New World, his survival at the foundation of the new town affirms the presence of the Amerindian other in the constitution of a Brazilian self, at the same time as it attenuates and controls this presence. Finally, the introduction of the Dutch invaders of the Portuguese colony brings into play other dichotomies, which complicate the original one between European self and American other by splitting the European into two camps, just as the Amerindian side had earlier been split between Iracema’s Tabajaras and Poti’s Potiguares. These divisions open a sphere of freedom for Poti’s actions, which are neither determined by the pressure of an overwhelming Portuguese power nor open to the accusation of treason to a uniform Amerindian interest. Just as Cooper made a point of placing the war against the French in the political center of The Last of the Mohicans, reminding his readers of the challenges to British power, so Alencar reminds his public of the limitations to Portuguese power: the subjection of the Portuguese crown to the Spanish and the invasion by the Dutch make adherence to the original colonizers’ cause a matter of choice rather than coercion and raise the possibility of the colonizers’ military and cultural defeat by another, greater force, that of the nation arising from their absorption of and into the new land.

O Guarani and Iracema uphold the value of hybridism, which functions as the mechanism by which the power and the distinctiveness of the new nation are achieved, but both novels in the end draw up an account of its cost. In O Guarani that cost is buried in a whirlwind of action: Ceci needs only a few minutes of prayer beside the river to reconcile herself to the loss of her entire family and get ready to depart with Peri into the forest. In Iracema attention to the cost is deflected by the language, the highly stylized poetic idiom Alencar invented: short sentences, short paragraphs, great density of imagery, incantatory
rhythms, and repetition of Indian names within an almost classical syntax carry out the combination of American and European elements, accomplishing what the plot shows to be only imperfectly possible. In the process, Martim's loss of Iracema is translated into the acquisition of an important distinction between the colonial power and the new nation: the characteristic expression of their new land's history in its own language. The feelings of nostalgia and melancholy aroused by the language gloss over the conditions of its creation, even though Alencar does not exclude these conditions from his tale: the reality of domination, conquest, and death remains hidden mainly because of the ideology of harmony that the text conveys, in an elaborate game of hide-and-seek set up with all apparent good faith.

Though the promise of hybrid offspring in *Guarani* and the founding of the Portuguese-Indian village at the end of *Iracema* seem to bode well for the formation of the hybrid society that Gilberto Freyre discusses as characteristically Brazilian, the love stories in both novels suggest that only essential—not social—man or woman can freely choose to marry someone who has skin of a different color, worships different gods, obeys different laws. Iracema and Martim are happy only when they are alone together and no duties to king or medicine man occupy them; on such a vacation from society their child is conceived. But Moacir is "the first Cearense" (p. 303), and with him, Alencar shows that harmonizing heterogeneous elements is unequivocally possible only on the ideological level. Freyre's hybrid society appears in *Guarani* in a world of the imagination, swept clean of the civilizations that mark the difference between the heterogeneous elements to be conjoined; it appears in *Iracema* after the heroine, representing the natural world, becomes a memory, her son goes to Europe, and the Indians, now baptized, merge into the official history of the country founded by the Portuguese. Finally the hybrid society becomes a sign, among others, of the reality and the difference of the Brazilian enterprise, with the sign's peculiar independence from the thing signified.

Years after *Iracema*, in *Ubirajara*, Alencar returned to Amerindians for the third and last time. The novel has the earliest setting, before the Portuguese arrived on Brazilian soil. It tells the story of Ubirajara, a young warrior of the Araguaia tribe who goes out into the world to make a name for himself—literally, since in the course of the story he changes names in accordance with his feats and purposes. In fair combat he vanquishes the most renowned warrior of the enemy Tocantins, then goes to live with them as a stranger, wins the hand and heart of
their most desirable virgin, and finally, by marrying both her and the young girl whom he had loved in the village of his birth, effects the union of the tribes, peace between them, and prosperity for all.

There is a hybrid marriage in this novel too, but the terms have changed; Ubirajara's Tocantim wife is alien not in her color but in her dress and in belonging to a tribe that is the hero's traditional adversary. When the young virgin of the Tocantins first sees Ubirajara, she recognizes him as an Araguaia by the red feather in his headdress: her tribe's color is blue. At the end of the novel, uniting the two tribes, Ubirajara wears both colors. The union benefits both sides and, far from leading to the destruction of either the partners or their societies, ensures the tribes' survival in a kind of golden age up to the time, known but not mentioned in the story, when the conquerors arrive.

But Alencar does not entirely eliminate the European element. It exists, of course, in the book's language, charged with European meanings even while it strives to express what it conceives as Indian thought. Most clearly, however, it appears in a veritable cotext of footnotes, where Alencar more or less directs the reading of his story and conducts a running argument with earlier historians and chroniclers of Indian customs, specifically opposing the common and contradictory notions that Amerindians were tabulae rasae, eager for European inscription, and yet, because they were savage or anticultilized, they provoked European aggression. His Araguaias and Tocantins are protocivilized, in the sense in which nongraphic civilizations can be seen as protographic; and they resemble in some ways medieval Europeans and in others the Greeks, Romans, and Jews of classical and biblical times. If Alencar's view of Amerindians as Hercules, Jacob, Cato, or Lancelot in feathers seems odd, it reveals how any confrontation with otherness dislocates meanings and shifts contexts. In context, this translation performs the double task of inserting Indians in history and providing Brazil with an autochthonous past as respectable as that of the former colonial power.43 Both the text and the footnotes of *Ubirajara* argue the value of the Indian component of the new tropical nation. The story does it for the individual by creating a hero; the footnotes do it for the Amerindians in general by drawing parallels between their culture and Western civilization. Yet

43 For Antônio Cândido, Alencar's heroic Indians "express the Brazilians' deep desire to perpetuate the convention that provides a country of crossbreeds with the alibi of a heroic race, and a nation of short history with the depths of legendary time" (*Formação*, 2:221). Martins avers that Alencar's "implicit purpose [in *O Guarani*] was to confer nobility and prestige on Brazilian origins" (3:66).
the division of the text keeps in abeyance the violence of their historical encounter. The European element is close at hand but harmless, interpreting from outside the story. In *Ubirajara* Alencar can present the ideology of mingling untainted, its utopian consequences unclouded by memories of destruction and guilt.

The violence that occurs in the novel is always ritual. Even cannibalism is presented and justified as ritual, structurally akin to the Christian Eucharist (*Ubirajara*, p. 356 n. 37)\(^4\) — that is, motivated, predictable, and controlled. Thus, while the text details feasts and fights, its anthropological and critical context attempts to rescue Amerindians from a couple of centuries of bad press that painted them as the “savage” other to the victorious European self. The notes liken any number of defining European customs to those of the Brazilian Tupis. They scold historians and colonizers for declaring Amerindians to be atheists and for identifying the universal entity of religion with its particular signs in altars and idols (p. 337 n. 22). They translate Tupi theology into ancient Greek terms, and they point out that, as descendants of the barbarian Goths, Gauls, Franks, and Celts, Europeans had little call to be upset by the religious practices of a different sort of barbarian. They note that in questions of honor the Tupis were at least as particular as any knight (p. 353 n. 36). And one especially long note to the chapter titled “The Nuptial Combat” makes sure the reader gets the point of the medievalizing language by explaining that “these games in which there was fighting, combat, and races, presided over by women who judged the valor of the champions and bestowed prizes on the victors, are showcases of as much gallantry as any joust could have exhibited” (p. 381 n. 61). Finally, in his most daring approximation, Alencar tackles cannibalism: “The remains of the enemy thus became something like a sacred host, which strengthened the warriors. . . . *[Cannibalism]* was not revenge, but a kind of communion of the flesh.” The words of the warrior who is to be sacrificed echo those in which the sacrament of Communion is said to have been instituted: “This flesh you see is not mine, but yours; it is made up of the flesh of the warriors I sacrificed, your fathers, sons, and relatives. Eat it, for you will be eating your own flesh” (p. 356 n. 37).

\(^4\) Hulme sees this homology as conditioning European fantasies about American cannibals, used to estrange Amerindian populations and make them unacceptable (*Colonial Encounters*, pp. 81–84); Alencar sees the same homology but uses it to de-estrange cannibalism. The similarity had occurred to Jean de Léry, who used it to attack his Catholic companions’ belief in transubstantiation; they would want to “eat
The notes also assimilate ancient Brazilian history, defined as the time before colonization, to an ancient European history of Greek heroes, biblical patriarchs, and in tune with fashionable medievalism, medieval knights. In Silviano Santiago's words, Alencar "correctly guessed . . . our past in accordance with values that were becoming dominant and ideologically correct within the independence-stressing thought of the nineteenth century" (p. 8). Unlike Cooper, who postulates the creation of historical, or Western, time in America ex nihilo, Alencar sees the writings of the first chroniclers of the discovery and settlement as the record of a prehistory, acceptable within European ideological structures because it so closely resembles European history. *Ubirajara* thus provides the new country with a legitimating chronological depth.

Also unlike Cooper, who excludes Native Americans from history, Alencar sees Amerindians as proto-Christians and shows Europeans as old barbarians made heroic by legends homologous to those he tells. This homology of pasts conditions the convergence of two histories on American soil. Just as he had made different cultures and populations permeable to each other, he makes into a permeable membrane the historical boundary between former metropolis and former colony. If Amerindians had their own forms of holy communion and created their own versions of medieval jousts, then the "annals of men" can be extended to transform the synchronicity of ethnography and anthropology into the diachronicity of a familiar historical discourse. In Alencar's Indian novels the newness of the present American civilization resides not in the various breaks that separate colonizer and colony, but in what they postulate as the characteristically Brazilian capacity to see knight and Indian blend into a composite figure that extends the Brazilian past to European depth.

Alencar's Indian novels both state and criticize the ways his readers see themselves. His voyages back in time represent successive stages in his dramatization of this tropical civilization for which he had set out to construct a language and to formulate an ideology. This civilization defines itself as European and of the New World, heir to European dreams of starting afresh but unencumbered by old guilt and failures; it sees itself as respectful of the new land's ancient population, heir to its regenerative innocence and generous with its saving gift of Christianity; and it prides itself on arising from this process of mutual regen-

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the flesh of Jesus Christ not only spiritually but materially, in the manner of the savage guaytaka, who chew and swallow raw flesh" (*Viagem*, chap. 6, p. 94).
eration and salvation, original in its double source, distinct from the European past and projected into a model future. But the first novel concludes that such newness costs the destruction of the past, except for the minimum number of individuals needed to create a future. The second novel envisages a distressing compromise: the Indian part is sacrificed, its continuing regenerative influence ensured by its absorption into the blood or the history of the new settlers. In the third novel the primitive survives on its own and prospers, but the other term of the hybridizing process moves to a different level of discourse, from plot to commentary. Together, the novels write the dream of the nation, valued for creating an “and/and” in a world that finds it difficult to think in any terms but either/or. They allow the imagination to extend the limits of acceptable reality in the name of its own distinctive good.

The differences between Cooper and Alencar show how different ideological constructs can arise from similar goals and materials. Both authors measure the distance between the desire for a new, redemptive American beginning and the reality of a continent where nature is destroyed and the primitive is either derided or exterminated or both. Both authors, while claiming historical and anthropological accuracy of representation, produce myths. And both show that though their mythical creations seem part of the positive fantasies of peopling a new land or starting history anew, they carry in themselves the same seed of dissolution and destruction that prompted their reactive creation.

In Alencar’s work this vision of destruction appears in the very implications of the harmony he establishes. His books are neither tired repetitions of European fantasies of Eden nor even blueprints for the harmonious conjunction of differences but radical tracts in which a utopia no more than adumbrated costs the destruction of both nature and civilization. Bracketing the violence implicit in his choice, Cooper proposes a less radical integration of European and American which leads to a continued march through the seemingly endless American wilderness, as Leather-stocking both flees civilization and opens trails along which it can implant itself. As Annette Kolodny points out in an entirely different context Cooper’s myth is finally sterile; his heroes leave memories but no descendants (The Lay of the Land, pp. 105–9). Chingachgook and Leather-stocking embody noble savage and noble white but they

45 Recall Philip Fisher’s dramatic statement of the abrogation of agency and responsibility by writers of a North American literature of nationality: “and on the way to the marriage . . . there was a massacre, there was a massacre, there was a massacre” (p. 73).
The "Indian" Novels of Alencar

are discontinuous with the succession of American history; they stand alone, outside tribe or village, fantasy figures in opposition to historical developments. If Huck Finn is a descendant of Natty Bumppo it is because, in the end, he too rejects the civilization and history of the new nation.

Cooper and Alencar wrote histories of hope and disappointment and created myths of opposition which, unlike most myths, do not explain what is but tell what was dreamed or wished but is not. In the end, these myths do not account for the identity of the people who invented them but represent an otherness against which they sometimes measure themselves, to which at other times they aspire. They show the new nations split against themselves from the beginning, arising from contradiction. In ways their authors probably did not intend, the new nations become old, begin to acquire the depth of mythical time (with concomitant historical disillusionment) that they so desired as they began to exist on their own.

The cultural material from the New World, then, suffered another transformation; as it was adapted to the formulation of an American national consciousness, it lost the pure notation of otherness it had carried in the first accounts, as well as the sign of alterity in nature and origin it had gained in the eighteenth century. It was integrated into history and shaped into the notion of a distinct national self, which arose from negotiating, with varying results, the line that separated it from its source and opponent on opposite sides of the Atlantic. These variations fragmented a transatlantic non-European self and instituted new oppositions, which in turn could reproduce, as inequalities of power established themselves among American polities, the patterns of acceptance and conflict which had once obtained between former colonies and former metropoles.