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## Imagining Costumbrismo: Connecting Image and Text in Nineteenth-Century Colombian Cuadros de Costumbres

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FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Miami, Florida

IMAGINING COSTUMBRISMO:  
CONNECTING IMAGE AND TEXT IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY  
COLOMBIAN CUADROS DE COSTUMBRES

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

SPANISH

by

María Sol Echarren

2022

To: Dean John F. Stack, Jr.  
Green School of International and Public Affairs

This dissertation, written by María Sol Echarren, and entitled *Imagining Costumbrismo: Connecting Image and Text in Nineteenth-Century Colombian Cuadros de Costumbres*, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this dissertation and recommend that it be approved.

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Date of Defense: July 1, 2022

The dissertation of María Sol Echarren is approved.

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Dean John F. Stack, Jr.  
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Andrés G. Gil  
Vice President for Research and Economic Development  
and Dean of the University Graduate School

Florida International University, 2022

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DEDICATION

A mis abuelitos

Judith Glady Roland

Eduardo Ernesto Leegstra

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION  
IMAGINING COSTUMBRISMO:  
CONNECTING IMAGE AND TEXT IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY  
COLOMBIAN CUADROS DE COSTUMBRES

by

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Miami, Florida

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Influenced by nineteenth-century scientific trends, Costumbrismo was a literary and artistic genre combining aspects of Romanticism and Realism and presenting traditional customs of autochthonous daily life. Nineteenth-century cuadros de costumbres, or “sketches of manners,” often used local color to depict national scenes, regional types, and cultural traditions. The cuadros, comprised of short but illustrative writings published as periodical pamphlets, contained visually charged descriptive language infused with a didactic objective in order to shape readers’ perspectives about the nation and present specific sociopolitical philosophies.

This dissertation analyzes the connections between literature and art through the written cuadros de costumbres and the paintings of nineteenth-century Colombians (from 1830 to 1880). This study draws on a new understanding of the theory of ekphrasis (understood as the verbal representation of visual representation) and image-text criticism as established in recent scholarship and based on the theoretical approaches of Murray Krieger, James Heffernan, and W. J. T. Mitchell, among other contemporary scholars. It

employs a novel approach to the ekphrastic analysis of literary works in comparison to the visual lithographs and paintings of noteworthy Colombian costumbristas. This study particularly explores how these cuadros represented nineteenth-century national spaces, women, and other marginalized groups.

In Colombia, the post-Independence sociopolitical context is crucial to understanding how the different regional elite intellectuals utilized Costumbrismo to portray their nation's unique customs and traditions as seen through their particular political philosophy. It examines the Colombian works as taken to reveal a prevalent Conservative worldview over the Liberal political paradigm. I have selected relevant cuadros and artículos de costumbres published in periodicals and visual works from the nineteenth century by the following costumbristas, namely, Colombians José Manuel Groot (1800-1878) and Ramón Torres Méndez (1809-1885) in addition to other writers of cuadros de costumbres, studied in juxtaposition to corresponding paintings by Groot and Torres Méndez, as representatives of Colombian Conservative thought. Their works appeared in publications such as the newspaper *El Mosaico* (1858-1872) and the anthology *Museo de cuadros de costumbres* (1866).



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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

cuadro / cuadros	cuadro de costumbres / cuadros de costumbres.
Museo (I and II)	Museo de cuadros de costumbres y variedades. Vols. I–II, Universidad de los Andes, 2020. Edited by Felipe Martínez Pinzón. Originally edited by José María Vergara y Vergara, 1866.
Museo de cuadros	Museo de cuadros de costumbres: Variedades y viajes. Vols. I–IV, Bogotá: Foción Mantilla, 1866. Edited by José Eugenio Díaz Castro. Biblioteca Virtual del Banco de la República.

*PART ONE:*

*Ekphrastic Emblems and Political Paradigms*

*in Colombian Costumbrismo (1830-1880)*

**I. INTRODUCTION AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK:  
EXPLORING EKPHRASIS IN *COSTUMBRISMO***

*Un cuadro quiero pintar, en que represente al vivo  
Las costumbres y maneras, del rústico campesino.  
Costumbres con su lenguaje, no de la clase del rico.  
Que no pinto sino al pobre, con sus modales y dichos.*

—J. M. Groot, *Cuadros rústicos de costumbres granadinas*, 1858.

**A. Introduction**

In nineteenth-century Colombia, the painter and writer José Manuel Groot (1800-1878), in his written *cuadro de costumbres* titled “Un sueño de dos colores” (1860) and his watercolor painting *La era del progreso* (ca. 1849) emphasizes the connection of the text with the visual image in order to project a national imaginary via his Conservative lens. Groot was unique in that he not only wrote but was also a talented artist. To accompany the text, Groot paints a satirical image of Tomás Cipriano de Mosquera, a leader who turned against the Conservatives by adhering to Liberal ideals. Mosquera, in the painting, appears next to his countrymen or other political leaders who had supported him. This political caricature (intensified by the chiaroscuro of light and dark colors) echoes the message of the *cuadro de costumbres*, “Un sueño de dos colores,” which references the aspired return of this concept of progress for Colombia during the time of Mosquera’s leadership, as an attempt to relive the previous Enlightenment ideals of scientific, educational, and political reforms borrowed from Europe. Groot juxtaposes in the painting the images of *light* – signifying progress, science, and knowledge – with *darkness* – denoting defeat, wars, and



death. He does the same in the written text when he says in an ironic tone: “¡Adelante, adelante con el progreso, con la perfectibilidad indefinida!, mientras extingue y demuele los elementos de la civilización y del saber, debidos a un gobierno a quien se acusa de ser enemigo de las luces” (Groot, *Historia y cuadros* 126-127). Groot indicates in his painting what he perceived in the dream of his text: disillusionment and irony. Towards the top of the painting, a crow appears flying over a crab, holding a sign that reads, “Progreso del país” (González and Segura, *Groot* 41). A series of ironic myths encompass this painting, as clearly the symbolism here is opulent; the crow emits connotations of death, and the crab is an animal that tends to walk backward, yet simultaneously it is holding a political message of progress and order so that the allegorical representations here contradict the message. Meanwhile, the white block of stone next to a bottle can perhaps be a reference to Mosquera but can also be an overt reference to masonry in Colombia, which was closely related to the Independence movements in Latin America but was a movement feared by the Conservatives.

Since Plato, the relationship between painting and literature, known as *ekphrasis*,<sup>1</sup> has been defined as a vivid and detailed description of objects and persons in both forms of artistic expression (Scott 1). This Greek term is often associated with Plutarch’s notion of *energeia*, or pictorial vividness, in the context of rhetorical description and verisimilitude when explaining an object, which set the foundation for verbal-visual

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<sup>1</sup> Emily Bilman’s *Modern Ekphrasis* (2013) introduces the original classical reference made in Jean Hagstrum’s invaluable book, *The Sister Arts* (1985), explaining the etymology of the Greek term *ekphrasis* (ἐκφρασις) or *ekphrazein*, consisting of *ek* (“out”) and *phrasis* (“to speak”), as to mean “to speak out” or “to tell in full,” and noting the definition of ‘ecphrasis’ (Latin) “by citing an example from 1715: ‘a plain declaration or interpretation of a thing.’ The Oxford Classical Dictionary defines it as ‘the rhetorical description of a work of art.’ Saintsbury says it is ‘a set description intended to bring person, place, picture &c., vividly before the mind's eye’ (*A History of Criticism and Literary Taste in Europe*, New York, 1902, I, 491)” (qtd. in Bilman 1).

imagery (Hagstrum 11).<sup>2</sup> While Plato focused on the classical philosophical thought of imitation from an ideal metaphysical form, Aristotle's perception of *mimesis*, understood as imitation or representation (as in the "creation of new artworks in different domains"), traced this phenomenon to ekphrasis in the fundamental connection between painting and poetry and the notion of intertextuality (Bilman 5, 18).<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, Horace, in his *Ars Poetica*, interpreted the principle of *mimesis* with the Latin maxim "*ut pictura poesis*" (as is painting so is poetry) and the symbiosis of "the imitation of the literary model of *other* authors" representing distinct aspects of real-life empirically (Bergmann 8; Bilman 6).

It is from this notional thinking of ekphrasis that new approaches to this field have commenced. Although the knowledge of classical rhetorical ekphrasis is indispensable and has been studied for centuries, contemporary criticism surrounding this concept has since been expanded and redefined in various ways and applied to many literary and artistic movements. Particularly in the nineteenth century, the ekphrastic discourse was recommenced and reexamined to illuminate the complex ways in which the literary and visual arts interconnect.

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<sup>2</sup> Another definition of this term mentions how "Ekphrasis refers to the literary and rhetorical trope of summoning up – through words – an impression of a visual stimulus, object, or scene. As critical trope...[it] is attested from the first century CE onwards: it is discussed in the Imperial Greek *Progymnasmata*, where it is defined as a 'descriptive speech which brings the subject shown before the eyes with visual vividness.'" Refer to "Ekphrasis," Oxford Classical Dictionary online (July 27, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199381135.013.2365>. In other words, "To create *energeia* is to use words to yield so vivid a description that [the verbal artists]...place the represented object before the reader's (hearer's) inner eye. This is as much as a verbal artist could hope for: almost as good as a picture, which in turn is almost as good as the thing itself" (Krieger 14).

<sup>3</sup> In *The Poetics* by Aristotle, imitation is demonstrated through the creation of poetry and painting from observations of natural activities, resulting in the ability to "deduce a person's identity by studying his painted representation in a portrait...[and] if we do not know the represented person, we can still enjoy the artistic imitation of the portrait because we can appreciate the artist's talent" (Bilman 19). Plato developed the original concept of *mimesis* where all works of art are an "imitation" of the real world as represented in literature and art (see "Literary Criticism in Antiquity," Oxford Classical Dictionary online (March 7, 2016), <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199381135.013.3730>).

Overview of Research Question(s) and Purpose: Exploring Ekphrasis in *Costumbrismo*

*Costumbrismo*, a peculiar literary and artistic genre that first appeared in late eighteenth-century Spain, achieved significant popularity in the mid-nineteenth century in Latin America. This emblematic current merged elements of Romanticism and Realism and, in general, detailed through vibrant text – and distinctive paintings – daily events with realistic eyes and visualized traditional scenes of daily life. *Costumbrismo*, conceptualized as a modest yet multifaceted literary and artistic genre, brilliantly illustrates and describes social types and local customs representative of nineteenth-century society and everyday culture (Moriuchi 216). One of its main subgenres, amply distributed through the press – the *cuadros* (or *artículos*) *de costumbres* – is generally defined as “short literary sketches on customs, manners, or character” about a particular region or society (Luebering 57). This literary subgenre has been classified through concise but vibrant prose based on its form and aesthetic value. It consists of descriptive and poignant depictions of everyday traditions and settings, lacking a complex plot and closed structure, and often showcasing satirical characters or ethnographical representations that echo certain political and social instances within a specific nation or region (Watson, *El cuadro* 38-39). Thus, the essence of *Costumbrismo* inspired Latin American nations to gradually “accept a ‘national reality’ stretching beyond the emphatic geographic, ethnographic, economic, social, and cultural boundaries” (González Echevarría 457).

This dissertation investigates the interconnectivity of image and text in nineteenth-century *costumbrista* works from Colombia, construing the term ekphrasis as a literary trope studied in contemporary frameworks through its relation to the visual and written representations produced in response to the contested political and social paradigms of this

post-independence nation. Essentially, the archetypical portrayals of Latin American history and culture found in the *costumbrista* art and literature of this period served as a reflection of both the artists' and the writers' ambivalent notions about modernity, its effect on the newly independent republics, and their autonomous perceptions (albeit through an ideological prism) of the reality of their countries after attaining independence from Spain. The quest for national identity and cultural definition has since become the underlying priority for Latin American territories. In tandem with the altering sociopolitical context of this scholarly debate, the interplay of verbal and visual representations in nineteenth-century postcolonial Latin American *Costumbrismo* evokes invaluable connections as a result of this relationship between its literature and art.

After the wars of Independence from about 1810 to 1825, *Costumbrismo* writings and paintings portraying scenes of everyday life for the new emerging republics began to appear (Sommer, *Foundational* 13-14). These scenes exemplified typical characteristics of a particular nation's social context, including preferences in education, traditional attire, and government and religious worldviews and festivities with a specific purpose: to portray the nation in a favorable light to foreigners (mainly Europeans) and create a sense of national unity, despite ongoing political disputes and social disparities. The post-independence era marked an ideological and aesthetic transition from Neoclassicism towards Romanticism and Realism, with *Costumbrismo* as an incipient variation that thrived in this cumbersome context shortly after it emerged in Spain. Nineteenth-century Latin American literature has predominantly been characterized by a nationalistic tone infused with sentiments of discontent attributed to the enduring political and economic

tumults of the time, overlapping with the influential traces of Romanticism (Pedraza Jiménez 392, 418).

Given that literature was seldom profitable, the public function of amplifying a political perspective or cry for social justice became a popular venue of expression (Henríquez-Ureña 114). Moreover, while nineteenth-century Latin American prose has centered mainly on the national novel,<sup>4</sup> the shorter “sketches of customs” of daily life published through the press and distributed in pamphlets gained rapid popularity. In essence, these works have been esteemed for their highly descriptive and symbolic representations of each nation, conveying a romantic tone and featuring important aspects of history and culture (Pedraza Jiménez 419, 426; Henríquez-Ureña 129).

Therefore, the main ambition of this study considers the following question: What is the function of ekphrasis within the descriptive-pictorial *cuadros de costumbres*, and how is it useful in the representation of a particular nation or society? By concentrating on the literary *cuadros de costumbres* and their relationship to the visual *costumbrista* illustrations produced in nineteenth-century Colombia, an exemplary nation that was prolific in this genre, this dissertation hopes to provide new insights into this fascinating topic that has progressively gained more and more scholarly interest. By applying the theories of ekphrasis and image-text to this area of study, it is my hope that this

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<sup>4</sup> Some of the most popular novels from this period include Jorge Isaac’s sentimental novel *María* (1867) or even Domingo Faustino Sarmiento’s controversial *Facundo: Civilization and Barbarism* (1845). For more on the significance of Latin America’s “national novels,” refer to Doris Sommer, *Foundational Fictions: The National Romances of Latin America*. U of California P, 1991. According to Sommer, nineteenth-century Latin American novels fused romantic ideals and utilitarian “dreams” based on European literary influences, where the “elite wrote romances for zealous readers, privileged by definition (since mass education was still one of the dreams) and likely to be flattered by the personal portraits that were all the rage in bourgeois painting and in narrative local color, the *Costumbrismo* that became a standard feature of the novels” (Sommer, *Foundational*, 14).

investigation will foment innovative ways to employ the literary trope of ekphrasis with other significant works of *Costumbrismo*.

Drawing from a variety of sources studying *Costumbrismo* literature and art, this research strives to learn how ekphrasis functions in these verbal-visual representations, which were closely intertwined with social and political cues of nineteenth-century Colombian society. The primary aim is to offer new approaches to examining the *cuadros de costumbres* and their relevant paintings in conjunction with image-textual analysis in order to illustrate vital historical and cultural records ingrained within nineteenth-century art and literature. Secondly, this approach seeks to highlight how *cuadros* are likewise tainted with sociopolitical paradigms perceived in the textual descriptions and visual images as subtle displays of national discovery that reveal satirical, pedagogical, or moral intentions. Finally, these works of *Costumbrismo* reflect the hegemonic customs of local people, as seen through the eyes of their Conservative or Liberal literati and intellectuals, as the higher social classes produced contested discourses based on their political ideologies.

In framing the conceptual framework and argument of this study, particularly how theories on image-text and ekphrasis can be connected to the intrinsic historical and sociopolitical elements perceived in the *cuadros de costumbres* and related paintings, this study pays particular attention to the following manifestations in the literary texts in comparison to the visual arts: (1) the alterations brought forth in this depiction as a result of opposing political ideologies while noting a paramount Conservative posture; (2) the manner in which urban and rural places were depicted with the advent of modernity and urbanization in Colombia; and (3) the representation of women and other marginalized

minorities in these societies, among other significant representations illustrated in the *cuadros*.

First and foremost, it is crucial to understand the close connection between the descriptive and vivid *cuadros de costumbres* to the painting techniques observed in *Costumbrismo*. This artistic movement had acquired the denominations of “pinturas de viajes,” or even “ilustración científica” (Sánchez Cabra, “Imagen de la nación,” par 1-2). This nomenclature was propelled by genre painting that illustrated traditional everyday scenes and types, which was becoming increasingly popular in the nineteenth century as it gradually took the place of the religious *peinture d’histoire* associated with the Catholic faith.<sup>5</sup> Latin American modern history scholar, Efraín Sánchez Cabra, has addressed the context of Colombia’s *costumbrista* paintings and literature in the nineteenth century, emphasizing the following point:

las pinturas de tipos, indumentarias, costumbres y vistas notables estuvieron más estrechamente relacionadas con la literatura de viajes y la descripción científica, sobre todo geográfica, que con la literatura de costumbres. Solo excepcionalmente se emplearon para ilustrar cuadros literarios, mientras lo contrario parece haber sido más frecuente, es decir, la composición de piezas literarias costumbristas basadas en pinturas...un vistazo a sus orígenes y fuentes pone al descubierto un hecho fundamental: la pintura de

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<sup>5</sup> Sánchez Cabra makes the distinction about the shift from religious art at the start of the nineteenth century in Colombia, saying: “debe anotarse que en Colombia la *peinture d’histoire* solo se practicó en su variante religiosa, pues durante la época colonial únicamente por excepción se trataron los temas clásicos o mitológicos, y los temas históricos solo comenzaron a surgir en la segunda mitad del siglo XIX. En realidad, lo que reemplazó a la pintura religiosa como expresión predominante fue el arte del retrato, en especial el retrato al óleo y, durante la primera mitad del siglo, la miniatura en acuarela” (“Imagen de la nación,” par 3).

este género alcanzó a todos los continentes y no exclusivamente a América Latina. (“Imagen de la nación,” par 5).

As evidenced, the original *costumbrista* paintings of social types and customs were primarily related to travel narratives inspired by scientific-led voyages<sup>6</sup> in the late eighteenth to the early nineteenth century to collect data on the geographical and botanical landscape and local types of Latin America. In certain instances, a painting was directly made to a literary *cuadro*, while most cases occurred with textual descriptions derived from paintings. In addition, Sánchez Cabra discloses the significance of this artistic style that extended globally and beyond Latin America but, at the same time, remained limited by the linguistic quandary given the Spanish terms *Costumbrismo* or *costumbrista*.<sup>7</sup>

Also, scholar Enrique Castrill in his article, “El cuadro de costumbres” (1978), asserts that the literary classification of these “sketches” of customs, which, unlike short stories, are quite different despite their similar short narrative style. While the *cuento* or short story tends to have a clear structure and cohesive plot, the *cuadro de costumbres* is constructed more like a collage of vivid descriptions, dialogues, and anecdotal

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<sup>6</sup> The nineteenth-century scientific quests in Colombia and throughout Latin America hyped the need for cataloging the nation’s flora and fauna in the *Expedición Botánica* from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, which in many respects paved the way for the literary and artistic genres of *Costumbrismo*. This was followed by the cartographical mapping of landscapes and territories, which also extended as an anthropological classification of the different regional people groups, with writings and drawings gathered and published for the mid-nineteenth century *Comisión Corográfica* (Uribe Hanabergh 126-128; Rodríguez, “El ensamblaje visual” 46-47). In *Patricios en Contianda* (2021), Felipe Martínez Pinzón explores the impact of the *Comisión Corográfica* in Colombia. Based on the analysis presented by scholar Nancy Appelbaum, he emphasizes the following: “Espacial y temporalmente, la Comisión tenía un horizonte modernizador: blanquear la población a través de la inmigración (preferiblemente del norte de Europa), identificación de baldíos para habilitar su ingreso, adecuación de rutas exportadoras de productos tropicales, la creación de la jornada laboral y el confinamiento en fábricas para la reconversión de campesinos en proletarios a través de su desvinculación de los medios de producción” (*Patricios* 65-66).

<sup>7</sup> The critic further stresses this point: “La palabra ‘*Costumbrismo*’ no parece tener equivalente en los idiomas europeos mayores distintos al español, de donde surge un problema lingüístico injustificado y fácilmente subsanable, evitando el uso del término ‘pintura costumbrista’” (Sánchez, “Imagen de la nación” par 5).



commentaries, which are envisioned as a kind of written “portrait” distinctive for its lively imagery describing local social types or cultural scenes in a typical national setting (Pupo Walker 6). In this sense, the *costumbrista* authors treated the text as if it were a plastic art piece, as stated by Pupo-Walker: “los costumbristas una y otra vez, invitan a la contemplación del texto como si se trata de una creación plástica” (7).

The interconnectivity of *Costumbrismo*, mainly its association between the plastic and verbal arts, underscores the notion that literary “sketches” or *cuadros*, lithographs, watercolors, and other paintings cannot be studied as separate ideas and units. Instead, they can be perceived as a complex inter-related process of literary and visual arts. For this reason, this study offers a selection of *costumbrista* paintings and written Colombian *cuadros de costumbres*, which I analyze with the tools offered by valuable theoretical readings of ekphrasis by the following critics, which will be explored in the next section: Murray Krieger (1992), James Heffernan (1991; 1994), and W. J. T. Mitchell (1994).<sup>8</sup> This study also gathers the contemporary criticism presented by Kathryn Mayers (2012) and Pedro Agudelo Rendón (2013), among other scholars.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> The core theoretical approaches to ekphrasis referenced in this study include Murray Krieger’s *Ekphrasis: The Illusion of the Natural Sign* (1992); James Heffernan’s article “Ekphrasis and Representation” (1991) and *Museum of Words* (1994); and W. J. T. Mitchell’s *Picture Theory* (1994), especially his renowned article “Ekphrasis and the Other.” Moreover, I will briefly reference some of the original developments made by Jean Hagstrum in *The Sister Arts* (1958), Grant F. Scott’s *The Sculpted Word* (1994), Peter Wagner’s *Icons, Texts, Iconotexts: Essays on Ekphrasis and Intermediality* (1996) and other recent perspectives like Emily Bilman’s *Modern Ekphrasis* (2013) but adapting their interpretations towards my own working theory of ekphrasis.

<sup>9</sup> In the scope of verbal-visual criticism, this dissertation was greatly inspired by the scholarship of contemporary critics, primarily from Kathryn Mayers’ *Visions of Empire in Colonial Spanish American Ekphrastic Writing* (2012) and Pedro Agudelo Rendón’s “Las imágenes en el texto: Aportes de la crítica literaria colombiana a la teoría de ékphrasis” (2013), in addition to other relevant scholars mentioned throughout this study. Moreover, several sources provided a wealth of knowledge utilized throughout this research, especially those pertaining to Colombian *Costumbrismo* literary criticism and art history, including scholars

Hence, in analyzing the different portrayals in the image and text of this Latin American nation, the political and historical elements of nineteenth-century Colombia showcased in this analysis exemplify the associations to the idea of imagining a nation<sup>10</sup> with each author and artist formulating a specific viewpoint of their reality. The constructional paradigms of noteworthy Colombian *costumbristas*, along with the respective geographical, historical, political, and cultural visions of their nation, deepen the implications of this investigation when comparing image and text.

For this purpose, I have selected a series of relevant *cuadros* and *artículos de costumbres* as published in Colombian national periodicals and collective works from the nineteenth century (mainly from 1830-1880) published in various publications such as *El Mosaico* (1858-1872) and *Museo de cuadros de costumbres* (1866), both compiled by José María Vergara y Vergara<sup>11</sup> (1836-1872), with a special spotlight on the respective paintings by the following noteworthy Colombian *costumbristas* of this period; namely, José Manuel

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Kari Soriano Salkjelsvik, Felipe Martínez Pinzón, Beatriz González Aranda, Efraín Sánchez Cabra, and many others.

<sup>10</sup> Some of the ideas of national creation posed by Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities* are briefly referenced in this study. Rendering a sense of nationalism through a “manmade” notion of socio-cultural imagined boundaries or identities occur when a nation is “imagined as a community, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship (Anderson 9). See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Verso, 2006.

<sup>11</sup> *El Mosaico* (1858-1872) is one of the most significant literary newspapers founded by Conservative writer José María Vergara y Vergara with José Eugenio Díaz Castro (author of the Colombian national novel *Manuela*). Around the same time, Vergara y Vergara undertook the task of compiling a “collage” of the most iconic *cuadros* published in *El Mosaico* and other contemporary newspapers, in the anthology titled *Museo de cuadros de costumbres* (1866). Mindful of the image of Colombia he wanted to showcase it to Europe with this anthology, he once confessed that his initial desire was to give it the original title of *Los granadinos pintados por sí mismos*, following the trend of other renowned nineteenth-century compilations of text-image productions of “sketches of customs,” like the original foreign European versions (i.e. *Les Français peints par eux-mêmes* [1840-1842], or *Los españoles pintados por sí mismos* [1843-1844]), but he changed it to *Museo de cuadros* given the fact that Colombia at the time was undergoing a civil war (1830-1862) with the Liberals in power, and the nation undergoing a name change from Confederación Granadina (1858-1863) to Estados Unidos de Colombia (Martínez Pinzón, *Museo* I, xxiv, xxx, xlvi).

Groot (1800-1878) and Ramón Torres Méndez (1809-1885), along with a comparison to the oeuvre represented José María Samper (1828-1888) and others.<sup>12</sup> Their works were published alongside other relevant newspapers and collections and studied in this visual-verbal analysis in juxtaposition to corresponding paintings by Groot and Torres Méndez, regarded as Colombia's most dynamic and influential artists of the time.<sup>13</sup>

Understanding the relationship between the written *cuadro de costumbres* and the visual work of art ultimately serves to explore three essential research questions proposed in this analysis: (1) How does addressing the image directly, as perceived in the painting and contrasted with the *cuadros*, bring a new understanding of the function of ekphrasis in the written text? (2) In interpreting the textual *cuadros* and the image (painting), how does the verbal-visual ekphrastic method of “painting with words”<sup>14</sup> reveal the author's internal perception of their surroundings and visions of nationhood for Colombia during the nineteenth century? And, (3) taking into account the low numbers of literate citizens in Colombia during the nineteenth century (in statistics)<sup>15</sup> when contrasting the verbal

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<sup>12</sup> A few *cuadros de costumbres* have also been integrated in this study from the following Colombian *costumbristas*: José Caicedo Rojas (1816-1898), José Manuel Marroquín (1827-1908), and León Hinestroza (1816-1880), and Manuel María Madieto (1815-1888).

<sup>13</sup> Considering the vast array of *costumbrista* paintings from Colombia in 1830-1880, the ones selected for this study have been carefully reviewed to approximate the time of publication and theme of the *cuadro* published within the same cultural context. In some cases, the texts and visuals share the same or slightly similar title.

<sup>14</sup> As referenced by Colombian scholar Felipe Martínez Pinzón, “La práctica efrástica —ese ‘*pintar con palabras*,’ metáfora común del género— es de curso corriente dentro de la escritura de costumbre que recurrió comúnmente a metáforas pictóricas como ‘cuadro,’ ‘galería’ o ‘boceto’” (*Museo* I, 112, my emphasis).

<sup>15</sup> According to a recent study, the literacy rate in Colombia at the end of the nineteenth century was one of the lowest in Latin America. For a detailed analysis on the education of Colombia and statistical data showing the rate of illiteracy compared to other Latin American nations in the nineteenth-century, see data and graphs reported in María Teresa Ramírez and Irene Salazar, “El surgimiento de la educación en Colombia: ¿en qué fallamos?” *Economía colombiana del siglo XIX*, Dec. 2010, pp. 419–481.

message in the *cuadro de costumbres* versus the graphic imagery depicted in the paintings, what is the vision of society displayed to the masses that is portrayed via a political paradigm? Are there any contradictions in the relationship exhibited between the written *cuadros* and the paintings?

It was not unusual for Colombian *costumbrista* artists of the nineteenth century to have been connected to a particular political or military group. The leading Colombian elite believed, much like their European counterparts, that this type of literature was part of a global literary network, exemplified in the collection of *Museo de cuadros*, for instance, as a “reacción a las reformas liberales a nivel nacional” (Martínez Pinzón, *Museo I*, xv-xvi). In effect, Conservatives felt threatened by the Liberals regarding their core national values, the separation of Church and State, and other debates based on their religious beliefs and how the nation should be governed. Specifically, Conservatives Groot and Torres Méndez have been recognized as the “pintores de costumbres más reputados del medio siglo XIX colombiano” (Soriano Salkjelsvik and Martínez Pinzón, *Revisitar* 26). Regarding the latter, Sánchez Cabra makes the following observation: “como casi todos los escritores costumbristas de su tiempo, en su mayoría conservadores, Torres Méndez profesaba públicamente antipatía por la política, a la que se consideraba como el mal del siglo pues los efectos que produjo eran para muchos equiparables con los de la peste. Pero, como todos sus contemporáneos, no estuvo dispuesto a mantenerse al margen de los acontecimientos” (Sánchez Cabra, “Ramón Torres” 21).

Indeed, Groot and Torres Méndez were essential representatives of nineteenth-century Colombian Conservative thought,<sup>16</sup> dissenting from their Liberal counterparts who deemed themselves to be instigators of a modern progressive nation in Colombia, like the famed José María Samper (particularly in his early stage as a Liberal because he later sided with some of the core values of the Conservative ideology).<sup>17</sup> In comparison, Samper's political and intellectual upbringing had evolved from a mid-century Liberal radicalism to embrace a shift towards a more conservative political and religious ideology in the 1860s until joining the Conservative party around 1876. He also assisted in the 1886 Constitution for Colombia, when the radical Liberal hegemony had subsided (D'Allemand, *Samper*, 1).

Furthermore, elite Colombian authors of the respected literary group and newspaper *El Mosaico*, with many of the works published in *Museo de cuadros de costumbres*, were cognizant of creating these cross-cultural "sketches" as a way to represent an all-encompassing version of national literature, especially under the direction of Conservative writer Vergara y Vergara (Martínez Pinzón, *Museo* I, lv). As indicated by Andrés Gordillo Restrepo, the reason for this aesthetic motive in portraying a diversified yet collective collage of *cuadros* to represent Colombian national culture – from the perspective of the leading literati – was that it substantiated the aesthetic power of a multifaceted nation, which emphasized quotidian, autochthonous traditions within their own territory, thereby replacing the former universal culture of classicism as a kind of

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<sup>16</sup> Regarded as one of the most important nineteenth-century political cartoon publication in Colombia, *Los Matachines Ilustrados*, directed by Torres Méndez and Groot, was a short-lived anti-radical newspaper that strongly opposed the Liberal leader José María Melo around 1854-1855 (Sánchez Cabra, "Ramón Torres" 21; González and Segura, *Groot* 86).

<sup>17</sup> On this point, Samper's works explored the contested political paradigms of Colombia and even argued that one's Catholic faith could be interconnected to the democratic liberal ideology, as explored in his novel *Martín Flores* (1866) and other relevant works (D'Allemand, *Samper* 6).

“revolución estética” (22).<sup>18</sup> Hence, the portrayal of traditions and customs of the time are depicted verbally and visually through the *costumbristas*’ repertoire.

#### Premises, Objectives, and Outline

The present study examines the ekphrastic elements of visual representation of Colombian *costumbrista* works through a new lens. It considers the relationship between the symbols of national identity with the convergent political ideologies represented visually and verbally via ekphrastic expressions connected to the pictorial aspects of *costumbrista* art and prose. As a result, the *costumbrista* writers are analyzed with associated paintings that match the themes of the *cuadros de costumbres* at the time they were published, often found in the periodicals and journals of the time, along with the paintings by Colombian artists such as J. M. Groot and Torres Méndez, in contrast to works by other relevant *costumbristas*.

While assessing the literary and illustrative works within the same context, it becomes clear that both the verbal and visual representations echo cultural customs and traditional practices that convey divergent symbolic political foci. This study also explores the ambivalence toward modernity in nineteenth-century Latin America and the role of urbanization. Furthermore, I will pay particular attention to the representation and the role

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<sup>18</sup> Considering that there was a global reach in mind for these publications (especially for European readers), the targeted audience of these prominent newspapers were mostly Colombian erudite and elite individuals who had the economic and educational means to purchase the newspapers. *El Mosaico* maintained an impressive number of subscribers throughout its extended years of publication, and it likewise provided quality content, including some the most representational Colombian *cuadros de costumbres* (Gordillo Restrepo 39, 43-44).

of women and other marginalized minorities in these *cuadros* and how they reflect their positions in this post-independence Latin American society.

Based on my studies of the relationship between the written texts and painting, concentrating on an array of *cuadros*, I explore two main premises. Principally, (1) how distinctively perceived national ideas are transferred from text to image from Colombian nineteenth-century examples drawn from the relationship between *costumbrista* texts and paintings by artists such as J. M. Groot and Torres Méndez, among others. Secondly, (2) how the imagery projected in “sketches of customs” exemplifies rural country life from the gaze of the city elite, and the depiction of women and other marginalized groups (in the context of societal traditions in Colombia) varies based on ideological notions which shape their definition of national distinctiveness.

In this respect, while examining the connection between the literature and visual arts in the context of nineteenth-century *Costumbrismo* during the course of this analysis, the following primary and secondary objectives are taken into account to produce innovative and relevant scholarship in this field, particularly in terms of these aspects: (1) analyze the collective image of the nation expressed through a comparative study of selected written and visual nineteenth-century *cuadros de costumbres* from Colombia as perceived through a Conservative lens; and (2) provide clarifications and annotations to interpret the term ekphrasis from a novel perspective; specifically, from Colombian nineteenth-century *costumbrista* works and the projection of significant sociopolitical and cultural conventions. This study also examines the following secondary yet relevant perspectives of nineteenth-century Colombian *Costumbrismo*, specifically how the visual and written testimony of the *cuadros de costumbres*: (3) reflected the particular political

viewpoints of the time, from Conservatism to Liberalism, including the varying attitudes toward modernization; (4) revealed the effects of urbanization in Colombia and the contrasts between the Bogotá elite and the rural inhabitants of other parts of the country; and (5) revealed the thought-provoking and ambiguous portrayal of women and other marginalized groups in nineteenth-century Colombia.

In terms of the organization of this study, the dissertation is divided into two main parts. Part I is titled “Ekphrastic Emblems and Political Paradigms in Colombian *Costumbrismo* (1830-1880).” This introductory chapter aims to present the theoretical framework that consists first of an attempt to define the phenomena of ekphrasis as established in recent literature as a tool with which to examine the relationship between paintings and visual descriptions as illustrated in the corresponding literary works. It also explores the state of the art in *Costumbrismo* studies, defining the *cuadros de costumbres* and the entrenched literary value these textual accounts provide for this form of analysis.

The second chapter provides an overview of nineteenth-century Colombian socio-political history within the literary context of *Costumbrismo* necessary for the groundwork in this research, expanded for Colombia from a Conservative lens. In effect, understanding the historical, socio-political, and literary contexts of these emerging countries provides the backbone for interpreting the construction of a nation’s identity throughout the examples shown in the subsequent chapters. It also profiles the Colombian Conservative ideas of the *costumbristas* through the literary and artistic works of *costumbristas*, in many cases by the same author/artist José Manuel Groot and artist Ramón Torres Méndez.

In examining the origins of *Costumbrismo*, national and political ideologies are analyzed, evidencing how the different regional elite intellectuals – who were both



Conservatives and Liberals in Colombia – portrayed their nation’s unique traditions by adding political and cultural undertones to the collective purpose of creating a national identity. These examples as portrayed in the most noteworthy *cuadros de costumbres* and paintings from this literary and artistic movement. Furthermore, the contrast and similarities which result from the distinctive interpretations of Colombian visual and verbal portrayals in *Costumbrismo* set the foundation to establish new grounds on ekphrastic representations that reflect distinct visions of nationhood and particular political mindsets. The paintings of relevant artists from these two nations are selected to connect the imagery from the textual descriptions to the visual configurations of the author/artist and provide discourse on the political and social contradictions that guided the contested identities of each nation.

The following section includes Part II, titled “Sketches of National Spaces and Marginalized Identities in Nineteenth-Century Colombian *Costumbrismo*.” This part surveys the connection between the image/text perspectives employed when studying the nineteenth-century Colombian “sketches” or *cuadros de costumbres* that illustrate national spaces and marginalized ethnographic individuals within its postcolonial society and provides a further understanding of the different aspects of a nation. At a glance, the third chapter centers on the idealization of rural spaces by the Conservative elite from the city that depicts political ideologies over national imagery behind the *tipos y escenas* from Colombian territory.

For Colombia, the painting and the written text were sometimes done by the same artist, which contrasts with examples where the paintings were the local artist was inspired by a foreign painter, particularly influenced by the scientific and artistic advancements of

the time. The geographical and social constituents that make up the nation of Colombia, with the city of Bogotá representing the hegemonic power of the capital with paintings and written texts by the elite gazing at the coastal port cities that were poorer and considered less civilized. This section also mentions the contrast to some Liberal political paradigms as represented in the works of José Caicedo Rojas and José María Samper (who later turned Conservative). It exemplifies the ekphrastic representations of the nation based on their *cuadros de costumbres*.

In contrast, the fourth chapter showcases the social types of Colombia's inhabitants and citizens, ranging from the elite leaders and society women to the more marginalized individuals. These marginalized social types are professed by the elite (usually white) men's perspective of what their nation *should* look like, or at least, what they expect it to be – whether it be from a Conservative and traditional lens or a more Liberal and progressive one (Martínez Pinzón, "People," 44-45).<sup>19</sup> These findings are compared to paintings of the period, developing parallel themes to the *cuadros*. It analyzes image-text connections to uncover the "veiled" and marginalized individuals in Colombian nineteenth-century societies – mainly women, Indigenous, and Black people – those marginalized by lingering hegemonic mindsets associated with European colonialism.

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<sup>19</sup> Martínez Pinzón explores the composition behind Colombia's elite and their process for adapting their vision of the nation and its diverse society according to their own interests and political biases. He indicates how the nation's *cuadros de costumbres*, especially from Conservative elites like Vergara y Vergara, when mid-century Colombia was undergoing "legal reforms furthered by liberalism makes visible the ways in which sketchers advanced their own ideas of the 'people' in order to create an image of the nation-state that was devoid of racial and class conflict. Hispanophile *criollos* like Vergara as well as recently enriched landowners...composed new Latin American elites fighting for legitimacy." Moreover, these Colombian elite leaders would alter the representation of marginalized individuals of societies in order to present their perspectives of their national reality: "Uprooting indigenous and mixed-race history...Vergara wrote onto the 'Indian Type' his own vision of a Hispano-Catholic national populace, a vision that was in contention with Liberal ideas sponsored by the Colombian Commission" (Martínez Pinzón, "People," 58-59).

Some examples involve the role of clothing and other customs within the hierarchies of society, the role of color in the *costumbrista* illustrations of these individuals, and analyzing the role of regionalisms and other cultural expressions. Building from Groot and Torres Méndez's Conservative depictions of these "faces" of Colombian society, this imagery contrasts sharply with the ruling Liberal progressive ideology.

Finally, the fifth chapter concludes with the epilogue titled "Ekphrastic *Costumbrismo*," offering an overview of the ideas explored through the *cuadros de costumbres* in line with verbal-visual contemporary approaches to ekphrastic theory as well as additional ideas for future research. Even so, a fundamental part of this research study was possible by collecting resources from various libraries, museums, and newspaper archives that have been largely forgotten or overlooked. Within the discipline of literary studies, this analysis also integrates the visual paintings as a way to bring depth to the verbal-visual discussion and present ideas for future topics to analyze the different works within *Costumbrismo* from other nations in Latin America and the world.

## B. State of the Art in *Costumbrismo* Studies: Contribution to the Literature

### Conceptualizing *Costumbrismo*

*Costumbrismo* has been readily defined as a hybrid genre, owing to its abstruse parameters. It combines aspects of both Romanticism and Realism as it presents traditional customs of autochthonous daily life, emphasizing individualism, while at the same time showcasing evidence of the nineteenth-century scientific desire to catalog and categorize everything (Butler 82-84).<sup>20</sup> Relevant scholarship has reexamined *Costumbrismo* and similar literary movements influenced by the mimetic concept of imitation (Escobar, “La mimesis costumbrista” 261),<sup>21</sup> birthed from eighteenth-century literary and aesthetic criticism amidst the revolutionary times of social and ideological manifestations leading to the romantic period (Escobar, “Costumbrismo” 118).

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<sup>20</sup> Critics have also noted the resemblance between *Costumbrismo* works and travel chronicles that were being inspired by the scientific advancements of the nineteenth-century, as “both genres of travel and *costumbrista* narratives of the period shares many points of common interest: both are hybrid genres in which essay, autobiography and memoir are interwoven with anecdotal stories; both share a taxonomic penchant to point out the customs and *tipos* found throughout the travels recounted; both involve narration in a realist mode; both center around verifiable locations; both involve travelling through various regions, underscored in the travel narrative while implicit in some *costumbrista* pieces and explicit in others. The main difference between them is that in travel narratives the process of traveling is foregrounded whereas in *costumbrista* texts the anecdotal information picked up while in different regions is underscored rather than the journey itself” (Butler 84).

<sup>21</sup> For an in-depth study of the author’s understanding of the concept of mimesis in *Costumbrismo*, refer to José Escobar, “La mimesis costumbrista,” *Romance Quarterly*, no. 35 (1988), pp. 261–270. Also, scholar Frederick Burwick affirms the intricate relation of mimesis, ekphrasis, and aesthetic illusion encompassed as an important factor within the Romantic aesthetic since the Enlightenment in his study published in “Ekphrasis and the Mimetic Crisis of Romanticism,” *Icons, Texts, Iconotexts: Essays on Ekphrasis and Intermediality*, edited by Peter Wagner, Walter de Gruyter, Inc., 1996, pp. 78–104.

Yet, in José Escobar's article, "*Costumbrismo*: Estado de la cuestión,"<sup>22</sup> the critic explains the continued ambiguity behind the conceptualization of defining this literary and artistic movement, evaluating the latest contributions formulated in contemporary times. He recognizes that, "los estudios sobre el *Costumbrismo* no [han] estado sustentados como es debido por un planteamiento teórico suficiente y riguroso, indispensable para fijar el concepto y los límites de este fenómeno literario moderno" (Escobar, "Costumbrismo" 117). Developments on *Costumbrismo* as a literary genre were booming before and after his publication in 1996 (particularly noting the scholarly influences from Leonardo Romero Tobar and Enrique Rubio Cremades),<sup>23</sup> yet Escobar recognizes the need to establish a clearly defined theoretical approach to *Costumbrismo* studies given that, "El costumbrismo se ha considerado más como documento de valor utilitario que como auténtica creación de ficción literaria" (119). To counteract that idea, Escobar emphasizes the importance to redefine *costumbrismo* "como fenómeno artístico de la modernidad" in line with current developments, not focusing just on the literary but also on the artistic experience – particularly, the essence of capturing the way these works are able to perceive and reflect the "local color" ("Costumbrismo" 120).

Some of the earlier and most essential scholarly works that have been recognized and often cited on this subject matter, especially concerning the study of the subgenre of

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<sup>22</sup> Refer to José Escobar, "Costumbrismo: Estado de la cuestión," *Romanticismo 6: Actas del VI Congreso. El Costumbrismo romántico*, edited by Joaquín Álvarez Barrientos et al. Bulzoni, 1996, pp. 117–126.

<sup>23</sup> See Leonardo Romero Tobar, "El *Costumbrismo*," *Panorama crítico del romanticismo*. Editorial Castalia, 1994, pp. 397–430; and Enrique Rubio Cremades, "*Costumbrismo* y novelas," *Historia y crítica de la literatura española 5/1 Romanticismo y Realismo. Primer suplemento*. Crítica, 1994, pp. 218–233.

*cuadros de costumbres*,<sup>24</sup> are the innovative works presented by Frank M. Duffey's *The Early Cuadros de Costumbres in Colombia* (1956), Maida Watson's *El cuadro de costumbres en el Perú decimonónico* (1980), and even Susan Kirkpatrick's article titled, "The Ideology of Costumbrismo" (1978). Since then, new research on the *cuadros de costumbres* has been revisited in twenty-first-century scholarship, expanding the study of *Costumbrismo* from different cultural discourses, literary criticism, and interdisciplinary perspectives.

As addressed by scholar Susan Kirkpatrick, the origins of this movement began in England and France – with traces of it seen in previous literary periods. There were also preliminary appearances in Spain in the eighteenth century for what later came to be termed as *Costumbrismo* (Kirkpatrick 28). Hispanic philological boundaries were ambivalent and not easily defined in the nineteenth century, and despite the period's evident desire to classify everything, *Costumbrismo* proved itself challenging to define.

Scholars like Ana Peñas Ruiz also provided essential developments concerning the state of the art in *Costumbrismo* studies that have expanded in recent decades. Given the intricacies of this field, there is nevertheless considerable demand for more in-depth studies, especially exploring the subgenre of the *cuadros de costumbres*. Indeed, there is still a "need to promote a theory of *Costumbrismo* that accounts for the complexity of this phenomenon in all its aesthetic and literary dimension" (Peñas Ruiz, *Hacia una poética* 605). Peñas Ruiz also mentions that, in contrast to the other more prominent genres like novels, there is not much research solely devoted to the *cuadros de costumbres*, even

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<sup>24</sup> *Costumbrismo* focused on the different social types and scenes from a nation, usually contrasting the city or provincial life, describing local dances, popular festivities, traditional attire, local regionalisms in colloquial dialogues, and other forms of traditional customs. This concept is explored in the third chapter.

though these texts offer some of the most significant contributions in nineteenth-century Spanish American literature (605).

There has also been some ambiguity with cataloguing this movement, as the term “*Costumbrismo*” did not exist in the mid-nineteenth century when most of these initial “sketches of customs” were surfacing. It was not until the end of the century that Miguel de Unamuno coined this term, documented in one of his articles, “La tradición eterna,” originally published in 1895 (Martínez Pinzón, *Museo* I, xxii). In this work, Unamuno had remarked, “Volveremos a mirar el *Costumbrismo*, el *localismo* y *temporalismo*, la invasión de las minucias fotográficas y nuestra salvación en el arte eterno” (qtd. in Peñas Ruiz, *Hacia una poética* 118-119). However, while not necessarily pinpointing to the literary genre of this term, Unamuno had preceded this statement by mentioning the artistic expression of the “*costumbristas*” and “*pintores de costumbres*” as a form of “arte clásico” with a somewhat wistful mindset: “hay un arte eterno y universal, un arte *clásico*, un arte sobrio en color local y temporal, un arte que sobrevivirá al olvido de los costumbristas todos” (119).

*Costumbrismo* has sparked the interest of contemporary scholars. In more recent developments, the scholarship by Kari Soriano Salkjelsvik and Felipe Martínez Pinzón has been helpful for aligning various aspects of *Costumbrismo* studies into one collection. Their edited book titled *Revisitar el Costumbrismo* (2016) presents interdisciplinary approaches to literary works within this transnational genre in Spanish American studies on diverse issues pertaining to the advances in cosmopolitanism, pedagogy, and modernization in the nineteenth-century. In essence, it highlights that “la escritura de tipos y costumbres no es un largo lamento por un pasado perdido, sino todo lo contrario: una

avanzada estética para hacer asimilable la implementación de la modernización en la región: desde la economía agroexportadora hasta el pensamiento racial” (Soriano Salkjelsvik and Martínez Pinzón, *Revisitar* 9).

*Revisitar el Costumbrismo* adds to these studies the insightful contributions by Ana Peñas Ruiz on the origins of the terms within this genre, with clarifications regarding its historical roots and Emmanuel Velayos’s studies of the closely knitted dynamic of political and aesthetic discourses found in nineteenth-century Latin American works. Patricia D’Allemand delves into Colombian *Costumbrismo* with examples of the critical contributions and literary works by the legendary José María Samper, referenced later in this study. Also, Mercedes López Rodríguez and Felipe Martínez Pinzón unveil the issues of race, gender, and class status within a highly diversified nineteenth-century Colombia, as seen in the *cuadros de costumbres* and other works that depict the local color and intricate glimpses of cosmopolitan and provincial scenes. Their combined findings reinforce the historical, sociopolitical, ethnographical, and cultural implications of the Colombian nineteenth-century mindset, especially concerning the different works by authors of *Costumbrismo*.

Echoing this idea about the aesthetic representations in *Costumbrismo* used to depict a nation’s local color and traditional customs, Felipe Martínez Pinzón affirms that this movement can sometimes be compared to the kind of style observed in Realism and Romanticism, depending on the author and context: “el cuadro de costumbres puede vehicular imágenes retardatorias de un color local afín al romanticismo o servir para administrar la población de la república y modernizar al país desde arriba. Esto depende del autor y su contexto social y político” (*Museo* II, 238n15). Moreover, the latest book by



Martínez Pinzón published in 2021, titled, *Patricios en contienda: Cuadros de costumbres, reformas liberales y representación del pueblo en Hispanoamérica (1830-1880)*, has substantiated supplementary knowledge regarding the literary and historical formation of Colombia through a panoramic imprint of the national *pueblo* and the elite (also covering adjoining nations, Venezuela and Ecuador) revealing contested political matters and other underlying topics like race and gender issues in the *cuadros de costumbres*.

Other scholars have associated the original works of this literary and artistic current with the travel chronicles that were flourishing at the time. As Andrés Gordillo Restrepo indicates:

El *Costumbrismo* no es el primer género literario nacional: es un género literario transnacional, que se expande en toda Hispanoamérica en el momento en que se están formando las naciones. Estrechamente relacionados con la literatura de viajes y con la pintura costumbrista, ya en la década de los cuarenta los cuadros de costumbres constituían un género muy practicado en toda América Latina. (Gordillo Restrepo 48)

From this standpoint, it is vital to note that this genre is transnational and multifaceted, extending beyond the literary – from poetry, novels, travel narrative, or *cuadros* or *artículos* and tightly linked to the artistic representations in the *costumbrista* paintings. Equally important, it is crucial to understand the post-independence historical and political context of Latin America and the other regional elite intellectuals employed in *Costumbrismo*.<sup>25</sup> In Colombia, the nineteenth-century ideological conflicts between the

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<sup>25</sup> Refer to the second chapter for the historical and political context of *Costumbrismo* in Colombia.

Conservatives and Liberals played a crucial role in developing national identity. In effect, *costumbristas* sought to portray their nation's unique and authentic traditions in order to justify their ideological principles.

As scholar María Teresa Cristina explained, this new republic was stirred towards modernization and progress,<sup>26</sup> inspiring utilitarian philosophical currents, establishing new schools, the union of artisans, and advocating for economic Liberalism and utopian socialism (101). These important national reforms and antecedents in Colombia shaped the complexity of *Costumbrismo*, which carried on a conscious objective given its prodigious origins. Especially in the culture's unique artistic and literary representations, Cristina notes the impact of these scientific and political tendencies on Colombian *costumbristas*. Hence, the end goal was to create a new sense of identity representing the nation and its political, social, and economic core values. During the preceding eighteenth century, ideas from the Enlightenment were entering Latin America, with the Bourbon Reforms inspiring an increasing interest in scientific knowledge and the freedom to observe one's surroundings with mindful innovation and observation, which led to the 1783-1817 Botanical Expedition in Colombia (Cristina 101-102).<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Towards the end of the century, the new Republics in Latin America were significantly inspired "in varying degrees by the European doctrine of positivism – a philosophy developed in France by Auguste Comte," that unified not just political order but also material progress (Wright and Smale 111).

<sup>27</sup> In addition, the scientific and philosophical trends that were manifesting at the time inspired this creative form of expression: "El *Costumbrismo* significa una nueva actitud frente a la realidad, que implica, a su vez, una nueva modalidad en su representación literaria...[y] la voluntad de construir una nueva realidad nacional en lo político, social y económico...Con tal fin se organiza la Comisión Corográfica (1850-1859), bajo la dirección de Agustín Codazzi. No se trata de una coincidencia el hecho de que el *Costumbrismo* se afiance durante el mismo tiempo en que esta exploración se desarrolla; ambos obedecen al deseo de conocer la tierra y los orígenes y características socio-culturales de su gente" (Cristina 101). For more on this definition, see María Teresa Cristina, "Costumbrismo," *Gran enciclopedia de Colombia*, vol. 4. Círculo de Lectores, 1996, pp. 101–110.

As noted by Tomás Pérez Vejo, the newspapers and illustrated press played a significant role during this period, given that these works “crearon imágenes, visuals y escritas, del territorio nacional, de su historia, de sus paisajes, de sus ciudades, de sus costumbres, de sus tipos populares...Delimitaron lo que era nacional y lo que no” (qtd. in Soriano Salkjelsvik and Martínez Pinzón, *Revisitar* 47). This understanding is based on existing scholarship that has now attributed the notion of studying in *cuadros de costumbres* the pictorial qualities of its literary genre, noting its descriptive and pictorial characteristics, which act as a kind of written *collage*. In essence, *Costumbrismo* served to diffuse the popular ideas (constructed mainly by the elite) regarding the form that the nation should take and helped construct the desired imagery about Colombian national culture through different media as represented in image and text.

In terms of the artistic depths within *Costumbrismo* in connection to the *cuadros de costumbres*, this dissertation has greatly benefited from the incredible scholarship established by Beatriz González Aranda and Efraín Sánchez Cabra. Their research on the history of Colombian art from the eighteenth century to the nineteenth century has been indispensable for this study. Their respective books, such as *José Manuel Groot (1800-1878)* and *Ramón Torres Méndez: Pintor de la Nueva Granada 1809-1885 (1987)*, among other works, emphasize the important legacy of Colombian *costumbrista* artists, particularly the most renowned, Groot and Torres Méndez. Finally, numerous studies on nineteenth-century Colombia's historical, cultural, and sociopolitical contexts have also been explored. One resource that is particularly worth noting is by Andrés Gordillo Restrepo, in the article from 2003 titled, “*El Mosaico (1858-1872): nacionalismo, elites y cultura en la segunda mitad del siglo XIX,*” which focused on the major contributions in

Colombia's most regarded newspaper, *El Mosaico*. His analysis was critical for this study for understanding the bilateral relations and national prospects of Colombia's intellectual elite. Moreover, a recent 2020 edition by Martínez Pinzón on Vergara y Vergara's original anthology from 1866, *Museo de cuadros de costumbres*, has been referenced throughout this study for the pertinent commentary provided on this exemplary collection. Also, the latest publication by Kari Soriano Salkjelsvik, *Sensibilidades conservadoras* (2021), has offered an incredible framework of the aesthetic and cultural discourses beyond the contested political ideologies of Latin American nations in the nineteenth century, which will be explored further in the second chapter.

#### *Cuadros de Costumbres*: Definition and Purpose

In *Early Costumbrista Writers in Spain, 1750-1830*, scholar Clifford Marvin Montgomery provides a succinct definition of the *cuadros de costumbres*, designating how this literary style originated from European eighteenth-century newspaper pamphlets through the press, which was influential in the growth of the nineteenth-century modern novel (7, 1, 89). As mentioned in his 1931 book:

The *cuadros de costumbres* may be briefly defined as a short sketch or essay in prose or verse describing some contemporary type, institution, incident or fashion, such as a dandy, the lottery, a bull-fight, a country fair, etc. It usually has very slight plot or character development, and just enough narrative to hold the interest of the reader. Realistic description is a basic characteristic. A didactic purpose is evident. The essays appeared as editorials and contributed articles, often as letters to the editor, in

newspapers, semi-literary or literary periodicals, and in pamphlet form (qtd. in Duffey xi).

Additionally, this classification of the “short sketch or essay in prose” used to describe a local, ordinary custom evolved from the original English expression of calling it “*physiologies*” or “sketches of manners” (used by Richard Steele and Joseph Addison). Some attributes are also compared to the French *tableau de mœurs*, which ultimately came to be known as *cuadros de costumbres* in Spain (most notably seen in the *costumbrista* works by the most prominent: Mariano José de Larra, Ramón de Mesonero Romanos, and Serafín Estébanez Calderón (Soriano Salkjelsvik and Martínez Pinzón, *Revisitar* 17; Montgomery 19).

As a popular subgenre of *Costumbrismo* that was preceded by these renowned Spanish writers, the *cuadro de costumbres*, also referred to as *artículo de costumbres*,<sup>28</sup> was coined to mean a “short sketch” of customs and manners that intricately describe the traditions and practices of a nation or specific region, with the inclusion of typical characters and social practices representative of a particular society and culture. Besides these descriptions, these “sketches” tend to include a brief narrative context containing

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<sup>28</sup> According to F. Courtney Tarr, the “*costumbrista* sketch in two forms – the *artículo* and the *cuadro*. The *artículo*, which flourished in the 1830’s with Larra and the earliest work of Mesonero, ‘has pronounced narrative or dramatic element approximating to a story or dramatic sketch with a moral or critical point or scene.’ The *cuadro*, of which Estébanez Calderón was the earliest exponent, and which became the dominating form after the appearance of *Los españoles pintados por sí mismos* in 1843 and 1844, is ‘the more detailed and affectionate description of picturesque types and customs, presented primarily for their own sakes rather than for humorous or critical purposes.’ The *cuadro* form, very popular in Colombia, is based on the assumption that the scene or custom described has sufficient interest per se to make unnecessary the use of narrative or other devices, and its didactic purpose is purely informative. Tarr points out that it is the *cuadro*, not the *artículo*, which leads directly to the regional novel of manners. Neither Spanish nor Colombian writers recognized the distinction between *cuadro* and *artículo*, but it is of great value in recognizing and classifying a body of material which is likely to be confusing in its volume and variety” (qtd. in Duffey xi).

tidbits of history and sociopolitical norms as well as everyday regional dialogue of the individuals portrayed. As stated by Pedro Henríquez Ureña, the “*cuadro de costumbres* was a criticism of social life, often with an avowed public purpose, the correction of antiquated and injurious habits. It was related to political literature, to the writings of men who wished to remodel society and the state (125). Hence, these important characteristics of an inherently didactic text, often interwoven with political and national symbolism, are vital to understanding the context in which they were written.

While the *cuadro de costumbres* has been generally identified in the nineteenth century as a “pequeña composición que describe en detalle las escenas, tradiciones, lugares y personajes llenos de color local; se trata de narraciones simples y de carácter estático que se complacen en el detalle,” the term has often been used interchangeably with the *artículo de costumbres* in Spain and Latin America (Rojas Otálora 54; Duffey xi). As an offshoot of the *cuadros*, the *artículos* disseminated in newspapers, insinuating critical or moral opinions about the foundations of a society from a realistic yet picturesque perspective. For instance, Colombian costumbrista J. David Guarín, in “Un artículo de costumbres,” attempts to share a definition of this genre by narrating a short dialogue with a friend discussing the whole process of writing these “sketches” that describe everyday occurrences, penned in order to make a critical point about society, recording a historical event or social practice, or illustrating national traditions:

—Cómo hacen ustedes, me decía hoy un amigo, para escribir un artículo de costumbres? Al leerlos, parecen como si no tuvieran trabajo ninguno en zurcirlos, ¡como si cuando se sentaran á escribir los llevaran en la punta de la pluma y no tuvieran más que dejarla correr...—Ah! si el escritor de

costumbres contara todo lo que ve, sin darle un lenguaje cultamente disfrazado, los periódicos dejarían de serlo para convertirse en pasquines, y lejos de cumplir la misión que llevan en sí, no harían sino corromper o echar abajo la moral. (Guarín 309, 311)

As demonstrated in this “artículo de costumbres,” Guarín narrates the process behind writing one of these daily sketches. This dialogue emphasizes that these short sketches would not likely serve the same purpose if the *costumbrista* writer meticulously wrote every detail he observed from his surroundings without using aesthetically embellished, descriptive language. In this passage, he adds that they would otherwise be *pasquines* or sensational news publications of satirical or critical tone that tended to distort reality.

Generally, these “sketches of manners” often sought to define the local color with its national settings, social types, language, and dialects – often adding a satirical or critical tone as self-evaluation and self-criticism of a nation. The *cuadros*, comprised of short but poignant writings, are usually infused with a didactical objective to change readers’ perspectives toward a nation, enlighten a political-social issue, or edify about a specific cultural facet:

Los cuadros de costumbres – en cuanto subgénero del *Costumbrismo* caracterizado por la descripción ensalzadora, satírica o añorante de tipos humanos, generalmente populares, y sus comportamientos, hábitos, tradiciones, valores y principales oficios, circunscritos a una región en particular – constituyen una puerta para entrar en las representaciones de pueblo y de nación de la época y en el imaginario de los mismos escritores, en quienes recaía – por constituir también figuras en ámbitos políticos,

científicos, estéticos, entre otros – el impulso cultural de la sociedad...proyecto que es un remanente de la Ilustración.<sup>29</sup> (Galindo Cruz 116)

As indicated, with these subtle traces of the Enlightenment era, borrowing from its political, scientific, and aesthetic reforms, the *cuadros* presented only certain characteristics of a particular society and culture as testimonies and depictions of its reality. This function of both the *cuadros* and the *artículos* was a result of the fact that they were disseminated through local newspapers and provided a way to *see* the world through the eyes of the *costumbrista* writer and artist, who commonly associated himself with the French and English figure of an observant *flâneur* (or *dandy*) who narrates and reports his gaze while sauntering through urban (and rural) spaces in society (Soriano Salkjelsvik and Martínez Pinzón, *Revisitar* 20-21).<sup>30</sup>

This gaze was heavily influenced by the effects of European nineteenth-century scientific and medical developments, particularly on physiognomy, which developed “an anatomy of observation” reflected in the reality presented in these “sketches” of customs and manners (Lauster 173-176).<sup>31</sup> According to Martina Lauster, “en el cuadro de

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<sup>29</sup> See Diana Galindo Cruz, “El museo (en el) impreso. Un acercamiento al Museo de cuadros de costumbres y variedades,” *Cuadernos de música, artes visuales y artes escénicas*, vol. 10, no. 2, July–Dec.2015, pp. 107–130.

<sup>30</sup> For an in-depth overview on the history of the emblematic figure of the *flâneur*, this “paseante callejero urbano ocioso intelectualmente activo” (Cuardic García 17) and its origins in French literature and representation in other transnational literatures, including its adaptation to rural spaces in Spanish and Latin American *Costumbrismo*, see Dorde Cuardic García, *El flâneur en las prácticas culturales, el Costumbrismo y el modernismo*. Éditions Publibook, 2012.

<sup>31</sup> French and English “sketches of manners” connected image and textual depictions which are also replicated in the *cuadros*. Particularly, the “French *Physiologies* of the early 1840s epitomize this pivotal role of the sketch throughout Europe, the medical term indicating a transfer of methodology from life science to



costumbres, en las *physiologies* y en los *sketches*, este personaje es el gran moralista,” whose keen and panoptical vision, “detalla interiors y exteriores indiscriminadamente, que arroja luz a pobres y a ricos, a ciudadanos y campesinos” (qtd. Soriano Salkjelsvik and Martínez Pinzón, *Revisitar* 17).

At the same time, pictorial attentiveness forms an important part of this style of literature, mainly because of its affinity to journalism (Toro Henao 158). In effect, the figurative aspect of *the cuadros de costumbres* stems from their detailed and vivid descriptions, functioning as a verbal representation of an imagined or perceived reality, as perceived by the author (like in Mayers’ view of the “mind’s eye”). The *costumbrista* writer takes the form of an observant narrator akin to the *flâneur* in literature, but with a different focal point in the *cuadros de costumbres*, often switching from the urban towards the rural setting to delineate autochthonous characteristics or the conflict between “civilización-barbarie” (Cuvardic García 89, 237-238).

Propagated by the nineteenth-century upsurge of journalistic trends via the modern periodical press, *Costumbrismo* undoubtedly began from distinctively divergent roots. Yet, it was not until around the 1830s, when Spain began cultivating its own systematic version of *cuadros de costumbres*, that this literary style became fairly popular. Most notably, the associations of this artistic movement with paintings and other art forms were evidenced in the original use of the terms such as “pinturas de género,” “*género de costumbres*,” or even “*pinturas de costumbres*,” which served to highlight shared characteristics both in the artistic and literary realms (González Aranda, *Manual*, 200; Peñas Ruiz, “Revisión” 31).

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the humorous study of contemporary mores” (Lauster 1). Refer to Martina Lauster, *Sketches of the Nineteenth-Century: European Journalism and its Physiologies, 1830-1850*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

*Costumbrista* works, including both art and prose, reflected a two-fold purpose. On the one hand, a didactic vein proposed sharing its traditions and educating its citizens while critiquing societal stances or practices that did not fit a particular constitutional mold or ideological stance (often condoning the deeds that hindered the formation of their definition of a civilized nation). On the other hand, a more idealistic vein illustrated a model representation of its nation and its disappearing customs and people with a projected political and patriotic tone (Watson, *El cuadro* 34-45).<sup>32</sup> Latin American nations portrayed their national identity with the help of the work of *costumbrista* artists and writers that juxtaposed these two realms, their definition of the quotidian present with its day-to-day customs with an added picturesque visionary projection that illustrated a raw, ideal, and authentic version of their society. The *cuadros de costumbres*, in a similar sense, painted – through colorful, detailed descriptions – places, traditions, popular activities, and the like to reflect this same stance.

Indeed, *Costumbrismo* inspired a complex mixture of variations: it was not limited to a single genre and poured over into the arts. Vibrant, verbal images were sketched and envisaged to create a reaction in the readers of *costumbrista* works – not just to illustrate an external version of reality but to project a “framed” vision of the nation with its popular customs and autochthonous local color. This reflected a subjective sociopolitical mindset instead of an objective image of the author’s reality and customs about a specific nation or

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<sup>32</sup> In addition, Watson further explains that, “El cuadro tiende a describir lo externo, sea que se trate de personas o escenas, empleando con habilidad el uso del detalle...atiende más a la descripción que a la acción...[y] existe una estrecha relación entre las artes plásticas, particularmente la litografía y el grabado, y el *Costumbrismo*, lo que tiene que ver con el interés por lo pictórico y por la valoración intrínseca de los detalles” (*El cuadro*, 34). Likewise, “el *Costumbrismo* otorga a los detalles externos múltiples niveles de significación, que sirven para describir la psicología y la estructura interna de las costumbres sociales” (Watson, *El cuadro*, 35).

region.<sup>33</sup> The literary and aesthetic wave of *Costumbrismo* that began in Europe, alluding to its origins to describe “cualquier descripción o pintura de costumbres en una literatura que muestre la vida cotidiana del hombre y al sociedad contemporánea del autor,” soon flourished in Latin America by helping the young nineteenth-century republics that were experiencing a historical moment towards liberty and independence to develop a sense of national identity (Cristina 101).

Strongly influenced by the descriptions of Latin American areas produced by foreign travelers during their classifying nineteenth-century scientific expeditions (explored in the third chapter), these literary works typically included poignant descriptions of national landscapes, cultural norms, and distinct societal mannerisms and practices, such as daily social activities, religious festivals, attire, and other kinds of traditions characteristic of a specific region. They also included paintings and sketches of inhabitants in different regions of the country, many of whom were unknown to the inhabitants of the capital cities (Luebering 201).

In this study, I argue that these concise and colorful “sketches” of manners paint an image of a nation and its customs. They incorporate a kind of crudeness and rawness in their candid descriptions through detailed narrations and critical commentary. This literary genre proliferated even more through the expansion of the periodical press in the nineteenth century, and because of its “short and to the point” dynamic had made it particularly effective in not only painting a vision of nationalism but also using it as a disciplinary tool to draw attention to contemporary practices and issues.

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<sup>33</sup> See Adelia Esperanza Ruiz, *El discurso costumbrista colombiano del siglo XIX: Instrumento ideológico idealizado*. 2010. Florida International U, PhD dissertation.

Not only does this movement intertwine the aesthetic and ideological tendencies of the time but it is also influenced by the dovetailed Romantic narratives given that, “los asuntos históricos se mezclan con los motivos sentimentales, el *Costumbrismo* y...siempre la intencionalidad política” (Pedraza Jiménez 392). Therefore, I approach the *cuadros de costumbres* as a collectible form of traditional “sketches” published in local periodicals and publications that visually represent a montage of carefully selected national images and political symbols. Lastly, there is a critical function to the *cuadros de costumbres* – to publicly diffuse a verbal-visual troupe for the nation, combined with the effect of *costumbrista* paintings to reinforce this message visually. The *cuadros* deliver a specific glimpse to foreign onlookers while at the same time presenting a unified, though somewhat unreal, vision of the Colombia nation to its readers.

## C. Ekphrasis Then & Now: State of the Art in Ekphrasis Studies – Analyzing Image & Text in *Costumbrismo*

### Defining *Ekphrasis* and the Connection between Literature and Art

As regards the theory of ekphrasis, this section outlines the definition of the term, which has been interpreted differently in contemporary criticism in order to develop a new understanding of it as well as a tool with which to analyze the Colombian *cuadros de costumbres* in this thesis. In the past, it was understood to be a rhetorical strategy used by orators, while today, it is commonly linked to a type of text in which the reflection or allusion to art – or the visual representation – is highlighted. In ancient Greek philosophy, “statues and paintings were treated *among* the objects suitable for ekphrastic description, but only after the fifth century did *ekphrasis* come to denote the description of visual art exclusively” (Heffernan, “Ekphrasis,” 312n1). The *Oxford Classical Dictionary* further indicates that by 1715 *ekphrasis* was introduced to the English language to signify the more restricted definition of a “literary description of visual art” and has since been gradually evolved to new understandings (Heffernan, “Ekphrasis,” 297). Over time, scholars have broadened the application of ekphrasis to contemporary literature and art.<sup>34</sup>

Considering the vast amount of scholarship on this topic, I will concentrate on some of the main theories of ekphrasis that will be helpful for this study. Some of the most

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<sup>34</sup> Peter Wagner also delves into the state of the art in ekphrastic studies, in his edited book, *Icons, Texts, Iconotexts: Essays on Ekphrasis and Intermediality* (1996). He reflects on earlier views that emerged in the 1980s with Roland Barthes and concurring theoreticians of structuralism, poststructuralism, and semiotics who contributed to what later came to be called “French theory,” expanding the understanding of humanist art history and literary criticism to teach the world “that everything from painting to objects, to practices, and to people, can be studied as ‘texts’” (2).

significant interpretations of visual theory from traditional to contemporary, as understood by scholars Murray Krieger, James Heffernan, and W. J. T. Mitchell, are considered, in addition to that of other critics who have recast interpretations of ekphrasis that can be approximated to the verbal-visual associations of *cuadros de costumbres* and other *costumbrista* works of art.

Murray Krieger's highly regarded *Ekphrasis: The Illusion of the Natural Sign* (1992), which revisited his original essay from 1967 titled "Ekphrasis and the Still Movement of Poetry," postulates the idea that there are different kinds of signs which form part of ekphrasis. He begins by referencing John Keats' "Ode on a Grecian Urn" as a means to understand the transition from the early Hellenistic meaning of ekphrasis broadly defined as a "verbal description of something...in life or art" that "clearly presupposes that one art ...[by] defining its mission through the dependence on the mission of another art – painting, sculpture, or others" (Krieger 6-7). Perceived in the Western world as an "aesthetic dream" since Plato, Krieger postulates the semiotic meaning of natural signs<sup>35</sup> versus arbitrary signs, "to the intelligible world received by our inner vision, conceived figuratively as the "eyes of the mind" or the imagination (Krieger 13; Bilman 18). Based on this opposition between natural versus arbitrary signs, Krieger's classification of the "ekphrastic principle" employs this trope as a literary tool that intertwines the verbal and visual spheres (Krieger 11, 13).

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<sup>35</sup> These so-called *natural* signs and *arbitrary* signs originate from Plato's notion of the differentiation between the duplicity of ideal "sensible and intelligible signs" based on the doctrine of mimesis (Krieger 13-14). While for Plato, "imitation signified the imitation of an ideal form existing in a metaphysical realm eternally," for Aristotle, "imitation meant the creation of new artworks in different domains" (Bilman 18).

Following Krieger, Mitchell and Heffernan also reconstructed this term from different ideological viewpoints. In the 1990s, the scholarship on ekphrasis began to take new grounds, particularly with Mitchell's perspicacious essay published in 1992, "Ekphrasis and the Other," also referenced in Heffernan's *Museum of Words: The Poetics of Ekphrasis from Homer to Ashbery* (1993), which have significantly expanded this trope and popularized its study beyond its original usage. Also, the book by Emily Bilman, *Modern Ekphrasis* (2013), outlines the evolution of this term from the ancient Greeks to the modern critical perspectives, emphasizing the power of the ekphrastic description concerning the visual arts, which adds "a human dimension," as the "ekphrastic synergy between the painting and the poem augments the reader-perceiver's aesthetic appreciation" (Bilman 4). As paintings remain the same, what changes is the viewer's vantage point, coupled with the writer's subjective perceptions, which "directs the viewer's gaze and shapes [their] response" (Bilman 155).

The second theory, based on a more recent definition, is an understanding of ekphrasis as a literary module, defined, as a "general principle of poetics, asserted by every poem in the assertion of its integrity," where the object described becomes an emblem and reflection of the artist's mind (qtd. in Heffernan, *Museum* 2). This theory in the study of ekphrasis, "the verbal representation of visual representation," as first defined by James Heffernan in his 1991 article "Ekphrasis and Representation" and further developed in *Museum of Words* (1994), has captured contemporary critics in recent decades (qtd. in Mitchell, *Picture Theory* 152).

One notices in this field of criticism a progression of this term as applied to different contexts of literary analysis. Heffernan's application shows the term's evolution

from classical to postmodern texts in various literary movements.<sup>36</sup> Ekphrasis, however, when understood as the description related to an artistic image or vision, can be expanded to include other forms of visual representations and illusionism. This understanding, according to Heffernan, allows ekphrasis to connect literature and visual arts to pictorialism and iconicity, though these terms are not mutually exclusive. While pictorialism can verbally create *effects* akin to those formed by images, *visual* iconicity (Heffernan, *Museum* 3), conversely, “is a visible resemblance between the arrangements of words or letters on a page and what they signify” commonly found in onomatopoeia, concrete poetry, or in specific sentence structures in verse or prose (“Ekphrasis” 299-300; 313n13). Nevertheless, Heffernan resumes his attempts at finding a middle ground between the two prominent aforementioned definitions of ekphrasis to position his own definition simply as “*the verbal representation of graphic representation,*” arguing that his assessment is based on the fundamental discrepancies between writing about art and writing about texts (“Ekphrasis” 299; 313n10).

In his thought-provoking article, “Ekphrasis and the Other,” also published in his landmark book *Picture Theory* (1994), W. J. T. Mitchell’s theory of ekphrasis has explained this relationship between verbal and visual language as ideologically meaningful, arguing that a painting can tell a story, offer arguments, and reveal abstract

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<sup>36</sup> When attempting to define his own interpretation, Heffernan provides examples to compare the differing viewpoints expressed in “postmodern” ekphrasis, citing two sources where ekphrasis was interpreted in new ways. For example, one such interpretation is by Linda Hitchcock, using the term *ekphrasis* to the referential phenomena of newspaper articles appearing in the literature by Julio Cortázar and John Fowles, while another interpretation used this term more broadly, as in the dissertation by Mack L. Smith, *Figures in the Carpet: The Ekphrastic Tradition in the Realistic Novel* (Rice University, 1981), to signify the “introduction of any work of art – whether verbal or literary – into another work of art” (313n10). From this perspective, Heffernan’s explanation can be used to employ diversified uses of ekphrasis in studies of contemporary literature.



ideas. In turn, words can describe spatial states and objects, as the message is both the object of reference and the visual representation (“Ekphrasis” 12). For Mitchell, “Ekphrasis, then, is a curiosity: it is the name of a minor and rather obscure literary genre (poems which describe works of visual art) and of a more general topic (the verbal representation of visual representation),” alluding to the ambiguity that comes from this term (“Ekphrasis” 1). Meanwhile, Mitchell recognizes there is a “pictorial turn” towards the value of visual media, as recent cultural and visual studies have shown, proclaiming that textual analysis turning towards the “visual experience” or “visual literacy” bring profound insights and meanings (*Picture Theory* 16). Still, the “Other,” for Mitchell, alludes to the competition between language and textual descriptions as in ekphrastic poetry, that is, the visual, graphic, and plastic arts. Even so, he argues that the visual representation as the “Other” cannot represent itself, as it must be represented by words: “Like the masses, the colonized, the powerless and voiceless everywhere, visual representation cannot represent itself; it must be represented by discourse” (Mitchell, “Ekphrasis” 9).<sup>37</sup>

Based on the inner semiotic interchanges, Mitchell also identifies three levels of the ekphrastic experience to illustrate the interrelation between the writer/artist, the reader/viewer, and the work of art. The “ekphrastic indifference” stage is that initial impact the reader/viewer perceives when analyzing the juxtapositions of words and images, conceiving it as either impossible or extraneous, which Mitchell expresses by using the pun,

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<sup>37</sup> In reference to Mitchell’s concept of the “Other” in this image-text dialectic, Pedro Agudelo Rendón expresses that, “La otredad de la representación visual podría ser cualquier cosa política o cultural en la cual el sí mismo es entendido como un sujeto activo, mientras que el otro es proyectado como un objeto pasivo. La representación visual no se puede representar ella misma, debe ser representada por el discurso” (“Los ojos de la palabra” 78).

“Words can ‘cite,’ but never ‘sight’ their objects” (*Picture Theory* 152). Secondly, the “ekphrastic hope” stage evaluates the potential of language to describe an image vividly and metaphorically, which allows, for example, the description of Achilles’ shield in the *Iliad*, arguing that the imagination can create a “free exchange and transference between visual and verbal art,” and in so doing, figuratively painting a visual impression in the reader’s/viewer’s mind (Mitchell, *Picture Theory* 152, 156). But the final stage of “ekphrastic fear” confronts the reality of the ekphrastic experience resulting in disenchantment after the exchange between imagery and text, fearing that the verbal form could be replaced by the visual form (Mitchell, *Picture Theory*, 154-155). Mitchell’s notion regarding the ekphrastic experience has become the base for later interpretations in this field.

Following this train of thought, Grant F. Scott, in *The Sculpted Word: Keats, Ekphrasis, and the Visual Arts* (1994), reviews the interpretations of ekphrasis supplied by the core theorists Mitchell, Krieger, and Heffernan (among others) in connection to classical literary texts in the pursuit of verbal-visual significance. Referencing the original definition for this term made by scholar Jean Hagstrum’s *The Sister Arts* (1958), ekphrasis was understood as “giving voice and language to the otherwise mute art object” (qtd. in Scott 12). Ekphrastic depictions can be found in various styles of literary texts, yet as evidenced by the evolution of this term, the most common genre in which to study ekphrasis is poetry since it is the most descriptive way to express forms, colors, space, and sounds – as he initially argued that ekphrasis was constrained to the “iconic” poetic description of visual works of art (Hagstrum 18n34). However, I agree with Krieger’s perspective on the limitations of Hagstrum’s association with this term, reserving

“ekphrasis for only those poems in which the represented art object... ‘speaks out’ to the reader,” as critics agree there is an “expansiveness of the meaning and application of ekphrasis in view of a fuller history of the term’s usage” (Hagstrum 18; Krieger 6-7). Ultimately, Scott pieces their findings together to eloquently convey them in the following manner:

Ekphrasis, then, is that which quickens as well as that which stills life. It breathes words into the mute picture; it makes pictures out of the suspended words of its text. It is as much about urgency as it is about rest, as much voyage as interlude. Ekphrasis appropriates *and* liberates the image, captures and enables it, depending on the context, and that is its beauty (Scott xii).

In other words, ekphrasis can be conceptualized as a kind of literary tool that invigorates the interconnectedness of the verbal-visual analysis. Still, I agree that it is “not just an obscure Greek term for a highly specialized and recondite genre” nor a “slippery matrix of visual-verbal paradoxes resulting from interart description” (xii). Instead, this allows for a more contemporary approach to the study of ekphrastic writings and paintings.

#### Lifting Limits: Approximating the Ekphrastic Discourse to the *Cuadros de Costumbres*

Contemporary scholarship on the studies of ekphrastic criticism and visual theory has gradually moved away from the purely rhetorical understanding of the term to formulate new approaches to ekphrasis, treating it more like a literary device and allowing for proximity to the visual arts. In doing so, newer examinations have surfaced attributing broader interpretations of the ekphrastic principle to prose texts and other kinds of writings,

such as novels and short stories – or, as explored in this dissertation, the illustrative *cuadros de costumbres* – which are rich in descriptive narration, vivid imagery, and metaphors, and thereby providing an innovative and captivating link between *costumbrista* literature and art.

At the heart of the relationship between the *cuadros* and the paintings, especially in the context of nineteenth-century Latin America, one must also consider some underlying influences from the aesthetic and sociopolitical contexts that serve to bring some important issues to light. Some recent scholars, such as Beatriz Giannandrea and Dorde Cuvaradic García, have begun to explore the relationship between *Costumbrismo* and ekphrasis. However, there is still a need for comprehensive research which specifically uses contemporary approaches to image-text to study the ekphrastic principle within nineteenth-century *costumbrista* works from Latin America. Concerning the *cuadros* or *artículos de costumbres*, I employ archival material found in dispersed periodicals, newspapers, and paintings circulated at different times during the nineteenth century. Hence, the collective work of connecting the “sketches” can seem daunting, but in the case of Colombia, there were some prominent publications that collected some of the essential works that comprise the focus of this analysis, among other ones explored in this study, like *El Mosaico* (1858-1872) and the *Museo de cuadros de costumbres* (1866). Recently, there has been a reprinted edition of the latter collection with extensive commentary by scholar Felipe Martínez Pinzón, as there are also countless noteworthy *cuadros de costumbres* published elsewhere in local Colombian newspapers that have yet to be analyzed and explored through this lens.

The juxtaposition of selected Colombian *cuadros de costumbres* and paintings emerged from a desire to explore the image-text symbols that have been experimented with in this subgenre, considering that Colombia had flourished in this literary and artistic realm. It is of particular interest to understand the contested symbols and portrayals of Colombian nationalism created during the nineteenth century's conflicting political and historical context. Therefore, by identifying ekphrasis and image-text as valuable methods to unravel the complexities between the *cuadros de costumbres* and visual recollection of *Costumbrista* paintings, this analysis seeks to bridge the gap and provide an innovative way of implementing ekphrasis in this area of research that has been receiving increasingly more attention in recent years.

Kathryn M. Mayers' *Visions of Empire in Colonial Spanish American Ekphrastic Writings* (2012) analyzes ekphrastic writings and images from the Colonial period in Latin America in order to reveal alternate visions on social contingencies and ideological implications and the role of Spanish American Creoles. Utilizing the literal definition of ekphrasis as the word 'vision' defined by W. J. T. Mitchell, this term is associated with the physical faculty of seeing that involves an object of sight that is not merely *presented* but also *perceived* – whether from an actual optical perception or material object to an imagined, intuitive, or even mental faculty in one's mind, evoked by the textual descriptions (Mayers x). In applying this term to contemporary literary criticism, following Mitchell's view on the "pictorial" turn, Mayers connects the issues of cultural identity to these verbal-visual representations when she says:

Ekphrasis's verbal renditions of these visual spectacles frequently engages in the debate over the power of visual paradigms for cultural identity, giving

voice to conflicting rumination on the way spectacles control the emotions and loyalty of the populace. (Mayers 11).

As a result, Mayers presents an analysis of ekphrasis by which one uses verbal-visual imagery to perceive ideologically charged descriptions of cultural identity, race, class, gender, and status issues. Though centered on different literary contexts and periods, Mayers' application has been particularly beneficial. It has inspired the latter part of this study, which will deal with the representation of marginalized groups, particularly the representation of women, Indigenous, and Black people in Colombian nineteenth-century *Costumbrismo* literature and society.

Mayers makes some interesting observations regarding an increase in ekphrastic writing, attributed to a combination of factors over the centuries. Some of these reasons include changes brought by religious beliefs that provoked the value of promoting conservative imagery and paintings since the time of colonialism in Spanish America. Additional changes, especially with respect to the growth of capitalism and militarization, social hierarchies, and class system, provoked political and philosophical conflicts between classes, races, genders, and other nations, where “ekphrases became increasingly important sites of conflict in the collective discursive struggle over power,” which were also “engaged with rituals of visual power and pleasure that naturalized different types of social and cultural hierarchies and offered symbolic resolutions to determinate contradictions among different groups of peoples” (Mayers 12).

Lastly, Pedro Agudelo Rendón, in his 2013 article in the *Revista humanidades*, “Las imágenes en el texto: Aportes de la crítica literaria colombiana a la teoría de ékfrasis,” studies the relationship between art and literature from the standpoint of Colombian literary

discourse. He traces this argument from the aforementioned theories of ekphrasis proposed from the classical rhetorical renderings to the modern literary criticism implemented since the mid-twentieth century. Specializing in Colombian literary criticism and noting an edited book by Efrén Giraldo, he introduces two critical concepts. On one hand, images can be understood as texts, “palabra e imagen ayudan a explicar el origen y destino de las sociedades,” and on the other, the distinction is made between “escritores que pintan y pintores que escriben,” where “los sistemas simbólicos le permiten al hombre apropiarse de la realidad y expresarla para hacerla más comprensible” (Agudelo Rendón, “Las imágenes” 106). He then proposes the following:

Si asumimos que la ékfrasis, en términos generales, se refiere a la descripción de un objeto, preferentemente artístico, tendríamos que decir, entonces, que es, en la apreciación y en la crítica de arte, donde se presenta en mayor medida. (110-111)

In this sense, one is able to “dibujar con palabras” the visual work of art, real or imagined (Agudelo Rendón, “Las imágenes” 111). He acknowledges the multiplicity of ekphrastic textual descriptions and visuals in contemporary writers and painters, noting that “la ékfrasis crea imaginariamente el objeto ilusorio que solo podrá ser conocido por la palabra” (“Las imágenes” 115).

Some of the relevant approaches made by Kathryn M. Mayers and Pedro Agudelo Rendón and other scholars have helped trace ekphrastic commonalities in literature and art, along with the historical, sociopolitical, and cultural factors represented. However, this study takes a new direction by delving into the intricate image-text connections by focusing

on the nineteenth-century *cuadros de costumbres* and integrating the visuals from Colombia.

Other recent critics have amplified some of the established ideas on ekphrasis.<sup>38</sup> Given that paintings are considered forms of mimesis, or imitations and representations, the relationship between art and literature can deepen by just using ekphrasis as a tool for dismantling the connotations reflected between image and text (Bilman 5, 18). For instance, Danilo Albero, in “La écfrasis como mimesis” (2007), takes this relationship between painting and literature, starting from the Greeks’ perspective on beauty and mimesis, and reformulates this idea under the concepts of “*representación, interpretación y recreación*” (qtd. in Agudelo Rendón, “Las imágenes” 102) as the adjusted meanings of mimesis in order to understand the figure of ekphrasis. Albero further provides some observations to help recover the full meaning of words as an expressive skill, which reinforces his desire to broaden the definition of this technique (5).

*Costumbrismo*’s visual art and literary texts from nineteenth-century Colombia are intricately woven within the cultural and political manifestations of its unique national context. The advantage of simultaneously seeing the visual along with the linear and descriptive narrative of the text allows for a deeper understanding of the meaning for the reader. Hence, this facilitates its purpose of sending a didactic message with symbolic national emblems. This image-text integration created an international movement that was common among many illustrated presses at the time, where the image served a special function within the press, to the point that it became an essential part of these kinds of

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<sup>38</sup> According to Michel Riffaterre, “la mimesis de la écfrasis es doble porque representa con palabras la representación plástica (qtd. in Agudelo Rendón, “Las imágenes” 99).



publications (Pérez Salas 103). In addition, the images linked to the text portray a more poignant way of connecting to readers at the time, especially in projecting the ideal image of a nation, not merely defined by foreigners with preconceived ideas but formulated internally and based on its current reality (Pérez Salas 96).

Yet, there is another reason for images taking such an important role in *Costumbrismo*. Given that many inhabitants of Colombia in this period were often illiterate and unschooled, the *cuadros* published in newspapers were sometimes accompanied by visual paintings. According to William G. Acree Jr. and Juan Carlos González Espitia's co-edited book, *Building Nineteenth-Century Latin America* (2009), "[w]riting, symbols, and spaces that fostered social interaction were central to the period of independence and the nation-building process that followed," especially with the advances of the printing press around the 1810s and 1830s in Bogotá, Caracas, Santiago, and the Río de la Plata (2). Headed by influential male literati, they took the lead in fashioning their own national symbols that would "introduce *América* as the central rhetorical focus" by creating cultural identities through their national literature in hopes of a new future amidst a tangled political scene and the lingering traces of social hierarchies and civil conflicts between Liberals and Conservatives (Acree and González Espitia 1-3). However, the high percentage of illiteracy in these nations through the 1870s implied that other resources were to be used to reach the masses, and so they had to adopt "various modes of reading in group settings [*tertulias*], through visual culture, and at public spectacles" (3). With the scientific innovations of the nineteenth century, as well as the advances in art such as the lithographic illustrations in newspapers and paintings, Latin America begins cultivating – and

circulating – their cultural and political imagery and social identities through verbal-visual expressions (Acree and González Espitia 5).

Overall, the interest in recreating reality through the representation of images and texts inspired many *costumbrista* writers and artists of the nineteenth century to build an image for their nation by using the symbols developed during this time. The varied works of *Costumbrismo*, especially the *cuadros de costumbres*, served the vital function of diffusing some of these ideological perspectives through the press and the everyday “print culture”<sup>39</sup> (Acree and González Espitia 5), along with the visual support of the lithographs, watercolors, and other paintings that were created during this time that helped to reach the masses. By defining its “imagined” community (as per Benedict Anderson), Colombia began promoting its own national identity, seeking to portray different customs representative of its culture (Peñas Ruiz, “Revisión” 47).

#### **D. Conclusion: Theoretical Framework and Methodology**

As a methodology for this dissertation, the scholarly perspectives on ekphrasis and visual theory posited by Murray Krieger (1992), James Heffernan (1991; 1994), and W. J. T. Mitchell (1994) and others have been considered foundational theoretical readings for the formation of this analysis. Moreover, I have also employed the supplementary readings from contemporary critics who interpret ekphrasis from relevant literary perspectives, such as Kathryn Mayers (2012) and Pedro Agudelo Rendón (2013), among other scholars. Their

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<sup>39</sup> Refer to William G. Acree and Espitia J. C. González, *Building Nineteenth-Century Latin America: Re-rooted Cultures, Identities, and Nations*. Vanderbilt UP, 2009.

combined theoretical interpretations and distinct applications to ekphrastic texts and visual paintings have enhanced the basis for developing my own hypothesis and re-adapted version of ekphrasis that has been orchestrated in relation to this study's approach to *Costumbrismo* literature and art.

By focusing on the verbal-visual representations of nineteenth-century Colombian national identity and local customs, analyzing the different portrayals through image and text in a selected list of *costumbrista* paintings and *cuadros de costumbres*, I hope that this study will illuminate the deep-rooted, autochthonous ideologies that the artists and authors of *Costumbrismo* jointly avowed. Throughout this analysis, it becomes apparent that a grand majority of *costumbrista* works exhibited the proclivity toward a Conservative outlook that had surpassed the Liberal connotations presented in this post-independence Republic. As a result, the constructional paradigms of noteworthy Colombian *costumbristas* and the respective geographical, historical, and political aspects of the nation deepen the implications of this investigation when comparing image and text.

I argue that ekphrasis, particularly in the context of *Costumbrismo*, functions as a literary trope that facilitates the understanding of vivid, imaginative, descriptive verbal depictions – especially in the *cuadros de costumbres* – that invite and interconnect the verbal with the visual representations. Thus, when comparing the textual *cuadros* to the visual *costumbrista* paintings, the impression on the reader/spectator is considerably enhanced once the projection from the internal gaze (this cognitive/creative process) is connected to a real-life representation of the type or scene described/illustrated, as perceived from the author's/artist's mind. As a result of this cognitive and mimetic process, the ideological mindset of the author/artist is transferred from words on paper to

brushstrokes on canvas and vice versa. In effect, *Costumbrismo* literature and art flawlessly enable this conjecture given the close relation and dynamic style of the *cuadros de costumbres* and *costumbrista* paintings commonly created in this period.

By joining text and image, both forms of innovative means, I construe the notion of creative imagery to expose the contested ideologies of political and national expressions from 1830 to 1880 – emphasizing the overarching Conservative perspective that is evident in the works produced in influential national publications like *El Mosaico* (1852-1872) and the popular anthology *Museo de cuadros de costumbres* (1866). In connecting image and text through the study of literature and art, ekphrasis becomes a critical tool for analyzing the *cuadros de costumbres*. Like the painting itself, a passage demands slow, careful reading to grasp the many intricate details depicting aspects concerning daily cultural practices, traditional attire, scenery, and political symbolism. In surveying literature and art, as María Payeras Grau affirms, ekphrasis works like an artistic tool for the writer to disclose its subjective connotations:

La ékfrasis se produce como un instrumento que, a partir de la imagen plástica, desarrolla un proceso de interiorización de la misma donde lo principal no es la descripción del cuadro como objeto externo, sino la expresión de las asociaciones *subjetivas* que éste ha provocado en cada una de las autoras, incentivando la objetivación de su mundo interior (60).

In other words, ekphrasis can be understood as a tool to explain the visual arts, encouraging the reflection of the creator's mind through an internalized cognitive process that extends beyond the verbal description of an image as an external object. As a result, ekphrasis

solicits the expression of the *subjective* associations provoked in the writers' thoughts concerning their vision of reality.

My own application of this term considers the wide-ranging methods of interpreting ekphrasis in the spectrum from classical to modern conventions, substantially expanded (or limited) by critics over the years. I claim that ekphrasis can be (re)defined as the verbal representation of an imagined or real visual work of art that concurrently evaluates the author's/artist's subjective and idiosyncratic visions of a nation as filtered from specific political and sociocultural worldviews within *Costumbrismo* literature and art, principally shown in this study through an examination of the *cuadros de costumbres* and relevant *costumbrista* paintings of the nineteenth century.

This study, however, shifts away from a purely one-dimensional *mimetic* interpretation of ekphrasis as the direct imitation of reality to a written or verbal work of art. Instead, it embraces a more dynamic method when connecting the literary and artistic works of *Costumbrismo*, implementing the divergent, subjective conceptions and considerations of the writers and artists involved to interpret the work framed within its relevant sociopolitical and cultural context, as determined by theorists and scholars. In addition, this research emphasizes the role of ekphrasis in showing the pictorial culture of *Costumbrismo* by analyzing painting and textual writings (these daily "sketches" of customs) to classify the hidden political symbols and cultural representations of the artist/writer.

To consider ekphrasis within the framework of the nineteenth-century *cuadros de costumbres*, one must examine the development of this literary trope up to now. From the theories of ekphrasis presented, there is a transition phase in the range of aesthetic to

ideological perspectives. Critics have debated the meaning of the term, underlining that it has been “variously used and variously defined” (Wagner 262) and that the definition depends on the specific argument employed. In light of Mitchell’s essay “Ekphrasis and the Other,” the implication of introducing “the psychological and emotional components of ekphrasis” besides the more accustomed notion of “spatial/temporal dynamics of ekphrastic writing to the specific psychology of aesthetic response in the writer/viewer” (Scott 182). Krieger, likewise, presents a clear, systematic theoretical statement, suggesting that “works of art [function] as ekphrastic objects in order to examine, in its most extreme form, the capacity of words to transmit pictures...with the interest in the *pictorial* capabilities of *verbal* art [onto] the broader consideration of ekphrasis as the sought-for equivalent in words of any visual image in or out of art” (Krieger 9).

Krieger’s standpoint on the trajectory of ekphrastic critical discourse throughout the centuries was inspired by the scholar Leo Spitzer in defining this term as the “poetic description of a pictorial or sculptural work of art, which description implies, in the words of Théophile Gautier, ‘une transposition d’art,’ the reproduction, through medium of words, of sensuously perceptible objects d’art (*‘ut pictura poesis’*)” in connection to Byzantine art (Spitzer 72). In effect, ekphrasis can be understood as the literary description of images – perceived or imagined – using words to recreate the visual image from the author’s mind. Also, Krieger expands his outlook to include other implications of the ekphrastic descriptions within literature in the form of prose, poetry, and other narrative texts. From this reasoning, I argue that *cuadros de costumbres* can be analyzed through this lens.

Through a novel approach to *ekphrasis*, Mayers understands it as the “trope that conjures up images from the physical world and places them before the mind’s eye and serves as a laboratory both for exercising and reflecting on the power of vision as a social institution” (xi). I build from this theory and recast my own modified theory of ekphrasis, which connects the artists’ visual representation of unique national (ideological) emblems in their paintings and lithographs to the imagery represented by the authors in their written *cuadros de costumbres*.

Mayers also connects visual and ekphrastic theory to contemporary developments in different artistic movements. She asserts that “visual theory over the past twenty years has stressed, seeing is not natural, but socially constructed, and different modes or ‘regimes’ of seeing in different eras indirectly shape cultural institutions” (Mayers 3). To emphasize this idea, Mayers provides a series of examples, noting, for instance, how art from the Medieval period with its two-dimensional religious paintings of saints inspired spiritual zeal and heuristic introspection, or how European Renaissance three-dimensional paintings inspired the perspective from above – “God’s eye point of view simulated detached observation and analysis” (3). In the interpretation of artistic and literary works, it is essential to recognize the subjective angle of the world as seen from the artist’s vision. Hence, these “very diverse examples of seeing illustrate the degree to which seeing is socially constructed and governed by cultural rules that determine purpose, value, and effects” (Mayers 3).

Following Mayers’ train of thought, I argue that *Costumbrismo* art was inspired primarily by the divergent sociopolitical and ideological constructs that defined Colombian national identity as represented by the writers’/artists’ unique mimetic version of reality

(as briefly explained by Agudelo Redón). By analyzing the ekphrastic written *cuadros* in comparison to the visual *costumbrista* paintings, my aim is to demonstrate, with Heffernan's terms, how the "verbal representation of graphic representation" can bridge the gap between the literary and artistic works of *Costumbrismo*, "not just on particular work of graphic representation, but on the nature of representation itself" (Heffernan, "Ekphrasis," 299, 304). In addition, scholar Diana Galindo Cruz, in a study focused on Colombia's *Museo de cuadro de costumbres*, indicates how the *cuadros de costumbres* can be regarded as "images" of the reality of Colombian nineteenth-century society. She indicates how,

lo que permite tomar los cuadros como imágenes, fragmentos de realidad, es claro que el componente narrativo constituye algo más que el marco para la descripción, pues dinamiza la composición, permitiendo captar el interés de sus lectores, razón por la cual las distintas descripciones no se agotan en la enumeración o referencia a los tipos humanos y morales de los cuadros de costumbres. (Galindo Cruz 128)

In other words, *cuadros* can be regarded as images or fragments of a nation's intricate culture and identity, showcasing specific references to different social types and customs of the nineteenth-century societies – as the illustrative narrative provides glimpses of their particular reality.

Drawing from Mayers and Agudelo Rendón's understandings of ekphrasis in contemporary Latin American literary contexts, I argue that the *cuadros de costumbres* offer a new understanding of the ekphrastic principle when viewed as elaborate paintings with words, as compared to the relevant artwork that illustrates and complements this



theory. In my research, I also hope to connect the written images portrayed in the Colombian *cuadros de costumbres* and the corresponding visual paintings of the time as a tool to illustrate the *costumbristas'* divergent perspectives regarding the desired visions of national as well as political expressions.

As an effort to fill the gap in recent scholarship,<sup>40</sup> this dissertation is guided by the conjunction of recent developments in *Costumbrismo* studies and visual and ekphrastic theories to formulate new connections between the abundance of vivid, textual *cuadros de costumbres* and artistic *costumbrista* illustrations of Colombia in the nineteenth century (1830-1880). As both a literary and artistic movement, *Costumbrismo* inspired the visualization of its local color, traditions, and diverse social types to integrate the varied complexities of Colombian national identity.

The interconnectivity between the *costumbrista* paintings from Groot and Torres Méndez and the written representations of the *cuadros*, particularly from *El Mosaico* and *Museo de cuadros de costumbres*, aid the verbal-visual configurations. The relationship of one medium to another cultivates a deeper understanding of national identity and culture through the subjectivity of local writers/artists. Similarly, *Costumbrismo* offers additional

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<sup>40</sup> Various theses were beneficial to this study in its initial stages when conceptualizing ekphrastic texts and paintings and Spanish American literature. Although these works are not exactly related to my research focus on nineteenth-century Colombian *cuadros de costumbres*, their input was still insightful when approaching this new subject matter. Among these are Beatrice Giannandrea's *Écfrasis: Escritura y pintura en el Costumbrismo argentino* (FIU, 2005) and José Rodríguez, *Écfrasis y Lecturas Icono-textuales en las "Leyendas" de Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer* (FIU, 2015) which attempted to connect ekphrasis from other angles to analyze divergent literary periods, genres, and nations. Another fairly recent example is by Jimena Zambran, *La écfrasis en la literatura hispana. Confluencias interartísticas entre la pintura y la literatura* (University of Western Ontario, 2016) which was helpful to begin conceptualizing ekphrasis with more contemporary literature and art in Latin America, noting how classical to modern approaches to ekphrasis have evolved throughout the years, even to twentieth- and twenty-first century literary criticism. In recent years, novel critical approaches to visual theory such as ekphrasis within Latin American literature and art have gradually been inspiring scholars with unique and distinctive perspectives, so research in this field will likely continue to grow.

historical traits that echo some of the post-independence societies that were rapidly changing as a result of urbanization and progress. In truth, Colombia wanted to be perceived differently in Europe, with several Colombian *costumbrista* writers and artists highly esteemed the perception of their idealized French and Spanish influences. Therefore, the verbal imagination joins the visual receptivity of the *costumbrista* author/artist in imagining Colombian cultural traditions, natural landscapes, and diverse citizens, maintaining a peculiar and hopeful gaze – guided by their core political values and social ideals.

When comparing the written *cuadros* and the pictorial representations, two critical implications can be considered, which will be explored in the next chapters of this dissertation: how the emerging nation of Colombia was undergoing a series of political civil wars, and therefore the literature and art of this time portrayed the Liberal and Conservative political paradigms; and, how the Colombian *cuadros de costumbres* popularized through major newspapers and *costumbrista* paintings during the mid-nineteenth century pervaded a lingering remonstrance displayed from the Conservative side. The verbal and visual representations described in the *cuadros de costumbres* and the *costumbrista* paintings merged as a panoramic view of the interconnected imagery encompassing the notion of nationalism from an overall Conservative ideological outlook.

## II. COLOMBIAN *COSTUMBRISMO*: CREATING AN IMAGINARY NATION THROUGH CONSERVATIVE EYES

El azul de los cielos, el celaje,  
Las caprichosas nubes, el torrente  
Y las palmas que ciñen la ancha frente  
De la cascada en medio del paisaje

¡Imita tu pincel!; y hasta el ropaje  
De púrpura y de rosa transparente  
Con que se adorna el sol en el oriente...  
Mas no iba a hablarte de eso: me distraje.

Al niño, al hombre, a la mujer hermosa  
Copia tu mano con destreza suma,  
Los ojos engañando artificiosa;

Y por eso es en balde que presuma  
Disputarle la palma generosa  
A tu pincel la más correcta pluma.

— Sonnet by Juan Francisco Ortiz, dedicated to Ramón Torres Méndez (Ortiz 310–311)

### A. Colombian *Costumbrismo* in the Nineteenth Century:

#### Establishing National Identity

During the 1840s, the literature being written in the nation of Colombia, formerly known as New Granada (Nueva Granada), began manifesting the desire to create a definition of national identity that included its popular social customs and traditions.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> See Sebastián Pineda Buitrago, *Breve historia de la narrativa colombiana, siglos XVI-XX*. Siglo del Hombre Editores, 2012: “El concepto de nacionalidad – y el mismo nombre de Colombia – existe aproximadamente hace 200 años, pero la sociedad es anterior a esa declaración de nacimiento y hunde sus raíces en la Conquista, en la fundación de las primeras ciudades, siendo su principal vehículo de expresión el castellano, cuya narrativa data de hace más de mil años...desde el siglo XVI en que se llamaba Nueva Granada, la peculiaridad diferenciadora de Colombia como ente cultural, social y político” (20). Also, the early stages of the post-Independence nation of “Gran Colombia” under the leadership of *El Libertador* Simón Bolívar extended from 1819 until 1831, and henceforth referred to as “Nueva Granada” from 1830 to 1858 (Martínez Pinzón, *Museo* I, 286n6).

Because of the growth of the periodical press in the following decades, a group of *costumbrista* intellectuals comprised of the nation's elite<sup>42</sup> became interested in unifying their vision for their Republic while subtly propagating a critique of the regional conflicts and civil wars that took place in mid-to late-nineteenth-century Colombia. Historians like Frank Safford, among others, explain that the concept of progress<sup>43</sup> has been the main argument for both the nation's Liberal and Conservative elite regarding the "moral"<sup>44</sup> advancement of Colombia, which entailed economic, educational, and scientific developments since the early nineteenth century (Safford 2; Rojas 3).<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> In *Nación y diferencia en el siglo XIX colombiano* (2005), Julio Vargas Vanegas explains the complexities of Colombia's national elite during the emergence of the new Republic: "en el siglo XIX apenas estaba emergiendo una clasificación poblacional centrada en lo regional. Esta clasificación, analizada desde un conjunto de pensadores particulares pertenecientes principalmente al eje Bogotá-Antioquia, daba cuenta de la construcción de una diferencia aceptable en torno a la figura del pueblo nacional. Por supuesto esta clasificación era jerárquica y, como tal, escenario de las élites para hacerse a la dominación simbólica de la nación" (136).

<sup>43</sup> There are varying degrees to the concept of progress in the scope of nineteenth-century Latin America. Frank Safford's article, "Race, Integration, and Progress," defines it as "the project of economic Europeanization" that inspired new republics to follow European ideals of "economic" progress for civilization (2). At the same time, as explained in *Contentious Republicans* (2004), James Sanders interjects that "Progress was not just material but also cultural" (28). Elaborating this further, Efraín Sánchez Cabra's article "Las ideas de progreso en Colombia en el siglo XIX" (2007) states how Colombia's need for economic and material reforms was intended to lead the nation towards "progress," mainly through industrial development and transportation routes in order to facilitate communication, exchange, and immigration, in addition to cultural advancement achieved through education (680).

<sup>44</sup> As noted by Cristina Rojas, Frank Safford's view is incomplete when it does not consider the violent and repressive aspects surrounding the "quest for progress" (4). She argues that the "struggle for civilization, in whose name civil wars were fought and political conflicts occurred" need not be disregarded (Rojas 4). Otherwise, this could "perpetuate the myth in Colombian history that liberalism's philosophical base for reform has been inspired by a utopian vision" (Rojas 4).

<sup>45</sup> After a period of economic stagnation and political difficulties in Colombia of the mid-nineteenth century, the idea of "progress" resurfaces with new connotations, especially around 1859 and 1886 when the Liberal defenders face the opposition of Conservative Catholics who question the motives it, although it was generally supported for bringing economic development to the nation (Orlando Melo 18). For a detailed overview of the different connotations given to the term "progress" since its early usage in 1780 to the nineteenth-century nuance, see Jorge Orlando Melo, "La idea del progreso en el siglo XIX, ilusiones y desencantos, 1780-1930." *Revista de Estudios Colombianos*, no. 36, 2010, pp. 18–29.

However, amidst the Liberal reforms of 1849 and onward, the Conservative resistance triggered intense regional tension and civil wars from 1859 to 1863 throughout the country (Rojas 3-4). From the Liberals' perspective, the reforms in education and discipline would help edify a recalcitrant and barbaric population. By the 1880s, however, the elite Liberals' power grip began to fade as the result of disagreements with the popular classes, shifting the national reign of power to Conservatives until the 1930s (Sanders 195).

In analyzing the contested identities and faces represented within the scope of both written and visual *Costumbrismo*, it is vital to understand nineteenth-century Colombia's political and historical basis. In post-independence Colombia, Conservatives mainly defended the Church's core values, supported traditional norms and practices, the cattle and agricultural industry, and the landowning class; Liberals defended a more secular viewpoint in favor of progressive ideals, free trade, and the commercial class.<sup>46</sup>

In the mid-nineteenth century, Colombia's economy grew significantly because of the growth of tobacco and coffee exports that helped develop a merchant class. Cristina Rojas, in *Civilization and Violence: Regimes of Representation in Nineteenth-Century Colombia*, examines the motives behind the civil wars in post-independence Colombia from 1849 to 1878, noting that a historical breakdown reveals that these were not a result of merely economic causes but resulted more from a "mixture of religious, ethnic, educational, and regional objectives" (xxiv). These overarching factors were the nuclei that

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<sup>46</sup> According to Catherine LeGrand, the link between Colombia's political parties and the multiple civil wars during the nineteenth century was rather complex: "Both the Liberals and the Conservatives were multi-class parties, led by elites and including middling groups and urban and rural poor. . . numerous civil wars between the two parties erupted: indeed, for 33 years of that century, civil wars were being played out in one or another part of the country. The seemingly interminable fighting culminated in the great War of a Thousand Days (1899-1902) that affected the whole country" (171).

provoked the multifaceted conflict between Liberals and Conservatives as a “struggle between civilization and barbarism [that] has haunted the imagination of Latin America from independence to the present” (xiv).

Contrary to most historical criticism, Rojas unveils the complexities of this polemical conflict beyond the motivation of the elite to position Colombia in the world market, free trade, and a *laissez-faire* approach by instead showcasing the imminent ideological beliefs regarding cultural and moral issues and each group’s definition of “civilization” (2). As expected, this fierce political quarrel and its distinctive ideological worldviews are reflected in most of the *Costumbrismo* literature and art in Colombia of this period.

Colombia’s elite mainly consisted of a group of white<sup>47</sup> men who defined themselves as the leading agents of society – often as statesmen or as literati – nurturing the notion of civilization over barbarism in their favor in order to continue a hierarchical structure of power based on social and political structures inherited from the Colonial period. This diverse elite group consisted of both Liberals and Conservatives who essentially belonged to a social group of Hispanic origin with racial markers based on

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<sup>47</sup> An article by Mercedes López Rodríguez included in the edited book *Revisitar el Costumbrismo* (2016), titled “Blancos de todos los colores: intersecciones entre clase, genera y raza en la escritura costumbrista colombiana del siglo XIX,” offers an approach to interpreting “whiteness” as understood in nineteenth-century Colombian literature. Based on works by Conservative writer Eugenio Díaz and Liberal writer Manuel Ancízar, she reveals that this concept of skin color was tied to region, race, and attire (151). She explains that the “definición de la blancura en la versión [conservadora] de [Eugenio] Díaz esta más fuertemente atada a la 'fisionomía' (barbas, color de la piel, características del rostro)” (López Rodríguez 159). She remarks: “Mientras las élites de las ciudades pueden escapar a estas tensiones, pues su blancura no está en entredicho, los blancos pobres, los mestizos y los indígenas que conviven en los pueblos andinos están atrapados en ellas” (150-151). Hence, skin color was oftentimes demonstrated in the works of *Costumbrismo* through the type of clothing used. It also demonstrates how the *cuadros de costumbres* “sirven como una casuística racial, en la cual no sólo describe sino que enseña a los lectores a identificar los elementos que asignan una posición racial a los individuos [mediante]...qué tipo de prendas usan” (López Rodríguez 151).

ethnicity, social status, and education,<sup>48</sup> and mostly limited to white or creole men of European origin. They identified themselves as descendants from worthy lineages which served, in their eyes, to validate specific traits and virtues (Vargas Vanegas 28-30). As the nation developed, it soon became apparent that “Power was concentrated in those who possessed civilization’s secrets: male creole literati,” with the intellectuals gaining a leading role in shaping the nation, and concurrently as “Words became valuable commodities” to stir the masses through the periodical press (Rojas xxix).

In the book, *The Making of Modern Colombia: A Nation in Spite of Itself*, David Bushnell notes that around 1823, the periodical press began to play a vital role in helping to debate politics and ideological issues more openly. The press included criticism as regards to Colombian government affairs, although these discourses were not unified on a basis of opposing ideologies, particularly since “la prensa independiente de Bogotá fue generalmente de tendencia Liberal, y su modalidad de Liberalismo no estaba reñida con una administración central potente con tal que el jefe del ejecutivo fuera otro Liberal granadino” (qtd. in Bushnell 31). Still, it is imperative to acknowledge that throughout this period of post-independence Colombian nation-building, the press that was being published from the capital was predominantly tinted with the ideology of the Liberal sovereignty, which ruled from 1849 and onward; nevertheless, the Conservative intellectuals and writers of *Costumbrismo* were making their voices heard amidst the bipartisan civil tensions taking place from the 1850s to the 1860s (Rojas 3-4).

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<sup>48</sup> Renán Silva, in *Los ilustrados de Nueva Granada 1760-1808*, confirms that this elitist lineage based on education was also interconnected to one’s blood line: “El acceso a la educación, naturalmente, tampoco estaba exento de violencias. Entrar a las universidades dependía de otra práctica asociada al linaje como legitimidad: los aspirantes debían presentar un certificado de limpieza de sangre para ser admitidos tanto durante la colonia como en la república” (qtd. in Martínez Pinzón, “Ciudadano,” ch. 6).

## B. *Costumbrismo* in Colombia from a Conservative Lens

As analyzed in this study, some of the most poignant collections of Colombian *costumbrista* works produced during this time frame posit immensely valuable data with which to study the opposing political perspectives. It is not just the written words of the literature of the times but also the visual depictions of the congruent *costumbrista* paintings that relate to each other in order to portray a more compelling and convincing message. When *Costumbrismo* was in full bloom, leading writers and artists such as José Manuel Groot and Ramón Torres Méndez soon began shaping the imagery of national identity into a more Conservative paradigm through their verbal and visual sketches, which represented a Colombia seen with their own ideological vision. Conservatives hoped to preserve their values throughout history and for future generations, even when the opposing party was in power.

An analysis of their written and verbal *costumbrista* representations that appeared in nineteenth-century publications such as *El Mosaico* and *Museo de cuadros de costumbres* shows how they were able to use both paper and print media symbols as well as words to present their messages. When considering the Conservatives' point of view in Latin America and Spain, it is vital to grasp the history of this ideology beyond its political affiliation. This notion of *conservatism* integrates underlying ideals of sociocultural or even aesthetic issues employed from different paradigms that alter one's view of society and everyday life. In Kari Soriano Salkjelsvik's latest edited volume titled, *Sensibilidades conservadoras: El debate cultural sobre la civilización en América Latina y España durante el siglo XIX* (2021), the definition given for this ideology consists of these traits:



*Conservadurismo* es un término escurridizo que cambia su significado tanto a lo largo de la historia como en el contexto —disciplinario, geográfico, generacional, etc.— en que se utiliza...[y] se refiere a un posicionamiento ideológico que designa, en términos muy generales, una resistencia al cambio abrupto y un compromiso con instituciones tradicionales como la Iglesia católica y el sistema monárquico. (12, n1)

This ideology's origins are based on traditional values of religion (mainly that of the Catholic faith) as witnessed around 1789 and the French Revolution, later implemented by François-René de Chateaubriand and others in the newspaper *Le Conservateur* in 1818. However, it was not until the mid-nineteenth century that it was properly instilled in Spain and Latin America (12n1).

Conservatives initially had the same purpose of developing a modern Colombian republic, actively seeking the same Liberal agenda for “modernization” and civilization, even as they strongly maintained their traditional moral principles that would still benefit the Catholic Church (*Sensibilidades* 13). Nevertheless, the unified Conservative elites in Colombia, like Vergara y Vergara, the leader of the *tertulias* of the literary group El Mosaico, wielded varying degrees of power in government and education, which had far-reaching societal implications that involved even the issue of the Spanish language (Martínez Pinzón, *Museo* I, lxi).<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> The language battle between the proper “lengua culta” from Spain versus the common “lengua popular” from Latin America (commonly used in the *cuadros de costumbres*) was an important matter for Vergara y Vergara, who sought to protect the local regionalisms. For him, “la estandarización del español, a través de una única ortografía, no puede prescindir de las variaciones locales de la lengua oral de las clases populares...se observa la particularidad local de la experiencia trasatlántica de la hispanidad” (Martínez Pinzón, *Museo* I, lxi).

There was also a residual sense of “nostalgia” among the Conservatives, especially as a reaction to the Liberal reforms made as part of efforts to bring civilization and progress after the wars of Independence, which represented “una catástrofe porque suponía una ruptura drástica con el devenir histórico natural de la sociedad, cuya soberanía, para ellos, no residía en el pueblo, sino en Dios” (25). Yet it was not based on a tenacious political regret but rather on a deeply religious perception of their reality, as stated by Fabio Kolar and Ulrich Mücke, “el pensamiento conservador no defendía el pasado por ser el pasado. Lo defendía por corresponder a sus ideas del ser humano y del mundo. No era un pensamiento retrógrado sin contenido, sino más bien la expresión política de una visión del mundo arraigada en el cristianismo y en las filosofías seculares herederas de la fe cristiana” (Soriano Salkjelsvik, *Sensibilidades* 26).

Latin American nations underwent a series of political confrontations, experienced despotism, and civil wars between different factions, including civilians versus military – and most poignantly those between Conservatives and Liberals after gaining independence from Spain (Henríquez-Ureña 112). Latin American Conservatives, who held in many ways some of the same beliefs as Liberals, were loosely defined as those who valued the Hispanic values of the colonial past with its emphasis on the values of the Catholic Church, supporting core values such as traditional ways of organizing society and the importance of the Spanish language. In contrast, Latin American Liberals, usually residing in the capital city, were primarily influenced by European mores and ways of being in Latin America and were also generally against the Catholic church and frequently were Masons.

Since the mid-century, the variances between Colombian leadership elite groups were determining the role of each political party. Colombia's political antagonisms were

accentuated by the origin of modernization and progress in the disputed perspectives concerning the colonial past and the aspired future for the new republic. Since the creation of the political parties in 1848-1849, these rivals contested endlessly over law and religion. Fundamentally, Conservatives believed that “the colonial world, independence, and the republic formed one and the same tradition” following the values rooted in moral and religious principles, while for Liberals, “the Revolution of 1810 appeared to have been a revolution in the name of difference,” seeking change to form a civil and free nation based on a *laissez-faire* economy and libertarian society (Rojas 35-42).

Throughout a series of civil wars that Colombia suffered from the 1840s to 1880s, and with at least three new constitutions written and revised and a *coup d'état* along the way, the opposition between the two parties intensified in great measure, with ongoing futile attempts to find stability and resolution. Yet, it was not until the 1880s when a sense of national unification and consolidation in Colombia occurred, though much later than in the rest of Latin America, as Conservatives regained power at the turn of the century (Von der Walde 244-245).

During this time, many Conservative writers and artists were adamant about constructing their respective stance on Colombian identity amidst the current Liberal opposition rising in power since the 1840s and towards the end of the century. The purpose of Colombian *cuadros de costumbres* was to create an idealistic image of this emerging nation with its varied regions and distinctive traditions. This somewhat served to counteract what they assumed were false images created by foreigners – simultaneously harboring political and cultural undertones in formulating a national identity and, ultimately,

protecting their distinctive Colombian traditional values.<sup>50</sup> Most importantly, this literary and artistic movement paved the way since “*Costumbrismo* es esencialmente tradicional y conservador, y no solamente un supuesto género literario ‘sustituto’ de la novela,” making an impact at a time when literature flourished despite the ongoing political chaos (Henríquez-Ureña 114).

### C. *El Mosaico* and *Museo de Cuadros de Costumbres*

Amidst the bipartisan disagreements, *El Mosaico*,<sup>51</sup> published from 1858 to 1872 with a few interruptions triggered by the civil wars, became the most influential periodical in Colombia of the nineteenth century,<sup>52</sup> instituted with the purpose of “retratar – de narrar – las costumbres del país” (Pineda Buitrago 21). Based in Bogotá, this newspaper served as the vehicle for an informal literary group or *tertulia* called by the same name, whose contributors consisted mainly of erudite members of the Colombian Conservative elite,

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<sup>50</sup> As expressed by a critic, “Los cuadros de costumbres constituían entonces no sólo la oportunidad de desplegar ante el extranjero un abanico de imágenes cuidadosamente seleccionadas con el fin de que se diera una idea ‘correcta’ de la república, sino que permitía desarrollar el impulso de conservar las tradiciones consideradas como propiamente colombianas mediante su señalamiento y exaltación, a la vez que se reprimían las actuaciones que atentaban contra la moral” (Galindo Cruz 124).

<sup>51</sup> The idea of creating this literary newspaper to include a variety of poems and *cuadros de costumbres*, among other literary and historical works, originated with Colombian writers Eugenio Díaz Castro and José María Vergara and Vergara, the latter who chose the symbolic name of “mosaic” to represent its mission of providing a montage of literature reflecting the popular culture and *faits divers*, following the style of the French press at the time, mostly targeting an audience composed of a cultural elite minority (Loaiza Cano, “La búsqueda” 5; Gordillo Restrepo 43).

<sup>52</sup> Early nineteenth-century scientific travel chronicles that were prevalent at the time began to influence Colombia ever since the Botanical Expedition (1783-1803), which later spawned the foundation of *El Mosaico* (Pineda Buitrago 21).

though it did include some Liberal elite authors.<sup>53</sup> During the time of its inauguration in the 1850s, “El ambiente entonces era, por cierto, favorable para una asociación bipartidista como lo fue *El Mosaico*,” but during its fourteen years, the newspaper experienced pressure as a result of the partisan feelings developed during the ongoing civil wars, and “termina silenciándose en el círculo vicioso de la guerra civil, cuando el gobierno Liberal decide su confiscación” until its final years of publication with the Liberal opposition censuring the press in the 1870s (Gordillo Restrepo 29, 32). Nevertheless, *El Mosaico* remains “un momento fundacional de la literatura nacional” (Gordillo Restrepo 32).

The first issue of *El Mosaico* published on December 24, 1858, reveals its religious, Conservative objectives and its desire to change public opinion (written in its original nineteenth-century spelling): “en ninguna parte más que en pueblos nacientes como el nuestro, la prensa está llamada a ejercer una alta influencia i a producir injentes resultados. La prensa debe encarrilar la opinión pública, iluminar las sociedades, inoculando en todos los individuos las ideas de una civilización progresiva. Ese es el objetivo de los periódicos políticos y religiosos” (qtd. in Cacia Prada 169). As stated by Andrés Gordillo Restrepo, the definition of nationalism in Colombia was guided in great

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<sup>53</sup> Andrés Gordillo Restrepo explains the significance of *El Mosaico* both as a newspaper and literary group that stimulated the spread of *cuadros de costumbres* while holding a bipartisan outlook amidst a series of civil wars in Colombia: “Entre las asociaciones culturales del siglo XIX, efímeras por definición, sobresale *El Mosaico*, no sólo por su longevidad (permanecerá catorce años en actividad intermitente), sino también por tratarse de la primera asociación que puede enmarcarse en el conjunto de las modernas agrupaciones literarias. Por otra parte, esta asociación de hombres de letras, llegará a constituir un ejemplo de civilidad y tolerancia en un país aquejado por las animosidades partidistas y las constantes guerras civiles. Efectivamente, la tertulia, que giraba en torno a la revista homónima, estuvo compuesta por un grupo de publicistas o *literatos* de la elite bogotana, identificados tanto con el liberalismo como con el conservatismo nacientes, que se empezaron a reunir de manera informal para discutir de literatura y pasar un ‘rato agradable’ evitando las discusiones políticas” (28). See Andrés Gordillo Restrepo, “*El Mosaico* (1858-1872) Nacionalismo, élites y cultura en la segunda mitad del siglo XIX,” *Fronteras de la historia*, no. 8, 2003, pp. 19–63.

part by how “en *El Mosaico* el nacionalismo articula y da sentido a sus múltiples manifestaciones... [en] fabricar una *cultura nacional*, en parte como contestación al afrancesamiento y a la influencia inglesa acercándose [a] la *madre patria*” (22). This concept of nation was mainly based on the predisposed notion of the cultural elite and intellectuals and their definition of Colombian race, popular customs, and its *pueblo* (57). Restrepo further indicates that the purpose behind *El Mosaico* was primarily to fill the void of institutions in Colombia dedicated to art and literature, and secondarily to present the image of nationalism that the intellectual elite of mid-nineteenth century Colombia had perceived as a collective image of a “*cultura nacional...la madre patria*” (Gordillo Restrepo 47-48).

During its final issues, *El Mosaico* attempted to generate a sense of political equilibrium, providing an inspiring common ground for Conservative and Liberal writers to share ideas, despite political differences (Von der Walde 246). As a result, it stimulated the publication of *cuadros* over the press in unprecedented ways (Pineda Buitrago 81). Other national journals,<sup>54</sup> such as *El Argos* and *El Observador* in Bogotá, also published *cuadros de costumbres*, and they became “particularly valuable as a mirror of tastes, criteria, the naïve curiosity, and general level of culture, and the manners of mid-century Colombia” (Otero Muñoz 73; Duffey 49; Vallejo Murcia et al. 161-162).

Considering the relentless civil wars occurring in Colombia until around 1885, contemporary Conservative writer José María Vergara y Vergara (1831-1872), who also contributed to *El Mosaico*, swiftly took advantage of the times and became one of the most

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<sup>54</sup> Refer to Gustavo Otero Muñoz, *Historia del periodismo en Colombia*. Universidad Sergio Arboleda, 2019, p. 73. This resource provides a thorough overview of the history of the national newspapers in Colombia, with excellent commentary by the author.

influential writers of this group. Vergara y Vergara's respected reputation, aside from being the first director of the Academia Colombiana in 1871, was also based on his having started two periodicals, one with a more literary focus, titled *La Matricaria*, and a more political one called *La Fe*, which he used as a vehicle to present his strongly Conservative religious views. A native of Bogotá, Vergara y Vergara became a renowned Conservative historian who focused on studies of his beloved city. As a prominent author,<sup>55</sup> he also wrote sketches depicting day-to-day activities, illustrating scenes from the last phase of the colonial period towards the end of the nineteenth century (Pérez Silva 495).

As Colombian *cuadros* and *artículos de costumbres* were popularized through the growth of newspapers, they became vehicles for a message about national identity. Authors like José M. Groot also voiced their current opinions about Colombia's natural scenery and traditions. These bucolic scenes of nature contained subtle political and ideological messages.<sup>56</sup> Under the same political climate, the *Museo de cuadros de costumbres*<sup>57</sup> was compiled in 1866 by Vergara y Vergara, considered "one of the best *costumbrista*

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<sup>55</sup> For more details about Vergara y Vergara's literary legacy in Colombia, refer to the notes in Vicente Pérez Silva, "José María Vergara y Vergara," *La autobiografía en Colombia*. Presidencia de la República, 1996, pp. 495–498, <https://babel.banrepcultural.org/digital/collection/p17054coll9/id/4>.

<sup>56</sup> Examples of this are shown in the third chapter.

<sup>57</sup> In *Revisitar el Costumbrismo*, an important note is made by Patricia D'Allemand in the canonization of this collection: "Más allá de cualquier alusión a sus antecedentes peninsulares -*Los españoles pintados por sí mismos*- o hispanoamericanos -*Los cubanos pintados por sí mismos*) *Los mexicanos pintados por sí mismos*-, los dos títulos planeados inicialmente para la antología -*Los granadinos pintados por sí mismos* / *Los colombianos pintados por sí mismos*-, títulos que sus editores se vieron obligados a abandonar, para optar por el de *Museo de costumbres*, registraban su intención de dar contornos nacionales a ese 'vasto cuadro' compuesto por la colección (Vergara y Vergara 1866 II). Pero si el nuevo título perdía su capacidad referencial a nivel del campo cultural a cuya construcción aspiraba contribuir la colección, revelaba en cambio una segunda función (58), which then, "implica un proceso de selección y jerarquización...en otras palabras, de aquellas que componen la tertulia *El Mosaico*. Y es justamente de esta élite, convertida en institución literaria, que el libro deriva su autoridad y capacidad de canonizar los textos incluidos (D'Allemand, *Revisitar* 59).

anthologies” (Duffey 50). In the Preface to *Museo*, Vergara y Vergara recognizes the function of the artistic representations of the images depicted in the *cuadros* to develop and highlight the national emblems of Colombia. Galindo Cruz acknowledges the purpose of infusing a new image within and without the national boundaries, in as how these “cuadros representativos de los paisajes o personajes característicos dentro de esa idea de nación que no solo se debía construir en el seno del país, sino también instaurar ante los extranjeros” (123).

In his most recent book, Colombian scholar Felipe Martínez Pinzón has compiled an annotated version of Vergara y Vergara’s original *Museo de cuadros de costumbres y variedades* (two volumes published in 2020).<sup>58</sup> This two-volume compilation of *Museo de cuadros* provides a precious resource that combines the primary texts initially published in the nineteenth century with an informative, annotated commentary by Martínez Pinzón that makes the *cuadros de costumbres* more accessible to today’s readers. Within the annotations provided, he reveals four significant components for developing this project and studying el Museo as a voice for the Conservative ideology of nineteenth-century Colombia:

Primero, ver el *Museo* como parte de un movimiento literario global. Luego, hacer evidente la forma en que la literatura de tipos y costumbres se entroncó con mecanismos de control biopolítico de la población colombiana. Después, mostrar que el Museo fue una reacción a las reformas

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<sup>58</sup> See *Museo de cuadros de costumbres y variedades*, vols. I–II. Universidad de los Andes, 2020. Edited by Felipe Martínez Pinzón. Originally edited by José María Vergara y Vergara, 1866.



Liberales a nivel nacional; y, finalmente, dar a conocer al público lector el archivo de periódicos que usó Vergara para componer su Museo. (xv-xvi)

Historically, this collection exemplifies the link between image and textuality and the study of local customs as the genre of a national literature. During 1854 and 1860, when Colombia was experiencing a series of civil wars, the nation was under a “pacto de convivencia bipartidista” that favored the creation of a cultural formation within the “élite criolla” that would unify rather than divide. Leading writers such as Vergara y Vergara and Groot promoted their nationalism ideals via *El Mosaico* and *Museo de cuadros de costumbres* (Gordillo Restrepo 29). Colonial art had had minimal interest in portraying customs or local traditions, with the primary purpose being religious representation instead of iconic national figures and scenes. Through the popular medium of the press, these *cuadros* soon reached new readers in order to teach them the perspectives of these writers about Colombian society with very subtle hints of the political views infused in them.

The reality is that these literary series, much like that of *El Mosaico*, were mainly geared towards a “minoría culta” centered in Bogotá and other major cities (Gordillo Restrepo 43). However, Martínez Pinzón sheds light on the moderate and almost muted Conservative outlook of the writer Vergara y Vergara:

Por conservador no se hace referencia a su afiliación al Partido Conservador, sino a su sensibilidad reactiva, producto de la cual se inventa como heredero de la patria, árbitro de las tradiciones de la nación y

organizador de la historia nacional como reflejo de su historia personal.  
(qtd. in *Museo* [Tomo I] xix).<sup>59</sup>

When Spanish *costumbristas* first reached Colombia, the main influential ones being Mesonero and Larra, they sparked a similar style in Latin American writers. Newspapers in Bogotá soon began publishing these daily “sketches,” but these were short-lived from early 1839 until they established popularity. Commentators and scholars of *Costumbrismo* in Colombia tended to include material not part of this genre, including political articles, biographies, and historical short stories. Often, the label *cuadro de costumbres* was erroneously grouped with any text considered casual prose. In 1889, José Manuel Marroquín,<sup>60</sup> another prolific Colombian *costumbrista* who was part of the literary group El Mosaico, defined this genre in the following way:

Su objeto es pintar, para instrucción de los extraños y de la posteridad, las costumbres de los países en épocas determinada...con el fin de corregir lo vituperable o defectuoso que haya en dichas costumbres...En este género tienen cabida los caracteres, las descripciones, los diálogos y cuánto puede adornar la historia ficticia; pero todo debe dirigirse al fin propuesto, esto es, a la pintura o al vituperio de una costumbre. (qtd. in Duffey xii)

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<sup>59</sup> As critic Ivan Padilla Chasing indicates, in an issue for the Colombian newspaper *El Liberal* dated June 8, 1869, Vergara y Vergara had clarified in the following statement his moderate political stance: “no pertenezco al partido conservador, pues acostumbro a pensar i manejarme por principios fijos que unas veces me colocan cerca i otras lejos de ese partido; pero mucho menos pertenezco al partido Liberal siendo, como soi centralista, aunque obediente a la constitución [liberal de 1863]” (qtd. in Martínez Pinzón, *Museo*, Tomo I, xix, xxiv).

<sup>60</sup> Conservative writer and politician José Manuel Marroquín (1827-1908), who later became President of Colombia at the start of the turn of the twentieth century, had also assisted Vergara y Vergara in the compilation of *Museo de cuadros*. (Martínez Pinzón, *Museo* II, 3).

Hence, the Colombian *cuadros*, as did those of other nations, sought to replicate and “paint” the local customs and regionalism with authenticity in order to value their own national identity and ways of life as a reaction to the drastic transition brought forth after the independence from Spain.

#### **D. Overview of Colombia’s Conservative Visionaries: José Manuel Groot, Ramón Torres Méndez, and Other Colombian *Costumbristas***

Vergara y Vergara was not the only Conservative writer who wrote *cuadros de costumbres*. A distinguished Colombian *costumbrista* of Dutch ancestry, José Manuel Groot (1800-1878) was an important figure contributing to the nineteenth century's political, cultural, and historical context as an honorable Conservative<sup>61</sup> intellectual dedicated to the world of literature and the arts. Groot's talent – as a writer and as an artist – was praised for his authenticity in depicting the reality of his nation with acute observation, representing the traditional customs of the common people with an ironic smirk and a colorful demonstration of historical facts. He was deemed an ardent artist of

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<sup>61</sup> Born in Bogotá (then called Santa Fé in 1800), Groot had originally been raised with an initial liberal ideology and freemasonry in the years leading to the Independence but later converted to the Roman Catholic faith and embraced the Conservative worldview by the 1830s (González and Segura, *Groot* 9-13). This kind of drastic ideological change, commonly witnessed in Colombia during a time of great political conflict, was also seen in the renowned Colombian writer José María Samper, as noted by scholar Giraldo Jaramillo: “Dentro del contradictorio espíritu del siglo XIX no son raros estos cambios de opinión, estas ‘conversiones’ religiosas o políticas, estas paradójicas alternativas humanas; común es el caso de políticos reaccionarios que en unos cuantos años actúan como radicales extremistas o de liberales que se vuelven defensores de la tradición y adalides de las ideas conservadoras; de librepensadores que regresan sumisos a la Iglesia o de fervorosos creyentes que en un momento dado se aportan de la fe y terminan su vida en un acto desesperado de incrédulos” (qtd. in González and Segura, *Groot* 13).

Colombian customs, not only as an essential writer of *cuadros de costumbres* but also as a painter of these sketches of daily life (Salvat et al. 1243-244).

Groot, as a pioneer of this genre in Colombia, defined *Costumbrismo*'s role in nation building, "con rasgos más llamativos y pintorescos de los sucesos y de los lugares...confiado en la memoria" (Maya, "Groot" 11). Given this peculiarity of fusing his national vision with art, it is clear that Groot's passion as a historian was inevitably expressed through his creative side, painting "la memoria" of Colombia in such a way that, "se queda con ella como acontece después de haber contemplado una pintura muy minuciosa, en la cual el detalle ahoga el conjunto...en cuya pluma la historia patria se resuelve en colores" (11).

According to the pathbreaking work by Frank M. Duffey, *The Early Cuadro de Costumbres in Colombia*, the most important works from major Colombian *costumbristas* are presented through a close analysis of their *cuadros* published in the nineteenth century. Like Vergara y Vergara and numerous other contemporaries, Groot belonged to the so-called Mosaico group, clearly the most popular literary *tertulia* in Colombia of his day. Although Groot's *costumbrista* production seems to have been limited, its quality was noteworthy as he dedicated his time to publishing and painting for periodicals such as *El Duende* and *El Día* during his time as a Voltarian rationalist, later during his more Conservative period, his work began to appear in a more religious one titled *El Catolicismo* (Duffey 17; Otero Muñoz 86). He seems to have the same purpose as many other *costumbrista* writers: to paint a unified new image of Colombia's basic elements as part of the national unification consolidated under the post-1880 Conservative ideology (Von der Walde 244).

During the 1830s, Groot had participated in noteworthy collective projects with other artists led by the renowned British traveling artist Joseph Brown (1802-1874), which included several watercolor paintings describing different traditional customs that are now owned by the Royal Geographical Society in London. Comparably, from 1848 to 1852, under the influence of the paintings and sketches of the Chorographic Commission (*Comisión Corográfica*)<sup>62</sup> deemed the “golden age”<sup>63</sup> for Colombian *costumbrista* art. Torres Méndez compiled several important national art collections. These works comprised his drawings, lithographs, and oil paintings showcasing traditional and religious customs that portrayed Colombian cultural identity and which were often published in local newspapers, earning him merited recognition as a pioneering artist (Sánchez Cabra, *Boletín cultural*, 27-28).

During the mid-to late-nineteenth century, as political and social tensions took place throughout Latin America, the trend of reading and writing *cuadros de costumbres* became popular in these emerging nations. Groot and other *costumbristas* played a

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<sup>62</sup> Colombian *costumbristas* were influenced by the scientific and artistic movements of the times: “La Comisión Corográfica, la tarea científica colectiva más importante del siglo XIX, que tuvo lugar entre 1850 y 1859 y cuyos resultados más concretos fueron la elaboración del mapa oficial del país y los informes que describieron las características geográficas del territorio y los rasgos étnicos de la población. Esta tarea implicó una necesaria colaboración entre dirigentes liberales y conservadores que el impulso inicial correspondió al reformismo modernizador liberal de mitad de siglo y aunque el grupo de ‘científicos’ estaba compuesto de liberales, es innegable que varias figuras conservadoras contribuyeron a los logros de la misión. La elaboración del mapa del país había sido una preocupación compartida por unos y otros; es más, para los dirigentes conservadores la Comisión Corográfica era vista como una genuina prolongación del espíritu ilustrado de la Expedición [Botánica] de fines del siglo XVIII” (Loaiza Cano, *Sociabilidad* ch. 2.5.3). Refer to the third chapter for more on this topic.

<sup>63</sup> Here, Sánchez Cabra points out the significance of these very productive years for nineteenth-century Colombian art: “De buscarse una época dorada de los cuadros de tipos y costumbres en Colombia, ésta sería el período entre 1848 y 1852, cuando no sólo aparecieron en exposiciones, sino que se imprimieron las primeras colecciones, se utilizaron para ilustrar periódicos y se les dio cierta dignidad científica, al entrar a formar parte de los materiales de la Comisión Corográfica” (“Ramón Torres” 27-28).

significant part in constructing national history in order to present to their countrymen and others their own definition of Colombian traditions as seen through the lens of the white upper class, wavering between the perspectives of Conservatives and Liberals. In the words of Felipe Martínez Pinzón, “las naciones se hacen de símbolos, más que de sitios, y los símbolos son los reflejos de las maneras en que nos hemos representado como comunidad” (176).

Colombian nineteenth-century *costumbristas* paid attention to certain symbols in order to illustrate an array of images that would serve to present their perception of Colombian nationalism during this significant period. Thus, *Costumbrismo* art and literature can be understood as a way of projecting and keeping a record of historical images that were important to establish the foundational roots of a nation.<sup>64</sup> Commentaries by the critic Baldomero Sanín Cano regarding Colombia noted the following: “Hubo una época tiranizada por el cuadro de costumbres. El literato hacía el estreno de su vida literaria con obras de esta clase...La ola romántica trajo entre nosotros la boga del cuadro de costumbres, se abusó del género porque su aparente facilidad convidaba a los escritores inexpertos” (qtd. in Pupo-Walker 7). Given the abundance and popularity of the *cuadros* showing ample variety in writing styles and lengths, there were certain “sketches of customs” that were identified among the most illustrative of the culture and nation – which were also selected, edited, and deemed worthy of being included in Vergara and Vergara’s *Museo de cuadros de costumbres* (1866).

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<sup>64</sup> According to Doris Sommer, “nation building projects invested private passions with public purpose...Romance and republic were often connected...through the authors who were preparing national projects through prose fiction and implementing foundational fictions through legislative or military campaigns” (7).

While *costumbrista* writers dedicated themselves to writing national novels and other types of prose, some with greater aptitude than others, the visual representations in the short yet poignant *cuadros de costumbres* depicted a creative and highly visual image of these new nations that had recently separated from Spanish rule. This genre, therefore, paved the way for Colombian writers who were seeking to portray their own national identity in hopes of redefining these unique *imaginary* boundaries from the rest of the world.

As an avid *costumbrista*, Groot was greatly influenced by the Spanish tradition of infusing political aspects in his literary and artistic works, as he wrote about his Nueva Granada (Colombia) from 1832 to 1863. Groot had converted to Catholicism and expressed his Conservative ideas in his first *artículo de costumbres* in 1839 to defend his faith, titled “Los impíos con la cabeza cortada” (*Cuadros*, 5-6).<sup>65</sup> He mainly produced a series of realistic portraits and traditional scenes, in addition to the prose and poetry writings within the same genre that he published, firmly showcasing his religious and political conservatism (Méndez 259). Critics have noted that Groot was one of the first in Colombia to devote himself to painting within this wave of *Costumbrismo* – “fue tal vez el primero que trabajó deliberadamente el *Costumbrismo* en pintura” with works of art dated around 1812 like *Cuadros rústicos de las costumbres granadinas* or *La venta*, painted when he was very young (González Aranda, *Manual*, 210). Groot’s most well-known work was his *Historia eclesiástica y civil de Nueva Granada*, published in 1869. His artistic side

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<sup>65</sup> For a fuller account of Groot’s legendary contributions to the fields of historiography, art criticism, and religion in Colombia, refer to the introduction in J. M. Groot, *Cuadros de costumbres*. Fundación Editorial Epígrafe, 2006.

flourished early in his career, as seen in the natural sceneries he painted in *La flora de Bogotá* (Duffey 17).

Although Groot's production of *costumbrista* works was scarce compared to other writers, his representations were highly recognized and respected. In effect, these short sketches wittily illustrate the local "color" of his country, highlighting popular social practices and everyday activities, including music, food, language, and clothing, among other cultural symbols. In effect, the *cuadros* written and painted by Groot were popular in both Colombia and throughout most of Latin America. Soon these "sketches of daily life" achieved mass appeal as a result of their publication in the press, as these were usually printed with an illustration included.

Joining Conservative visionaries like Groot, Ramón Torres Méndez (1809-1885) emerged among nineteenth-century Colombia's most prolific *costumbrista* artists (Salvat et al. 1255-256).<sup>66</sup> Torres Méndez was also interested in portraying his nation's characteristics through the traditions and customs of daily life – through art – especially by encompassing all of the faces of society, from the poor and marginalized to the affluent upper classes. Recognized as "el pintor más notable de la Nueva Granada en el siglo XIX," Torres Méndez devoted himself to painting these daily life sketches of Colombian traditions, professions, and pastimes, as he was considered "pintor del pueblo bajo, sin

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<sup>66</sup> Torres Méndez's artistic contribution for Colombia is truly outstanding: "El principal pintor 'costumbrista' colombiano, Ramón Torres Méndez, fue primordialmente un pintor de retratos, de los cuales hizo, según su biógrafo José Belver, más de 600 en su larga vida profesional, mientras que de las 'escenas de costumbres neogranadinas' dejó 'en diseño e inéditas' alrededor de 300. Y como todos los pintores, también hizo 'cuadros de todo género' ('más de 200'), entre ellos pinturas religiosas, alegorías, decoraciones para teatro y monumentos sacros" (Sánchez Cabra, "Imagen de la nación," par 4).



ocultar generosa simpatía por su miseria.”<sup>67</sup> He shared Groot’s conservatism with the detailed representation of Colombian society in both of their paintings, where the protagonist of these stories occupied almost the entire description, illustrating their surroundings and everyday activities. Colombian critic Gabriel Giraldo Jaramillo confirmed that the artist’s repertoire had been “creando, tal vez sin quererlo, las bases de un arte auténticamente nacional” (qtd. in Sánchez Cabra, “Ramón Torres,” 17).

Torres Méndez's paintings can be regarded as “visual” *cuadros de costumbres*, which he has skillfully portrayed through his lithographs, drawings, and oil paintings. His repertoire includes a mix of scenes and types, but less about the landscape itself and more about the human experience – evoking powerful emotions, mindful of vibrant and poignant details regarding the clothing, facial expressions, and cultural relics that impressively frame the essence of the local color. His illustrations document a colorful glimpse of Colombia’s nineteenth-century customs through subjective perceptions, as one of the most esteemed among his contemporaries.<sup>68</sup> Through the advancement of the press, Torres Méndez’s visuals were locally disseminated, inspiring other *costumbristas* to include his images in prominent newspapers like *El Pasatiempo* and *El Tiempo*, among others (Sánchez Cabra, *Ramón Torres* 161). This verbal-visual phenomenon via the press set in motion this flow

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<sup>67</sup> See Rodrigo Gutiérrez Viñuales, “El paisaje y las costumbres en la pintura iberoamericana: Artistas viajeros y costumbristas americanos del XIX.” *Pintura, escultura y fotografía en Iberoamérica, siglos XIX y XX*. Ediciones Cátedra, 1997, pp. 153–199.

<sup>68</sup> Besides Groot, some of the main contemporary *costumbristas* who often are associated to the work of Torres Méndez includes Conservative writers (most of them from the literary group El Mosaico). Among them were José Manuel Marroquín (1827-1908), writer, politician, and landowner from the Bogotá savanna (who later became President of Colombia between 1900-1904); León Hinestrosa (1816-1880), a Conservative poet and prose writer from Bogotá; Manuel María Madieto (1815-1888), a Conservative politician and writer from Cartagena; and José Caicedo Rojas (816-1889) and José María Samper (1828-1888), radical Liberal politicians and writers who eventually turned to the Conservative ideology. (Martínez Pinzón, *Museo* I, 251n2; *Museo* II, 3n3, 112n12, 225n1; Ayala par 1–7).

of literary *cuadros* and costumbrista paintings, inspiring other writers to sketch new writings based on his illustrations.

Nonetheless, Groot's works are different from the typical style of other *costumbristas*. He does not divert the narration with superfluous details; instead, he maximizes his skills in historiography and art to trace clear narrations that have a noticeable artistic touch. In this manner, Groot can *paint with words*, as stated by Julio R. Castaño Rueda: "La fuerza narrativa la trajo enredada en las venas que crecieron con el siglo XIX. Es historiador por testimonio y católico a ultranza. Eso lo exime de bendiciones arzobispaes para *pintar con palabras* el vernáculo arte de las tradiciones" (qtd. in Groot, *Cuadros*, 8). Consequently, Groot's talents as a writer and painter are evident in his works and carried over to his vivid *cuadros* and paintings, sparked by his passion for history, art, and Catholic ideology. From this varied group of Colombian *costumbristas*, a limited list of works has been selected to exemplify this analysis of Colombian nineteenth-century *cuadros* – painted as a colorful mosaic of visual and verbal visages – illustrating various insightful and observant elements regarding their ideological approaches to creating the *pueblo nacional*, their local customs, racial and social differences, and political emblems. In the next chapters, examples will be studied in constructing the national image for Colombia and the contrast to other Liberal and Conservative *costumbristas*.

*PART TWO:*

*Sketches of National Spaces and Marginalized Identities*

*in Nineteenth-Century Colombian Costumbrismo*

**III. PICTURING NATIONAL SPACES IN COLOMBIA:  
COSTUMBRISTA EKPHRASIS BETWEEN TEXTUAL DESCRIPTIONS  
AND PAINTINGS**

**A. Introduction: Urbanization and Modernity in Nineteenth-Century Colombia's  
*Pueblo Nacional***

Throughout much of the nineteenth century, as ideological disputes and civil wars increased, the writers and artists of *Costumbrismo* in Colombia were significantly affected, not just by the contested political climate, but also by the progressive changes which were a result of the scientific explorations carried out in the complex geographical regions of Colombia (Appelbaum, "Envisioning" 375-376, 381; Orlando Melo 17-18). From the colder Andes mountain ranges to the warmer Atlantic lowlands, Colombia's *costumbristas* began portraying their national territory through metaphorical imagery, depicting a dynamic natural canvas that reflected the distinctive nineteenth-century societies and ways of life found in Colombia. Indeed, the study of these geographical complexities raised other issues related to transportation and communication, but the main portrayal of these emblematic settings centered on the dichotomy between rural and urban spaces, creating a collage of Colombia as a "country of regions" (Uribe Hanabergh 128; Appelbaum, "Envisioning" 392).

In the book *Patricios en contienda* (2021), Felipe Martínez Pinzón sheds light on how the national image of Colombia is presented in many of the *cuadros de costumbres*, particularly those in which they portray the *pueblo* and the writers' interpretation of local

people and customs (67). He explains that the “imagined” *pueblo nacional* – projected by Conservative works of *Costumbrismo* – “entendía el pueblo nacional como entidad en existencia desde la colonia” (67). At the same time, nineteenth-century Colombian elites desired to create a refined image of the nation that would gain the approval of European onlookers<sup>69</sup> (Martínez-Pinzón, *Patricios* 68).

The process of modernity in nineteenth-century Latin America resulted in a historical, political, and artistic outburst as regarded the definition and interest in national culture and traditions. Artists and writers of *Costumbrismo*, as the telltale observers, began studying and portraying aspects of their unique culture and territory. In particular, the *costumbristas* literary and artistic works portrayed not only the “local color” of their landscape and customs but also interpreted them in such a way as to convey a specific ideology and political message to the masses. For instance, national projects like Vergara y Vergara’s *Museo de cuadros de costumbres* offered a platform for many *costumbristas* (especially those within the elite literary group of El Mosaico), to voice their desired vision of their nation – “una imagen de pueblo nacional como hispano-católico para reconectar la historia de España con la de Colombia” (Martínez Pinzón, *Patricios* 66-67).

The first step of this process was initiated with the scientific missions that gathered valuable data about the country as a byproduct of modernization. These textual and visual discoveries were then artistically arranged and disseminated through travel chronicles and the national press – and circulated in newspapers, *cuadros de costumbres*, and books. Based on Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities*, the printing press played a

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<sup>69</sup> The prologue in Vergara, y Vergara’s *Museo de cuadros de costumbres* (1866) had a specific audience in mind: “abriguemos la esperanza de que nuestro libro sea leído por españoles europeos” (qtd. in Martínez Pinzón, *Patricios* 68).

significant role in creating a definition of nationalism that helped to form a sense of national identity for local and regional citizens of Colombia and the rest of the world. The result was a colorful blend of this “imagined community” employing European progressive nuances within the setting and customs of a Latin American *pueblo* that projected a newfound depiction of Colombia as a civilized and modern nation (qtd. in Martínez, *El nacionalismo* 164).

The nineteenth-century scientific expeditions led by European scientists and artists in Colombia were part of a progressive Colombian Liberal agenda, which caught the attention of the whole country. Nevertheless, the elite from the literary group El Mosaico, whose works appeared in Vergara y Vergara’s anthology *Museo de cuadros*, remained true to their Conservative ideals, even as Liberals fought to maintain political power through much of the second half of the nineteenth century (Williams 7). An example of this is that when the Liberal President Mosquera funded the scientific expedition called *Comisión Corográfica* (explored in the next section) its final report was attacked by Conservative centralist Vergara y Vergara who stated “la narrativa brindada por la Comisión no dejaba campo para España, las costumbres hispanas o la religión católica” (Martínez Pinzón, *Patricios* 66). In contrast to the report of the *Comisión Corográfica*, Vergara y Vergara offered a “polished” cosmopolitan vision of the nation of Colombia in his book *Museo de cuadros de costumbres y variedades*, which was carefully crafted by cutting out sections that did not fit the narrative in support of a Hispanic-Catholic community with Bogotá at the center (Martínez Pinzón, *Patricios* 66).

With the European-centered capital of Bogotá in the higher altitudes and at the core of the nation, where most of the literary and artistic productions were published and

sketched, the representation of the urban landscape evidenced the contrast between distant, unrepresented provincial regions and populations that had not always been the ideal foci. For many of the works included in Vergara's *Museo de cuadros*, and especially for those analyzed in this study, "Bogotá es el lugar de la fundación de la colonia y por tanto el centro reproductor de la nacionalidad...donde se imagina un romance entre el patricio hispano-americano y un pueblo hispano-católico"<sup>70</sup> (Martínez Pinzón, *Patricios* 71).

In the image-text dialectic, Colombian Conservatives and Liberals elites were cognizant of the essential role both the written and the visual works would play in the representation they wanted to create about their nation. In effect, Colombia's complex geopolitical landscape from rural to urban spaces (and the demographic diversity explored in the next chapter) made the country's unification a challenging task for the *costumbristas*. Beatriz González Aranda affirms that in Colombia of the nineteenth century: "el *Costumbrismo* ha sido uno constante en literatura y artes plásticas. Los escritores del siglo XIX dominaron el tema hasta tal punto que dentro de sus propias obras costumbristas se burlaron del hábito de mirar los hábitos de los moradores de campos y ciudades" (González and Segura, *Groot* 28).

As a result of the desire to present their ideology, local Conservative artists such as José Manuel Groot and Ramón Torres Méndez, who had been self-taught, were suddenly prompted to publish their work in national art collections. Hence, Torres Méndez – and likewise Groot – dedicated their work to illustrating the people and customs of the "imagined" *pueblo* and the idyllic country life, even within urban settings (Sánchez Cabra,

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<sup>70</sup> "De los 97 cuadros compilados, 95 aparecieron en periódicos de la capital con lo cual se la inventa también como un lugar de diseminación de la herencia hispana común" (Martínez Pinzón, *Patricios* 71).

*Ramon Torres* 134; González and Segura, *Groot* 33; Moreno Clavijo 1853). For instance, in Groot's case, the preservation of local color is shown in his many of his *cuadros* and "pinturas del país," by illustrating minute autochthonous scenes and customs and amplifying them as quintessential national symbols: "En este gusto por las costumbres Groot denoto una actitud romántica en lo que manifestó su fascinación por el comportamiento del pueblo y a la vez la necesidad de colocarlo en un contexto más amplio" (González and Segura, *Groot* 33).

Likewise, Torres Méndez echoed a similar outlook through the contrast between the "pueblo bajo y los notables," revealing the correlation of rural customs within urban spaces, as noted by Efraín Sánchez Cabra:

La serie de tipos nacionales despliega el cuadro general de una sociedad que Torres percibió en la contrastante concurrencia del pueblo bajo y los notables, dentro de un ambiente que pese a ser *predominantemente rural, aun dentro de los centros urbanos*, presentaba facetas de complejidad que superaban la simple apariencia (Sánchez Cabra, *Ramon Torres* 134; my emphasis).

In this sense, Torres Méndez shared a similar approach to Groot in offering the contrast of rural-urban depictions, emphasizing a predominant Conservative perspective that favored the vision of the *pueblo* in its purest form as a way to highlight the simplicity and tranquility of colonial vestiges against the progressive Liberal reforms. Sketched with decorum, realism, and a humorous and satirical side, their works dealt with members of the lower social strata, usually drawn outdoors, displaying people in their rustic territory and everyday customs (Moreno Clavijo 1853).



For this reason, this chapter examines the implications of nineteenth-century Colombian works of *Costumbrismo* that portrayed changes that the urbanization process brought to the representation of the modern capital and the remote, rural areas. The selection of Colombian *cuadros de costumbres* and paintings, including drawings, lithographs, and watercolors, portray a panoramic perspective of the overall artistic developments within the nation at the time. The analysis of this image-text relationship will help to understand Groot and Torres Méndez's representation of Colombia's diverse constructions of nationalism during a time of metamorphosis pushed by the progression towards modernity and the influence of scientific trends resulting from this process (Uribe Hanaberg 126-128). Although there are countless examples of verbal and visual representations of this in nineteenth-century Colombian literature, this research studies the portrayals of rural-urban spaces and customs as demonstrated by a collection of written and pictorial *costumbrista* works. In this chapter, I examine a list of works from Colombian *costumbrista* writers and artists in terms of the following themes: (1) the influence of the scientific trends on *Costumbrismo* and the mark of foreign artists on local *costumbristas*; (2) the juxtaposition of rural-urban national spaces, with a specific emphasis on the Conservative perspective of rural scenes and customs.

## **B. Retrospective Gaze: The Influence of Scientific Expeditions, Political Purposes, and Foreign Perspectives on Colombian *Costumbrismo* and Local Artists**

*Costumbrista* works were influenced by the scientific advances of nineteenth-century Europe and South America that began with the initial *Real Expedición Botánica*

*del Nuevo Reino de Granada* (Botanical Expedition of New Granada, 1783-1816) and continued with the mid-century *Comisión Corográfica* (Chorographic Commission, 1850-1859). Principally, aesthetic ideals from Europe motivated the botanical and artistic voyages like the *Expedición Botánica* in Colombia, evidencing the vestiges of the eighteenth-century interest in the picturesque and Romanticism that led to the inquisitiveness of scientists and leaders like German cartographer Alexander von Humboldt<sup>71</sup> to explore the Americas in the nineteenth century, resulting in a wave of illustrated texts, travel chronicles, watercolors, and lithographs (Uribe Hanaberg 127). Equally, this movement in *Costumbrismo* proliferated through the form of short sketches published in local newspapers as *cuadros de costumbres* (González and Segura, *Groot* 29; Deas, “El valor histórico” 20).

The artistic component of *Costumbrismo*, especially in the depiction of Colombia’s traditional characteristics is demonstrated by capturing the different types and customs. This style can be traced to the aesthetic origins of the eighteenth-century interest in the picturesque depicted in the travel chronicles and research explorations popular at the time, given that “[e]n los orígenes de la pintura de tipos y costumbres, los viajes de exploración científica y geográfica tuvieron una influencia aún mayor que las ideas sobre lo pintoresco” (Sánchez Cabra, “Ramón Torres” 31).

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<sup>71</sup> Verónica Uribe Hanaberg explains how the *Expedición Botánica* led by Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859) during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century inspired a number of European artists, travelers, and scientists to explore and document the “exotic” landscapes and wild flora and fauna of South America (126). This project was preceded by the eighteenth-century scientific endeavor prompted by Spanish physician José Celestino Mutis, who had arrived in 1761 at the capital city of Bogotá (then-called Santafé) for this mission supported by the Viceroyalty of Spain during the colonial reign of Charles III (127). See Verónica Uribe Hanaberg, “Translating Landscape: The Colombian Chorographic Commission.” *Journal of Arts and Humanities*, vol. 3, no. 1, January 2014, pp. 126–136.

Some years later, Colombia's political and scientific leaders brought foreign artists in the 1850s to take part in the so-called *Comisión Corográfica* (Sánchez Cabra, *Gobierno*, 28n15). This scientific project, led by Italian cartographer Agustín Codazzi, included a plan to map the different regional sites of Colombia, collaborating with artists and writers to categorize the varied geographical territories and ethnic cultures in order to obtain new knowledge of Colombia (Gordillo Restrepo 26).<sup>72</sup> Gaining an understanding of the national regions became the catalyst for the nation's political and economic development. Cartography was of paramount importance in the exploration of physical boundaries, serving to map the heterogeneous regions and the local resources that brought a newfound appreciation for the national territory, leading to advancements in roads, commerce, and cultural exchanges (Herrera de la Hoz et al. 12).

Apart from the contested political origins of this Liberal-led project intended to push the nation towards progress (Von der Walde 247), Colombian *costumbristas* were then constructing their own “mosaic”<sup>73</sup> illustration of their nation – a kind of national album or “mapa cultural del país” (Martínez Pinzón, *Museo I*, xlvi). This creative

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<sup>72</sup> The *Comisión Corográfica* in Colombia began under the order of the then-Liberal ruler Tomás Cipriano de Mosquera and was led by Agustín Codazzi (1793-1859) until the time of his death, with the first expedition in 1850 until 1859 contributing to this scientific endeavor along with a team of local painters, writers, and politicians, including the sociopolitical and geographical input from Colombian Liberal writers like Manuel Ancizar, among others (Sánchez Cabra, *Gobierno*, 41, 539, 590). In fact, Ancizar later wrote a series of biographical sketches published in *El Mosaico* from January 13 to March 5, 1864, titled “Agustín Codazzi,” in honor of his legacy (Sánchez Cabra, *Gobierno*, 28n15). See Efraín Sánchez Cabra, *Gobierno y geografía: Agustín Codazzi y la Comisión Corográfica de la Nueva Granada*. Banco de la República, El Áncora Editores, 1999.

<sup>73</sup> Sánchez Vigil brings light to the *costumbristas*' choice of words for naming their newspapers and magazines: “otros términos empleados para designar los contenidos fueron *panorama*, *museo* y *mundo*, utilizados en sus respectivos significados de vista general, compendio de obras que se exhiben y se muestran, o exposición de hechos o sucesos ocurridos en todas partes para destacar su carácter informativo universal en una evidente intención de globalizar” (qtd. in Galindo Cruz 114).

byproduct of Codazzi's Commission inspired many *costumbristas*. Artists and writers alike began creatively national imagery that made it possible to capture the essence of "unidad en la diversidad" (Von der Walde 248). Consequently, it is essential to understand that as Colombia's *costumbristas* were undoubtedly inspired by this scientific movement, most of them marked their own route in terms of the verbal and visual construction chosen to represent their nation.

Martínez Pinzón explains that the works included in Vergara y Vergara's *Museo de cuadros de costumbres* were "carefully chosen fragments from the Commission's travel narratives [turned] into sketches for his *Museo*," which were made "in stark contrast to the federal project of the Commission" ("People for the Patricians" 47). Inspired by a Conservative approach, Vergara y Vergara hand-picked those *cuadros* that had initially appeared in newspapers like *El Mosaico*, among other local ones issued from 1846 to 1866; in effect, he orchestrated a specific panoramic vision designed for the European audience, thereby creating "his own one-man Commission, his *Museo*" ("People for the Patricians" 47; *Museo* I, xxii). In this way, many Conservatives who joined him on this project sought to paint a "mosaic" of Colombia to reconnect its roots with Spain as a newly established and civilized - yet culturally distinctive - republic.

Although Vergara y Vergara's anthology presented an array of *cuadros* from both Conservatives and Liberals, it predominantly "depicted Colombia as a monolingual and Catholic community that was culturally derived from Spain and had Bogotá at his historical center" (Martínez Pinzón, "People for the Patricians" 47). More importantly, the "political objective of Vergara's book was to propose a modern vision of the country not as an economic alliance between industrial northern European nations and Latin America but as

a contemporary cultural nexus between Colombia and Spain,” thereby “Hispanicizing Colombian history” by recreating cultural representations that would reconnect and assimilate Colombia to Spanish culture after its Independence (“People for the Patricians” 47). Consequently, most of these *cuadros* were inspired by the *Comisión Corográfica*, a (federal) scientific project supported by Tomás Cipriano Mosquera’s Liberal government to represent all regions nationwide. In response to it, other *costumbristas* readjusted the ideological approach through a more Conservative sensibility – Vergara y Vergara wanted to portray a Colombia categorized as “americana español” that did not necessarily have an affiliation to one political party but rather “una identidad colombiana específicamente hispana” (Soriano Salkjelsvik and Castro, *Sensibilidades* 14, 23-24).

#### The Impact of Foreign Artists on Colombian *Costumbristas* Groot and Torres Méndez

Colombian artists, influenced by prominent foreign European figures who arrived after the time of Independence, began imitating similar artistic patterns in their *costumbrista* paintings. Groot worked closely with the London-born traveler and artist Joseph Brown, who arrived in Colombia in 1825, while Torres Méndez (regarded as a more experienced artist) has been associated with Edward Walhouse Mark, an English artist born in Spain that came to South America in the 1840s (Deas, “El valor histórico” 19-21). Additional foreign influences were attributed to the interest in the picturesque in Romanticism in books and illustrations produced in early nineteenth-century England. For example, scholar Sánchez Cabra suggests that one compilation titled *Costume of*

*Yorkshire*<sup>74</sup> (1814) by George Walker cleverly resembles the written portrayal and visual focus of those created by like-minded South American *costumbristas*, “donde lo rural se mezclaba con lo urbano” (“Ramon Torres” 34).

In Colombia, Groot is known, among others, as a painter of *costumbres* and the one that most resembles the style of Torres Méndez. However, the latter has been considered the most skilled, given his incredible precision and the popularity that many of his lithographs enjoyed, and the fact that he even explored other styles like oil and miniature paintings (González Aranda, *Confrontación de miradas* 6-7). Influenced by Brown and Groot, Torres Méndez also shows the influence of the remarkable work by Mark, who specialized in watercolor paintings with hues of blues, yellows, and browns on a white background, sketching simple yet detailed landscapes and local human types and figures in ordinary activities.<sup>75</sup> In addition, “en el álbum de la Comisión Corográfica,” according to Sánchez Cabra, it is evident that “el indudable avance que representa la obra de Torres Méndez con respecto a la de José Manuel Groot, es un avance de grado y un perfeccionamiento técnico, pues aquel era mucho mejor pintor, pero no necesariamente

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<sup>74</sup> In this compilation by English writer George Walker, the set of “ilustraciones, acompañadas por descripciones en inglés y francés, son principalmente un registro de ocupaciones en el norte de Inglaterra, donde lo rural se mezclaba con lo urbano, en plena era de la revolución industrial. Figuran vendedores de caballos, sastres, carboneros, pescadores, picapedreros, cortadores de turba, niños trabajadores de las fábricas, jinetes, tejedores, soldados, así como ilustraciones de curiosos oficios, como el de los buscadores de sanguijuelas y el de los raspadores de huesos de ballena” (Sánchez Cabra, “Ramón Torres” 34). This particular style is comparable to the work by Groot and Torres Méndez, emphasizing the rural perspectives intertwined within urban spaces.

<sup>75</sup> During the Botanical Expedition, Colombian artists learned to master watercolor art techniques that were used by cartographers and foreign artists. Torres Méndez, especially, along with many of his contemporaries, followed Edward Mark’s watercolor style that was popularized in England since late eighteenth century: “La técnica de la acuarela comenzó a practicarse en Colombia con los cartógrafos...La acuarela inglesa, por su parte, constituye todo un capítulo en la modernización de esta antigua técnica china” (González Aranda, *Confrontación de miradas* 5).

una evolución” (“Antecedentes” 43). In effect, “la imagen de la Nueva Granada en el siglo XIX que transmitieron los pintores de costumbres quedó formalizada desde la década de 1830” through the exemplary paintings of customs created by them (Sánchez Cabra, “Antecedentes” 43).

This genre within *Costumbrismo* began generating a wide variety of artistic paintings, facilitated by the growth and dissemination of the press, with many illustrated works and chronicles published and exchanged. Among the most distinguished were the works by Groot but especially those by Torres Méndez, appearing in some Bogotá newspapers that included relevant sketches and illustrations (i.e., *El Pasatiempo*). These works from nineteenth-century Colombia, which peaked between 1820 and 1860 (with comparable popularity in many Latin American nations), produced art in the form of lithographs, xylographs,<sup>76</sup> watercolors, drawings, and even etching, sometimes printed in art collections and local newspapers (González Aranda, *Confrontación de miradas* 13).

By reconstructing a “mosaic” of textual and visual representations, as explored in the examples that follow, Conservative *costumbristas* played a crucial role in creating a picture of Colombia through their literature and visual arts. National voyages like the *Expedición Botánica* and the *Comisión Corográfica* reinforced the connections between science, literature, and art of the time exemplified in Groot’s and Torres Méndez’s oeuvres.

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<sup>76</sup> It is important to note the difference between lithographs and xylographs, especially as the latter art form was particularly useful when illustrations were included in the newspapers and book publications at the time: “Al finalizar la primera mitad del siglo XIX los periódicos de sátira política o de entretenimiento se ilustraban con sellos xilográficos. La xilografía de pie (*xilo*, madera; *grafos*, línea) fue desarrollada por Thomas Bewick (1753-1828), en Inglaterra, a finales del siglo XVIII, para ilustrar libros y periódicos. Se utilizan bloques de madera dura que se corta al través del tronco y no a lo largo de la fibra. A diferencia de la litografía, las viñetas xilográficas podían intercalarse con los textos” (González Aranda, “Gubias, dados y matachines,” par. 1; *Confrontación de miradas* 13).

“Un sueño de dos colores” (Groot) | *Unos yerbateros* (Groot)

The impact of these scientific explorations on Colombian nineteenth-century culture is significant, as witnessed through the written texts and colorful paintings. In Groot’s *cuadro de costumbres* “Un sueño de dos colores”<sup>77</sup> (1860) there is a clear example of the scientific and artistic influence of Francisco Javier Matís from the Botanical Expedition, one of the great painters of Colombia’s landscape (González Aranda, *Manual* 462). Julio Ricardo Castaño Rueda explains that this *cuadro* encompasses “las costumbres de los soñadores” in that visionary and dreamlike state, as that dream in two colors “está manchado de realidades imperecederas” (9). Here, Groot explains the process of painting a scene in his mind while dreaming: “apenas me dormí cuando empecé a soñar que me hallaba en un gran salón, donde trabajaban varios pintores sobre papel” (Groot, *Historia y cuadros* 115). The narrator’s dream takes him to the past, where he encounters some of the most renowned figures in the sciences and the arts. He then proceeds by narrating the encounters he has with the legendary botanists and artists of this era who have clearly influenced his life and work: “Al primero que conocí fue a Matiz, que con grande atención dibujaba una planta del natural. Luego vi a [Manuel] Hinojosa, que después fue mi maestro de dibujo” (Groot, *Historia y cuadros* 115). In effect, this *cuadro* honors the creative talents of past icons that have inspired Groot.

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<sup>77</sup> This *cuadro* by Groot was originally published in *El Mosaico* (issue 42) on October 26, 1860. The essence of this work is defined in a statement made by Beatriz González Aranda: “El espíritu científico estaba en los viajeros y el aire de la Nueva Granada. Colombia nunca se ha repuesto de la nostalgia de la Expedición Botánica, tal vez porque no ha vuelto a existir un proyecto de tal envergadura y prestigio” (González Aranda, *Confrontación de miradas* 13).



“Un sueño de dos colores” echoes Groot’s fascination with the Botanical Expedition, referencing Matís and Hinojosa, two of the most respected figures researching the flora and fauna of the nation at the time (Martínez Pinzón, *Museo I*, xlv; Castaño Rueda 9). This narrative can be compared to Groot’s visual painting titled *Unos yerbateros, Francisco Javier Matís y el doctor Céspedes* (ca. 1845), where he also alludes to two historical botanical artists, pictured together in a humorous scene while doing research in the out-of-doors. By calling these two botanists “yerbateros,” Groot pokes fun at their respected positions during the *Expedición Botánica* and compares them to spiritual herbalists as mere “curanderos o personas que comercian con yerbas” (González and Segura, *Groot* 38).

As explained by González Aranda, this visual “demuestra el humor y el desenfado de Groot, quien se atreve a burlarse de la profesión de botánico, que por muchos años represento la intelectualidad” (*Groot* 39). This scholar also suggests that Colombia “siempre ha vivido de la nostalgia por la Expedición Botánica” (*Groot* 39). This idea that there was a nationwide appreciation for this scientific movement (and what it represented intellectually towards an ideal of progress, also reinstated years later in the *Comisión Corográfica*) contrasts with the “visión burlesca de Groot” towards the representation of these two leading figures of botanists as *yerbateros*.



Figure 3.1. José Manuel Groot. *Unos yerbateros, Francisco Javier Matís y el doctor Céspedes* (ca. 1845). Watercolor on paper. 33 x 23 cm. Colección Rivas Sacconi, Bogotá (González and Segura, *Groot* 37).

In this painting (Figure 3.1), the two older men appear ragged and unkempt under their dark-colored cloaks and hats, one carrying leaves in his hands and the other one with other plants coming out of his pocket. The man on the left is also pictured using an old-fashioned monocle to examine the leaves closely. Groot positions the two botanists in the foreground, right at the center of the painting, while the background shows an entirely different scene. Germán Rey observes that “las figuras de los yerbateros de José Manuel Groot, el doctor Céspedes y Francisco Javier Matís se toman la centralidad de la acuarela dejando en un segundo plano a una montaña que se torna anodina” (qtd. in González Aranda, *Manual* 13). Behind the two scientists, there are two men, proportionally smaller in size to show distance: one of them focused on collecting leaves from the ground in a bucket, while on the right-hand side of the painting, the other one appears to fall down the

mountain, losing his hat on the way down. This intriguing and comical detail is even more poignant as the other three men are completely oblivious to this mishap.<sup>78</sup>

Similarly, Groot mimics this comical scene in his painting. The written description in “Un sueño de dos colores” parallels this visual imagery in several ways. In particular, the author/artist engages the reader in vivid encounters with dead figures and scientists at an important moment in Colombian history. In one instance, the narrator is found focusing on the telescope at the observatory, entertained by the scientific advances of the times. Suddenly, a powerful wind blows him and his companions away, like a metaphorical violent blow, which he describes as: “empezó a soplar por el oriente un aire tan recio que me llevó el sombrero, y de tal modo se aumentaba la violencia que ya no podíamos mantenernos a pie” (124). Here, the symbolism of the wind can allude to the scientific trend and pursuit of progress that had consumed Colombian politicians and intellectuals at this time (also considering the end of the *Comisión Corográfica* when Groot created this *cuadro*). Following this surreal (and satirical) dream, Groot concludes that the wind caused them to fall into a religious convent: “les caímos nosotros con toda la ciencia” (126), this time ironically poking fun at the clash between religion and science. Nonetheless, Groot’s sarcasm intensifies in the final passages of this *cuadro*, creating a wordplay when discussing the blow from the fall with the word “golpe” (*coup d’état*): “Al golpe (de

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<sup>78</sup> In this regard, Martínez Pinzón reiterates this comical detail that so typical to Groot’s style, as shown in this watercolor, *Unos yerbateros*: “El humorista Groot nos muestra detrás el último detalle que completa el cuadro: atrás dos muchachos herborizan bajo la guía, suponemos, de Matis y Céspedes. Uno de los muchachos recolecta plantas dentro de su sombrero; entre risa y juego, el otro cae de la montaña. No es la comunidad científica que cierra el conocimiento sobre sí misma, sino un aprendizaje que pasa por la cotidianidad y por el cuerpo, para hacer de la experiencia – de la risa, por ejemplo – fruto de las conexiones entre conocimiento y vida” (“Francisco Javier Matis” 51). See Felipe Martínez Pinzón, “Francisco Javier Matis, el negro pío, un águila y la hoja del guaco: Una contranarrativa de la visión espacial de las élites sobre el Trópico.” *Maguaré*, vol. 26, no. 1, Jan.–June 2012, pp. 41–74.

Estado), porque ahora todos los golpes son de Estado que dimos contra el suelo, sentí que me había hecho pedazos, y dando un vuelo en la cama desperté” (125). The narrator in the written text wakes up from this bad dream to a Colombia consumed by the fascination of scientific pursuits and in the middle of political chaos – much like the visual image of *Unos yerbateros*.

The colorful and surreal details in this text that describe the dream with the two botanists allow Groot to create visual-verbal exchanges that brilliantly juxtapose history and fiction (González Aranda, *Manual* 9). In the verbal representation, Groot takes his readers/viewers back in time to the era of the Botanical Expedition when he encounters two scientists, Francisco Javier Matís<sup>79</sup> and Mariano de Hinojosa<sup>80</sup> (the latter being his former “maestro de dibujo” (Groot, *Historia y cuadros* 116). The narrator, in a dreamlike state of consciousness, observes the work of two of these intellectuals:

Yo estaba suspenso viendo y oyendo a los dos sabios, cuando de repente me hallé, sin ver cómo, en un jardín donde andaban varias personas, unas con sus lentes observando las flores, y otras observando con gran sosiego. Se me figuraban aquellos personajes de los Campos Elíseos que Fénelon nos pinta en su bella obra de *Los diálogos de los muertos*. Allí volví a ver a

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<sup>79</sup> González Aranda indicates that Alexander Humboldt considered Francisco Javier Matís as one of the most important botanical painters in the world (*Manual* 10).

<sup>80</sup> In this *cuadro*, Groot was certainly combining historical facts with fiction, but some of those details were his genuine notes of appreciation to honor his real-life instructors: “José Manuel Groot fue formado tempranamente en el campo del dibujo y la pintura. Su arte es uno de los eslabones encontrados entre la Expedición Botánica y el arte del siglo XIX. Su primer maestro, Mariano de Hinojosa (1776-c. 1840), pintor de plantas, formaba parte del segundo grupo de artistas que fue vinculado por Mutis a su empresa científica” (González and Segura, *Groot* 26).

Matís que explicaba a otro, que no conocí, la naturaleza y propiedades de la *verónica*, planta medicinal. (Groot, *Historia y cuadros* 117).

In this example, there are some direct references that Groot makes concerning these renowned “sabios” whom he admired. Like the painting *Unos yerbateros*, Groot describes how he witnesses Matís talking to his colleague about the medicinal plant called *verónica* (speedwell herb). Then, he alludes to another textual work titled *Los diálogos de los muertos* by French writer and Catholic priest François Fénelon (1651-1715)<sup>81</sup> as a metatextual connection that parallels this narration created by Groot’s dialogue with these dead scientists.

Groot embellishes this text with ekphrastic references by recalling key details that create an image in the reader’s mind. These connections relate the visual representation of the scientific *yerbateros* collecting plants in nature to the symbolism of the idyllic gardens, Campos Elíseos, which in ancient Greek mythology represented an ideal paradise or afterlife for dead heroes, and where Groot envisages conversing with these historical figures of the Botanical Expedition. Another essential detail that occurs in this *cuadro* is the moment when the narrator encounters José Celestino Mutis (1732-1808),<sup>82</sup> one of the leading figures of this scientific project. He is described as holding part of his own manuscript on Bogotá’s flora and its collection of illustrations, painted by these botanical

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<sup>81</sup> “François de Salignac de La Mothe-Fénelon: French Archbishop and Writer.” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, edited by Melissa Petruzzello, 13 July 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Francois-de-Salignac-de-La-Mothe-Fenelon>.

<sup>82</sup> “Mutis, fundando la Expedición, ese lujo de nuestra historia, formó a los literatos de 1810 que reconocemos y veneramos como padres. Es, pues, indisputable que nuestra cuna intelectual está en los primeros años de la Colonia” (Vergara y Vergara, *Historia* 637). See José María Vergara y Vergara, *Historia de la literatura en Nueva Granada*. Biblioteca Nacional de Colombia, 2017. Originally published in Imprenta de Echeverría Hermanos, 1867.

artists: “Allí tenía Mutis parte de los manuscritos de la obra que estaba escribiendo bajo el título de *La flora de Bogotá*, y parte también de la magnífica colección de láminas que debían acompañarla, trabajadas por los pintores de la botánica” (Groot, *Historia y cuadros* 116-117). Indeed, this compliments the verbal-visual analysis by emphasizing the connection between the written accounts and the illustrations that followed most of these scientific endeavors and which inspired Colombia’s *costumbristas*.

As an artist, writer, and historian, Groot created political and social caricatures – both in verbal and visual form – based on his Conservative ideology. In this satirical painting, Groot “tuvo suficiente aliento para hacer caricaturas sociales en las que se atrevió a burlarse de instituciones tan respetadas como la Expedición Botánica” (González Aranda, “La caricatura,” par. 6). Like many Conservative Colombian artists, Groot liked to paint local customs, often emphasizing the vast cultural diversity in them, and disclosing political rivalries through humorous or satirical depictions of these events. Both Groot and Torres Méndez, as self-taught artists who were devoted to illustrating their reflection of Colombia’s national identity through their creative (and often humorous) representations of society, significantly contributed to the development of the social and political caricature popularized in the nineteenth century (“La caricatura,” par. 6-7).

Furthermore, in “Un sueño de dos colores,” Groot echoes the political mindset concerning these scientific movements through the use of verbal and pictorial symbols. Through a series of nebulous and dreamlike events, the narrator describes an encounter at the astronomical observatory, where he finds a precious stone pertaining to this expedition, noting the following: “Esta alhaja preciosa...despojo del viaje más célebre de que se puede gloriarse en el siglo XVIII...la Real Expedición Botánica, que abraza un programa

científico capaz de llevar al país al más alto grado de civilización y de progreso” (Groot, *Historia y cuadros* 121-122). Written with some exaggeration in order to add a touch of humor, this alludes to the idealized task and mission attributed to the scientific endeavors and the overall national ambition towards civilization, progress, and modernity.

As a result, Groot’s writing style opts for inoffensive satirical comments leaning towards humor and simplicity. As will be shown in the examples in the next sections, many of his *cuadros de costumbres* “[s]on un gracioso y fiel retrato de la sociedad de entonces, un reflejo auténtico de esas costumbres, un eco de aquellas almas refinadas a consecuencia de la cultura, pero sujetas a todas las limitaciones de un medio humano donde prevalecían aún los hábitos coloniales” (Maya, “Groot” 12). By capturing a humorous but realistic glimpse of Colombian society, Groot uncovers a vivid representation of his culture, customs, and colonial longings through a Conservative gaze at the past to redirect the future.

### **C. Colombian National Spaces: The Conservative Perspective of the *Pueblo Nacional*; Ekphrasis in Coloring the Colombian Landscape**

In mid-nineteenth-century Latin America, the literary works published and disseminated through the press often depicted the characteristics that contributed to a compellingly diverse and extensive portrayal of the nation. Colombian *costumbrista* writers and artists carried the following mindset:

Aquella tendencia a crear una conciencia nacional, compartida por la mayoría de las publicaciones literarias de la década de 1840, favoreció el

que se abordaran temas referentes a las provincias, caminos, costumbres y todo aquello que permitía a los receptores apreciar las potencialidades y la diversidad del país, situaciones que también eran presentadas de manera visual a través de distintas visitas de ciudades, paisajes, planos, mapas, restos arqueológicos y escenas cotidianas. (Pérez Salas 96).

As indicated above, supported by panoramic imagery, the “conciencia nacional” that emerged in the 1840s presented the vision that these Colombian elite visionaries had for their nation. Indeed, the regional and ethnographical variety of Colombia is portrayed through the description of its assortment of customs and its complex natural territory that extends beyond the urban space to isolated rural settings. In retrospect, in the nineteenth century, *costumbristas* were challenged with coalescing a diverse national space that was still dislodging its colonial history: “La ciudad colonial era el escenario donde todo se mezclaba, las categorías étnicas y sociales, donde la vida, con sus múltiples rituales, se construye con el tiempo” (Giraldo M. 9).

Following the theoretical outline for this study, rooted in concepts postulated by Murray Krieger (1992), James Heffernan (1991; 1994), and W. J. T. Mitchell (1994), my analysis for this chapter centers on the image-text connections that developed as a result of the scientific, artistic, and sociopolitical changes that modernity and urbanization brought to nineteenth-century Colombia. The exploration of the ekphrases between the literary *cuadros de costumbres* and corresponding visual arts leads to a better understanding of the construction of the urban and rural spaces of an emerging republic and their politically charged environment. These image-text connections, I argue, offer valuable insight into the development of a national identity for a diversified and divided Colombia, particularly



noting critical national ideologies found in nineteenth-century customs and practices (Agudelo Rendón, “Las imágenes” 110-111; Mayers 11).

As a result, I argue that ekphrasis is not only expressed in the visual depictions and colorful narratives but is also expressed through vibrant exchanges of detailed sketches of a nation’s customs and practices in the reader’s mind. When taken in the context of *Costumbrismo*, ekphrasis can be used to describe a painting or portrait, but more than that, it *narrates* a story through the visual imagery of the *cuadro*. Therefore, the figures and scenery in these depictions take the form of types, landscapes, and spaces that utter a series of events full of symbolism concerning a nation’s identity and, even more so, reflect a distinct political perspective (Von der Walde 244-245).

In line with this research purpose, the ekphrastic connection between image and text nurtured so vividly within *Costumbrismo* shows how this process of *painting with words* (Castaño Rueda 9) becomes a way to create reciprocal imagery in both textual and visual descriptions. These nineteenth-century Colombian *costumbrista* works, especially those selected for this study, evidence the differences between the elites in developing their own national expression. Instead of offering a cosmopolitan perspective, the Conservative elite specifically desired to illustrate local, home-based traditions and customs as the ideal, as expressed by a critic:

se produce en el campo literario un cambio en los intereses, se empieza a ver una creciente preocupación *por definir y crear una literatura y un arte propiamente nacionales* por oposición al universalista y cosmopolita...[y] las elites, *sobre todo las conservadoras* que estuvieron más comprometidas

en este cambio cultural que las liberales (Gordillo Restrepo 25, 28; my emphasis).

As indicated, the elite *costumbristas* created new cultural institutions, with the most successful one being the bipartisan literary group called El Mosaico, which began the most influential local newspaper. There was a distinct change of focus in *costumbrista* writers and artists – especially by the Conservative elites more so than the Liberals (Gordillo Restrepo 28) – to define and create first-hand, autochthonous representations of Colombia’s culture.

In the next set of examples presented in this study, the *cuadros de costumbres* and corresponding visuals are arranged in a verbal-visual collage or “mosaic” – in a similar fashion to how Vergara y Vergara aesthetically arranged and positioned the “sketches of customs” in his *Museo de cuadros* (Soriano Salkjelsvik and Martínez Pinzón, *Revisitar* 18). Amidst a contrast of ideological perspectives, the *cuadros* and paintings selected illustrate a series of emblematic scenes and types that serve to paint a colorful canvas of Colombia, especially from the perspective of the Conservative *costumbristas*. In particular, this chapter centers on the *cuadros de costumbres* by José Manuel Groot, namely, “La tienda de don Antuco,” “Costumbres de antaño,” “La barbería,” “Nos fuimos a Ubaque,” and “Una compra de novillos,” in addition to a *cuadro* by León Hinestroza, “El paseo campestre,” related to the oil painting of the same name by Torres Méndez, *Paseo campestre*. The *cuadros* are related to the following paintings from Groot, in the respective order: *La venta*; *Vista de un pueblo*; *La barbería*; *Imitación de la naturaleza del campo de Pueblo Viejo y Ubaque*; and *Agrícolas de Funza*.

“La tienda de Don Antuco” (Groot) / *La venta* (Groot)

As an example of this literary and artistic genre, Groot is renowned for his skillful artistry in *Costumbrismo*, writing and illustrating his impressions about his country, often evoking nostalgia for an idealized colonial past. One such example is found in the ekphrastic relationship between a *cuadro* by Groot from 1856 titled “La tienda de don Antuco,”<sup>83</sup> set in the heart of a local shop nearby Bogotá with a painting by Groot the following year called *La venta (Paisaje Sabanero)* (1857) that showcases a traditional social gathering.

This *cuadro* and painting symbolically echo the importance of a local place in which to exchange ideas. For Groot, this colonial *tienda* was particularly meaningful as it is where he describes there were frequent and enriching *tertulias* (like his literary Mosaico group), which provided a kind of spiritual escape and peace for the *costumbrista*, similar to the effect of nature:

Las cinco de la tarde habían dado... Mi espíritu deseaba expansión después de estar todo el día entre el cajón de la oficina; mi mente, variedad de objetos sobre qué distraerse, y toda mi alma, seres desocupados con quienes tener un buen rato de tertulia. Era todo lo que me pedía el cuerpo, y nada mejor para esto que la tienda de don Antuco (Groot, *Museo* I, 25).

This passage sets the tone for the rest of the *cuadro*. Groot uses his vision of the countryside as a microcosm of what he envisions on a larger scale to represent the nation. This *tienda* in Groot’s story is unlike any other. It is a unique one where literary *tertulias* were

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<sup>83</sup> This *cuadro* was originally published in the newspaper *El Álbum: Periódico literario, científico y noticioso* dated July 6, 1856 (Martínez Pinzón, *Museo* I, 25n1).

welcomed, and it stands in contrast to the literary tertulias in Bogotá like El Mosaico. It alludes to an emblematic, yearned for space designed for the soul of the contemporary *costumbrista*, representative of the symbolic intellectual exchange and even spiritual recharge it provided from the pressures of modernity.

Groot underlines the fact that this place serves to contrast with literary tertulias in the city, emblematic of modernity, by relating it to the period of Spanish dominance. He says that this store had the characteristics “de una de las únicas tiendas coloniales que quedaban en Bogotá a mediados del siglo XIX” (Ríos Durán, “La casa,” 71n69). It also offered a creative territory where the mind could be enriched by taking time to observe a “variedad de objetos” (Groot, *Museo I*, 25). From an artistic point of view, this also signifies an inspiring place outside the pressures of modern developments by supporting the more positive aspects of colonial traditions that Groot often depicted in many of his works: “La tienda de don Antuco era una tienda colonial, porque dicho señor ‘no había querido entrar en modas’” (Ríos Durán, “La casa,” 71n69; Groot, *Museo I*, 27).<sup>84</sup>

*Costumbristas* sought to reflect their current interpretation of historical and political occurrences through their own subjective gaze of reality and their desire to describe an idealized past (Bilman 155). Hence, the role of “mimesis costumbrista” plays an essential part in the portrayal of national society by describing the ordinary experiences of common citizens, particularly from the perspective of Bogotá’s elite, given that “el nuevo objeto de

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<sup>84</sup> For an in-depth study on the symbolism behind the home and what it represented in nineteenth-century Colombia, refer to María Astrid Ríos Durán, “La casa santafereña, 1800-1830: en el camino hacia la intimidad, el confort y la domesticidad,” *Anuario colombiano de historia social y de la cultura*, no. 34, 2007, pp. 43–84.

mimesis es la sociedad, referente cultural e ideológico de la literatura surgida al amparo institucional de la vida pública burguesa” (Escobar, “La mimesis costumbrista, 262).

Regarding this ekphrastic process, Groot explains to his readers the necessity behind his creative method: “tenía que escribir un artículo de costumbres...El cuadro de la tienda de don Antuco debe ponerse en exhibición antes de que se borre de mi imaginación” (*Museo I*, 30). Taking a more dynamic approach to “mimetic *Costumbrismo*,” I consider the subjective conceptions and considerations of the writers and artists as aspects that frame a particular work within its appropriate sociopolitical and cultural environment (Escobar, “La mimesis costumbrista” 261). Thus, Groot’s statement envisions the underlying creative manifestation of writers who first observe their surroundings while processing them in their minds and quickly recreate their perception of the world. Following a Conservative paradigm, Groot’s ideological formulation and his perception of the *pueblo nacional* as imagined in his mind’s eye can be correlated to his pictorial representation of this emblematic scene, which “debe ponerse en exhibición” (*Museo I*, 30).

A parallelism can be drawn into how Groot interprets the colonial *tienda* in this *cuadro* as a Conservative utopia. As suggested by Juan Pablo Dabove, in his study of Jorge Issac’s foundational fiction<sup>85</sup> which similarly conceptualizes the nation’s *haciendas*

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<sup>85</sup> The foundational novel *María* (1867) by Conservative writer Jorge Isaacs (1837-1895), which has been recognized as the “most popular nineteenth-century novel in Latin America,” also depicts this kind of symbolism behind a local *hacienda* called “El Paraiso” as representative of an idyllic and tranquil utopia in the countryside of Colombia (Sommer 172; Soriano Salkjelsvik and Castro, *Sensibilidades* 24). In this example, the *hacienda* functions as a place of Conservative utopia because it illustrates “la alianza *afectiva/cultural*: la participación compartida en un universo de prácticas y rituales cotidianos: oraciones, narraciones, conversaciones, comidas, fiestas, viajes, hospitalidad, formalizadas por medio de relaciones de compadrazgo” preserving its essence through local customs and traditions (Dabove, ch. 7). For more on this novel’s representation of nineteenth-century Colombian Conservative ideology through utopian rural spaces, see Juan Pablo Dabove, “*María*: Utopía conservadora, gótico y el retorno funesto de la Historia,” *Sensibilidades conservadoras*, edited by Kari Soriano Salkjelsvik. Editorial Iberoamericana, 2021, ch. 7.

(country estates), this space is viewed not just “como unidades de producción agraria, sino también como universos estabilizadores de jerarquías y relaciones sociales que revelan las sensibilidades conservadoras...y que aglutinan tensiones entre concepciones liberales y conservadoras de la historia” (Soriano Salkjelsvik and Castro, *Sensibilidades* 24). In a similar fashion, given the significance behind this modest urban setting with rural tonality as an emblematic space and as a sociopolitical utopia, a connection can be made in Groot’s creative motive behind the image-text representation of this colonial *tienda* as a cultural hub of cultural and aesthetic value (Dabove, ch. 7). Therefore, it serves to illustrate the Conservative yearning for cultural traditions rooted in colonial idealizations of countryside life or “vida campestre” so prevalent in Groot’s verbal and visual works (Rivas Groot, “Boceto” iv).<sup>86</sup> For instance, in Groot’s *cuadro*, Don Antuco reminisces in response to an “oficial de la independencia” who visited his store, saying, “Esos eran otros tiempos,” recalling a longing for past times and expressing the need to “conservar los recuerdos antiguos” (*Museo* I, 27).

In the painting *La venta (Paisaje Sabanero)* from 1857 (Figure 3.2), Groot’s portrayal of local color and the bucolic countryside focuses on the Bogotá savanna. The significance of this oil painting exemplifies not just the nineteenth-century fashion of painting landscapes, but in this case, the landscape carries cultural and historical meaning. Groot’s artistic intention as a *costumbrista* juxtaposes his appreciation for the natural

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<sup>86</sup> Groot’s fascination and devotion towards the simple, countryside life, was indicated in the memories that his grandson had of him. He said that his grandfather “buscaba solaz trazando sus festivas descripciones de la vida campestre, ó en la pintura amena de tipos santafereños. Homero nos pinta á los combatines de la *Ilíada* yendo á la playa después de cada refriega, y sumergiéndose en el mar para quitarse el polvo y el sudor de la lucha. Groot se refrescaba, tras el ardor de la polémica, con una oleada de esa alegría que corre por sus cuadros de costumbres” (Rivas Groot, “Boceto” iv).

mountainous landscape and his love for the rustic lifestyle where *campesinos* gathered as a community, not just for an exchange of goods but more so for an exchange of ideas during the casual *tertulias*. In this visual, the color scheme serves the function of expressing his ideas because the use of different shades of brown also visually serves to bring attention to the center of the painting and show homogeneity and harmony with the color of the mountains in the background. As an artist from Bogotá, Groot devoted his talent to creating “paisajes sabaneros, escenas de personas montando a caballo,” among many other rural scenes (Therrien 70). The European ideals of city life contrasted with the reality of how they were perceived and experienced in Colombia’s urban centers in the nineteenth century because “los espacios urbanos locales, rodeados de miseria, analfabetismo, enfermedades, hacinamiento y delincuencia” were in need to be reformed after the wars of Independence (Therrien 35).<sup>87</sup>

Thus, the illustrations of bucolic Colombian scenery functioned as nineteenth-century Conservative symbols. The fact that the emblematic national place presented by Groot stood the test of time, “permanece sin mudarse,” underlined the roots of the Conservative ideology in the Spanish Colony (*Museo* I, 27). In this case, Groot compliments his painting of *La venta* with the verbal descriptions that mimic the color schemes and details he references in the painting. First, the role of color is crucial, especially in the way that the combinations of brown, black, and white shades are visible in the oil painting. This color scheme gives the illusion of antiquity and past times with

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<sup>87</sup> Refer to Monika Therrien, *De fábrica a barrio: Urbanización y urbanidad en la Fábrica de Loza Bogotana*. Editorial Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, 2007.

rustic, cobblestone roads, shabby wooden beams, and slanted roofs, which convey a similar message through the verbal description found in the *cuadro*:

La tienda de don Antuco es de gran fondo y trastienda; el techo es alto y ahumado...El suelo empedrado es correspondiente con el cielo, que es entresuelo del edificio que tiene encima. Las vigas juntas rollizas y corcovadas de que está formado y el pavimento empedrado indican la abundancia de madera y la escasez de chircaleños en aquel tiempo...[y] este cielo ahumado en que las telarañas, tan batanadas como el mejor lienzo del norte... (*Museo I*, 26-27)

In this pictorial description, the construction materials of the *tienda* are mentioned, especially the “pavimento” and “suelo empedrado” that reflect the colors in the greyish-white nebulous sky, “este cielo ahumado,” in addition to the abundance of wood, all of which are clearly visible in the painting. Moreover, the times that Groot refers to “en aquel tiempo” mention the lack of “chircaleños,” or tile construction workers from the outskirts of the city who were formerly marginalized as barbaric villains of society (Therrien 36). Secondly, the ambiance outside resembles the rustic and disheveled inner atmosphere. The place is described with pieces of furniture and shelves that are covered in spiderwebs, soot, and dust, “hoy de color de hollín por el polvo y los moscos” (*Museo I*, 26), and “telarañas” that mimic a threaded canvas or tapestry on the walls (*Museo I*, 27).

Also, the depiction of the rural customers attending the *tertulias* at the *tienda* shows them wearing the traditional *ruanas* (ponchos) gathering outside with their horses, “a este asilo de los desocupados,” which can be assimilated to those shown in the visual (*Museo I*, 26). Groot also describes them as “cuatro tertulidores que, embozados en sus capas y



fumando un tabaco, bien arrellenados en sus asientos, recuerdan sus tiempos” of colonial times (*Museo I*, 28). Here, Groot’s comparison of these countrymen gathering in this tranquil and relaxed atmosphere to exchange ideas and goods (alluded to at the beginning of this *cuadro*) is now humorously portrayed as an asylum for the “desocupados” (26).

Towards the end of the *cuadro*, the narrator witnesses a dialogue (showcasing unique regionalisms) between a poor shoemaker selling merchandise to Don Antuco at the store, particularly a pair of boots bargained for at a lesser price. While observing this exchange, the narrator shares the epiphany he experienced: “Entonces caí en cuenta de que en los negocios de nuestras gentes se atraviesa otra clase de moneda invisible, pero corriente, que son las mentiras, para las cuales todos tienen trueque” (*Museo I*, 29-30). As exemplified here, Groot makes a subtle social criticism “de nuestra gente” concerning the exchange of “lies” (depicted metaphorically as “invisible” coins commonly shared by people). However, this subtle, satirical tone is prevalent in Groot’s works, showcasing a significant aspect of the *cuadros de costumbres*, which is the ability to unveil society’s good and bad manners through lighthearted humor (Gordillo Restrepo 48). Thus, these vivid details are reminiscent of the past – characteristically employed by Groot’s “keen and kindly eye” –as the dialogues animate the scenery (Duffey 21).



Figure 3.2. José Manuel Groot, *La venta (Paisaje Sabanero)* (1857). Oil on canvas. 43.3 x 60 cm. Colección Fondo Cultural Cafetero. (González and Segura, *Groot* 35). (left)

Figure 3.3. José Manuel Groot. *Vista de un pueblo* (ca. 1830). Watercolor on paper. 23 x 33 cm. Colección Rivas Sacconi. (González and Segura, *Groot* 34). (right)

“Costumbres de antaño” (Groot) | *Vista de un pueblo* (Groot)

Conservatives idealized rural spaces and the lifestyle of the lower classes, despite the evident income inequality and difficulties of life in the impoverished areas outside of Bogotá (Watson, “De héroes y heroínas,” 6-7; Arias Vanegas 37-38, 104-105).<sup>88</sup> In the nineteenth century, Colombia’s social and political structure differed from other nations in Latin America. The elite of Bogotá could not control the outer regions, evident in their

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<sup>88</sup> Maida Watson further describes the conflict represented in this *cuadro* between the city of Bogotá and the savannas by examining the use of political myths of both Liberals and Conservatives in the early nineteenth-century story, using as an illustration the symbolism behind the exemplary figure of Policarpa Salvierra (La Pola). Policarpa was a young seamstress woman of humble origins who became a heroine for the inhabitants of Gran Colombia at the time of independence because of her role as a spy to help bring the country to freedom. After her assassination by the Spanish opposition, she became a patriotic symbol who died for this historic cause. In retrospect, La Pola sacrificed herself for a cause that better suited the interests of the Creole oligarchy and not so much of her own social class. Nevertheless, her story served the function of a symbol for the formation of the new republic just like the paintings of a bucolic Colombian rural world served as symbols for the nineteenth-century Conservative Colombians (Watson, “De héroes y heroínas,” 6).

fight to protect the plains – the rural *pueblo* – in the outskirts of Bogotá (the savanna) as an emblem of autochthonous and national value which accorded with the ingrained Conservative ideals of idealizing rural life and Catholic religious principles (6-7). As illustrated in the previous example, Groot's *La venta (Paisaje Sabanero)* idealizes the geographical area in the state of Cundinamarca, known as the Bogotá savanna, located near the capital.<sup>89</sup>

Catherine LeGrand believes that the elaborate geographical divisions of Colombia and its wide-ranging demography correlate with its countless regional conflicts: “Colombia’s vast areas of public lands, its mountainous terrain, the variety of altitudes, climates, ecosystems, and peoples, and ongoing transport and communication difficulties produced a country of various regions and sub-regions” (169-170). Frank Safford and Marco Palacio concur with this thesis when they state that it was “marked by spatial fragmentation,” and “economic atomization, and cultural differentiation” (qtd. in LeGrand 170). Thus, LeGrand concludes that due to this physical reality, “the sense of nation remained tenuous” (LeGrand 170). As a result, Groot’s choice of topics for both his written *cuadros* and his paintings reflect the political conflicts between the cold highlands with Bogotá as its epicenter and its urban elite, the neighboring savanna, or plains of Bogotá with the dominance of the rural *hacendados* and the *tierras calientes* or coastal tropical

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<sup>89</sup> Unlike the dichotomy of *civilización vs. barbarie* presented by Argentine Liberal Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, the situation in Colombia in the nineteenth century had additional layers of complexity given the rural-urban regional elite and the opposing ideological perspectives. Beyond the contested enthusiasm of the progressive ideals of the Liberal elite of Bogotá against the idealization of the countryside and Catholic reverence of the Conservatives, it also included the opposition represented by the landowning class of the rural provinces against Bogotá’s city elite (Watson, “De héroes y heroínas,” 10; Arias Vanegas 105). The rural territory played an important role in this time, given that in “las zonas rurales las haciendas fueron el centro de la organización social, y muchas veces político, de las provincias” (*En marcha* 71).

regions with a different ethnic and political structure (Watson, “De heroes y heroínas” 9-10).

As Julio Arias Vanegas suggests, while the (rural) countryside “era el del pueblo,” the (urban) city was the “escenario natural de las élites” (38). In the mid nineteenth-century, “el campo nacional era uno de los objetos de descripción más importante,” considering that, ultimately, “el país era en esencia rural y hacía allí estaba dirigidos los esfuerzos de conocimiento e intervención de la elite” (Arias Vanegas 38). Meanwhile, the city spaces did not merit much attention for the writers/artists, especially since “las ciudades no ameritaba grandes descripciones” except for certain anecdotes (38). As a result, the elite *costumbristas* made the countryside their central focus, juxtaposing idealization with social criticism, particularly by observing the customs of the rural scene (Arias Vanegas 37).<sup>90</sup> More importantly, in emphasizing the rural lifestyle, the *costumbristas* insisted on showing the regional essence of the *pueblo nacional*, depicting the popular religious festivities, local food, and other traditions that would help Conservatives present their ideological values associated with the Catholic religion (Arias Vanegas 39).

This concept is exemplified in many of Groot’s written and visual works, which often evoke the idealization of the countryside, its customs, and people. By illustrating the daily customs of the Colombian people as seen through his Conservative lens, Groot relies on satire and irony to rebuke those practices or customs that he either condones or desires to see change. Indeed, “Costumbres de antaño” is considered one of Groot’s most popular

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<sup>90</sup> As noted by Julio Arias Vanegas: “El campo idealizado de la nación era aquel que también estuviese dominado por la presencia de una red de pueblos interconectados por caminos que garantizaran el movimiento comercial y humano, lo que era evidente en el mercado y en el sometimiento definitivo de la naturaleza a manos del hombre” (38).

*cuadros* and significant for illustrating traditions of an idealized past. In this example, Groot reconstructs a collage of customs representing Colombian religious events and customs of a previous period, indicative of his Catholic faith. Narration and description are both suggestively done, and the details presented are uncanny, precisely those of most interest to the modern reader:

En la *Nochebuena* los buñuelos eran el emblema de la época, y los hacendados de tierra caliente se hacían un deber el mandar el regalo de melado a sus amigos, regalo que no bajaba de un zurrón para cada casa, y a los conventos mandaban una o dos cargas a los procuradores para endulzar sus cuentas con los provinciales (Groot, *Museo* I, 414).

In this excerpt, Groot characterizes the local color through vibrant descriptions. He first describes the custom of sending a special kind of sweets, *buñuelos*, a traditional pastry that he labels as “emblema de la época,” which were given during the Christmas festivities to friends but also to government officials with whom groups like convents wanted to establish good relations in order to obtain better treatment during tax time. With a humorous tone, he then adds how the religious convents would charge the peasants (“endulzar sus cuentas”) during this time (414). Also, the nostalgia of recalling this typical food as a symbol of this season resonates with Groot’s Conservative worldview that the Hispanic past is better than the turbulent present.

Groot’s paintings typically reflect the intrinsic beauty of Colombian natural landscapes, reflecting the artist’s sentiments regarding the value he places on the rural lifestyle while also engaging the writer’s creative process. For instance, in the painting (Figure 3.3) titled *Vista de un pueblo* (ca. 1830), Groot once again paints his idealization

of the geographical area outside of Bogotá – La Sabana – whose elite had conflicted with the literati from the capital (Arias Vanegas 38). At the same time, they were very dependent on the ideological will of this group because of the politicized nature of nineteenth-century Colombian life. The color scheme of this painting portrays the landscape from an aerial periphery as if looking down and observing the tranquil scene of the town, encompassed by surrounding mountains fused effortlessly with the skyline using a range of pastels. In effect, Groot projects a very serene ambiance with a celestial or dreamlike essence reinforced by the hazy lighting shown from a distance, which confirms the beauty of the rural landscape and signifies through colors the idealization of this bucolic place.

Thus, by focusing on the rural spaces, the description of its customs also became an object of interest for *costumbristas*. For Conservatives like Groot, it added an opportunity to reiterate and highlight Catholic religious customs and traditions as sacred. Groot highlights the religious celebrations in the town during the Christmas season, which include references to food. As such, the mention of details like the “buñuelos y empanadas [que] llenaban la época,” truly serve to paint an authentic image of Colombian society with its unique customs, as it also references the different ethnic groups described in this rural scene: “más allá se veía una venta de indios en *chirriadera* y un capuchino bailando con los hábitos arremangados” (*Museo* I, 414). Therefore, Groot’s descriptions in this *cuadro* of food, other elements of popular culture and groups of regional people evoke an allusion to the tensions of the provincial governments under Liberal power, a complaint of the Conservative opposition.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> At the start of the nineteenth-century, inhabitants of the *tierras calientes* were portrayed more negatively (as backward people) considering that “gran parte del país era tierra caliente y, como tal, juzgado

One important *cuadro de costumbres* by Groot that highlights the value of rustic customs prevalent in Colombia's urban spaces is titled “La barbería” (1858), which describes different barbershops as symbolic of different social strata. Since the *Expedición Botánica* there was “un interés creciente por los temas de tipos, usos y costumbres, más cercanos al propósito ilustrado de observar, ordenar y clasificar” which was revisited with the *Comisión Corográfica* in the mid nineteenth-century (Gaona Rico 17). Based on this notion, a *costumbrista* writer and artist would work in a similar style to that of a scientific traveler in one of these expeditions, implementing a procedure of selecting, assessing, documenting, and preserving information in an orderly (and aesthetic) manner, signifying the proximity to the studied matter and close observation of the customs and practices of the represented subject (Gaona Rico 58-59). Using selective memory, they would recreate a world based on the perceptions of “an anatomy of observation” (Lauster 173-176) that would communicate a verbal and visual display, as per the ekphrastic approach proposed in this study. Therefore, the connection between the image and text in works of *Costumbrismo* is addressed: “para los costumbristas – dibujantes y/o escritores – hay una mirada que parte de lo testimonial y avanza hacia lo taxonómico (Gaona Rico 58).

As a matter of fact, “Groot se sentía complacido con lo observación minuciosa, casi científica” of this trend in *Costumbrismo*, which is made evident in “La barbería”

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negativamente” (Arias Vanegas 95). However, this changed after the mid-nineteenth century because of the agro-economic needs in the lowland regions of Colombia (particularly for tobacco and coffee, among other natural resources) that eventually motivated the elite to try to classify them as a “potential” land and people group that could be molded to fit an agenda of economic progress (Arias Vanegas 95-98).

(González and Segura, *Groot* 28). Depicting a scene of a local barbershop from colonial times, Groot illustrates his perspective about his observations and pictorial memory to recreate an emblematic scene showcasing a typical Colombian setting. With a “mirada retrospectiva sobre los peluqueros de los tiempos aristocráticos” (*Historia y cuadro* 204), Groot guides his readers/viewers through every detail that reinforces the visualization of his vantage point as an artist and writer, addressing how he felt in the process of creating this *cuadro*: “me divertía observando” (*Historia y cuadro* 210). Then, he confirms this statement once again when he reiterates how “las demás cosas que se presentaban a mi vista y que para mí, que soy aficionado al género de costumbres, eran verdaderos objetos de observación” (Groot, *Historia y cuadros* 210).

As a result, these commentaries by Groot help to reinforce this image-text relationship developed in this study, which can be interpreted as what W. J. T. Mitchell considered “ekphrastic hope” when an observant writer and artist can manage to connect the *sister arts* (as evidenced in Heffernan’s explanation of how ekphrasis “speaks not only *about* works of art but also *to* and *for* them”) given the proximity of the verbal representation of a visual representation (Mitchell, *Picture Theory* 152; Heffernan, *Museum* 7). Underlining the ekphrastic relationship between his paintings and his written work, Groot introduces the *cuadro* by announcing the connection to the painting he made some years prior with the same title:

Pinté un cuadro de barbería, y voy a describirlo con todos sus pormenores, agregándole algunos otros episodios para mejor inteligencia de las costumbres de nuestros rapistas, que a buen andar van desapareciendo con los resplandores de las barberías francesas y la moda de las barbas...pues



no será razón que se pierda la idea de sus costumbres. (Groot, *Historia y cuadros* 204)

Something is compelling about the artist having the visual image in front of him when describing the *cuadro*, as Groot can transmit that colorful image to the readers in words. Another essential element here is the comparison to the French barber shops, which were replacing the old-fashioned local (colonial style) shops in many places. Groot uses the verbal and written *cuadros* to present the Conservative ideology that the new foreign customs should not replace the old, Spanish-based ones.

He illustrates this comparison, after visiting the “barbería francesa,” by comparing it to the local “barbería granadina,” remarking that he was pleased to discover that the drive for competition with the European shops would make the local ones push themselves to offer better services: “me alegraba la idea de que el estímulo habría de hacer con este oficio como con los otros, que en vista del modo de trabajar de los extranjeros se han mejorado en términos de competir nuestros talleres con los mejores de aquéllos” (Groot, *Historia y cuadros* 213). Groot amplifies Colombian society's ongoing pressures in keeping up with European customs and practices but advocates for the local and original colonial style as the one that should be preserved and admired (something that Vergara and Vergara often emphasized in his *cuadros* as a fellow Conservative *costumbrista*).

The rudimentary image painted in watercolor by Groot (ca. 1830), also titled under the same name, *La barbería*, provides an authentic representation of a typical local barbershop in the city, with openings to the street to provide fresh air in the warmer climates and with wooden chairs for the customers. The barber is dressed in a simple all-white uniform.



Figure 3.4. José Manuel Groot, *La barbería* (ca. 1830). Watercolor on paper. 23 x 33 cm. Colección Rivas Sacconi. (González and Segura, *Groot* 35).

*La barbería* (Figure 3.4) represents a traditional costumbrista nineteenth-century scene, which emphasizes everyday local activity and local service, in this case, that of a barbershop, which Groot ekphrastically portrays through the juxtaposition of detailed verbal descriptions and a visual work of art. Through an array of details, Groot uses his artistic technique to portray the singularities and customs of his nation. Much like the casual setting and decoration of the shop that has an open door with a view of the street, he paints the candid posture and gestures of the people, the variety and detailing of Colombia's traditional clothing (specifically of the national colorfully striped *ruanas*, or ponchos), which all serve to confirm the incredible skillfulness of this writer and artist of *cuadros de costumbres*.

Through his works, Groot also offers his perspectives on national history and politics, viewed from his Conservative worldview. The first scene centers on the space itself, depicting a local barbershop with an open-door view of the street, with wooden

chairs and tables holding the necessary utensils, closely resembling his painting. Here, the main character is the barber called “maestro Lechuga” who was an “hombre de edad, alto y amojamado, cotudo” wearing a “casaca de paño blanco” (Groot, *Historia y cuadros* 205). As pictured in the painting, the hairy barber is dressed in this traditional white attire, and the verbal depictions reinforce the visual. Second, the older man on the left side of the painting is also depicted ekphrastically in this *cuadro*. Groot’s observations lead him to depict the “viejo de estampa pobretona, pero de aire no vulgar, narigón, flaco y amoratado” with grey hair tied to the back, “cabeza bien poblada de pelo cano y largo peinado para atrás; ruana azul, calzón de género blanco” (Groot, *Historia y cuadros* 211).

The next scene is one of the most ekphrastic ones as it begins describing word for word the intricate details of the painting. Knowing that Groot had made the painting before, he references various parts of the visual through his textual *cuadro*. He describes the man in his forties, pictured on the right, “El campesino a quien afeitaba era un hombre fornido y colorado...de negra barba y cejijunto” (207). Upon entering the barbershop, he sits down at the chair, leaning back as he gets his service at the hands of the barber, “maestro Juan.” He contrasts the rural man to a prisoner, held hostage by the barber, “preso entre los brazos de la silla y las vueltas de un paño que tenía cobijado por encima de la ruana; con la cabeza tiesa y echada para atrás contra el espaldar de la silla” (Groot, *Historia y cuadros* 207-208).

More importantly, Groot uses this barbershop scene as a platform that compares it to the current political situation. He especially criticizes some of the current fashions and trends of the time in terms of hairstyles and physical appearance to insinuate his disapproval of current political trends. By reading between the lines, it becomes evident how Groot uses the dialogue of the barbershop as a pretext to allude to politics and criticize

society in a satirical way. He associates this by comparing his hairstyle with the movements leading to Colombia's day of Independence on July 20, 1810: "Nunca olvidaré que a pocos días del 20 de julio, al maestro Lechuga debí la independencia de la coleta, que tiranizaba mi cabeza" (206). Groot here employs a playful association of political and historical facts within the context of the barbershop experience and getting a haircut. He reminisces that "gloriosa fecha" of going to the barbershop to cut his long strands and finally receive his freedom, where "se prescribió el peinado español y se adoptó el de pelo corto introducido por Bonaparte en Francia" (Groot, *Historia y cuadros* 206). The references to Bonaparte allude to the French Revolution that inspired the Independence movements in Latin America. Furthermore, he comically talks about "La Libertad de la coleta" and "la tijera libertadora del maestro Lechuga" as a way to compare the barber to the Libertador Simón Bolívar who helped the nation to find freedom from Spain (or "el peinado español" in this story).

In effect, to reinforce his Conservative view that preserving a traditional approach to democracy was the ideal (and not the Liberal impulses of the time), Groot asserts that he will not be swayed by the current waves and trends in (political) style when he expresses that, "en los tiempos de la Patria, los barberos y las barberías tomaron un carácter más democrático, aunque conservando siempre cierta originalidad tradicional" (Groot, *Historia y cuadros* 206). He finalizes his rant by calling out a political outcry, "y ruego a Dios no permita que a los peluqueros franceses se les antoje resucitar la coleta, porque protesto no entrar por la moda aunque todos se vuelvan coletudos" (206). By making this statement, using the metaphors of the hairstyle trends imposed by the French, Groot satirically informs his audience that he will not again be swayed by the political pressures even if everyone

else chooses to follow the masses and become “coletudos.” Toward the end of this *cuadro*, Groot continues the political parallelisms he so wittily establishes through this barbershop scene. When it is the turn of the narrator to get his haircut, he says “Yo callaba, y él rompió el silencio en que estábamos y empezó a hablarme de cosas políticas, ciencia a que son muy aficionados los barberos; y debe de ser por lo que conversan con los funcionarios públicos...especialmente en tiempo de elecciones” (Groot, *Historia y cuadros* 210).

Groot further portrays the customs of the rural town in a positive light, showing appreciation for its rural people, noting that “yo no tengo recelo de las gentes del campo que son muy alentadas” (210). The barber objects, however, noting the current political climate does not allow one to trust people: “Eso era de antes...ahora no hay que fiarse, porque los malos humores se han regado por todas partes, y no hay guayabas sin gusanos” (210). Moreover, Groot pictures the *campesino* dressed in the traditional rural attire with a “ruana colorada guasqueña” (207) being unable to move and swayed by the political insinuations of the barber holding him hostage. The details of the painting by Groot mimic these verbal descriptions, including the hat on the floor next to the chair the man is sitting on the bottom righthand side, particularly noting the “sombrero con funda de hule, el que tenía en el suelo al pie de la silla y entre la copa el pañuelo de atarse la cabeza; zamarros de cuero colorado, alpargates y grandes espuelas” (Groot, *Historia y cuadros* 207).

“El paseo campestre (cuadro de costumbres de Ramón Torres)” (Hinestrosa) | *Paseo campestre* (Torres Méndez)

In *Museo de cuadros*, “El paseo campestre (cuadro de costumbres de Ramón Torres)” by León Hinestrosa (1816-1880)<sup>92</sup> published in the Colombian newspaper *El Tiempo* on June 22, 1858 (issue IV, no. 182). Hinestrosa makes a direct ekphrastic reference to the original painting by Torres Méndez with the same title, *Paseo Campestre* (ca. 1856). Art critic Gustavo Santos recognized Torres Méndez “como el pintor más importante del país después de Gregorio Vásquez...y a León Hinestrosa como inspiración para un artículo de costumbres” (Sánchez Cabra, *Ramón Torres* 152).

In this *cuadro*, the author mimics Colombia’s forests, inspired by Torres Mendez’s brushstrokes, in the following scene: “Los bosques en la América meridional tienen la grandiosidad y hermosura con que se ostenta casi siempre la naturaleza primitiva, esa naturaleza a donde la mano del hombre no ha alcanzado todavía para imprimir su sello de su civilización” (*Museo* II, 225). Inspired by the *Comisión Corográfica* of the mid-nineteenth-century, this *cuadro* showcases that kind of scientific gaze admired by the *costumbrista* – a gaze that is capable of sketching through words a detailed, precise, and colorful depiction that serve to classify (and visualize) the rural scene and local types in a magnificent collage.

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<sup>92</sup> Colombian *costumbrista* León Hinestrosa was a poet and novelist from Bogotá (Martínez Pinzón, *Museo* II, 225n2). Martínez Pinzón also confirms the ekphrastic connection established in this *cuadro*: “Este texto de Hinestrosa es un ékfrasis de un lienzo al óleo de gran formato de Ramón Torres Méndez, del mismo nombre, que está hoy en el Museo del Seminario Mayor de Bogotá” (*Museo* II, 225n1).

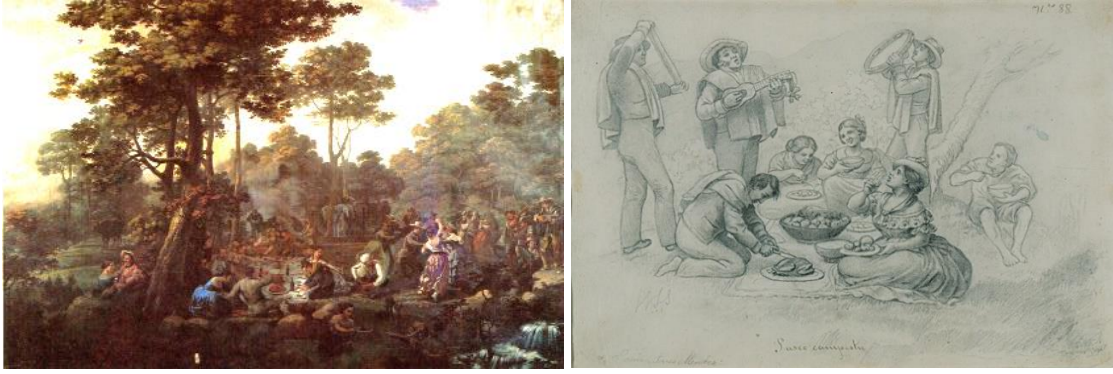


Figure 3.5. Ramón Torres Méndez. *Paseo campestre* (ca. 1856). Oil on canvas. 107 cm x 170 cm. Museo del Seminario Mayor, Bogotá. (Sánchez Cabra, *Ramón Torres* 154). (left)

Figure 3.6. Ramón Torres Méndez. *Paseo campestre* (ca. 1865). Pencil on paper. 22.5 x 32.3 cm. (Colección de Arte Banco de la República AP1249; Sánchez Cabra, *Ramón Torres* 180). (right)

Torres Méndez’s most iconic painting (Figure 3.5), *Paseo Campestre* (1865), includes various important national symbols such as *el tiple* related to traditional dances, food, and social activities; here, the local people are seen in a festivity outdoors, singing and eating together in an Andean landscape. The original *Paseo Campestre* was first drawn in 1856 (Figure 3.6), with a secondary (and much larger version) oil painting created that same year with the same name (but is also known under the title, *Torbellino a misa*), which became popular for being “el único óleo de costumbres del pintor, y la obra más grande que de él se conserva” (Sánchez Cabra, *Ramón Torres* 149, 152, 154, 227).<sup>93</sup> More

<sup>93</sup> Shortly after the painting was completed in 1856, the Bogotá newspaper *El Porvenir* provided an ekphrastic overview on September 9 of that same year. This visual portrays a day on the countryside, showcasing diverse groups of people gathered in one place of unity and harmony, embracing culture and the beauty of nature, sheltered under the tree’s shade: “El cuadro representa lo que se llama propiamente un paseo al campo. Se ven pintados en él diversos grupos. Aquí, a la -sombra de los árboles, hai varios individuos comiendo; allá se ven algunas parejas bailando sobre el césped al son del pandero, amigo inseparable de la jovial alegría; al otro lado de una calle de árboles se ve el buei que baja lentamente a beber en un arroyo, limite y primer término del cuadro; i como último término de él se ve la candelada, i bullir las personas encargadas de la refacción. No somos competentes para apreciar las bellezas artísticas de esta pintura; pero lo juzgamos como de hermoso colorido, excelente perspectiva, naturales vestiduras, i sobre todo de argumento escogido con

importantly, Torres Méndez illustrates various social types intricately drawn with the traditional attire, festivities, typical foods, dances, and attitudes of the times, plainly drawn in the original illustration and taking center stage of the canvas. The mimetic reflection of the rural people dancing, singing, jumping, and playing in nature is evidenced in the illustrations.

Details evidencing the facial expressions and local attire are more clearly shown on the original pencil drawing, picturing the *campesinos* sitting in a circle, with musicians playing the local guitar (*tiple*), and having a picnic outdoors. For this, Hinestrosa writes: “Hay gran comilona, danzan, cantan y hacen libaciones...el alumbrado y ruidoso festín, las silenciosas selvas, la madreSelva...” (*Museo* II, 227). Although the urban and rural landscape tends to play a secondary role for Torres Méndez, in contrast to Groot,<sup>94</sup> there is an exception in the colorful portrayal of nature in the larger oil painting *Paseo Campestre*. Still, the artist maintains his style and expressive energy when he describes the nation’s traditional clothing, physical attributes, and local color, using keen observation and creative interpretation (Sánchez Cabra, *Ramón Torres* 134).

In particular, the ekphrastic connection is established by engaging readers with vibrant metaphors and descriptive elements that help one *see* the painting *through words*.

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notable i exquisito gusto. Pudiéramos decir del cuadro lo que un académico español al oír leer una composición bucólica: ‘esto huele a tomillo’. Sí: huele a tomillo el campo; el humo que se alza levemente en blandas espirales es el mismo que hemos visto, i el celaje, i la transparencia, i esa perspectiva aérea son las mismas que la naturaleza ha mostrado a nuestros ojos, i nos ha hecho gozar, a nosotros amigos de los campos, nacidos i criados en los campos, i que arrastramos a nuestro pesar la turbulenta, ceremonia, molesta vida de las ciudades” (qtd. in Sánchez Cabra, *Ramón Torres* 152).

<sup>94</sup> Meanwhile, as explained by Efraín Sánchez Cabra, the essence of their paintings on “escenas campestres” was shared by both Groot and Torres Méndez: “Groot, ya recordado como compañero de Torres Méndez en las lides periodísticas de 1855, pinto al óleo y a la acuarela varias escenas campestres, personajes populares y episodios de fiestas y mercados, con singular estilo en que los errores de dibujo se encuentran sobradamente compensados por el encanto de la nota directa y espontánea” (Sánchez Cabra, *Ramón Torres* 128).



As suggested in this study, the verbal-visual juxtaposition helps to reinforce the message conveyed by the writer/artist while simultaneously shedding light on their subjective ideological perspective. For instance, Hinestrosa follows his praise of nature by condemning the advances of modernity and civilization, declaring:

Pero la naturaleza libre de los Andes crece majestuosa y llena de vigor: el árbol orgulloso pretende ocultar su copa entre las nubes, extiende sus brazos como para abarcar el horizonte, se llena de frondosidad y de verdura, matiza sus colores a su antojo, engalana sus ramas con candidas flores y sus flores exhalan perfumes deliciosos... (*Museo II*, 226)

In this passage, the personification of nature that “extiende sus brazos” (226) to reach the horizon paints a vivid image of a wild, untamed landscape wandering free, away from the tyranny of civilization. The text also reaffirms Colombia's majestic rural national scenery in contrast to urban scenes, highlighting the vividness of nature, “naturaleza libre de los Andes,” with adjectives noting its lush vegetation and vigorous, verdant ambiance (Sánchez Cabra, *Ramón Torres* 158).

Therefore, Hinestrosa's written description, also reinforced by Torres Méndez's paintings, visually preserves his nation's valuable historical, regional, and cultural characteristics. It particularly underlines the Conservative's beliefs that Colombia's pristine countryside held the key to its future progress. Indeed, Torres Méndez also illustrates and replicates natural scenes and the life of *campesinos* to escape into the pureness of nature to the area uncorrupted by civilization (Sánchez Cabra, *Ramón Torres* 158). That sense of freedom is expressed in the following phrase: “En estos paseos campestres se corre, se danza, se canta, se grita, se salta, se juega con el agua cristalina que

eternamente se desliza por entre piedras y matas” (*Museo* II, 227). As illustrated in the paintings by Torres Méndez, the liveliness of the local festivity is brought to life, emphasized by the author in this way: “se han reunido hombres y mujeres a gozar de los árboles, a respirar el ambiente de las flores, a escuchar el canto de los pájaros, el ruido de las fuentes, y, en fin a gozar de la naturaleza salvaje” (227).

Hinestrosa’s portrayal of nature recalls slavery and oppression by comparing the metaphor of a civilized nature and an enslaved nature. He expresses it in the following way: “los árboles y los arbustos de los jardines, esclavizados y oprimidos, nacen solo donde el hombre quiere...se encorvarán, se doblarán, se inclinarán, se desnudarán o morirán según la voluntad de su señor” (*Museo* II, 225). Here, the wording used – to bend down, kneel down, and bow down – projects the imagery of slavery. Hinestrosa then reaffirms: “He aquí la naturaleza vegetal civilizada, la naturaleza esclava.” (*Museo* II, 226).

In addition, the writer recognizes the artist throughout the *cuadro*, praising his artistry<sup>95</sup> in detailing the beauty of nature. Through his commentary on the various details, Hinestrosa verifies that the visual is more than just a mimetic reflection of the natural landscape and its local customs. He emphasizes the aspect that the autor has chosen to portray that conveys the mores of his society: “Torres ha pintado en su cuadro uno de los rasgos más característicos del mundo moral: ha pintado las dichas al lado de las miserias” (*Museo* II, 228).

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<sup>95</sup> The function of the writer (poet) and the artist is also explained by Hinestrosa in this *cuadro*. He claims that: “El poeta puede inspirarse en esta naturaleza animada...Si el poeta puede inspirarse en los prados y en los bosques, el pintor lo hará también hermoseando sus cuadros con una variada vegetación, con caprichosas perspectivas, con mansos arroyos y cascadas bulliciosas. Y en efecto, el señor Ramón Torres ha escogido para exhibir la orgía de que vamos a hablar, una bellísima escena de la naturaleza rustica” (*Museo* II, 226-227).

Overall, in the pursuit of coloring the national identity, *costumbristas* (artists and writers) began documenting, much like the scientific expeditions had practiced, a series of verbal and visual visages that would form into a picturesque montage of their customs showcasing local color. *Paseo campestre* is a beautiful example of this purpose – capturing the intricacies of the national landscapes and the uniquely diverse social customs and practices of daily life that help glimpse the nation’s treasured past. Specifically, in the Conservative view, these works exemplify aspects of the natural landscape in its purest forms and the idealized bucolic life (as an escape from the current political upheavals). Indeed, the reconstruction of the past “en busca de una identidad nacional que debía ser creada, se nutría de ciertos rasgos culturales, de costumbres y de una historia que se rehace para que la memoria que se acuñe sea nacional” (Pini 29). Therefore, through vivid descriptions and colorful sketches, *costumbristas* created a visible window through which to gaze at the Colombia of the past.

“Nos fuimos a Ubaque” (Groot) | *Imitación de la naturaleza del campo*  
*de Pueblo Viejo y Ubaque* (Groot)

One of Groot’s earliest *cuadros*, titled “Nos fuimos a Ubaque” (which includes two subsequent parts under the same series), describes a realistic and witty story of a family traveling to the outskirts of the city by horseback (Duffey 17). Trips to the countryside near Bogotá was a popular topic for Colombian *costumbristas* and if they mentioned other *pueblos*, these were usually generalized and unnamed “en los que se daba una idea general de los tipos y de las costumbres populares y de la configuración social y ‘moral’ del

*pueblo...[para] construir una imagen del pueblo portador de la soberanía nacional”* (Gordillo Restrepo 49). City dwellers from Bogotá would venture into the rural parts of the nation almost as if they were visiting a foreign country, encountering new territory and experiences, which Groot brilliantly depicts in his *cuadros* and visuals, highlighting a bucolic gaze of Colombia’s countryside.

In the painting titled *Imitación de la naturaleza del campo de Pueblo Viejo y Ubaque* (Figure 3.7), Groot paints a “mimetic” reflection of Ubaque, a town in the Eastern Province of the region of Cundinamarca, in 1836. The association of relating nature to nostalgia for the past, el “pueblo viejo,” can be attributed to the fact that the Romantics saw rural areas as an escape from the oppressive forces of modernization and civilization, as it was subtly evident in *Costumbrismo* and reinforced with the “nostalgia for el campo y la naturaleza [que] se acentuó con el romanticismo” (Pineda Buitrago 74). In the center of the landscape, one finds a humble couple of *campesinos* working the field, next to their cattle, with the woman lying down on the soil surrounded by the mountains and the vibrant, verdant nature. The message conveyed in the visual echoes Groot’s sentiments towards his appreciation of the countryside as the idyllic environment, which was a common place of escape from many elite families of Bogotá, as Groot takes his readers through a journey of how the family ventured out to Ubaque as the ultimate destination.

Within the scope of nineteenth-century Latin America, Martínez Pinzón indicates that although Romanticism replicated much of the Enlightenment’s infatuation with the idea of progress, particularly “its enthusiasm for the future, and a penchant for what was new,” he claims that this movement was equally “fascinated by novel productions of the past” (“People for the Patricians” 59), which was certainly a theme that appeared in many

of the works by Groot. Similarly, Duffey agrees that Groot's emphasis on describing colorful, realistic rural customs and scenes (even in urban settings) conveys the "arch-conservatism and rigid orthodoxy of the *campesino*" that was unequivocally identified as a popular emblematic type in Colombia during this period (18).

Victor Goldgel,<sup>96</sup> who examines nineteenth-century Cuban paintings, notes the following observation that can be applied to those in Colombia: "Gran parte del *Costumbrismo*, el grabado y la litografía de la época pueden explicarse a partir de esa necesidad de visualizar ese territorio [o paisaje], recién redescubierto tanto desde un punto de vista económico como desde el científico y artístico" (138). The same theory can be applied to Colombian paintings of this time, as this picturesque and romantic style of painting landscapes and portraits was driven by the sudden shifts caused by changes in urbanization and modernity. Furthermore, Martínez Pinzón explains why the elite wanted to create an imagined country that did not exist based on Colombia's climate difference and culture. For the power elite, given its geographical location in the cold and higher Andes Mountains, the inferior groups were associated with the heat of the lower, more tropical spaces "Si para las élites argentinas el problema de su territorio era la extensión, para las colombianas lo fue el calor" (*Invernadero* 13). Colombia's western part is separated by its "tierras frías," consisting of the three main ranges along the Andes Mountains. The first Spanish settlers founded the capital in colonial times, known as

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<sup>96</sup> "Los primeros significados de la palabra 'romántico,' asociada con tanta frecuencia a la originalidad, fue, justamente, 'pintoresco,' y el pintoresquismo de la literatura y las litografías producidas hacia mediados de siglo, por su parte, responde al rasgo fundamental del romanticismo hispanoamericano: el esfuerzo por representar lo nacional." See Victor Goldgel, "Una isla pintoresca y su horroroso colorido. Aproximaciones a la modernización y la violencia en la cultura visual cubana del siglo XIX," *Decimonónica*, vol. 12, no. 1, 2015, pp. 134–150.

Santafé de Bogotá, in the highlands, and it was separated both geographically and culturally from its “tierras calientes,” the warmer lowlands along the Pacific coast and the Caribbean. This latter area extends to the southern Amazon tropical forests and the eastern plains of *Llanos Orientales*. The valley of the Magdalena River connects the eastern to central interior mountain ranges and moves north to the Barranquilla harbor on the Caribbean Sea (LeGrand 168).



Figure 3.7. José Manuel Groot. *Imitación de la naturaleza del campo de Pueblo Viejo y Ubaque* (1863). Oil on canvas. 103 x 141.9 cm. Centro Cultural de Bogotá, Museo de Arte Miguel Urrutía. (Colección de Arte Banco de la República AP2244). (left)

Figure 3.8. José Manuel Groot. *Agricultores de Funza* (ca. 1850). Lithography. 23 x 33 cm. Colección Rivas Sacconi. (González and Segura, *Groot* 35). (right)

Since colonial times, the white elite in Bogotá needed the tropical lands to cultivate produce to export internationally in order to build the economy. Hence, from the colder, higher, more civilized cities to the warmer, lower, rural regions with mixed indigenous races (“razas más oscuras, climas más cálidos”) a political agenda was forged, as the “mecanismos de representación que pusieron en juego las élites andinas para narrar la captura del espacio nacional en las tierras bajas crearon fronteras imaginadas” which

generated a new wave of interpreting the national territory, divided by climate space and race (Martínez Pinzón, *Invernadero* 15-16). “Nos fuimos a Ubaque” is explored further in the next chapter in relation to the depiction of women and the Other.

“Una compra de novillos” (Groot) / *Agrícolas de Funza* (Groot)

A different art piece by Groot (Figure 3.8), *Agrícolas de Funza* (1850), also has an ekphrastic association with the references to a nearby town he describes in the text of the *cuadro* that he titled, “Una compra de novillos.” This *cuadro* paints a portrait of the typical life of a *campesino*, pictured riding horses and wearing the traditional attire of colorful, striped ponchos called *ruanas* and straw hats (*Museo de costumbres* IV, 25-27):

Por el camino de Funza  
galopaba en mi caballo,  
cuando sentí que venían  
detrás de mí, a paso largo,  
dos jinetes campesinos,  
en alta voz conversando  
en su lenguaje campestre;  
al compás de los caballos  
galopaban al tendido,  
sonando huecos los cascos  
sobre el duro camellón,  
tal cual se pone en verano...

Cuando el sol su disco asoma,  
centellando por el cielo  
entonces por los cercados  
con mi gente voy saliendo,  
por entre vacas y toros  
que, perezosos al fresco,  
se levantan al pasar  
mi caballo por entre ellos.  
Y de entre aquestas majadas,  
y pastales de poleos  
los gratos olores salen  
para embalsamar el viento.

In this passage, there are a number of important aspects that Groot highlights that can be related to his painting. Just from this short excerpt, one encounters a plethora of details that involve almost all the human senses: From the galloping noise of the horses to the way cows and bulls saunter in the meadows “perezosos al fresco,” as the radiant sun illuminates the sky, to the aroma of “poleos” mixing in the breezy wind, “para embalsamar el viento” (27).

As one of Groot’s most characteristic paintings, this visual shows two rustic “jinetes campesinos” traveling by horse along the countryside (25). As depicted in his *cuadro*, the colorful *ruanas* became an iconic symbol to represent the rural country life in Colombia (González and Segura, *Groot* 32). However, an article in *El Pasatiempo* published in Bogotá on November 8, 1851, titled “Dama de Bogotá en Traje de Montar” (that included a direct verbal-visual reference to the painting by Torres Mendez with the same name and year of publication) mentioned that the traditional use of the *ruana* was starting to be substituted for an *esclavina* or shorter cape, worn equally by men and women of different social classes (qtd. in Sánchez Cabra, *Ramón Torres* 136).

Food also plays a symbolic function in this *cuadro* as in others written by Groot. The impressive use of details continues with the *campesino* entering Alberto’s house to receive “el obsequioso casero” (*Museo de costumbres* IV, 29). In this section dedicated to the traditional foods of nineteenth-century Colombia, described under the section “El almuerzo,” the use of spices is mentioned such as “Un platón lleno de ajiaco, con habas y con alverjas, con guascas y con cominos, con cecina y carne fresca, “and the drinks consisting of “dos jarros de loza fina de *chicha*...en sus chipitas, al lado las totumas



timanejas,” que “como corales lucía con ajos en la salsera...el ají con calabaza, picante como candela” (*Museo de costumbres* IV, 29).

To all this, Groot adds a stirring remark of longing for the past, after vividly illustrating the wonders of the tranquil and pleasant life of a *campesino* (*Museo de costumbres* IV, 32):

¡Ah!, ¡vida del campesino!	De la bienaventuranza
¡Quién vivir así pudiera!	es imagen en la tierra
En otro tiempo me hallaba	la vida del campesino
entregado a tus faenas	cuando sólo en ella piensa.
lleno de paz y alegría	Pero yo me veo envuelto
cogiendo mis sementeras,	en medio de la tormenta
haciendo ordeñar las vacas	en este mar borrascoso
y echando ganado a ceba.	de política y contiendas.
¡Feliz el que del bullicio	Donde todo es renegar
de las ciudades se aleja	todo vueltas y revueltas
y en el campo retirado	agitación y fastidio
su vida pasa serena!	en interminable brega.

As described in this *cuadro*, written in verse, Groot observes the peace and delight experienced through the eyes of a farmer in order to reinforce the message that highlights the tranquility of the past undisturbed by modernity. He contrasts these visuals with the opposite imagery he uses to describe the civilized world, tormented by politics and quarrels, frustration, and nuisance: “Pero yo me veo envuelto en medio de la tormenta, en este mar borrascoso de política y contiendas” (49). Amidst the political and economic

turmoil of nineteenth-century Colombia, the pressures of civilization made *costumbristas* such as Groot long for the undisturbed nature and serene joys of country life.

Emmanuel Velayos in *Revisitar el Costumbrismo* (2016) posits how the local customs of a nation connect when arranged through textual and visual representations. These descriptions and pictorial emblems combine to create a panoramic view of the daily customs of nineteenth-century society “como una sucesión de viñetas ante la mirada de un espectador” (Velayos 96). In this regard, Groot was fond of writing and illustrating these landscapes and their people as a way to record and illustrate their Colombian ways of life, including that of farmers, merchants, military, and naval officers. For example, this painting evokes the colorful attire<sup>97</sup> of rural towns like Guadas, located about one hundred kilometers from Bogotá.

Kari Soriano Salkjelsvik’s edited book, *Sensibilidades conservadoras*, helps us understand the various philosophical, social, and political factors encompassing the Conservative posture that had permeated Latin America since the 1830s (Soriano Salkjelsvik and Castro, *Sensibilidades* 12-13). The Conservative ideology supported its Catholic core principles. But with the abrupt changes brought to the Church in Latin America during the nineteenth century, when it was beginning to lose its power, the clergy worked closely with Conservative elites of the faith “para fomentar la educación religiosa...y así impulsar y conservar una visión del mundo guiada por la moral católica”

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<sup>97</sup> Regarding the traditional attire for the lower social classes in Colombia during the nineteenth-century, some popular clothing pieces included the following: “Los grupos sociales que no pertenecían a las esferas ilustradas de la sociedad y, en consecuencia, no estaban sujetos a los designios de la moda europea, mezclaron materiales y diseños de acuerdo a lo que tenían a mano y lo que percibían. Continuaron como el algodón, tejido con la chinilla o añil; la palma de iraca, para la elaboración de sombreros altos y la lana de oveja, para el tejido de ruanas, de doble faz, de colores vivos. La indumentaria de la clase trabajadora se caracterizó por el uso de pañuelos amarrados en la cabeza, telas con rayas y numerosos adornos y joyas” (Gómez Cely 19).

(Soriano Salkjelsvik and Castro, *Sensibilidades* 32). As a result of this, Soriano Salkjelsvik remarks that “las sensibilidades conservadoras serían las *expresiones* de conservadurismo en textos literarios y culturales, pero también la *utilización* de textos como vehículos para nutrir un contenido doctrinal de corte conservador” (*Sensibilidades* 17; my emphasis).

As evidenced, Groot’s *cuadros* tend to illustrate his beliefs from the mirage of a small city or rural environment in a typical nineteenth-century Latin American society, full of vivid and intricate details that provide a visual glimpse into the locals’ lives. This serves to retell his Conservative’s interest in depicting rural life as the place where true values were found. True to his ekphrastic tendencies he created “una formula especial para dar la impresión de que el lector *veía lo que estaba leyendo*” (Pachón Pandilla 16). Groot devoted a significant part of his paintings and descriptions within his *cuadros* from Bogotá through a rural gaze that extended to surrounding regions in the countryside. His outlook is attributed not only to his Conservative ideology but to the fact that, since his youth, Groot had associated the beauty of nature and landscapes with an escape from the political situation that had caused his family to move from Bogotá to the savanna. He dedicated time and appreciation via artistic expressions to depict “el aire puro, alegre, libre de la vida campesina” (Caro 15; González Aranda, *Groot*, 27).

#### **D. Final Remarks on the Depiction of National Spaces in Colombian *Costumbrismo***

This genre was popular in *Costumbrismo*, especially between 1820 and 1860, given the impact of foreign artists and the principal scientific movements such as the *Expedición Botánica* and especially with the *Comisión Corográfica* in Colombia, exemplified by its mimetic style based on detailed observation, categorization, and creative ingenuity (González Aranda, *Confrontación de miradas* 3, 13). Out of all the *costumbristas* in Colombia of the nineteenth century, José Manuel Groot was perhaps the most representative of this period, given his dual talent in creating both the written *cuadros de costumbres* and the costumbrista paintings that would present his perception of the nation of Colombia (Giraldo Jaramillo 15). His style most resembles that of his contemporary Ramón Torres Méndez. However, the latter has been considered the most popular in terms of precision and excellence in illustrating the national customs and types, as evidenced in the numerous references to his works and praised recognition of his lithographs (Sánchez Cabra, *Ramón Torres* 133). Both Groot and Torres Méndez are lauded for their representations of Colombia's *pueblo nacional*. Still, Torres Méndez was prolific in many of his visual *cuadros de costumbres*. His work included more representations of Colombia's human types than natural scenes and landscapes (although there were some exceptions, like his oil painting *Paseo campestre* (González Aranda, *Confrontación de miradas* 6-7).

As demonstrated by these works of Conservative *costumbristas*, the positive imagery which traced its roots back to a colonial past and the idealization of the tranquil, rural lifestyle was the preferred means of expression to escape the burdensome reality of

the ever-present civil wars and tumultuous political conflicts of the nineteenth century. In effect, the eccentric and peculiar customs of rural spaces were captured in both written texts and visuals, which helped frame Colombia's national identity. Hence, to find the "la idiosincrasia del pueblo y de los diferentes componentes típicos y hasta cierto punto específicos de la sociedad urbana y campesina nacional, se recurrió a los cuadros de costumbres" (Gordillo Restrepo 48).

**IV. SKETCHES OF MARGINALIZED IDENTITIES:  
THE PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN AND ETHNIC GROUPS  
IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY COLOMBIAN *COSTUMBRISMO***

**A. Introduction: Depictions of Female Figures and Mixed Races in the Colombian  
*Cuadros***

This chapter examines the verbal and visual representation of women and other marginalized groups in the patriarchal societies of nineteenth-century Colombian *Costumbrismo*. The ambiguous portrayal of these socially diverse marginalized people – based on class, gender, race, and ethnic identities – is determined by the writer/artist’s gaze (predominantly of elite white males) and their distinctive political ideologies (Martínez Pinzón, “Una nación” 391). Hence, this study employs an ekphrastic assessment to understand the portrayal of these identities from the written descriptions found in the *cuadros de costumbres* alongside the visual *costumbrista* paintings, especially those created by Groot and Torres Méndez, among other Conservative writers who published in *El Mosaico* and *Museo de cuadros de costumbres*.

The juxtaposition of image-text representations of these human types and their customs offers new understandings to unveil the faces and customs of marginalized individuals in Colombian nineteenth-century *cuadros* and paintings – focusing on how women, Indigenous people, and African-blooded servants were portrayed. The prejudice exhibited toward these individuals was partly due to the patriarchal societal limitations on

females and the hierarchical divisions between racial-ethnic people groups that resulted from European colonialism (Arias Vanegas 100-102). In particular, this chapter also considers the impact of the scientific expeditions, especially of the mid-century *Comisión Corográfica*, regarding the role of clothing in the different social classes, the role of color in the *costumbrista* illustrations, and even the function of regionalisms and other cultural expressions. As such, the role of clothing was a major aspect of these nineteenth-century societies: “A través de la pintura, la acuarela, el dibujo, la caricatura y el grabado, el traje fue descrito y magnificado como puede verse en las obras de Ramón Torres Méndez...y José Manuel Groot” (Alvarez 41). It also focuses on Groot and Torres Méndez’s Conservative illustrations of these “faces” of Colombian society in an effort to override the Liberal progressive stance in the nation.

In *Patricios en contienda* (2021), Martínez Pinzón studies the efforts of Colombia’s elite to orchestrate the image of the *pueblo nacional* based on gender and racial determinants used in accordance with their political agendas and cultural predispositions. He also addresses the significance of the scientific advances of this era in relation to the racial, cultural, and environmental factors impacting the works of *Costumbrismo*, emphasizing that “Comisión Corográfica es el esfuerzo más importante del siglo XIX en Colombia por racionalizar la diversidad racial, cultural y ambiental bajo los parámetros de liberalismo económico” (Martínez Pinzón, *Patricios* 207). In addition, Conservative *cuadros de costumbres* published during the mid-century Liberal reforms allowed *costumbristas* to present their own view on national identity based on their interpretations of Colombia’s marginalized groups, hiding, or minimizing any racial and class issues (Martínez Pinzón, “People,” 58-59). Beatriz Rodríguez further explains the significance of

the scientific and artistic influence developed in Colombian elite writers and artists during the *Comisión Corográfica* during the 1850s:

Para las elites del momento, el proyecto corográfico presentaba la oportunidad de recodificar, inventar y ordenar un territorio casi desconocido para ellos y la posibilidad de darle vuelco a la vida social y económica de la nación. en el mundo tumultuoso del periodo post-independentista, la exploración científica y geográfica parecía ofrecer el tipo de conocimiento necesario para el ‘progreso’ de la nación y la consolidación del poder político. (Rodríguez, “El ensamblaje visual” 46)

In effect, Colombian elite leaders played with the representation of marginalized individuals of societies as a way to project their own vision for national identity, distancing themselves from Indigenous and mixed-race history to formulate a “polished” version that showcased the Hispanic and Catholic roots of their world view in disagreement with the Liberals’ strategy for the *Comisión Corográfica* (Martínez Pinzón, “People,” 58-59). Colombian *costumbristas* deployed the verbal and visual descriptions to highlight marginalized communities in a way that would benefit their political and aesthetic purposes. Guided by their subjective observation of them – through the “mind’s eye” to recall the ekphrastic engagement of reality (Mayers xi) – and also in accordance with the predominant political agenda that would help formulate or refine Colombia’s national identity, the image-text representations of these marginalized beings were guided mainly by the Conservative *costumbristas*’ traditional lens (against the Liberal and progressive perspective) (Martínez Pinzón, “People,” 44-45).



In particular, this chapter highlights examples that present marginalized individuals – particularly women, Indigenous, and African people groups in Colombian nineteenth-century *cuadros de costumbres*. W. J. T. Mitchell’s scholarship on ekphrasis and visual culture is helpful for this study, considering that the *costumbrista* works demonstrate compelling interconnections in the verbal and visual representations (Mitchell, “Ekphrasis and the Other,” 3).<sup>98</sup> This verbal-visual imagery is certainly guided by a national perspective rooted in a sociopolitical mindset, which permeated the works of many of the authors of significant Colombian works published at this time, such as those in *El Mosaico* and the *Museo de cuadros de costumbres*.

#### La Pola – Legacy of an Emblematic Colombian Female Figure

In the early nineteenth century, newly emerging Latin American republics sought after heroes – and heroines – that functioned as political, historical, and even moral figures. One of Colombia’s most revolutionary female heroines in the nineteenth century was Policarpa Salavarrieta, known as “La Pola,”<sup>99</sup> memorialized for her courage and strength.

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<sup>98</sup> Margaret Persin also employs a broader approach to ekphrasis, where a text can sometimes refer to an artist’s oeuvre and not necessarily a specific work of art (18). She notes how some textual works instead “capture the essence of, or pay homage to, an artist’s style” through the verbal description (Persin 18). This was indeed the case in some *cuadros de costumbres* that reference or at least allude to Ramón Torres Méndez (for instance, refer to José Manuel Marroquín’s *cuadro* “¿Quién es el más feliz de los mortales”).

<sup>99</sup> La Pola was born in Colombia in 1796, a native of Guaduas, Cundinamarca (although some skepticism resonates regarding her place of origin, with some scholars claiming it was in Socorro, Santander), and later annihilated in 1817 in the city Bogotá at twenty-one years of age (González Aranda, *Manual* 103). Even though she manifested a sense of bravery and strength, she has also been portrayed as a young, light-skinned, pious woman. The legacy of this Colombian feminine figure, regarded in history “por haber sido el enlace entre los partidarios de la Independencia y los guerrilleros de los Llanos Orientales,” compels historians to wonder why she became such an important icon, “¿Por qué La Pola se convirtió en icono y a otros protagonistas no les sucedió lo mismo, ni hubo transfiguración? ¿Por ser del pueblo? ¿Por ser mujer?” (González Aranda, *Manual* 103-104). After her death, many artists and writers have been captivated by the

Beatriz González Aranda discusses the significance of the iconography<sup>100</sup> of La Pola, especially as illustrated in the oil painting by an anonymous artist, titled *Policarpa Salviatierra marcha al suplicio* (ca. 1825) (*Manual* 105).

One example that alludes to this painting of La Pola is found in the *cuadro de costumbres* titled “Historia de unas viruelas” by Liberal writer Rafael Eliseo Santander, comparing the female protagonist to La Pola wearing the typical clothing of the time with a traditional blue dress displayed in this painting, “como viuda vestía el traje de la época, traje de pancho azul, del mismo color que vistió más tarde *Policarpa Salavarrieta* el día en que fue inmolada” (*Museo de cuadros* IV, 214). From these verbal and visual representations, Earle notes the vital role of clothing and Conservative religious ideals found in La Pola but also seen in other nineteenth-century Colombian literary and artistic works. Various texts and visuals were made in her honor, but specifically alluding to her religious piety, “[l]as pinturas de la Pola durante esta época subrayan su identificación con la virgen María” (Castro Carvajal 130; Watson, “De héroes y heroínas,” 7).

Although some critics speculate on the details of La Pola’s life, her legacy as a humble seamstress turned into a patriotic symbol of victory for the nation of Colombia is unquestionable (Castro Carvajal 117-118). As Rebecca Earle has proposed, the portrayal of women can be associated with the spirit of nationalism observed in nineteenth-century Latin American literature as interpreted through Benedict Anderson’s understanding of an

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idealization of La Pola, relaying myths and anecdotes concerning her life to portray her through verbal and visual depictions.

<sup>100</sup> The concept of iconography, from the Greek term *eikôn*, meaning “image,” typically embodies ideal and powerful figures in the arts, and is also understood as “la ciencia de leer las imágenes” (González Aranda, *Manual* 99-100).

“imagined” boundary that determines the characteristics and perceptions of a country (qtd. in Watson, “De héroes y heroínas,” 2). Similarly, the elite’s portrayal of national emblems often carries core cultural values, which, as Earle claims, convey residual patriarchal patterns that were ubiquitous at the start of the new republics; accordingly, “nationalism of nineteenth-century elite mentalities was largely cultural, residing in symbols, iconographies and imagining” (qtd. in Watson, “De héroes y heroínas,” 2). After La Pola’s archetype, nineteenth-century Colombian Conservatives and Liberal *costumbristas* have taken novel approaches to portraying women, as explored in the next section.

## **B. The Representation of Nineteenth-Century Colombian Women**

The first part of this chapter begins by centering on the representation of nineteenth-century women in Colombia’s *cuadros de costumbres* and illustrations, especially those created by Groot and Torres Méndez. By focusing on some of the major *cuadros* published in *El Mosaico* and *Museo de cuadros de costumbres*, as well as through the *costumbrista* lithographs and other paintings, there is invaluable evidence from the written and painted depictions that illuminate the way women of the time were portrayed – mainly through the gaze<sup>101</sup> of elite men (Mitchell, “Ekphrasis and the Other,” 160-165; Persin 147-148). The writings and paintings selected are framed from the *costumbrista* gaze, focusing on the way women in postcolonial society were characterized through the eyes of patriarchal

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<sup>101</sup> Scholar Margaret H. Persin offers an analysis on the traditional patriarchal perspective on literary and artistic works, “the so-called ‘male gaze,’ which ‘defines the sensory as well as the philosophical point of view of the art piece’ (146). She also applies W. J. T. Mitchell’s understanding of ekphrasis “as a means of transferring to the realm of literary art sublimated versions of our ambivalence about social Others, whether that other be of a different gender (i.e., female), race, economic class, religion, social or cultural group” (Mitchell, “Ekphrasis and the Other, 161-165; qtd. in Persin 148).

paradigms, thus showcasing women as marginalized individuals sketched in everyday scenes, wearing traditional attire, and practicing local customs (Pozzi 249).

As a result of the influence of scientific trends in Colombia during this time, writers and artists were inspired to classify and document their surroundings, serving many times as the only indicator of a disappeared society, which records a moment in time regarding these significant yet repressed social types of the nineteenth century (Rodríguez, “El ensamblaje visual” 46-47; Restrepo Forero 57).<sup>102</sup> This form of literary and artistic taxonomy is of substantial interest for this study since the representation of these significant yet otherwise forgotten social types of nineteenth-century life often serves as the only indicator to understand these misconstrued figures. As noted by Victoria Uribe Hanabergh, this was a “key event in Colombian geography, politics, history, and art” because the *Comisión Corográfica* supported a Liberal initiative towards modernization, especially in studying and classifying the various people groups through literature and art as a way to document Colombia’s panoramic imagery (135).

Thus, more than collecting “scenes,” these scientific endeavors collected “types”<sup>103</sup> – all varieties of species, including human types of distinct social strata and ethnic groups

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<sup>102</sup> As mentioned in the third chapter, the early nineteenth-century *costumbristas* were influenced by the scientists’ findings brought on by the *Expedición Botánica* (Botanical Expedition, 1783-1817) and later with the *Comisión Corográfica* (Chorographic Commission, 1850-1859) that classified the nation through the different regions and diverse groups of people (Uribe Hanabergh 128).

<sup>103</sup> Among the most renowned Colombian scientists who worked closely with Alexander van Humboldt in these expeditions at the turn of the century, Francisco José de Caldas (1768-1816), known as “el Sabio” is mentioned in Groot’s *cuadro* “Un sueño de dos colores” when he remarked: “En una de esas noches había estado leyendo varios documentos sobre los trabajos científicos de los sabios Mutis, Caldas...” (*Museo* II, 101). The legacy of Caldas’ works has impacted the work of *costumbristas*, mainly from his 1808 text, “Del influjo del clima sobre los seres organizados” (1808), analyzing a study of the diversified of the human *types* of Colombia, noting the significance classified in “el territorio neogranadino en ‘tipos’ —así llamados por el propio Caldas— que ocupan diferentes lugares en el mapa de altitud de los Andes tropicales. Los indígenas en las selvas, los mulatos y los negros en las hoyas ribeñas y en las costas, los mestizos en las montañas y

that closely resembled the style and format of the literature and art found in Colombian *Costumbrismo* (Martínez Pinzón, *Museo I*, LII-LIII). One example that mimics this format is Vergara y Vergara's *Museo de cuadros de costumbres*, presenting a "mosaic" of scenes and types that were carefully selected and categorized to represent the diversified national faces and customs.

Owing to this interest in classifying social types, the overarching imagery of nineteenth-century Colombian presents a wide range of portrayals of feminine figures that range from the more idealized concept of a sophisticated woman as the "angel in the house"<sup>104</sup> to the dejected representation of (primarily Indigenous) female workers (Mayayo 40). Women had to adhere to nineteenth-century patriarchal expectations and demands that restricted them to the domestic sphere while stereotyping idealized notions regarding beauty, submission, education, and other important aspects concerning the women of this century (Hoyos 88). In addition, European nineteenth-century notions on women's habits, customs, and attire also played a critical role in Colombia and its interpretation of how women should act and live in a society (Hoyos 87-88; Mayayo 40-42).

These scientific expeditions encountered a series of challenges in presenting different types of women, not only because of the geographical variety from the lower plains to the higher mountain range of the Andes but more so because "Colombia is a

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los blancos en las ciudades andinas; así reunidos, pero segmentados, daban una especie de panorama colonial, a la manera botánica, de la organización de la diferencia. Esta forma de entender el neotrópico, al igual que la figura del propio Caldas, figuraría de manera prevalente en los cuadros que Vergara escogió para su *Museo*" (Martínez Pinzón, *Museo I*, LII-LIII).

<sup>104</sup> This phrase became popularized in Victorian nineteenth-century: "es en esa época...cuando se consolida el ideal burgués de la feminidad: el de la mujer modesta y recatada, recluida en la atmósfera apacible de su entorno familiar, convertida en un 'ángel del hogar.' Es en ese periodo también cuando se afianza, en materia artística, la llamada doctrina de las esferas separadas" (Mayayo 40).

highly multiethnic country, where every region has its particular idiosyncrasy” (Uribe Hanabergh 128). Similarly, Colombian elite *costumbristas* (mostly white male literati) began their own parallel taxonomy and representation of national types, especially of the nation’s marginalized individuals and groups of people, including all “sorts of *mestizo* populations and combinations of European, Indigenous and African blood” which encompassed the same agenda pursuits of the “scientific, artistic or political expedition,” resulting in “a deep confrontation of man versus nature” (128).

Therefore, this first section considers the image-text connections concerning the portrayal of nineteenth-century Colombian women as marginalized individuals in a patriarchal-minded society. The textual descriptions and visual imagery created by elite Colombian writers and artists of *Costumbrismo* reinforce the characteristics that they commonly attributed to women. To demonstrate this, I underline some essential issues that Colombian *costumbrista* writers and artists addressed to portray the representation of Colombian women based on the following variables: (1) the ideal of the domestic sphere; (2) the categorization and social ranks based on race; (3) the role of clothing as a major indicator for determining social status; (4) the ill fate of those who stepped out of the ideal placed imposed by patriarchal standards on society. This section will use examples of *cuadros de costumbres* and *costumbrista* paintings showcasing these themes. More specifically, this section analyzes the *cuadros de costumbres* by José Manuel Groot, “Nos fuimos a Ubaque” (with its second part, “Nos quedamos en Chipaque” and “Llegamos a Ubaque”); “Remigia o vicisitudes de las hijas de la alegría,” with the respective visuals, *Señora preparando alimentos*, and *Pequeños mercaderes ambulantes de Bogotá*. It also compares José Caicedo Rojas’s “Las criadas de Bogotá” and José Manuel Marroquín’s

“¿Quién es el más feliz de los mortales?” with two drawings by Torres Méndez, including *Las criadas* and *Niñeras de paseo*.

In Groot and Torres Mendez’s works, the presentation of women was perceived from a Conservative outlook as part of an agenda of creating a cohesive national identity. But they were not alone. Other concurring Colombian writers underlined their vision, like José Caicedo Rojas (a Liberal that turned Conservative), José Manuel Marroquín (Conservative), and even some foreign artists like Auguste Le Moyne, who worked closely with Groot.

#### Framing the Context: A Woman’s Place in Nineteenth-Century Colombia

In analyzing the iconographic and literary works that portray the image of Colombian women in the nineteenth century, this study attempts to understand how men in a patriarchal society perceived them. In *Las mujeres en la historia de Colombia*, Magdalena Velásquez Toro provides a historical panoramic regarding women’s place in Colombian society” and an overview of the prejudices and stereotypes about women found in these male-dominated environments, when she says: “a la inversa de lo que ocurre con los hombres, es su situación en el universo del poder privado el que las coloca en determinado lugar de la vida política, económica y social” (xxiii). Additionally, Beatriz Castro Carvajal’s *Historia de la vida cotidiana en Colombia* examines the private realm through the everyday lifestyle of women in Colombia from the Conquista to the twentieth century, analyzing the role of women’s attire and social practices in order to highlight the

differences based on social status,<sup>105</sup> as well as the cultural idiosyncrasies associated with the female gender (9-11). Some of the original literary representations of women in *Costumbrismo*, as specified in Gabriela Pozzi's article, "Imágenes de la mujer en el *Costumbrismo*," relates the central themes attributed to the image of women in major works from Spain, such as *Los españoles pintados por sí mismos*, which share some parallelisms with Colombian *cuadros de costumbres* (250). She observes how, "[e]stos textos se proponen esbozar la identidad genérica femenina y justificar...la posición que se le asigna a la mujer en la estructura social, su reclusión en la esfera doméstica" (Pozzi 249).

Regarding female representations in Colombian art, Patricia Mayayo's *Historia de mujeres, historia del arte* (2003)<sup>106</sup> examines the place women held in Colombia in the nineteenth century as controlled by dominant patriarchal societies that relegated them to the "essential" roles of mothers, wives, and domestic servants of the home, while also restricting them from certain roles, vocations, and social practices (Mayayo 41). Similarly, this "ideal" characterization of women imposed by society was also reflected in the literature and art of the time, heavily influenced by religious (Catholic) principles and Romantic notions. These standards depicted women as pious, submissive beings, restrained

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<sup>105</sup> For instance, this edited book includes the article by Catalina Reyes and Lina Marcela Gonzalez, which presents an important aspect regarding the different standards attributed to Colombian women based on their social status: "A las mujeres de clase alta y sectores medios, les estaba vedado circular a solas por las ciudades y para ir a la iglesia debían hacerlo acompañadas por sus criadas. Las mujeres pobres, por el contrario, pocas veces podían permanecer en el hogar y se veían precisadas a emplearse como sirvientas en otras casas, ya sea como lavanderas, aguadoras y carboneras o para realizar otros oficios. Estas mujeres circulaban libremente por la ciudad y sus hábitos y costumbres eran menos rígidos que los de las mujeres de sectores medios y altos" (Reyes and González 219).

<sup>106</sup> In this context, it is important to realize the limitations that women had in the nineteenth century, where they were often the objects being portrayed by male artists, but rarely given the opportunity to become artists themselves: "A lo largo del siglo XIX las mujeres fueron sistemáticamente excluidas de las escuelas públicas y organizaciones profesionales...la mujer no tiene cabida en el mercado del arte como creadora sino como creación, como objeto de consumo y delectación visual" (Mayayo 42). As a result, there were a limited number of women who were able to become artists in that period.



by a set of rules on social propriety and etiquette: “el decoro femenino y del confinamiento de las mujeres a la esfera de lo privado y lo doméstico” (Mayayo 40).

Moreover, women’s social life and education in Colombia during the nineteenth century (and their leisure time) was regulated and directed by men and sometimes endorsed by some women as well, yet there were blurred lines for certain social (public) outings and local cultural activities (Bermúdez Quintana 112; Mayayo 42; Hoyos 88; Londoño 6-7, 14-16; Castro Carvajal 11). Some of these characteristic practices (and limitations) are evidenced in the works presented by Groot and Torres Méndez. In particular, the article “Rosas y espinas: Representaciones de las mujeres en el arte colombiano 1868-1910” by Luz Adriana Hoyos offers an analysis of the paintings, drawings, and lithographs in *Costumbrismo*, including those by Torres Méndez (Hoyos 98). She explains the different ways the *costumbrista* illustrations categorized Colombian nineteenth-century women according to their position and status in society, but especially on the marginalization based on race. On the one hand, they present women with moral and religious characteristics that are typically associated with higher social classes and those “mujeres eminentemente blancas o mestizas” (like the Virgin Mary). On the other hand, the “Eves”<sup>107</sup> or the fallen/sinful women (generally ascribed to women of color) are correlated to those of lower social status (Hoyos 93).

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<sup>107</sup> Luz Adriana Hoyos further explains the religious symbolism associated to Colombian representations of women in art (like in Ramón Torres Méndez’s visual *cuadros de costumbres*, based on differences of race and social status: “Frente a estas mujeres eminentemente blancas o mestizas se presentan las ‘Evas,’ ligadas a otros roles como los de criada, campesina, prostituta o delincuente; modelos que no representan los ideales de la sociedad pero que su presencia en las imágenes distingue, diferencia y legitima el papel privilegiado que se le atribuía a las mujeres de élite. Por esta razón, se analiza cómo en las representaciones subsiste ese modelo privilegiado pero también, cómo tal modelo se refuerza al mostrar las diferenciaciones que persisten entre las mujeres en clase, raza y edad” (Hoyos 93, 98).

Some scholars also explore the label of “*el bello sexo*”<sup>108</sup> imposed by men on nineteenth-century women, which was strictly established on the paradigm of imposing an ideal standard of inner (spiritual) and outward (physical) beauty (Bermúdez Quintana 112). As a result of the changes brought through modernization in the nineteenth century, an aesthetic shift occurred as a result of scientific explorations of this period, and *costumbristas* began representing women through a different sociocultural lens. In a change from the predominant colonial style of religious female portraits, framing them as “angels of the house” and the epitome of submissiveness, decorum, and daintiness, the mid-century production of *costumbrista* works began to include representations of marginalized, rural women of mixed races, particularly those of lower social strata and upbringing, depicted in autochthonous settings. However, during the second half of the nineteenth century, women became more marginalized as a result of the gradual “cambio de roles para la mujer y su tránsito de la esfera privada del hogar (recuérdese la metáfora ‘el ángel del hogar’) a la esfera pública” (Arango-Keeth 287).

*Costumbrista* artists included representations of the Other – the rural *campesinas* of mixed races in unusual scenes – in contrast to upper-class city women. Their illustrations depicted them in traditional attire, performing everyday tasks outdoors. Some illustrations

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<sup>108</sup> According to Suzy Bermúdez Quintana, “[t]anto el cristianismo como el romanticismo influían para dar una imagen en ocasiones supraterrrenal de la mujer de esa época en Bogotá. Se cree que si a las representantes de la élite capitalina las llamaban el bello sexo, no era mera casualidad. Al reflexionar sobre los varones escritores de la prensa femenina en Santa Fe de Bogotá, se vio que a veces los llamaban el sexo feo o bien el sexo barbudo, en contraposición al bello. Esto se debía a que se esperaba que las mujeres ideales fueran bellas, no sólo física sino espiritualmente. En cuanto a la belleza del alma femenina, algunos autores de la época pensaban que el espíritu de las mujeres era más fuerte que el de los varones, pues ellas no sólo eran la expresión de la ‘omnipotencia divina’ sino ‘la última y mejor obra de Dios.’ La mujer además era ‘la obra maestra de la naturaleza’ y ‘el primer misterio de la creación,’ pues para los varones era un ser indescifrable” (106).

show them out in public places like the local food market or taking part in social activities beyond the customary domestic and religious settings where upper-class (white or *mestizo*) women were more commonly represented in the nineteenth century.

“Nos fuimos a Ubaque,” and “Nos quedamos en Chipaque” (Groot) | *Señora preparando alimentos* (Groot)

As previously discussed, the three-part *cuadro* by Groot, “Nos fuimos a Ubaque,” besides its emphasis on depicting bucolic customs, also offers a detailed narration regarding a family trip from the capital to the rural province, with humoristic mishaps regarding life in the nineteenth-century while depicting women’s place in society. Considered one of his most famous “sketches” of customs, Groot portrays the social constituents of a typical Colombian family in detail, particularly emphasizing the candor of the maidservants and the triviality of the young daughters (Duffey 17). The events are realistic and offer insight into local customs, revealing dynamic dialogues and verbal descriptions that bring the story to life in the readers’ minds.

Groot introduces the ekphrastic rendering of this *cuadro* when he says, “Yo describiré el cuadro que se me ofreció a la vista...” (*Museo* I, 267). Groot’s way of announcing to his readers his intention to depict this *cuadro* (verbal representation) through his interpretation of a real or imagined circumstance (visual imagining) skillfully carries out his ekphrastic aim. Echoing Mayers’ usage of ekphrasis as the “trope that conjures up images from the physical world and places them before the mind’s eye,” this *cuadro* provides a way to manifest through the power of vision some elements of the author’s

world and his approach, in this particular case, to how women were perceived in the context of Colombian nineteenth-century society (Mayers xi).

As an example, Groot's verbal description illustrates the distinction between women and men in a typical Colombian household. At the beginning of this *cuadro*, before their departure, the family is at their home in Bogotá, and the narrator expresses that, "Cuando una familia está en víspera de viaje, en esta tierra que se llama Bogotá, toda la casa se pone en movimiento," describing the activity of each person around the house, especially noting how, "Las mujeres se afanan, los muchachos se alegran, los hombres disponen, y las criadas andan como ringletes" (Groot, *Museo I*, 267).<sup>109</sup> He paints a picture of the women as "preoccupied" fulfilling the various household chores, with the female servants known as *criadas* running in circles "como ringletes," hurrying to complete these domestic tasks such as cleaning and cooking before going on the family trip. In contrast, the young men "se alegran," giving an image of being relaxed and carefree while the men of the house are in charge (*Museo I*, 267).

Similarly, Groot's painting parallels this verbal portrait of Colombian women in their "rightful" place in domestic spaces, restrained because of the limits imposed by these patriarchal nineteenth-century families. As reflected in *Señora preparando alimentos* (Figure 4.1), the women are depicted within the home, preparing food, contemplative, and immersed in domestic duties. Their demeanor shows how serene and concentrated they are

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<sup>109</sup> This *cuadro de costumbres* written by Groot was originally published in *El Álbum: Periódico Literario científico y noticioso* dated May 26, 1856. He set a trend among other *costumbristas* like Ricardo Silva's "Mi familia viajando" to portray a traditional family's outing to the countryside (Duffey 81). Furthermore, this example recalls the iconic *cuadro* "Un viaje" by the Peruvian Felipe Pardo y Aliaga, in which the chaotic actions of the members of a Limean household are described with the same details right before the departure of the family scion to Chile.

in making the food. Although upper-class women were still responsible for adhering to society's patriarchal obligations, carrying the responsibility to search for "actividades que permitieran su realización dentro de la vida doméstica," they typically had their own *criadas* (maidservants) or *cocineras* (cooks) to assist them, as these kinds of "labores fueron transmitidas a las jóvenes indígenas y mestizas al servicio de las europeas" (Rey Alvarez 40).

In another scene within this *cuadro*, the women's vanity is unveiled through a sarcastic tone used by the narrator. While preparing for the trip, the young women pack their "essentials," consisting of clothing for church – "para ir a misa el domingo" – and other items like "el espejo, los peines, un tarro de pomada y otras chucherías mujeriles: 'el fiambre de mis señoritas,' como decía la cocinera" (*Museo I*, 268). Groot's portrayal of women shows them preoccupied with their physical appearance and other "womanly" concerns, or "chucherías mujeriles."



Figure 4.1. José Manuel Groot. *Señora preparando alimentos* (n.d.). Watercolor. Biblioteca Luis Ángel Arango (Castro Carvajal, Beatriz, ed. *Historia de la vida cotidiana en Colombia*. Bogotá Editorial Norma, 1996).

The second part of Groot's cuadro is titled "Nos quedamos en Chipaque," Groot highlights the unacceptable behavior exhibited by the women during the trip. In this sketch, the family encounters a series of mishaps after traveling by horse before they reach a midway stop in the town of Chipaque before reaching Ubaque (Sánchez Cabra, "Antiguo" 334).<sup>110</sup> At this point, Groot centers the story on the actions exhibited by the young women, subtly mocking the lack of proper etiquette they exhibit throughout this trip, portraying them as troublesome, "haciendo estorbo y tertuliano muy divertidamente" (*Museo* I, 276). They are also shown as trivial, distracted, and burdensome for not being cooperative, submissive, and obedient (as per the patriarchal standard).

The decadence of the young women's behavior at the end of the story is mentioned by Groot in an ironic tone. When pictured outside the realms of their Bogotá home, Groot notices they act differently from their customary (and obligatory) prudish and proper ways. He remarks, "y era cosa que me hacía mucha gracia verlas comer aquel cordero pascual con los deditos llenos de manteca, después de ser tan remilgadas en su casa," implying that they disregarded the obligatory social norms of propriety and etiquette (*Museo* I, 273). Therefore, the message conveyed by Groot's sarcastic tone about this criticism of the "improper" behavior exhibited by these young women throughout this *cuadro* is worthy of attention.

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<sup>110</sup> According to Efraín Sánchez Cabra, "las familias de Bogotá llegaban a veranear a Ubaque, y a Chiquinquirá llegaban cada año no menos de 30,000 peregrinos procedentes de los cuatro puntos cardinales de la nación. Viajar era un evento extraordinario, ajeno a la vida cotidiana del ciudadano común" (Sánchez Cabra, "Antiguo" 334). He also remarks how, "No para nada 'El Mosaico,' colección de muchas de las mejores producciones de la literatura nacional del siglo XIX, llevaba el subtítulo de 'Museo de cuadros de costumbres, variedades y viajes'" (Sánchez Cabra, "Antiguo" 334–335).

This *cuadro* also marks a critical point regarding the Conservative ideology of Groot and like-minded *costumbristas*, focusing on the family unit as a symbol of national strength. In Colombia, like in many Latin American nations that were founded on Conservative and Catholic moral principles, “la unidad familiar” was the base for “los valores que infundía el catolicismo y que eran necesarios para garantizar la vida moral y trabajadora del pueblo” (Arias Vanegas 45).<sup>111</sup> At the moral and social core of the *pueblo nacional*, the family was considered the nucleus of the nation as it represented the foremost social institution that was sacred and respected as “la base de la sociedad colombiana,” especially since the “espacio doméstico era el lugar indicado para establecer costumbres, comportamientos éticos y religiosos rígidos y austeros” (Reyes and González 214).

On the whole, *costumbristas* like Caicedo Rojas understood that the depictions and attitudes towards Colombian women of the nineteenth century were placed under a magnifying glass. This classification of women would eventually prejudice women themselves, as they were criticized and judged on their external and internal attributes, thus condoning and marginalizing them when they did not adhere to nineteenth-century notions of decorum and propriety, consistent with the patriarchal burdens imposed on society.

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<sup>111</sup> Strongly influenced by Conservative norms and Catholic dogmas, “El pueblo nacional deseado era uno que estuviese ordenado en torno a familias trabajadoras, fecundas, decentes, patriotas y que fuesen ámbitos de instrucción moral...La unidad familiar era la base del control poblacional” (Arias Vanegas 45). For further reading on this topic, see Catalina Reyes and Lina Marcela González, “La vida doméstica en las ciudades republicanas,” *Historia de la vida cotidiana en Colombia*, edited by Beatriz Castro Carvajal. Editorial Norma, 1996, pp. 205–240.

“Las criadas de Bogotá” (Caicedo Rojas) | *Las criadas* (Torres Méndez)

Similar to Groot’s depiction of women absorbed in domestic duties, those described by another *costumbrista*, José Caicedo Rojas (1816-1898),<sup>112</sup> describe humble servants undertaking day-to-day household chores. From a Conservative standpoint, nineteenth-century women were typically constrained to the domestic responsibilities as per the early Victorian label of women of “angels of the house,” based on a male-gaze directive of women as submissive helpers in the private sphere (Shabliy et al. 4).<sup>113</sup> Colombian society had separate roles for the house servants, as seen in the *cuadro* “Las criadas de Bogotá” by Caicedo Rojas, originally included in the newspaper titled *Biblioteca de Señoritas* (first issue, dated March 6, 1858, and signed under the pseudonym “Celta”) (Martínez Pinzón, *Museo II*, 112n12). The various categories of female housemaids, or *criadas*, are described under the ideal mold for a nineteenth-century society.

In the wake of the scientific trends, Caicedo Rojas labels the traditional nineteenth-century local housemaids as if cataloging women as a distinct species.<sup>114</sup> During this time,

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<sup>112</sup> Over the course of his life, Colombian *costumbrista* José Caicedo Rojas changed political ideological affiliations, previously identified as a radical Liberal he later turned to the Conservative party. It is not clear when this transition occurred, as scholars have identified him as both. In one instance, his biographical details are listed as “Masón, escritor liberal y músico. Aparte de cuadros de costumbres, crítica de ópera y novelas históricas, escribió, a cuatro manos con el biografiado, las memorias del pintor José María Espinosa (1796-1883)” (Martínez Pinzón, *Museo I*, 51n2). In another instance, he is mentioned as a Conservative (similar to José María Samper): “algunos conservadores, como José Caicedo Rojas, uno de los fundadores de la conferencia de San Vicente de Paúl en Bogotá...” (Loaiza Cano, *Sociabilidad* ch 2.5.3).

<sup>113</sup> For an international perspective on women’s human rights, as explored in nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century literature, refer to Elena V. Shabliy et al., editors, *Women’s Human Rights in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture*. Lexington Books, 2020.

<sup>114</sup> This trend was quite common among many *costumbrista* writers and artists, following the scientific advances of the nineteenth century, especially in many works by Groot and his contemporaries (refer to chapter three).



the *costumbristas* had a desire to classify everything into *escenas y tipos* (Butler 82-84),<sup>115</sup> which became prevalent in “el género de costumbres cuya esencia es su carácter descriptivo, y en este caso con mayor razón teniendo en cuenta que su relato era parte de una empresa científica” (Gaona Rico 51).

The first type of *criada* is so involved in “su ministerio doméstico,” limiting her from participating in other extraneous activities, like “ir a misa...o al mercado los viernes,” as those additional chores like going to church or the marketplace are outside her responsibility. This typical *criada* had to be “aseada y pulcra,” extremely clean and orderly, with a certain “aire distinguido y de desenfado adquirido con el roce de la buena sociedad” (*Museo de cuadros IV*, 75). It implied fulfilling their role under patriarchal and religious expectations of being submissive, diligent, and virtuous. She is categorized as “como la subsecretaria, procuradora y delegataria” that, when given a chance to talk, “habla de Europa, aunque al oído” (75), as if to imply that she sheepishly discusses topics outside of the home with caution. Nevertheless, this type of handmaiden had acquired mannerisms by working for an upper-class family, like the woman in Torres Mendez’s painting, *Criada indígena* (Figure 4.2), who is shown to be diligently cleaning the floor with a broom, with her gaze down at the floor. As an artistic technique, the pencil drawings by Torres Méndez are particularly unique as they capture the essence of these social types in a direct yet straightforward manner. In fact, “[e]l dibujo de Torres Méndez es nítido...sus obras se caractericen por cierta tersura y un tono directo que contribuyen a realzar su valor descriptivo” (Sánchez Cabra, “Ramón Torres” 23).

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<sup>115</sup> Scientific trends influenced *costumbristas* in the nineteenth century to classify their stories into scenes and types. See Oscar Franklim Gaona Rico, *Noticias iluminadas: arte e identidad en el siglo XIX*. Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá, Fundación Gilberto Alzate Avendaño, 2011.

As illustrated, Caicedo Rojas highlights the different ranks of the *criadas*' servanthood, such as housemaids hired to assist in the kitchen, serve as nurses, and take care of the family children, among other humble tasks. Moreover, *cuadros* such as these exemplified the selfless image of the *criada*, "que nacían, vivían y morían en el hogar doméstico de sus protectores, y apegadas a él como el bejuco a la encina" (*Museo de cuadros* IV, 74). The simile in this example pinpoints the visual image created through a verbal description: the author compares this humble female servant to a wild vine that lives off an oak tree, "como el bejuco a la encina," as the *criada* is forced to live as a parasite for a certain family to be able to survive in this nineteenth-century context. This example demonstrates the marginalization and injustice towards women of mixed races, restricted to the boundaries of "el hogar doméstico" in nineteenth-century Colombia (74).

The second type of maid is the *flotante*, who carries out important roles assigned to them within the limits of the home: "cocinan, barren, almidonan y planchan la ropa" (*Museo de cuadros* IV, 75). This kind of maid carries the weight of the domestic work, as they are defined as the class "que lleva, o debía llevar, el peso de la casa; ellas son las que hacen mandados" (75). As indicated by her name *flotante*, this servant changes employers often and as a result "acumulan un buen caudal de noticias y conocimientos prácticos que se comunican unas a otras, y que circulan de casa en casa en forma de historias, anécdotas y relaciones" and is interested only in accumulating money and sharing news and bits of practical resources with other *criadas* (*Museo de cuadros* IV, 75).

For instance, the visuals reflect the description of the *criada*'s character and physical appearance, as the author emphasizes their customary attire. These women generally appear to be barefoot and are dressed simply, "descalzas de pie y pierna, llevan

mantilla de paño, y los domingos sombrero de jipijapa con vistosas y anchas cintas de colores” (*Museo de cuadros IV*, 75).<sup>116</sup> Nevertheless, if they exhibit good character and have a good physical appearance, then they are proven to be trustworthy, especially if they are “buena de cuerpo y alma”; this way, the lady of the household can rely on her maid to complete the burdensome domestic chores: “la señora descansa en ella como su brazo derecho, o su *alter ego*” (*Museo de cuadros IV*, 75). Still, these female servants are also marked negatively by their local slang or regionalism, described as a unique “jerga, entre culta y bárbara” (76). Caicedo Rojas disapproves, claiming they “estropean pasablemente la lengua castellana,” making up words or misusing them in the wrong context (75). For instance, when describing the condition of certain family members who had become ill, the servant erroneously says, “Ha estado *disputando* sangre,” and “ha estado enfermo con una *ilusión*” (*Museo de cuadros IV*, 76).

The third type of *criadas* serve as *attachées* or substitutes for upper-class households or more inferior ones, who are always filthy “llenas de mugre,” wearing a faded petticoat, “el delantal es de cañamazo, y las enaguas, aunque de zaraza, no revelan el color ni la pinta que tuvieron en un tiempo” (76). Their main roles could include being “amas de leche” or “secretarias de las cocineras,” serving as nurses and as cooks, and taking on basic tasks around the kitchen and home (*Museo de cuadros IV*, 76). These classifications

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<sup>116</sup> This *cuadro* by José Caicedo Rojas includes a special footnote made within the publication of the *Museo de cuadros de costumbres* regarding the eventual changes to the traditional attire that was typically worn by these servant women, adding the following commentary: “Ya la estampa de la criada flotante, o sea de 2<sup>a</sup> clase, ha cambiado sustancialmente: ahora andan descalzas de piernas; pero forradas de pie, el que aprisionan en cárcel de cuero y suela; o en cachupina ajustada pero con chirriaderas y tacón claveteado, como diciendo a su paso: «aquí va todo esto». Los sombreritos antioqueños han sido suprimidos por lo que cubren; pues en los tiempos que andamos, las criadas de tono quieren andar descubiertas y con la cola arrastrando” (*Museo de cuadros IV*, 78).

followed the scientific dogmas of categorizing women based on their outward appearance, race, and clothing as if they were some kind of flora or fauna (López Rodríguez 157-159).

At the bottom of the servant hierarchy was the fourth type of *criadas*, called “chinas,” and these were the most marginalized, “ocupan el más bajo escalón en la jerarquía servil” (76). In fact, as evidenced in the *cuadros de costumbres*, nineteenth-century Colombian upper- and middle-class families often refer to their female servants and *criadas* as *chinas* who assist in a particular household in order to identify those young women of lower social status. In this context, the term *china* refers to subordinate women, marginalized for being of an inferior social rank, and many of them of a racial blend. As per the classification since the colonial era, “la china, en el sistema de castas colonial, designa la mezcla racial” (Martínez Pinzón, *Museo I*, 262n3). Caicedo Rojas describes them with derision and disgust, defining them as full of “mugre, desaseo y estupidez” (*Museo de cuadros IV*, 76). They are usually dressed in black attire, with hair that is described as messy, “semejante a la de Medusa, causa espanto y horror; tal es su desgreño” (76). These harsh, descriptive words evoke a strong picture of how these humble servants with dirty, untamable, dark hair, “crines negros e indomables,” were perceived. It also alludes to the racism and marginalization these women were subjected to in their society.

In “Las criadas de Bogotá,” Caicedo Rojas presents his perspective on the role of a *costumbrista* as “un observador alegre y desocupado,” comparable to the figure of the *flanêur* (*Museo de cuadros IV*, 74). “Nosotros,” he comments, referring to himself and other *costumbristas* as casual observers of every class type in society (who without the added skill of a writer of customs, could not possibly embark on this kind of art):

simples aficionados a estudiar y observar todas las clases de la sociedad, aunque sin las dotes necesarias para escritores de costumbres, apenas podremos ensayar en esta, como en otras materias, tal cual pincelada, a la ligera y con brocha gorda que pueda servir siquiera para llamar la atención de lo que con justicia pueden llamarse tales, hacia una clase tan notable de la sociedad en que vivimos” (*Museo de cuadros IV*, 74).

In other words, Caicedo Rojas’ appreciation of the unique skill of “escritores de costumbres” employs this method of *painting with words* which provides the necessary tools “para pintar este cuadro,” which is an essential component of the ekphrastic process mentioned in this study (*Museo de cuadros IV*, 77). As stated in the *cuadro*, “tal cual pincelada, a la ligera y con brocha gorda” (77), the writer/artist must be able to justly illustrate and classify the local customs and people. This is correlated to the ease with which an artist can effortlessly use the paintbrush to delineate the different classes of society.

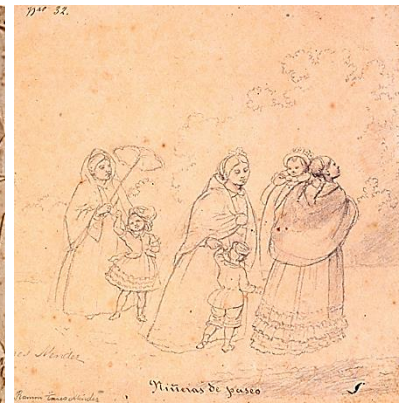


Figure 4.2. Ramón Torres Méndez. *Criada indígena* (n.d.). Graphite on paper. 22.5 x 25 cm. (Colección de Arte Banco de la República AP3078). (*left*)

Figure 4.3. Ramón Torres Méndez. *Niñeras de paseo* (n.d.). Pencil on paper. 22.1 x 21.1 cm. (Colección de Arte Banco de la República AP3018). (*right*)

“¿Quién es el más feliz de los mortales?” (Marroquín) | *Niñeras de paseo* (Torres Méndez)

Concerning the role of women, especially marginalized *criadas* that Groot and Caicedo Rojas have referenced in the writings above, another Conservative author also emphasizes the representation of women within the domestic realm, serving nineteenth-century families as house servants whose primary function is to take care of the family children. This kind of service is exemplified in José Manuel Marroquín’s *cuadro* titled, “¿Quién es el más feliz de los mortales?” (published in the sixteenth issue of *El Mosaico* on April 30, 1864). Set in a typical nineteenth-century Colombian household, *tertulia*, where people gathered to read stories and share news, the intriguing question proposed in the title is invoked at the start of the narrative. Marroquín proceeds to unveil who is the “mortal más feliz,” writing from a Conservative perspective on the irony of a servant woman’s role as being the *happiest* human being on the social ladder (*Museo* II, 3). This female caregiver or nurse was known as an *ama de leche* or *nodriza* for having the task of breastfeeding babies that were not her own in order to help the mother, who in this *cuadro* had suffered the unfortunate death of two prior sons.

Marroquín exemplifies this transformation with clothing as the most important item in the nineteenth century that signified one’s status in society. As the narrator suggests, “por medio de observaciones diarias” on first-hand experiences, the family chose Agustina to take this vital role as *nodriza* (*Museo* II, 4). Of Indigenous blood, this poor *campesina* transforms when stepping into the new household in the city from her native “tierra alta hasta la plaza de la capital” (*Museo* II, 5). The abrupt change from country to city life

signified a new challenge, yet “por más repentina que hubiera sido la transición de su antiguo modo de vivir al actual, Agustina se hizo sin esfuerzo alguno a las costumbres Bogotanas” (5). She then sees her reflection for the first time in a mirror, wearing new luxurious dresses; and this image astounds her:

Yo no sé si la india en los descansos de su juventud habría soñado con el lujo y saboreado la idea de verse algún día ostentosamente ataviada; pero era mujer, y...no le fue indiferente la transformación que en su vestimenta se obró...al mirarse por primera vez en uno de los espejos de la sala (*Museo* II, 5).

Certainly, a young Indigenous *nodriza* or *niñera* can transcend social status based on her proximity to the family’s children, and this situation has allowed her to experience freedom. Similar to Groot and Caicedo Rojas, this *cuadro* by Marroquín also delves into the importance of clothing, especially for women, when noting that – “pero era mujer” – as a way to resonate with readers’ the level of worth carried by women based on “su vestimenta” as well as the vanity of contemplating her reflection on the mirror. In that respect, the marginalization and oppression of these Indigenous women become blurred, given the essential duty they wield as caregivers and their assimilation to a higher class based on “el lujo” of newly acquired clothes. For Agustina, becoming the official servant of this new house meant that she could now forget her previous misery and end her captivity to the present social stigmas: “se olvidó de la miserable condición de que se la había sacado” (*Museo* II, 5). This example is probably why the author categorizes them as the “happiest” beings in society.

Agustina did, however, miss one component from her previous life as an indigenous *campesina*, as indicated by the narrator: “Haciale falta la chicha; ni pudiera ser de otro modo estando habituada a tomarla desde su más tierna infancia, y manifestó a mi cuñada su temor de que sin su bebida favorita se le mermase la leche o le sobreviniese alguna enfermedad” (5-6). Believing this was of upmost importance for Agustina’s well-being, the narrator’s in-law proceeded to seek out as much *chicha* as possible, “acudió a la tienda de ña María Chiquita, alta notabilidad arrabalera, que es precios al licor lo que Dent a los relojes, o Didot a la tipografía, o nuestro Ramón Torres a los retratos” (*Museo* II, 6). This final nod to the Colombian artist Ramón Torres Méndez is a homage to the reverence given to his works at the time.

The pencil drawing by Torres Méndez, *Niñeras de paseo* (Figure 4.3), helps visualize a scene of Colombian nurses walking together in a group with the children under their care. The simplicity of this illustration captures a glimpse of everyday life, delineating the ordinary essence of the women as the main focal point becomes their traditional attire. It also reflects a trend in *Costumbrismo* to define types purely based on the kinds of clothing used, which in the case of *niñeras* like the character of Agustina represented in Marroquín’s *cuadro*, her race was now an ambiguity given that working for this upper-class family allowed her to wear clothing for women of higher status. As noted in a study by Mercedes López Rodríguez, for Conservative *costumbristas*, clothing was a more meaningful way to appear as “whiter” in a society stirred by external and physical façades rooted in a prejudiced racial/social hierarchy (López Rodríguez 150-152). The women pictured in Torres Méndez’s drawing, liberally sauntering through the town, resemble how Agustina, a racially mixed *criada*, is now able to dress the part and join them.



Unable to have a good relationship with the house cook, the *nodriza* was fired after her first complaint. The author comically compares this to a political conflict, “lo que en el lenguaje de la política moderna se llama una cuestión de gabinete” (*Museo* II, 6). In a moment of rage, the man decides he can no longer stand this woman: “jura que no sufrirá más el despotismo y los caprichos de aquella mala pécora” (7). Nevertheless, his attempts fail as he feels remorse for his religious knowledge and decides to let go of his anger towards her. Given this freedom, Agustina proceeds to expand the limits. She has now changed in her character, class, and status: “se hizo coqueta y presumida... y se aficionó al lujo...[hasta] pasar de Agustina descalza a Agustina calzada” (7). Years after taking care of the baby Carlitos, it became impossible for the family to fire her once he had grown up, given that their child was “el muchacho más mimado de toda la cristiandad” (7). The author concludes the story of the female character Augustina, “la historia de todo el género a que ella pertenece,” by emphasizing that the happiest being in a society is none other than the nurse: “la criatura más feliz es una ama de leche, que era lo que quería demostrar” (*Museo* II, 8).

“Remigia o vicisitudes de las hijas de la alegría” (Groot) | *Pequeños mercaderes ambulantes de Bogotá* (Groot, Le Moyne)

Another *cuadro* by Groot, titled “Remigia o vicisitudes de las hijas de la alegría,”<sup>117</sup> portrays a sketch that describes the deterioration and dehumanization of a marginalized woman in society, manipulated by the desires of men, and regarded as an outcast for her lack of economic freedom, especially after turning down marriage requests.<sup>118</sup> Initially published in the newspaper *El Charivari Bogotano* in 1849, it was later included in Vergara y Vergara’s volume, *Museo de cuadros de costumbres*. Martínez Pinzón remarks that the phrase “hija de la alegría” referred to the French euphemism of *fille de joie*, meaning prostitute (*Museo* II, 49n1). Groot recounts the story of a once untainted and beautiful young woman named Remigia, who, from the beginning of this narration, is described in her darkest stage as “un ser tan horrible” and “infeliz” (*Museo* II, 49). Groot depicts her as “descarnada y amarilla, como de momia sepulcral...con la cara medio carcomida, voz gangosa y lastimera [que] nos pedía limosna” (49). Remigia is found in a later phase of her life as a destitute beggar on the street, unrecognizable and in an utterly dismal condition.

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<sup>117</sup> Maribel Berrío Moncada explains how this work by Groot, as well as similar ones published during this time, demonstrates an early stage of what resembles the start of national short stories, with writer Eugenio Díaz as the main initiator of this literary genre in Colombia (116). See Maribel Berrío Moncada, “El cuento colombiano: análisis de los criterios de selección en las historias y las antologías literarias,” *Estudios de Literatura Colombiana*, no. 26, Jan–June, 2010, pp. 109–130.

<sup>118</sup> In the edited book *Building Nineteenth-Century Latin America* (2009), Juan Carlos González Espitia delves into the topic of Latin America’s approach to the issue of prostitution within a male-dominated society. He explains that “prostitution in Colombia revealed that the masculine heads of the family – deemed by republican tradition to be exemplary, magnanimous mirrors of rectitude and devotion – were actually not living up to either of these attributes” (254). In fact, the incidence of this practice was common among men who typically abused and subjugated the *criadas* or housemaids, especially the *campesinas* from the regions of Boyacá and Cundinamarca (Acree and González Espitia, *Building* 254).

The narrator tells us how he first met the character of Remigia selling wax matches in the streets. He comically uses this detail about her labor to poke fun at how she had not “ignited” any romantic sparks: “con nadie sacaba candela, a no ser con uno que otro chicotero que por encender su tabaco le hacía quemar inútilmente a la pobre muchachita un fósforo de prueba y después le decía que no ardía bien” (49-50). Since colonial times, “era mal visto el trabajo remunerado pues estaba en contra del concepto de feminidad” (Rey Alvarez 40). Hence, Remigia’s status as a street vendor already categorized her as a marginalized individual given her economic situation. In order to survive in this society, a nineteenth-century woman had minimal options: she could either hope to find a potential marriage that could improve her financial condition or look for work in limited places within the public sphere (risking her respect as a woman in society), which led her to unfortunate pressures within this male-dominated territory (Reyes and González 214-215).

Remigia later laments not marrying the wealthy artisan, a *cachaco*<sup>119</sup> from Bogotá: “¡...si yo hubiese tenido más juicio y no me hubiera creído lo de los cachacos!” (*Museo* II, 54). Her realization comes full circle when she sees the life that could have been hers upon entering the home of the man that once had proposed marriage to her, who was now “casado con una muchacha todavía más pobre de lo que estaba Remigia cuando lo despreció por las ofertas de paragüitas, sayas y maroma” (*Museo* II, 54). Years after falling into prostitution, “Como la miseria la lanzó a la más baja prostitución, las enfermedades la acabaron de rematar,” she was so ill that had no choice but to stand in the streets and beg, “a pedir limosna” (*Museo* II, 54). Although the female protagonist of Groot’s *cuadro* is

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<sup>119</sup> In simple terms, *cachaco* or *cachaca* is used to describe a young person from Bogotá. It is exemplified in a *cuadro* titled, “Cachaco” written by Ignacio Gutiérrez Vergara, who was notably influenced by Larra and Mesonero Romanos (Martínez Pinzón, *Museo* I, XLn48).

adorned with descriptions emphasizing her journey into blooming juvenile beauty, delicacy, and polished style, her circumstances begin to take a toll on her appearance over time. Through a series of unfortunate events, Remigia refuses to marry one of the artisans who proposes to her. Consequently, after experiencing extreme poverty, she resorts to working as a prostitute. The emphasis on detailing her physical attributes is based on a nineteenth-century male gaze labeling women's desirability, and to showcase this change, Groot shows how Remigia lost the "whiteness" of her skin at the end (Lopez Rodríguez 146, 158).

As did many of the *costumbristas* of his time, Groot emphasizes the role of clothing and physical appearance. For instance, Groot illustrates aspects of female physical beauty and sense of fashion, particularly the appearance of the protagonist as a young teenage girl: "Llegó Remigia a los quince años y empezó a desarrollarse en su físico lo que los franceses llamaban la *beauté du diable*, que es aquella edad en que hasta las feas parecen bien" (50-51). As Remigia came of age, her attire and physical attributes were praised based on the current perception of beauty and aesthetics. However, Groot notes how the men of society were fascinated by her beauty but slowly began defiling her character. In effect, Groot describes Remigia's youthful appearance as if it were a portrait, so flawlessly drawn, emphasizing a varied palette of colors:

Ya rayaba en los dieciséis...ya estaba grande, de talle esbelto, de un color blanco muy despercudido, con sus ligeros frescores carminados en las mejillas; sus labios de coral, frescos como el botón de rosa que empieza a abrirse, dejaban ver con una graciosa sonrisa dos hileras de dientes parejos y tan blancos como la porcelana...Su pelo castaño y fino, su cuello

torneado, sus manos blancas, y bien hechas; en fin, a todas estas bellezas daba realce el aire y la frescura juvenil, agregándose el sencillo adorno que usaba con tanto gusto, de ese gusto que es instintivo y natural en algunas muchachas bonitas, que cualquier cosa que se pongan les ríe (Groot, *Museo* II, 50-51).

In this excerpt, Groot's artistic touch through the vibrant use of colors is particularly noteworthy, from the porcelain white color of Remigia's teeth and skin to the faint peachy coral blushing her cheeks and lips, which he compares to a blossoming rosebud. Among the elite, the French and European beauty standards were very present in nineteenth-century Latin America, as Groot alludes to the character's beauty in that stage of *beauté du diable* of youthful teenage years and the influenced mindset of perceiving white skin color as the ideal (Garrido 135-136).



Figure 4.4. José Manuel Groot / Auguste Le Moyne (attributed). *Pequeños mercaderes ambulantes de Bogotá / Petits marchands ambulants de Bogotá* (ca. 1835). Watercolor on paper. 18.4 x 27.5 cm. (Museo Nacional de Colombia 5504). (Ortiz Cardona 10).

Groot's painting, *Pequeños mercaderes ambulantes de Bogotá* (ca. 1835), attributed to French artist August Le Moyne (Figure 4.4), displays a nineteenth-century scene of a woman selling objects on the streets of Bogotá. Adjacent to the street vendor with the light-colored *ruana*, the main focus of this canvas is on the woman wearing a traditional straw hat and dress next to a wooden umbrella. She is sitting on the sidewalk with a couple of household items, including the likely boxes of wax matches on the left side and other objects like knives, scissors, and a mirror shown on the right. This painting creates an impression comparable to the character of Remigia, so intricately described by Groot. His observation in the textual description highlights the ethereal posture and modesty of Remigia's appearance, as he notes the shape of her forehead and other physical traits explicitly when *physiognomy* was still a popular obsession in the nineteenth century (López Rodríguez 159, 165):

Su frente hermosa se apoyaba sobre un par de cejas oscuras, sin ser eternamente negras, que parecían pintadas y daban un ligero sombrero a sus ojos lánguidos y al mismo tiempo brillantes como dos luceros, de color un poco garzo; su nariz acordonada y en una proporción divina, completaba un conjunto encantador en aquel rostro tan bien ovalado...Remigia andaba regularmente con un camisoncito sencillo de zaraza oscura o de color medio, su mantilla de paño negro y sombrero de paja con cinta ancha.  
(Groot, *Museo II*, 50-51)

In this excerpt, a darker color range is accentuated in contrast to the brightness of her light-colored eyes, “como dos luceros, de color un poco garzo,” to the dark, captivating eyebrows framing her face that he describes like a painting, “parecían pintadas” (50). The

symmetrical (“proporción divina”) of her nose, the oval shape of her face, and her “frente hermosa” (50) confirm the nineteenth-century notion of *physiologies* and natural traits that would define a person’s moral character (Soriano Salkjelsvik and Martínez Pinzón, *Revisitar* 18-19).

Although Remigia was initially depicted as a humble and heavenly figure (emphasizing her angelic beauty and the whiteness of skin and other physical attributes), her circumstances and ill fate altered the trajectory of her life. Evidencing the downfall of her character, she is shown as a beggar on the verge of death, having lost the white color of her skin, recolored as “amarilla, como de momia sepulcral” (*Museo* II, 49). The contrasts of colors in this *cuadro* are vital as they exemplify the transition from an angelic figure to a dark/sinful “Eve.” At the same time, it is clear that her sublime beauty transcended even the simplicity of her traditional attire “de zarza oscura o de color medio,” her “mantilla de paño negro,” and a simple straw hat “con cinta ancha” (*Museo* II, 51).

The references to contrasting colors from white to black also showcase an essential aspect regarding the role of color in the verbal and visual representations at the time. Acting as a microcosm of the nation, the figure of this woman serves as a reflection of the nation's state prior to the abuse, violence, and corruption brought through the incessant political civil wars. Groot’s *cuadro* can be taken to allude to a more significant issue and criticism of his present society. In particular, the description of this (white and desirable) woman in her youth and prime years as she physically and morally descends to the gradual, unfortunate (dark and decayed) downfall and corruption into prostitution could signify an important message of the greater societal downfall with its brutal political difficulties. Hence, these characteristics can signify Groot’s view of Colombia in the mid-nineteenth

century amidst the violent civil wars as an allusion to the decadence that results from political corruption.

Moreover, Groot's predisposed notion of beauty in these descriptions, especially in signaling out the "whiteness" of the woman, indicates how social hierarchies based on skin color and lineage were instilled in the European mentality of "whitening" the nation based on one's skin color. On this topic, Mercedes López Rodríguez offers an interesting analysis of how Colombian society of this period interpreted "whiteness" (159). For instance, she argues that the "whiteness" of a person in Colombian nineteenth-century society was tied to ambiguous levels of status, race, and even clothing (Lopez Rodríguez 159-160). In fact, clothing was also used to educate others on identifying individuals of lower rank in the community (and likely regarded as non-white). Against this view,<sup>120</sup> Conservatives like Diaz (and Groot) showcase examples that counteract this by presenting "white" characters as women who are dressed in the attire of the lower social ranks, as rural campesinas, even though their clothing signified the opposite of the Liberal elites. Initially portrayed as a "white" youth despite the clothing she uses and her social rank as a street vendor, Groot's character of Remigia parallels the Conservatives' approach against the Liberal progressive classifications of the national races (López Rodríguez 159-162; Martínez, *El nacionalismo* 192-193).<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Mercedes López Rodríguez reveals the different approaches to "whitiness," by illustrating the perspective of Colombian writers Manuel Ancízar (Liberal) and Eugenio Díaz (Conservative). In the Liberal view, the elite saw miscegenation as the preferred method for gradually converting society's ethnic groups towards achieving a lighter skin color, even though they are not regarded as being fully white: "desde una noción flexible de raza, ve en ellos la progresiva marcha hacia la blancura como producto del mestizaje" (López Rodríguez 147).

<sup>121</sup> In particular, López Rodríguez employs that Diaz's main character in *Bruna, la carbonera* (1879) illustrates how "la belleza de la protagonista campesina aparece frecuentemente resaltada, a pesar de su



Written with a didactic motive, as was customary in various works of *Costumbrismo*, Groot reveals his intent behind this *cuadro*: “Voy a contarle la historia de esta infeliz, porque son dignas de observarse las vicisitudes de las hijas de la alegría, por el escarmiento que de ello pueda resultar” (*Museo* I, 49). He unveils to his readers the unfortunate downfall of a woman’s life, from her years of naiveté and youthful innocence to her ultimate shame as an outcast of society after men took advantage of her.

In the end, Groot reiterates the moral of the story, concluding with the same dialogue that the narrator began with an old friend walking along the streets where they encountered Remigia in her final (and disgraceful) stage of life. Although initially it would seem like Groot is reproaching women who chose this kind of lifestyle, “y mira ahí *la carrera que recorren casi todas las mujeres que se entregan a la prostitución*” (54), he is quick to assert that the shame should fall on the men who prey on poor women like Remigia, “no tienen tanto ellas la culpa, sino esos hombres inmorales que las seducen desde la más tierna edad...” (*Museo* II, 54). The blame is now placed on the men of society and the current nineteenth-century pressures experienced by women at the time, subjugated by immoral men who seduce young women at a very vulnerable stage in their lives.

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pobreza, su oficio y sus vestidos indígenas. Su hermosura llega incluso a causarle problemas cuando un blanco de la ciudad...intenta primero seducirla y luego secuestrarla" (Lopez Rodríguez 160). Similarly, Groot's character, Remigia, experiences a similar downfall after rejecting the marriage proposal as a youth, becoming a downcast of society, losing not only her beauty but also the “whiteness” of her skin as a consequence.

### C. The Portrayal of Marginalized Identities: Ethnic Groups in Nineteenth-Century Colombian *Costumbrismo*

#### Depictions of the Marginalized Other in the Colombian *Cuadros*

In the ambition to create a national identity through the canvas of *Costumbrismo*, nineteenth-century artists and writers deviated in their portrayals of the marginalized “Other.” After mapping Colombia’s regional landmarks, the complexities of the regional territory also revealed the unique variety of groups of people representing the nation (Arias Vanegas 106, 112). Given the *costumbristas*’ ideological polarities at the time, the sketches for the marginalized “faces” of the nation were characterized by diverse motives. In José María Samper’s *artículo de costumbres* “Literatura fósil” from 1864, addressed to the writers of *El Mosaico* as a criticism of the current state of national literature, he makes the following proclamation to illustrate his argument, which hints at the Liberal perspective about the current times:

¡Pobre América! A virtud de dolorosas pruebas, a fuerza de revoluciones,  
has logrado emancipar:

A los indígenas, de su *tributo*;

a los esclavos, de su *cadena*... (*Museo* II, 171)

In effect, as noted by Martínez Pinzón, these words speak of the Liberal ideals endorsed by Samper and the likeminded elite of the mid-nineteenth century (Martínez Pinzón, *Museo* II, 171n5). At the same time, Samper contrasts this liberation as a plea for Colombian national literature also to be freed, recalling the arduous revolutionary conflicts involving Indigenous groups and enslaved Black people. However, novel issues arose on how to

represent the socio-ethnic image of the emerging nation – primarily through the political lens presented in *costumbrista* literature and art.

The ideological mindset of the nineteenth-century Colombian elite, like in many other nations in Latin America,<sup>122</sup> tended to adhere to Eurocentric perceptions of race, class, and family lineage, “sin perder de vista el vínculo con Europa tras el rompimiento con España” (Soriano Salkjelsvik and Martínez Pinzón, *Revisitar* 9-10; Appelbaum, “Whitening” 633). The fascination with progress and “civilization,” as part of the Liberal reforms included strong support for the immigration of (white) Europeans to inhabit and merge with the population in order to achieve a nationwide “whitening”<sup>123</sup> of its inhabitants, assuming that changing the color of a nation would lead them one step closer towards appearing (and acting) more civilized despite the fact that the socio-ethnic confrontations and persistent racial divide that Latin American countries exhibited had existed since the colonial period (Arias Vanegas 30, 95-96; Appelbaum, “Whitening” 633-635).

Characterized by figures that tried to showcase the ethnographic variety of Colombia, the literature and visual arts of the time, particularly the *cuadros de costumbres*

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<sup>122</sup> Scholars have explored the purpose of promoting European immigration in Latin American nations (like Brazil and Argentina) nations to approximate a progressive ideal, but this worked differently in Colombia, as regional elites looked for neighboring citizens to improve the racial demographic toward the European model (Appelbaum, “Whitening” 633-634).

<sup>123</sup> In other words, the elite “associated backwardness with Indianness and blackness” and “progress with European background and whiteness” (Appelbaum, “Whitening” 635). These prejudiced ideas of “whitening” the face of the nation in order to become more civilized was supported by Argentine Liberal politician and writer Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, supporting the ideals of French *physiologies* (Soriano Salkjelsvik and Martínez Pinzón, *Revisitar* 10). In Colombia, Liberals like José María Samper as well as Manuel Ancízar, leading figure of the *Comisión Corográfica*, also assumed a similar ideological perspective towards lightening the race through miscegenation, so that in this way, “existan mezclas raciales que produzcan sujetos cada vez más blancos” (López Rodríguez 165).

and the *costumbrista* paintings, played a crucial role in portraying race and cultural issues. As explained in *Revisitar el Costumbrismo* (2016), Mercedes López Rodríguez reveals how the Colombian Conservatives and Liberals of the nineteenth century disagreed over issues of race concerning hierarchical differences. As per the European progressive ideals, the Colombian elite contended with the inequitable agenda of “whitening” the nation. The bipartisan elite demonstrated opposing approaches to dealing with this racial discrepancy, delineated through their writings. López Rodríguez sustains, through examples in Colombian *cuadros de costumbres*, how Conservatives and Elites create pictorial “sketches” in different ways to inform, illustrate, and invite their readers to understand how to recognize racial distinctions in the nation based on their distinctive ideological motives (López Rodríguez 145-147).

The exploration of these two opposing visions makes evident the social tensions which were based on the notion of whiteness and debated in the early republic, and the role that *Costumbrismo* played as the scene of this debate (López Rodríguez 147). On the one hand, Liberal Ancizar, “desde una noción flexible de raza, ve en ellos la progresiva marcha hacia la blancura como producto del mestizaje” (147). On the other hand, Conservative Díaz, “desde una noción de raza mucho más fija, intenta mostrar que los campesinos andinos han sido y serán blancos racialmente” (146-147). Furthermore, Frédéric Martínez has distinguished the two-fold didactic purpose of this genre – mainly in the work by Conservative *costumbristas* – that promoted their defense of traditional principles and reacted against the Liberal reforms and norms (Martínez, “El nacionalismo” 192; López Rodríguez 148n6).

According to Nancy Appelbaum, in her article “Whitening the Region,”<sup>124</sup> Colombians “created an interregional geography of race and status that privileged certain places and peoples with the nation as white, modern, and progressive while denigrating others as backward and inferior” (632). In the endeavor to create a diversified yet collective national identity, in the midst of ongoing political civil wars, the issue of race was one of the primary challenges that came as a result of opposing ideological points of view. These works reflect glimpses of local color, social practices, and everyday customs. More importantly, the goal of many Colombian *costumbristas* was to present various aspects of their culture and customs, evidencing “la variedad y la unidad poblacional de la nación” that included the different *tipos* that comprised the image of New Granada, “[b]ogas, artesanos, cosecheros, criadas, indios, negros, mestizos, campesinos y notables,” among others (Arias Vanegas 82).

On the issue of race in Colombia, Peter Wade, author of *Blackness and Race Mixture: The Dynamics of Racial Identity in Colombia* (1993), has established a correlation between region, race, and even climate, proposing a model that other scholars have studied as regards how regional and geographical location influences the ethnic spectrum (43, 57). This outlook generally showcases an inclination towards the superiority of white and *mestizo* races of European and Spanish lineage in the central and higher (colder) areas against the marginalization of those mainly residing in the lower (warmer) coastal regions

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<sup>124</sup> The regional and social constructs of racial hierarchy were intensified by political affiliations, as demonstrated in the nineteenth-century inhabitants of southwestern Cauca and northwestern Antioquia, which further complicated the racial divide in Colombia (Appelbaum, “Whitening” 644). Given the political alliances associated with region and race, there emerged a notion that “whitening of Antioquia implied the blackening of Cauca” (654). For more on this topic, see Nancy Appelbaum, “Whitening the Region: Caucaño Mediation and ‘Antioqueño Colonization’ in Nineteenth-Century Colombia,” *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 79, no. 4, 1999, pp. 631–667.

(such as the *bogas*), comprised of people mixed with Indigenous and African roots, classified as the Other (Appelbaum, “Whitening” 632; Wade, *Blackness* 43, 64). In essence, the “Andean highlands held the majority of whites and mestizos, the Amazon plains and jungles were dominated by Indians, and the coasts had a strong black element with not inconsiderable numbers of Indians” (Wade, *Blackness* 56). Nevertheless, as clarified by Appelbaum, Wade’s model does not include the “racial and ethnic differentiation among inhabitants of the Andean interior” (“Whitening” 632).

Also echoing Wade’s ideas, Martínez Pinzón in the article “Tránsitos por el Río Magdalena”<sup>125</sup> (2011), offers a study with (then-Liberal) José María Samper’s *costumbrista* works to showcase the racial distribution that originated with Francisco José de Caldas in 1808, particularly emphasizing how Caldas “organizó las razas en la geografía intertropical colombiana para leer el espacio nacional” (19). In this view, which goes hand in hand with “la organización teleológica de la modernidad,” where civilization is linked to the whites and *mestizos* found in the higher Andean regions – in better climate conditions – in contrast to “barbaric” *tierras calientes* with the *mulato* in the valleys and the Afro-indigenous *zambos*<sup>126</sup> inhabitants in the hot, unbearable tropical lowlands (where the *bogas* lived) (Martínez Pinzón, “El tránsito” 19n2).

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<sup>125</sup> For a study on these important figures along the Río Magdalena, evaluating the works of Colombian *Costumbrismo* from the Liberal perspective, refer to Felipe Martínez Pinzón, “Tránsitos por el río Magdalena: el boga, el blanco y las contradicciones del liberalismo colombiano de mediados del siglo XIX,” *Estudios de Literatura colombiana*, no. 29, July-Dec. 2011, pp. 17–41.

<sup>126</sup> As defined by Peter Wade in his book *Race and Ethnicity in Latin America* (2010), racial nomenclature could be reviewed as follows: “dozens of labels existed, but *mulato* was the term often used for someone of supposedly black-white mixture, *zambo* for black-indigenous mixture and *mestizo* for indigenous-white mixture. Not all *mestizos* were ‘mixed,’ however, since an indigenous person who disavowed his or her origins could attempt to ‘pass’ into this category” (Wade, *Race* 27).

In response to Wade's analysis, Julio Arias Vanegas reevaluates the place given to Indigenous and Afro-descendants in Colombian society as ostracized beings. He establishes that one cannot disregard other groups of people since the vast majority of *mestizos* and other mixed-race groups are constrained to the dichotomy of civilization and barbarism, as it did not consider exceptions (60). He also recognizes that “[i]ndios y negros eran marginales y no invisibles en el discurso nacional” (Arias Vanegas 52). In reinforcing the distinction of marginalized as “outcasts” it does not mean they were insignificant within this collection of national imagery, as considered in this study: “Marginales no en el sentido de insignificantes, sino de subordinados y contrarios al ideal,” entailing the “oposición aristocrática entre élite criolla blanca y pueblo bajo de indios y mestizos” (Arias Vanegas 29, 52).

As highlighted by this group of scholars, the customs originated from mixed-race identities labeled as the Other, which were appropriated by the elite to serve a specific function in sketching an ideological “mosaic” of national identity. This analysis focuses on some of the customs and practices of Colombian regional Indigenous people and villagers (*campesinos*), Afro-Indigenous *bogas* (formerly enslaved boatmen in coastal tropical regions along the Magdalena River, who were freed after 1851 with the abolition of slavery in Colombia), and the *cargueros* (carriers) of the Andean Mountain regions (Appelbaum, “Whitening” 634).<sup>127</sup> Through verbal-visual examples, I argue that the presentations of

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<sup>127</sup> One important distinction within the scope of what is considered as “Others” is explained by Peter Wade: “[Black] and indigenous people have both been characterised as Others, located in the liminal spaces of the nation, but they have fitted in different ways into what I call the structures of alterity. The apparent ‘invisibility’ of black people in Colombia, for example, has not been due to a simple process of discrimination – indigenous people have, if anything, suffered even greater discrimination – but due to the precise mode of their insertion into the structures of alterity” (*Race* 37).

Colombia's multi-ethnic and complex regional territory depicted in the *costumbrista* writings and illustrations of the elite not only reflected their political ideologies but impacted views on race.

Furthermore, as employed throughout the rest of this study, the *cuadros de costumbres* emphasized their connection to the role of color in the illustrations and the visual renderings concerning the role of clothing, or lack thereof (Rodríguez, "El ensamblaje visual" 56), in order to distinguish and inform readers<sup>128</sup> so that they could identify people according to their physical appearance and attire (Arias Vanegas 118-119, López Rodríguez 165). Another critical aspect of how marginalized beings were depicted was through the verbal descriptions that highlight the role of regionalism. Influenced by the classification used in the *Comisión Corográfica*, the *costumbristas'* assessment of the Indigenous and African people's local way of speech was regarded as worthy for some to be documented for highlighting the local color, but in some instances, as contemptible and labeled as barbaric, uncivilized, and even lazy (Restrepo 53).

As for the representation of Colombia's autochthonous popular culture, the contributions by the Other are crucial as some portrayals highlight the positive (or negative)

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<sup>128</sup> In her article published in *Revisitar el Costumbrismo* (2016), López Rodríguez expounds on the didactic purpose employed by *costumbristas* based on their ideological viewpoints. She emphasizes how "whiteness," miscegenation, and other racial and physical attributes could be (mis)interpreted by the traditional clothing worn by Andean *campesinos*, using examples from the works by Liberal Manuel Ancízar and Conservative Eugenio Díaz. She makes the distinction that Liberals (including José María Samper) understood *mestizo* as a person who is in the process of becoming "white" (López Rodríguez 165) but with distinctive indigenous traits, whereas the Conservatives insisted on the "whiteness" of the *campesinos*, regardless of their traditional attire that could indicate otherwise (this is also evidenced in some of Groot's works, particularly the character of Remigia showcased in the previous chapter). Hence, Conservatives would try to educate their readers to not be swayed by the physical appearance or clothing worn to determine an individual's race, as rural *campesinos* could also be considered as white, as demonstrated in their *cuadros de costumbres* (López Rodríguez 146-148).



aspects that bring out the folkloric “local color” (Arias Vanegas 41-42).<sup>129</sup> The verbal-visual collage of Colombian popular culture encompassed the (accepted) symbols of national music, dance, and other essential cultural elements like traditional attire, food, and local regionalisms (Arias Vanegas 42). Nevertheless, even in the *cuadros de costumbres* and the paintings, there is an ambiguity that conflicts with how the Liberal or Conservative elites choose to portray national culture. For Colombian elite writers like Vergara y Vergara or Samper, among others, “el estudio de lo popular se traducía en el estudio de lo propio nacional, de lo propio – también como propiedad – de la élite: en ese caso de *su* pueblo” (Arias Vanegas 41). In this sense, only certain aspects of the folkloric cultures that would help to reinforce an ideal image for the elite were embraced (41-42).

In this appropriation and mixture of popular cultures, the *bambuco*, for instance, “que algunos consideran la música nacional de Colombia, se originó en le región andina” (Restrepo 176). Hence, the writings and visuals from the perspective of the elite would often depict the musical sounds, instruments like the *triple*, and dance styles of the Other (as their own) in a way that would assimilate those to European cultures while minimizing the local rhythms of Andean Indigenous groups who popularized them. While Conservatives and Elites presented the rich variety of local traditions of *campesinos* in a

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<sup>129</sup> According to Julio Arias Vanegas, in *Nación y diferencia en el siglo XIX colombiano* (2005), there were certain limits to how the popular culture would be reflected in Colombian *cuadros de costumbres* and illustrations, essentially “framed” under the strict paradigm of the elite, appropriating the culture of the marginalized Other and establish it as its *own* (polished) version of national culture that would be comparable to their Spanish counterparts: “El estudio de las costumbres, al apropiarse de o más bien crear lo popular, lo limpiaba y lo ordenaba para generar lo propio compartido...el emergente folclor permitía depurar el pasado y las otras posibles herencias culturales, como la indígena o la negra, en torno a las herencias españolas. Las costumbres, al igual que la historia permitieron trazar un origen común con el español, que inscribía al pueblo granadino y colombiano en su tradición cultural” (Arias Vanegas 41-42).

positive light, they still wanted to “fine-tune” and “harmonize” it so that it would not be considered too far off from the European versions (Martínez Pinzón, *Museo I*, LVIII).

The contested political construction of Colombia’s national identity used imagery to align their view of their nation in a collective and colorful “mosaic” that highlighted some elements and suppressed others. For this study, I focus on three principal ways in how *costumbristas* portrayed the Other by (1) evaluating traditions that offer cultural enrichment, especially in the depiction of autochthonous local color (including local music like the *tiple* and national dance styles like *bambuco*) as representative of Colombia’s appropriated identity; and (2) classifying the purpose of *bogas* and *cargueros* as servants of the old-fashioned transportation system, helping the economic needs of the nation through demanding and challenging fluvial and land routes through the Magdalena River and the Andes mountain ranges (Arias Vanegas 88-89). It also addresses (3) the role of color in the pictorial representations as well as the specific clothing and regionalisms accentuated in the written *cuadros*.

In particular, the *cuadros* analyzed include Groot’s “Nos quedamos en Chipaque” and “Llegamos a Ubaque” (grouped under the main *cuadro*, “Nos fuimos a Ubaque”), José Caicedo Rojas’s “El tiple,” Manuel M. Madiedo’s “El boga de Magdalena,” José María Samper’s “De Honda a Cartagena,” and León Hinestrosa’s “Antiguo modo de viajar por el Quindío: Cuadro del Señor Ramón Torres.” In respective order, the visuals by Torres Méndez alluded or directly referenced in these *cuadros* are, *Ollero de Tocancipá*, *El tiple* and *Baile de campesinos*, in addition to *Champán en el Río Magdalena*, *Habitantes de las orillas del Magdalena*, and *Modo de viajar en la montaña de Quindío y Sonsón*.

This selected list of visuals and related cuadros de costumbres establishes a vital connection regarding the different modes of transportation prevalent around the mid-nineteenth century. This analysis places a magnifying glass on these emblematic figures, such as the *bogas* and the *cargueros*, and discusses another subject: the service of transportation. As was customary among these marginalized Indigenous and African “servants” of Colombia, their primary function can be summarized as providing transportation (especially for those of higher status in society). Even though the *bogas* and *cargueros* were praised for their strength as they helped the nation enable travel, trade, and communication throughout the dangerous topographical challenges of this land, they were still discriminated against and regarded as backward beings. At the end of the century, their service and strength began to fade, as “Latin American nations had acquired a veneer of progress,” given that the establishment of railroads and steamships, which “circulated commerce, ideas, and peoples...more readily and swiftly” (Bradford 7, 33; Arias Vanegas 101-102). Lastly, Gordillo Restrepo adds that despite the evident dissimilarities in culture, at least for the *costumbristas*, they all claimed and aspired to see in the future a Colombia with “[l]a misma idea de pueblo, caracterizado por la unidad de lengua, cultura, tradición, y raza” in order to become “un gran pueblo colombiano” (55).

“Nos quedamos en Chipaque” and “Llegamos a Ubaque” (Groot) | *Ollero de Tocancipá*  
(Torres Méndez)

As previously mentioned, artists and scientists practiced innovative artistic techniques during the *Expedición Botánica*. One visual style involved painting a landscape with “a man with his back towards the viewer in a contemplative attitude, a system which

also works as a topographical reference, in order to understand the enormity of that which is being portrayed” (qtd. in Uribe Hanabergh 127). González Aranda also explains that besides the topographical and ethnographical interest of artists following the scientific trail of the *Comisión Corográfica*, one of the main objectives was to reach European audiences and capture their attention through the portrayal of Colombia’s colorful and diverse emblems of popular culture, even if some form of exaggeration or caricature was needed to do so (*Manual* 234). Also, in relation to the racial, cultural, and environmental factors impacting the works of *Costumbrismo*, the “Comisión Corográfica es el esfuerzo más importante del siglo XIX en Colombia por racionalizar la diversidad racial, cultural y ambiental bajo los parámetros de liberalismo económico” (Martínez Pinzón, *Patricios* 207).

Hence, by reading the *cuadros de costumbres* in conjunction with relevant visual paintings, a social syntaxis is formed allowing for the display of everyday customs and human characters despite the lack of action in the plot of the *cuadro*. This verbal-visual configuration, then, conveys a powerful message: “una expresión estética de una óptica republicana, ya que se trata de una sintaxis articulada desde la inmanencia de la discursividad de los cuadros de costumbres para representar la realidad social” (Velayos 115-116).

Following this artistic trend, an example is found in Torres Méndez’s painting, *Ollero de Tocancipá* (Figure 4.5), showing the perspective of an *ollero* (an Indigenous or *mestizo* potter) from his backside. Many of the varied people groups in Colombia were represented in the written and visual *cuadros* in accordance with a particular task, service, or characteristic function they would provide for the nation. This, of course, was

contingent upon the type they represented based on the regional environment they were inhabiting, particularly that “representación del tejido social” so commonly witnessed in the subjective political dimensions found within this literary genre (Velayos 111).

The *ollero* depicted here carries an exaggerated pile of pottery accumulated on his back like a caricature, merging into the pottery so that he becomes part of the item he carries. Also, to embellish this visual, Torres Méndez sketched a small yet humorous detail of a rooster sitting comfortably on top of that enormous pile, on top of everything else the man is carrying. In this respect, “el *Ollero de Tocancipá*, compuesto con fino humor, siendo el verdadero personaje del cuadro el voluminoso fardo coronado graciosamente por un elegante gallo” (Sánchez Cabra, *Ramón Torres* 146).<sup>130</sup> Hence, the artist likely added this feature to illustrate a typical custom with some humor and curiosity, given the popular *costumbrista* adaptation to the technique, which “convierte al cuadro de costumbres en una caricatura” (González Aranda, *Manual* 234). Torres Méndez was known for exemplifying elements of *Costumbrismo* via satire in order to maximize his perspective on Colombian society.

When connecting the visual and verbal representations, in this case portraying the typical Colombian *olleros* (potters), it is vital to evaluate how Conservative *costumbristas* depicted these humble peasant workers. In his own style, Groot references *olleros* (potters) from Colombian rural regions in his *cuadro*, “Nos quedamos en Chipaque,” which is the continuation of a three-part series following the initial *cuadro*, “Nos fuimos a Ubaque” (explored in the previous chapter). In this three-part series, Groot takes his readers on a

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<sup>130</sup> For an in-depth study on the artistic repertoire and impact of Ramón Torres Méndez in Colombia during the nineteenth century, see Beatriz González Aranda, *Ramón Torres Méndez: Entre lo pintoresco y la picaresca*. Exilibris, 1985.

journey through the narration of a typical family from Bogotá that traveled together to different towns. Despite encountering some obstacles along the road, it leads them to interact with other social types within their society, in this case, giving Groot a chance to introduce and likewise represent the Other indigenous working class outside the boundaries of the city.

While searching for a place to rest in the middle of a *páramo* (moorland) in this town called Chipaque, as the main character recalls his encounter with hospitable indigenous *olleros* at a ranch that offered him a place to rest on a pile of hay while his family rested elsewhere: “Yo me fui largando a ver si encontraba abrigo en otro montón, aunque fuera de indios, y di con un rancho de olleros que me alojaron en un rincón donde estaba la paja, y allí (para qué he de decir otra cosa) dormí perfectamente” (*Museo I*, 274). This image of humble villagers offering the author a place to rest certainly presents them in a very positive light.



Figure 4.5. Ramón Torres Méndez. *Ollero de Tocancipá, Sabana de Bogotá* (1878). Lithography. 25.5 x 34.7 cm. (Ed. A. Delarue, París; Museo Nacional de Colombia 3775). (González Aranda, *Manual* 234).

Upon arriving to their destination, in the third part of this *cuadro* titled “Llegamos a Ubaque,” Groot describes how the family arrived after traveling by horse and foot through these rural regions: “Allí nos reunimos todos y nos dirigimos a la casa que estaba ahí no más en la plaza; la china y yo a pie, los demás a caballo” (Groot, *Museo I*, 276). In addition, the *cuadro* presents the following scene:

Mi tío y mi tía no hablaban de otra cosa que del chasco de las cargas, culpando a los arrieros que no les habían adivinado el itinerario. Por supuesto que todos convenían en ello, ponderaban la bestialidad de esa gente y lamentaban los trabajos de Chipaque (Groot, *Museo I*, 276).

In this passage, it becomes clear that although the narrator expresses a positive approach to those Indigenous workers, Groot does include opposition to this attitude and complaints from the uncle and aunt in this family. As expressed here, they complain about the challenges of the trip, with the mule-drivers (known as *arrieros*) carrying their bags along the way, blaming them for not doing their job efficiently. In this situation, the marginalization of the Indigenous workers is accentuated, referring to them as savages and backward people, “ponderaban la bestialidad de esa gente,” as they regretted their experience in the remote town of Chipaque (276).

In contrast to the discrimination described earlier, or at least as an intermediary between this harsh reality toward the treatment of Indigenous people, the narrator recalls his visit to Chipaque with gratefulness. While the family hosts a house party on their arrival, they are suddenly overwhelmed with the social pressures to have to serve and attend to their numerous guests. In this instance, he recalls the experience he had when he first encountered the poor *olleros*: “Mi tía renegaba en la despensa con las visitas tan largas. Yo

le decía: tía, prefiero una noche como la de Chipaque sin camas y sin fiambre a una llegada tan solemne como esta, con tanta visita” (*Museo* I, 277). While the comment is made in a sarcastic and humorous tone, as is so prevalent in Groot’s style, he does indeed reinforce his appreciation for the encounter he had with the *olleros* during their stay in the town of Chipaque, appreciating how they helped them spend the night at least with a roof over their head, even if they were “sin camas y sin fiambre” (277). He compares that experience to something more pleasant than being overwhelmed by the social demands of their house guests.

Sánchez Cabra further illuminates the context behind the struggle of travelers and peasants who had to travel along the varied geographical landscape of Colombia. One important aspect of traveling from town to town by foot, horse, mule, or even canoe, was the need to stay somewhere overnight in a desolate forest or dangerous uninhabited territory, particularly through the Llanos Orientales or even those “regiones escasamente pobladas, con comunicación fluvial ‘de sistema indígena,’” of less traveled zones (Sánchez Cabra, “Antiguo” 333). Considering the minimal number of *ventas* or local inns that would provide shelter and rest after a long trail, he notes that one main problem “consistía en hallar un techo para no dormir en campo raso” (Sánchez Cabra, “Antiguo” 330).

As a result, Groot’s *cuadro* highlighting the gratitude of his main character after finding a kind group of *campesinos* who allowed him to stay the night “en un rincón” of hay at the “rancho de olleros” certainly portrays them in a positive light. The anecdote is appreciated even more after considering the real impediments local travelers faced in those customary circumstances.



“El tiple” (Caicedo Rojas) | *El tiple* (Torres Méndez)

In creating national iconographies through cuadros published in Colombia during the nineteenth century, one local newspaper from Bogotá called *El Museo* captivated its subscribers by including illustrations connected with the textual *cuadros*. A note from the editorial team introducing the third issue in the first volume dated May 10, 1849, indicated the following: “Del grabado que acompaña al presente número...Dicho grabado corresponde al artículo de costumbres titulado *El Tiple* que también hallarán nuestros lectores en este número” (1).<sup>131</sup> Some years later, this cuadro appeared in Vergara y Vergara’s collection of *Museo de cuadros* (1866) with some modifications. The purpose of many Conservative *costumbristas* like Vergara y Vergara was to adhere to and honor Spanish family lineage and traditions, portraying Colombia as a sort of “heritage offshoot” of Spanish ancestry, even if the local customs in South America were marginally different. Nevertheless, there was still a desire to maintain this sense of “comunidad hispana en la que no hay jerarquías” (Martínez Pinzón, *Museo* I, LVII). In Vergara y Vergara’s Conservative gaze, the *bambuco* was essential – “el alma y el aire de la patria” – that had been appropriated from its native roots and assimilated into the idealized Spanish heritage and culture (*Historia* 614).

“El tiple” by José Caicedo Rojas is one of the most significant examples of a *cuadro de costumbres* examining a unique element of popular culture. After the initial publication in 1849 for *El Museo*, in conjunction with the visual created by Torres Méndez, “el dibujo

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<sup>131</sup> *El Museo*, Bogotá, vol. I, no. 3, 1 May 1849, p. 1 (Bermúdez 154; Vallejo Murcia et al. 162-163; Martínez Pinzón, *Museo* I, 51n1).

‘El Tiple,’ publicado como ilustración a un artículo literario, conserva independencia con respecto a éste,” with the same title and same year of publication (*El tiple*, 1849). As indicated by Sánchez Cabra, this example was one where the illustration was created for the written *cuadro* in mind and published in the same newspaper *El Pasatiempo*. Nevertheless, many of the paintings by Torres Méndez were usually employed in the opposite way, where the painting inspired the written work, as Torres Méndez had inspired many *costumbristas* with his artwork: “son varios los ejemplos de escritos inspirados en sus cuadros” (Sánchez Cabra, *Ramon Torres* 178).

In this respect, the vision behind his *Museo de cuadros* was challenged by some *cuadros* included in this anthology: “la compilación estriba en mostrar al pueblo colombiano como una variación del español sin importar si la cultura colombiana es derivativa o se halla en igualdad de condiciones con la española” (Martínez Pinzón, *Museo* I, LVII). Therefore, in depicting Colombia’s marginalized rural *campesinos* and their customs, writers like Caicedo Rojas challenged this notion of cultural parity with Spain that was emphasized so strongly by Vergara y Vergara and other like-minded Conservatives. Still, in the same *cuadro*, Caicedo Rojas recognizes that in the end, both of these cultures represented “nuestro pueblo” and were uniformly merged to justify the idea that both Colombians and Spanish people were part of the same lineage. In regards to this, Caicedo Rojas remarks:

Comparemos nuestro bambuco, nuestro torbellino, nuestra caña, con el fandango, las boleras y otros, y hallaremos muchos puntos de semejanza entre ellos; elegantes y poéticos éstos, groseros y prosaicos aquéllos: Pero hermanos lejitimos y descendientes de un común tronco” (*Museo* I, 53).

In this excerpt, the writer assumes that “nuestro bambuco,” among other typical dances, has been appropriated by the elite, popularized in the upper classes since the 1840s “junto con la llegada del romanticismo y el auge del liberalismo decimonónico” (Cruz González 225). Conservative elites highly valued this concept, especially Vergara y Vergara, who defended the hierarchical reverence bequeathed by preserving Spanish family lineage (Martínez Pinzón, “Ciudadano” ch. 6).

In a footnote inserted in his *Museo de cuadros de costumbres* from 1866, Vergara y Vergara attempted to redeem Caicedo Rojas’ dismal portrayal of the *tiple* through a positive light, claiming that it was a much more “civilized” instrument that had improved over time since the initial publication in 1849. Vergara y Vergara mediates in the following way:

En los diecisiete años que han trascurrido desde que se publicó este artículo en *El Museo* hasta hoy, el uso de la bandola se ha generalizado mucho en los Estados del interior, entre todas las clases de la sociedad. Este pequeño instrumento se ha civilizado, no solo en la forma, sino también en el empleo que de él se hace: tandas enteras de valeses alemanes, *polkas*, *mazurkas* y demás aires al orden del día se puntean en la bandola, acompañada de un tiple o guitarra, y no es raro que se haga uso de él para bailar, aun en salones de buena sociedad. No pueden negarse los grandes progresos de la civilización bandolera en nuestro país. (*Museo* I, 56).

Here, Vergara y Vergara’s purpose is to correct Caicedo Rojas’s criticism of this cultural practice. Motivated by his allure of assimilating Colombian practices with Spanish ones, he justifies to his readers that this rural custom has been “civilized” since the author wrote

this piece. He indicates that the *bandola* has been more commonly used in the provinces and urban centers alike, “entre todas las clases de la sociedad” (56), regardless of social status. In terms of the *tiple*, “este pequeño instrumento” (56), Vergara y Vergara also confirms that it has efficiently adapted to modern times and is used for playing European-styled music (not just local rhythms), including the *waltz* and *polkas*. To him, this serves as proof of a nation embracing its customs regardless of where they originated.

The role of clothing is a significant aspect depicted in the paintings by Torres Méndez. From *El tiple* (1849) to *Baile de campesinos* (1878), the differences in social classes are indicated by the type of clothing used. These images display the typical customs of New Granada’s rural peasants, enjoying a social activity, singing and dancing to the local rhythms. Figure 4.7 shows how Torres Méndez places the rural couple at the center of the canvas as the main focal point, with the light centered on them, and with the musicians on the left side, pictured using the *tiple* typically used to accompany the *bambuco* dance style. In particular, the peasant clothing worn by the woman includes the traditional “saya y mantellina de bayeta,” whereas the man is pictured wearing a colorful *ruana* with the “ubicuo sombrero de palma tejida” commonly worn at the time (Sánchez Cabra, *Ramón Torres* 134).

In *El tiple* (Figure 4.6), the men are also depicted wearing the traditional striped pants, the “calzón de manta rayada,” commonly associated with the rural *campesinos* (Sánchez Cabra, *Ramón Torres* 134). Additionally, given that clothing was used as an indicator of social classes, Conservatives would often portray *mestizos* in lighter skin colors, often portrayed as white, to teach and inform their audiences that people from the

interior did not necessarily have to be limited to darker skin color.<sup>132</sup> Torres Méndez masterfully captures this in his lithographs of everyday scenes emphasizing traditional attire and the autochthonous music, dance, and instruments of rural *campesinos*.



Figure 4.6. Ramón Torres Méndez. *El tiple* (1849). Lithography by Martínez y Hermano. (Biblioteca Digital de Bogotá 2077733).<sup>133</sup> (left)

Figure 4.7. Ramón Torres Méndez. *Baile de campesinos, Sabana de Bogotá* (1878). Lithography. 26 x 33 cm. (Museo Nacional de Colombia 3765; Torres Mendez, *Álbum de cuadros* 22). (right)

<sup>132</sup> Another lithography by Torres Méndez, titled *El bambuco* (ca. 1860), presents the same scene but from an urban setting with upper-class people dancing along to this traditional rhythm. In this case, the men dancing in *El bambuco* are pictured wearing the fashionable *capa española* (“una prenda de vestir ya en desuso en las décadas de los sesenta y setenta del siglo XIX en Colombia”), along with the classical black frock coat and neck tie, “levita y el corbatín, que emergen debajo de la capa como una prueba de que la civilización – la levita como traje del civilizador – no se opone a las tradiciones hispanas” (Martínez Pinzón, “Ciudadano” ch. 6). Unlike the paintings that highlight more traditional (rural) attire like the *ruana*, this visual stands out because it is reinforcing the Spanish lineage by means of clothing, showing that those of upper-class (urban) centers had also embraced the *bambuco* as a national dace with European-styled clothing.

<sup>133</sup> This painting’s original title is catalogued as *El tiple* (1849), but it also appears listed as follows: Ramón Torres Méndez, “Música popular. Indio bailando al compás del tiple y del alfandoque. Tipos y costumbres de Colombia,” Chiquinquirá (Boyacá, Colombia), 1849. Biblioteca Digital de Bogotá, <https://www.bibliotecadigitaldebogota.gov.co/resources/2077733/>.

This *cuadro* prompted a nationwide appreciation for this local sound, where “the tiple and the bandola began to be considered the foremost symbols of ‘national music’ in Nueva Granada, later Colombia” (Bermúdez 154).<sup>134</sup> Nevertheless, Caicedo Rojas’s approach to the popular musical instruments and regional dance styles highlighted the clash of cultures that certainly did not equate with the romanticized Spanish customs.

However, Vergara y Vergara’s *Museo de cuadros* reiterated the need for local Colombian customs to keep par with their European counterparts, claiming a figurative union. Indeed, Caicedo Roja’s depiction of these customs (despite their cultural differences) essentially justified how the Hispanic tradition connected with the European realm in order to inspire Colombia’s culture towards a more “civilized” and refined national music, dance, and cultural routine. In order to do this, however, “Vergara intervino el texto de Caicedo Rojas en 1866, el compilador del *Museo* intentaba representar, bajo un signo positivo, a diferencia de Caicedo Rojas, al tiple como un instrumento civilizado, pues es en él que se toca el bambuco, música nacionalizada por su generación” (Martínez Pinzón, *Museo* I, LVIII).

Due to his own talent and interests as a guitarist and musician, Caicedo Rojas unveils his knowledge about his interpretation of local Colombian popular culture that integrates Spanish and Indigenous (*mestizo*) roots. As portrayed in Figures 4.6 and 4.7, the author echoes the artist’s cultural emphasis on the musical instrument known as a *tiple* (a small guitar), with additional references to the music and dance style called *bambuco*

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<sup>134</sup> For more on the history of this musical instrument through iconographic analysis, refer to Egberto Bermúdez, “Music and Society in 19th-century Nueva Granada and Colombia: The *bandola* and its History Through Iconographic Sources (1850-1900),” *Ensayos: Historia y teoría del arte*, no. 21, Dec. 2011, pp. 151–180.

(which also is said to have African influences) and compares them to the classical Spanish guitar and esteemed European ballroom dances like the polka and the waltz. Although Caicedo Rojas initially depicts the *tiple* as a “degeneración grosera de la española guitarra,” and the local *bambuco* dance as “lo mismo que nuestros bailes lo son de los bailes de la Península” (*Museo I*, 53), he later vindicates some of his own culture to the Spanish one, recognizing how they both are “hermanos lejítimos y descendientes de un común tronco” (*Museo I*, 53). He recalls, for instance, that these old-fashioned guitars were still in use by the white aristocrats of Bogotá: “Aún se ven en algunas casas antiguas de Bogotá tiples de estos que llamaremos aristocráticos, y que en tiempos más felices han sido punteados por blancas y delicadas manos” (*Museo I*, 56). As if echoing Groot’s yearnings for the past found in “Costumbres de antaño,” the nostalgia for the picturesque, colonial times is also mimicked by his Conservative colleague.

Vergara y Vergara in his book *Historia de la literatura en Nueva Granada* (1867) also considered this popular dance style in light of the need to relate local culture with those customs originating in Spain. Regarding the *bambuco* he remarks: “Su danza es eternamente original’ su música es singular, y en fuerza de su mérito y de su poesía se ha convertido en música y danza nacional, no solo de las clases bajas sino aun de las altas, que no lo bailan en sus salones, pero que la consideran suya” (Vergara y Vergara, *Historia* 614). This Conservative view regarding popular culture was also accepted by the Liberals: “las élites liberales y conservadoras andinas empezaron a promover el bambuco como aire nacional, en contra de otros ritmos vistos como salvajes y racializados como ‘negros,’ tales como el currulao (mapalé)” (Martínez Pinzón, *Museo II*, 47n7).

Furthermore, the *artículo de costumbres* by José María Samper, “El bambuco” (1868), was published when he was shifting from his radical Liberal years and embracing a more conservative ideology. Given this, his approach towards the popular culture of the Indigenous and African people groups in New Granada was approached from a slightly different light. In the article he claims that the *bambuco* was indeed “nada más nacional, nada más patriótico que esta melodía que tiene por autores a todos los colombianos” and the “alma de nuestro pueblo hecha melodía” (qtd. in Wade, *Música* 65).

Yet, Samper’s Liberal tone is exemplified in one of his most recognized *cuadros*, “De Honda a Cartagena” (explored further in the next section). This text gives a glimpse into the marginalization of the African-rooted dances of Colombia and his strong dismissal of them over European ones. In this *cuadro*, he speaks on the representation of the popular dance called *currulao*, making the following observation:

El currulao es la danza típica que resume al boga y su familia, que revela toda la energía brutal del negro y el zambo de las costas septentrionales de Nueva Granada. Así, todo el mundo quiso contemplar la escena y excepto las señoras, cuyos ojos no eran adecuados para ver esa danza extravagante (Samper, *Museo de cuadros* III, 255).

In this excerpt, he exposes his perspective on this national “danza típica” associated with the marginalized people of his nation, the *bogas* (boatmen) and the inhabitants of the coastal lowlands of Colombia, who were the most marginalized in this society, which consisted of people mainly of African and Indigenous descent. In Samper’s perspective, their traditional dance of *currulao* was classified as shameful and extravagant, not worthy for the “señoras” to gaze upon this suggestive and improper dancing style, “cuyos ojos no



eran adecuados para ver esa dama extravagante” (*Museo* II, 255). This intolerant dismissal classifies the African-influenced dances as “exotic” and “extravagant,” evidencing Samper’s strong negative opinion of the Other.

In particular, Samper echoes Caldas’ 1808 notion of the hierarchical composition of race as dependent on the variables of region and climate, as these marginalized identities lived in the areas that were the farthest from the central urban hub of the capital of Bogotá (Arias Vanegas 90). Caldas’ view was grounded “[d]esde la perspectiva geográfica, climática, naturalista y económica,” that perpetrated the progressive ideals from a new angle, especially after the scientific projects of the *Comisión Corográfica*, where the local types and their customs were categorized in accordance to the region each people group represented based on the “ascenso y el descenso por las cordilleras, donde la variación climática, y de las actividades productivas determinaba la diferencia poblacional” (Arias Vanegas 89-90). In a final scene described in “El Tiple,” Caicedo Rojas even includes excerpts from some songs that exemplify the lyrics and themes of the *bambuco*.

“El boga de Magdalena” (Madiedo) | *Champán en el Río Magdalena* (Torres Méndez)

In 1840, Rufino Cuervo was the first to write a *cuadro de costumbres* describing the *bogas* (boatmen)<sup>135</sup> from the Magdalena River, putting the spotlight on “los tipos más

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<sup>135</sup> A significant aspect regarding the verbal and visual identification of the *bogas* has to do with the references made to the color of their skin. Manuel M. Madiedo’s *cuadro* mentions in multiple instances the *bogas* calling each other as “sambo” or “sambio viejo” (*zambo* is a mixed-race of indigenous and African blood) or even “negro de los demonios” (*Museo* I, 13, 10). As Malcolm Deas explains, “[t]hrough the laments of the *mulato* poet Candelario Obeso, perhaps through the habit of skipping those repetitive accounts of trouble with *bogas*, one had carelessly concluded that all *bogas* were black” (Deas, “El valor histórico” 22).

importantes que habitan la nación” for the fluvial transport of goods and people in New Granada (Arias Vanegas 101). Since then, various *costumbristas* have chosen to write about (and illustrate) this emblematic human type living along the coastal regions of Colombia. As explored in this section, the textual descriptions of the *bogas* include peculiar details regarding their character and lifestyle, highlighting their strength and service to move the *champanes* along the river. Conversely, the visual paintings give further insight into the life of a *boga* (101).

The portrayal in the Colombian newspaper titled *El Pasatiempo* (1851-1854) featured various works by Torres Mendez, which published some of his lithographs next to a *cuadro de costumbres* (Figure 4.9). One of his most esteemed paintings (Figure 4.8), titled *Champán en el Río Magdalena* (1860), was published originally with a *cuadro* written under the title “El boga de Magdalena” by Manuel M. Madiedo (1815-1888). A native of Cartagena, Madiedo was a Catholic Conservative intellectual like Torres Méndez, who featured regional and national themes in his works, and who later became “un político heterodoxo, novelista y uno de los primeros en introducir las ideas socialistas en Colombia” (Martínez Pinzón, *Museo I*, 9n2).

In this specific *cuadro*, Madiedo illustrates an exemplary aspect of the nation’s diversity, including the *bogas* as marginalized, uncivilized, yet strong individuals. The author carefully includes examples of the dialect of the inhabitants along the Magdalena

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However, this generalization of *bogas* as Black people was refuted in some of the paintings by foreign artists like Joseph Brown’s paintings illustrating the life of the *bogas*, depicting a diverse group of mixed races arduously rowing the *champán* along the Magdalena River. For an example, refer to Joseph Brown’s watercolor paintings titled, *Champán Drifting down the River Magdalena* (based on an original painting by J. M. Groot) or *Champán in the Magdalena* (ca. 1840) (Deas et al., *Tipos y costumbres* 50, 54).

River, adding characters of its unique heterogeneous traits. Madiedo begins this *cuadro* as an excerpt of the novel *La maldición*, which first appeared in issues 41 and 44 of *El Mosaico* in 1859. Vergara y Vergara, when editing this for publication in the *Museo de cuadros*, gave it the title of “El boga del Magdalena” to represent Colombia’s *bogas* who would typically be seen traveling along this vast national river with a *champán* (Martínez Pinzón, *Museo I*, 9n1; Deas, “El valor histórico” 22).

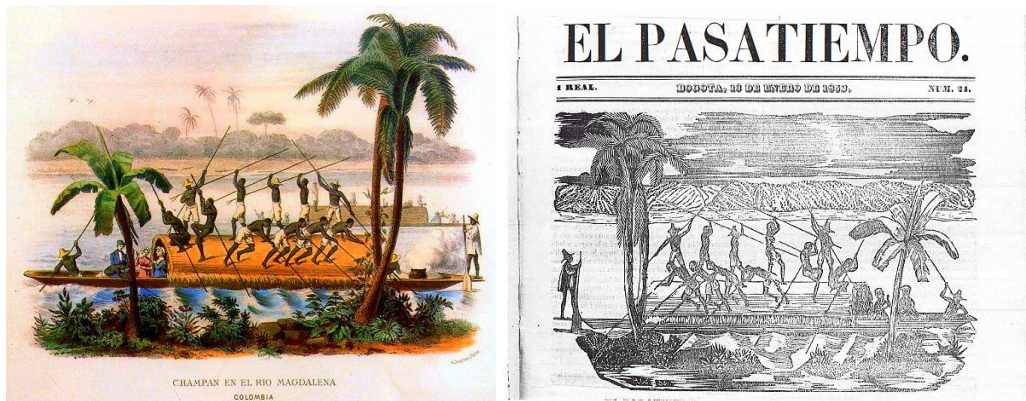


Figure 4.8. Ramón Torres Méndez. *Champán en el Río Magdalena* (ca. 1860). Lithography. 26 cm x 33 cm. (Torres Méndez, *Álbum de cuadros 2*). (left).

Figure 4.9. Ramón Torres Méndez. *El champán*. Xilography in *El Pasatiempo*, no. 24, Bogotá, January 13, 1852. (Agudelo Ochoa 63). (right).<sup>136</sup>

Given Vergara y Vergara’s habit of cutting excerpts from newspapers and turning them into *cuadros* for his collection *Museo de cuadros* (Martínez Pinzón, *Museo I*, 9n4), Madiedo starts by narrating the first scene of a *boga*’s life experience rowing along the

<sup>136</sup> “Nótese la inversión de la imagen, producida por, haberse trazado el diseño en la plancha de madera en el mismo sentido del original, en este caso la litografía hecha por los hermanos Martínez” (Sánchez Cabra, *Ramón Torres* 169). An earlier version of this visual by Torres Méndez had been published in the Colombian newspaper. *El Pasatiempo*, no. 24, Bogotá, January 13, 1852. This visual is annotated by Agudelo Ochoa as “El Boga del Magdalena. Obra que inspira una narración que lleva el mismo título” (Agudelo Ochoa 63).

river. The verbal description begins by painting the story *in medias res* of a musician named Carlos interacting with the *bogas*:

Carlos continuaba tocando y, lleno de bienestar que jamás había sentido, repetía con gozo entre sí mismo: –Ciertamente que esto no se parece a las lindas cuadrillas con que se divierten los parisienses; ni estas playas ardientes rodeadas de bosques ignorados se asemejan a sus ricos salones alfombrados con los productos de las fábricas de los Gobelinos; ni tienen nada de común los casi desnudos bogas del Magdalena con los perfumados leones de la capital de Francia. (*Museo* I, 9-10).

In this first passage, Madiedo illustrates with this imagery this anthropological and societal distinction by contrasting the half-naked Colombian *bogas* to the “perfumados leones” of high-class Parisian citizens. Carlos is introduced as a white (French-like) city man who visits Colombia's hot and mosquito-infested *tierras calientes* and steps into unfamiliar territory, retelling his encounter with a distinct culture on the coasts. He experiences the life of the Magdalena *bogas* first-hand. He makes this drastic contrast between the beautiful “cuadrillas” and the expensive, embellished, and carpeted rooms found in the city and the arid and desolate beaches “rodeadas de bosques ignorados” (10). Madiedo’s mention of the artistic seventeenth-century Gobelin wall tapestries (“de los Gobelinos”) also alludes to the elite’s fascination with mimicking European urban styles found in typical “civilized” society in opposition to the abandoned and barbaric coastal tropical area where the *bogas* live.

Another example illustrating this dichotomy is when Madiedo records examples of the *bogas*’ local regionalisms through the dialogues in this *cuadro*. Martínez Pinzón

indicates the wrong spelling of the word “civilización” in the dialogue of one of the *bogas*, spelled as “subiliasión” as a way to accentuate the “supuesto salvajismo de estas poblaciones ribereñas” in the riverbank region of the Magdalena (*Museo* I, 10n5). That linguistic distinction is made on purpose throughout this text, often mixing the “z” and “c” sounds with “s” as a way by the author to emphasize the regionalism used by the coastal *bogas*. The *bogas* get into a fight during an internal argument about who could dance better, and their discussion is worth noting: “¡Qué vas tú a saber bailá, cuando eres más lerdo que un burro viejo! Si fueras tan vivo como dices no te hubieras dejado golpeá por un animar tan sonso como un caimán. ¡Y teniendo en la mano un *macoco*, con er cuar fuera yo jasta capá de comerme cruos mir caimanes! (*Museo* I, 11). One can perceive the intentional linguistic oversights that express the *bogas*’ regionalism, evidencing the nation’s regional diversity. Every detail in this *cuadro*, especially the close interaction with local animals in this type of environment (i.e., the *boga* fighting an alligator), alludes to their extraordinary strength, which Madiedo illustrates for his readers

In another instance, the *bogas* closely interact with Carlos, who is described as playing music, and Madiedo accentuates their dialect in this encounter: “Branco, venga y pruebe er cardo der boga, que le prometo que no le hará daño la comida der pobre” (*Museo* I, 10). Detecting the way of speech of Colombia’s *bogas*, the letter “r” seems to be replacing the “l” or “n” in this dialect, as the *boga* is calling out to the “branco” or “blanco,” the white city man to try their traditional food as a warm invitation to appreciate their culture and lifestyle. One *boga* summons the white man: “Y dirigiéndose a Carlos añadió: – Branco, venga y pruebe” (10). In essence, the *boga* offers a welcoming gesture to Carlos to experience their world through their food, promising that “la comida der pobre” will not

harm him. He then announces to all, “¡Muchachos! Er sancocho se enfría!” (10), sharing a typical Latin American dish, *sancocho* (soup or stew), which is a popular Colombian dish comprised of meat, plantains, potatoes, and vegetables.

The writer also includes colorful and vibrant details that bring a new dimension and understanding of the culture of the humble Colombian bogas, bringing depth to the images painted by Torres Méndez that complement their arduous labor of rowing the boat across the Magdalena River. In the verbal description, *bogas* are depicted while eating their local food, expressively described at a moment when they all share their meal, “el resto comía en común, hablando del baile con ademanes expresivos y altas voces” (*Museo* I, 10). These details evoke an image of the vibrant expressions of community in their culture, their enjoyment of music and dance, described as they discussed daily life activities, feasting together, and energetically gesturing with loud voices.

Torres Méndez’s colored lithography titled *Champán en el Río Magdalena* (Figure 4.8) compliments a scene described in this same *cuadro* by Madiedo. It was common for the *champán* boat to typically carry a dozen or more crew on board, including a cook and some (white upper-class) guests to transport along the river (Deas et al., *Tipos y costumbres* 22, 50).<sup>137</sup> Pictorial details like the white cloud of smoke coming from the cooking pot are also paralleled in the text after stopping on the shoreline to enjoy a meal together after a grueling journey: “La olla...dejando escapar de su seno una columna de humo blanco, y entre las rubias brasas del fogón humeaban grandes pedazos de bagre salpreso, mientras

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<sup>137</sup> In a similar painting by Joseph Brown, *Champán in the Magdalena* (ca. 1840), there are more pictorial details that evidence the “full range of characters and activities to be found on board this kind of boat, including the cooking of meals” (Deas, *Tipos y costumbres* 50). Hence, the *bogas* are given a more authentic representation of their individual customs and practices and not grouping them all under the same classification .

que al calor de la ceniza se doraban los plátanos verdes, los sabrosos amarillos y las blancas yucas que debían servir de pan” (*Museo* I, 10). Here, Madiedo illustrates a scene of the *bogas* enjoying a regional (and colorful) dish prepared by the cook on board the *champán*, shown on the right-hand side of this painting. Despite being misconstrued in nineteenth-century society, the *bogas*’ unique customs are illuminated through these written and painted *costumbrista* scenes that offer a new glimpse of how they lived aboard the *champán* drifting along Magdalena River.

The pictorial descriptions encompass the ekphrastic connection to the painting by Torres Méndez, which further illustrates a “glimpse” into the *bogas*’ life, but behind the frontal barrier drawn by the palm and plantain trees, the arid wilderness described at the beginning of this *cuadro*. With the constant mention of color (greens, yellows, white) when describing the local tropical food and natural habitat in the text, its effect on the readers’/viewers’ minds is a more vivid representation that figuratively leaves a visual impression (Mitchell, *Picture Theory* 152, 155-156). For instance, the *bogas* are described as eating on the arid shoreline, using green leaves from plantain trees as a tablecloth: “Los bogas, después de haber sacado del champán anchas hojas de plátano, las tendieron sobre la arena a manera de mantel” (*Museo* I, 10). As Madiedo delves into the gastronomical details of how the *bogas* prepared and ate their meals outdoors on the beach, these customs and manners (such as using plantain tree leaves as a tablecloth ) offer a more wholesome image of the simplicity of the Boga’s life of the *bogas*. Also, Madiedo’s metaphor compares the white color of the yuca root to the fierce alligator’s fangs, “colocaron sobre su rústica mesa las presas de res salada, los trozos de yuca más blancos que los colmillos del caimán y los plátanos verdes divididos por mitad” (10). This metaphor reiterates the

effects of color when describing nature as a way to envision the rustic lifestyle and presumed ferocious nature of the *bogas* in their natural environment.

As Arias Vanegas notes, Madiedo's *cuadro* emphasizes the physical strength of the *bogas* (101). "El Boga de Magdalena" presents a scene of how one of the *bogas*, called "terrible Tábano," was known to have "cada brazo como el de una ceiba, el pecho de ancho de una piedra de lavar ropa, cada mano como un oso y la voz como el ronquido de un toro" (10). These similes are effectively used to describe a *boga* in a way that depicts his physical characteristics in relation to nature, plants, and animals – with arms like a thick tree branch (ceiba), a broad chest like a stone used for washing laundry, hands like a bear, and his voice like a bull's snore.

Madiedo further explores the violent and savage imagery attributed to the *bogas*. The use of hyperboles accentuates this characterization even more, as in the phrase "arrojaba espuma de su pecho inflado por la cólera" (*Museo* I, 12), followed by a verbal and physical fight depicted through dramatic, stern, and naturalistic features. In a moment of fury, the two enemies fight "como dos toros celosos" to the point that a sandstorm is lifted from the ground: "Un turbión de arena se levanta de debajo de sus pies" (12).<sup>138</sup> Through this example, Madiedo compares this scene to a bullfight or a circus, explained as "un gran circo dentro del cual deben combatir los dos enemigos, y para cuya formación Carlos no se desdeñade prestar sus brazos robustecidos por el gimnasio de los colegios europeos" (12). Thus, the disparity of Carlos' arms fortified in a European-based school

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<sup>138</sup> Following this pattern established by Madiedo throughout this *cuadro* of comparing European-minded city life to rural Colombian barbarism, the descriptive rural scene of the *bogas* fighting violently like bulls and lifting a sandstorm in the commotion, can be compared to the more urban scene of a bullfight illustrated by Torres Méndez titled *Escena de un jinete en la plaza de toros de Bogotá* (1852).



gym next to the natural strength of the *bogas* akin to that of bulls reiterates the author's message of civilized versus backward, uneducated individuals. Nevertheless, these enemies quickly reconcile and become friends again, "se abrazan para olvidarse de todo tomando un trago en una misma totuma" (*Museo* I, 13), suggesting that this violent scenario is commonplace in the *bogas'* daily life.

The frontal illustration for the issue published in 1852 in *El Pasatiempo* includes a unique glimpse of the working conditions of the *bogas*. Rather than describing the usual urban setting of elite classes, this raw depiction made by Torres Méndez exemplifies the hard labor of the *bogas* with a grim view. In Madiedo's verbal depiction, the half-naked, sunburnt *bogas* are painted as lifeless statues in their coastal, rural habitat:

Los dos atletas [*bogas*] parecen estatuas y los silenciosos espectadores hombres sin vida...sus venas anuncian el calor de la venganza; y vuelven y revuelven sobre sus membrudos brazos como un boa que se enrosca sobre la tosca corteza de un tronco centenario...sus caras quemadas por el sol de la zona tórrida (*Museo* I, 12-13).

From this excerpt, Madiedo sketches very somber characteristics of the *bogas* that reinforce their marginalization from society. He compared them to sunburnt athletes (to signify their strength), lifeless statues (to imply soullessness), and silenced spectators (to mean uncivilized beings with no voice of their own). In addition, the details of their veins announcing the warmth of vengeance and the imagery of their assigned role as *champán* rowers, constantly moving up and down the Magdalena River, invoke an image of a perpetual nightmare and people forgotten and unappreciated by society: "olvidados de los trabajos de la vida en un sueño profundo" (*Museo* I, 14). This metaphor is reinforced at the

end of this *cuadro*. The *bogas* are depicted as falling asleep on the shore, covered under the sand to protect themselves from mosquitos (“parecían al claroscuro de la luna las tumbas de un cementerio”), described as a scene of death, echoing visuals of perennial solitude (*Museo I*, 14).

Indeed, the overall categorization of *bogas* as the Other, invoking their distinctive strength and regional dialect as separate from that of a city man, particularly from the lens of the Bogotá elite, confirms the oppression of these beings hidden away in arid, abandoned coastal lands. Nevertheless, within the purpose of creating a unified collage of Colombia’s local color, the emphasis placed on the service and strength of the *bogas* adheres to a nationalistic duty of facilitating transportation, which leads to commerce and cultural exchange. As illustrated in the painting by Torres Méndez, along with Madiedo’s *cuadro*, these *costumbristas* offered a glimpse into the life of a *bogas*. As marginalized beings of society and as formerly enslaved people, they continued working in transporting civilians along the river. The juxtaposition of the verbal and visual depictions of the poor, robust, half-naked *bogas* taking the well-dressed upper-class men and women from the city on the *champán* is an image that poignantly documents the social and racial differences of nineteenth-century Colombia.

“De Honda a Cartagena” (Samper) | *Habitantes de las orillas  
del Magdalena* (Torres Méndez)

“*El progreso triunfará.*”  
(Samper, *Museo de cuadros* III, 253)

In contrast to the earlier works mentioned in this study by Conservatives, Jose Maria Samper (1828--1881), has also written about the *bogas* in a famous *cuadro* titled “De Honda a Cartagena,” initially published in *El Mosaico* (1858) and later included in Vergara y Vergara’s *Museo de cuadros de costumbres*.<sup>139</sup> This *cuadro* is one of the most significant *costumbrista* works written by Samper “as it explores the Liberal perspective regarding the inhabitants of the Magdalena River, considered as “la grande arteria del comercio de Nueva Granada” (*Museo de cuadros* III, 246). Samper’s change of ideology is significant: “[E]l famoso caso de José María Samper,” López Rodríguez suggests, details his evolution from “intelectual liberal radical a comienzos de la década hasta convertirse en un conservador a comienzos de 1860” (58). Nevertheless, despite Samper’s gradual political shift towards Conservatism, at the time of writing this *cuadro* he was still writing from a Liberal worldview (D’Allemand, *Samper* 15).

Martínez Pinzón also explores Samper’s perspective of this marginalized group. Building on economic and political nineteenth-century Colombian principles, this *cuadro* was written at a time when Samper was still a full-blown radical (as specified here, from 1848 to 1865, before changing to the Conservative ideology) (Martínez Pinzón, “Tránsitos”

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<sup>139</sup> Other *cuadros de costumbres* published in *El Mosaico* that depicted the emblematic figure of the *boga* included “Seis horas en un champán” by José Joaquín Borda, “Navegación por el Chocó” by Santiago Pérez, and the first *cuadro* on this subject titled “El boga” by Rufino Cuervo” (Martínez Pinzón, “Tránsitos” 34n22).

18, 21). This is important because it gives light on what was propelling Samper's motive in depicting the *bogas*. For example, the dichotomies reiterated throughout the *cuadro* are city/town, civilized/barbaric, and educated/illiterate, which illustrate the tropical region far from the colder civilized places where progressive upper-class people generally lived in nineteenth-century Colombia. This complements the theory mentioned above by Peter Wade on the correlation model of race distinctions altered by the variables of regional climate and location (Wade, *Blackness* 43, 57). This racial/regional hierarchy was also based on early nineteenth-century ideas posited by Caldas and supported by Samper regarding the ethnographical and geographical complexities (Martínez Pinzón, "Tránsitos" 18).

Samper's Liberal portrayal of the *bogas* as an ostracized and marginalized group of people is described in detail in this *cuadro de costumbres*. In this sketch, he pictures the *bogas* as the backward Other and contrasts them to the European prototype he so highly reveres as the model of progress and civilization. To emphasize his point, Samper also offers a descriptive image of the (barbaric) coastal lowland areas of Baja Magdalena in contrast to his hometown of Honda, in the region of Alto Magdalena, which he describes as a picturesque old town (*Museo de cuadros* III, 246).<sup>140</sup>

Within the Liberal elite political paradigm, as Martínez Pinzón suggests, the issue regarding the *bogas* is more profound than the evident racism directed at them and can also

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<sup>140</sup> In this *cuadro*, Samper also recognizes the assumed regional discrepancies from the higher altitudes in the south (more progressive) in contrast to the lowlands in the north (barbaric and uncivilized), with the city of Honda at the center of these two sides of the spectrum, since from his perspective: "La ciudad de Honda es el límite o centro de dos regiones enteramente distintas: hacia el sur y el oriente las admirables comarcas del alto Magdalena; hacia el norte las soledades infinitas, los desiertos ardientes y la monótona uniformidad del bajo Magdalena" (*Museo de cuadros* III, 247).

be attributed to an economic concern (“Tránsitos” 22). Samper's 1858 version of this cuadro published in *El Mosaico* contained offensive racial slurs about the *bogas*, framing them in derogatory language. For example, even the version included in the edited *Museo de cuadros* was still considerably discriminatory:

el boga, descendiente de África, e hijo del cruzamiento de razas envilecidas por la tiranía, no tiene casi de la humanidad. sino la forma exterior y las necesidades y fuerzas primitivas...el boga del bajo Magdalena no es más que un bruto que habla un malísimo lenguaje, siempre impúdico, carnal, insolente, ladrón y cobarde. (Samper, *Museo de cuadros* III, 256-257)<sup>141</sup>

This passage clarifies that Samper’s disdain for the *bogas* was based on his ideological understanding of region over race, echoing the hierarchical racial system from Caldas, placing the *bogas* at the bottom (Arias Vanegas 71). The negative list of adjectives he ascribes to them demonstrates his strong disdain for this group of people as if they were soulless, primitive, and backward beings. He also reproaches the *boga* for his local speech, disapproving of his use of regionalisms - “un bruto que habla un malísimo lenguaje” (257).

At the same time, the drive for Colombia to enter the capitalist world market, fomenting trade with Europe and the rest of the world, meant that an area like the tropical

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<sup>141</sup> Here, Samper also compares the *boga* to an *indio* from the Andean highlands and the *llanero* from the grasslands east of the Andes, showing more contempt toward the *boga* from the lower coastal region than for the Indigenous people of higher lands (D’Allemand, *Samper*, 33, 89). This regional/racial hierarchical system is attributed to the racial prejudice of the times that were based on regional location and climate (as per Peter Wade’s model) (Martínez Pinzón, “Tránsitos” 18). He describes the Indigenous people in the following manner: “Si el indio puro de las altiplanicies andinas es, a pesar de su ignorancia, dulce y humilde, y la astucia constituye su fuerza moral; si el llanero de las pampas granadinas, criado en las soledades y en medio de los peligros, pero rodeado de un horizonte infinito, es no obstante su barbarie un ser eminentemente heroico, poético en sus instintos, galante, cantor, espiritualmente fanfarrón, crédulo y generoso” (*Museo de cuadros* III, 256-257). Nevertheless, the “visión del indio como incompatible con la ‘civilización’ nunca abandonaría la escritura de Samper” (D’Allemand, *Samper*, 89).

lowlands along the Magdalena River (where the *bogas* mainly resided) geographically represented the transatlantic “gate” for the exchange of goods. The *bogas*, then, had a role as workers that could facilitate transportation in the years before the steamship was established in Colombia (although the man-powered system took longer). This region specifically represented the fluvial passageway from the Atlantic Ocean through the Magdalena River to the rest of the nation, and therefore, this area was strategic for stimulating economic growth. While the rich, natural resources of this region were indeed presented in his *cuadro*, its local inhabitants were in dire need of being “civilized.”

Samper’s *cuadro* is driven by a two-fold motive: to improve the transportation system in Colombia by discouraging the use of the old *champán* of the *bogas* to be fully replaced by the modern steamboat; and to motivate an influx of European immigrants to help “whiten” the nation, enriching the economy and culture with European customs (“Tránsitos” 22). These categories follow the sequence of events presented in Samper’s “De Honda a Cartagena” in retelling the travel experience from his native Honda to the coastal city of Cartagena from an old-fashioned *champán* to a modern *vapor* (steamboat) (Martínez Pinzón, *Invernadero* 55; “Tránsitos” 29).

First, Samper refers to the *champán* (an inanimate object) before directly describing the marginalized beings who work on it and whom he finds disgraceful and uncivilized (Martínez Pinzón, “Tránsitos” 29). In particular, he makes a distinction between regions, those coming from “baja Magdalena” (like the lowland coastal region where the *bogas* are) in contrast to those from “alta Magdalena” (like the city of Honda). In his view, civilized intellectuals are closer to the city center which he portrayed an emblem of progress, a “paraíso de Nueva Granada [donde] se ve la vida social, el desarrollo activo, la

civilización” (Samper, *Museo de cuadros* III, 247). However, as the *bogas*’ place of origin in Baja Magdalena, he describes the following:

De Honda para abajo, siguiendo el curso del Magdalena, la escena cambia enteramente. El río, como para revelar mejor el carácter salvaje de la región que le rodea, se hace más perezoso en su marcha y lejos de profundizar su cauce, se bifurca en multitud de brazos...[y] revela que allí no ha fundado el hombre su poder, que la humanidad no ha tenido todavía valor para entrar en lucha con esa emperatriz de los desiertos que se llama naturaleza (*Museo de cuadros* III, 247).

Here, this detailed portrayal of the Baja Magdalena region suggests an indirect reference made for the characterization of the *bogas* (also based on Calda’s hierarchical racial model associated with the region and climate, as mentioned before). Given that the *bogas* are observed from a distance, the adjectives Samper associates with the inanimate object (in this case, the “río”) parallels the traits he alleges about these uncivilized people groups, such as “salvaje” and “perezoso” (247). The metaphorical reference of Nature as the “emperatriz de los desiertos que se llama naturaleza” also illustrates the untamed nature that consumes the region, revealing that “allí no ha fundado el hombre su poder” (247). This statement reiterates Samper's ethnographic ideal that the farther a place/individual is from the central hub of civilization or the nation’s core, in his mind Bogotá, the farther they are from being enlightened, rational beings (D’Allemand, *Samper* 33-34, 84).

In addition, this *cuadro* reflects Samper’s sentiments about the need to bring more European immigrants to help “civilize” and “whiten” the nation. During his trip, he boards a steamship with other European travelers, and the final scene is characterized by his

describing the music and songs the Europeans are signing as “esos cantos de la civilización” (*Museo de cuadros* III, 249). His favoritism toward European-centric culture is strongly evidenced in this *cuadro* by praising foreign cultures in contrast to the regional customs of the “barbaric” ostracized *bogas*, whom he believes are in dire need of being civilized.

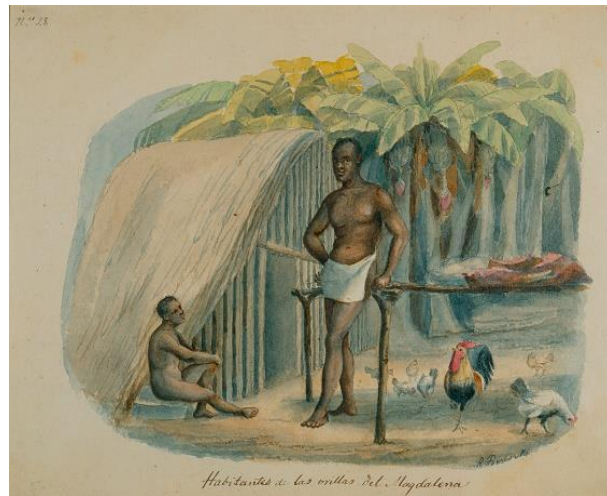


Figure 4.10. Ramón Torres Méndez. *Habitantes de las orillas del Magdalena* (ca. 1850). Watercolor on paper. 26 x 33.8 cm. (Biblioteca Luis Ángel Arango AP1268).

In contrast to Samper’s written texts, as shown in Torres Méndez’s watercolor painting (Figure 4.10), *Habitantes de las orillas del Magdalena* (ca. 1850), the emphasis is placed on the *bogas*’ living environment at the shores of the Magdalena river. A figure of a grown man standing up and a younger man or child sitting on a rock on the ground, both with minimal or no clothing, depicts the natural habitat of these marginalized beings in the regions of Baja Magdalena that Samper scorned. In “De Honda a Cartagena,” Samper remarks that he was searching for a “singular escena de costumbres nacionales y de



contrastes en extremo romántico,” when he directs his gaze at a humble town along the river, much like those in Torres Méndez painting. He describes this area as “miserable como casi todos los de las orillas del bajo Magdalena” (*Museo de cuadros* III, 254).

Samper addresses the physical environment as a key factor for the deplorable condition of these marginalized beings. In *Habitantes de las orillas del Magdalena*, Torres Méndez transmits the essence of a regional, hot climate area by illustrating a candid scene showing these naked, dark-skinned inhabitants. They are drawn in front of a humble, wooden tent surrounded by tropical palm trees, which captures the imagery of the environment that Samper alluded to in his descriptions. This remote habitat for the Magdalena residents is also covered by lush greenery and wild animals, “donde el sol devora y las serpientes abundan como las hormigas” included “arboledas,” “chozas llenas de colorido local,” where the “bogas, tan discordantes y variados” lived (*Museo de cuadros* III, 248). Hence, the vivid imagery of wildlife, lush tropical colors, and “local color” is likewise reflected in this visual. Meanwhile, Samper is gazing at them from a distance, showing “un contraste tan curioso como el que hacían el vapor Bogotá y los champanes y las casas indígenas” (*Museo de cuadros* III, 248).

The image of the *boga* as one of the most marginalized beings by the elite was founded on a prejudiced taxonomy of races which assumed that “[l]o negro aparecía como población problemática, en tanto conflictiva y a la vez caracterizada por una fuerza física importante para los trabajos pesados en la tierra caliente y en las regiones de la frontera” (Arias Vanegas 78). The representation of the Other, the (barbaric) *boga*, is contrasted to the (civilized) European, as described by Samper:

De un lado el lujo de la naturaleza, indomable y grandiosa, perfumada y llena de misterio; del otro el lujo de la civilización, de la ciencia, y la ostentación de la fuerza vencedora del hombre. Allá el hombre primitivo, tosco, brutal, indolente, semi-salvaje y retostado por el sol tropical, es decir, el boga colombiano, con toda su insolencia, con su fanatismo estúpido, su cobarde petulancia, su indolencia increíble y su cinismo de lenguaje, hijos más bien de la ignorancia que de la corrupción; y más acá el europeo, activo, inteligente, blanco y elegante, muchas veces rubio, con su mirada penetrante y poética, su lenguaje vibrante y rápido, su elevación de espíritu, sus formas siempre distinguidas (*Museo de cuadros* III, 248).

In this excerpt from the *cuadro*, Samper illustrates the dichotomy of “naturaleza” and “civilización” interpreted by various adjectives. He classifies this type of the “boga colombiano” by their physical attributes (“semi-salvaje y retostado por el sol tropical”) and their moral character as lacking prudence, knowledge, and decorum. His Liberal gaze on the *boga* paints him as a backward, uneducated, and primitive being who needs to be changed to assimilate with those in Europe. He also rejects their way of speech, describing the local regionalism of the *bogas*, “con toda su insolencia y su cinismo de lenguaje,” as sons of ignorance (248). In contrast, the European (“muchas veces rubio,” “blanco y elegante”) is deemed by Samper as intelligent and honorable, “con su lenguaje vibrante y rápido” (248). By describing the *bogas* in the most pejorative way possible, Samper fantasizes that this will somehow lead others to believe that “El progreso triunfará” (*Museo de cuadros* III, 253).

Despite Samper's criticism of these marginalized identities, the book *Esclavos, negros libres y bogas en la literatura del siglo XIX* (2011) asserts the notion that the *bogas* played a vital role for the nation as a result of this transportation service<sup>142</sup> (Arias Vanegas 81). Opening the international market towards progress enabled mobility and transport along the fluvial path of the Magdalena River, connecting the inner regions to the Caribbean and the Atlantic Ocean). The book delves into this further, noting that:

De estos personajes dependía el transporte de las mercancías para exportación, en las que estaban cifradas las esperanzas de conectar al país con el mercado internacional y encaminarlo por la senda del progreso. Por tales motivos los bogas eran de la mayor importancia. La descripción que de ellos hacían los viajeros no era entonces un simple dato curioso de algo observado en el camino; estaba mediada por el interés en la labor estratégica que realizaban” (Leal et. al., *Esclavos* 4).

However, it is important to highlight that the *champanes* were no longer the only boats navigating the Magdalena River during this time (*Ramón Torres* 156). In fact, the steamboat had already been introduced in the nation. For example, this is mentioned in the 1851 issue of the Liberal newspaper *El Pasatiempo* that referred to Torres Méndez's painting, *Champán del río Magdalena* :

hoi el *Champan* i el *boga* no hacen el principal papel en el Magdalena, i que el vapor, ese agente poderoso de la civilización, ese representante del

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<sup>142</sup> During the *Comisión Corográfica* in the mid-nineteenth century, “los negros bárbaros habitan siempre en las regiones de frontera, los valles ardientes y las selvas, y cuando hacían parte de pueblos y ciudades lo hacían incorporados como sirvientes o fuerza de trabajo civilizada” (Arias Vanegas 81). This was exemplified through the textual descriptions in the *cuadros* as well as the illustrations, like in Torres Méndez's paintings for the bogas analyzed in this study.

progreso estupendo a que en este siglo ha llevado el hombre su industria i sus medios de locomoción, va reemplazando paulatinamente al bárbaro i primitivo sistema de las canoas i champanes” (qtd. in Sánchez Cabra, *Ramón Torres* 156).

This article reiterates the newspaper’s Liberal objective to diffuse progressive ideals, voicing its views towards the old-fashioned *champán*, deeming them barbaric and primitive. When this was published, the local press in Colombia had established freedom of the press since the 1850s. Thus, the push for modernization meant letting go of archaic colonial relics like the *champán* and welcoming the faster steamboat to improve the transportation system in Colombia and, in so doing, foster growth in the economy (Martínez Pinzón, *Invernadero* 68-69).

Finally, to counteract Samper’s view of the *bogas*, especially in view of his desire to have them assimilate to European culture, a comment by one of the foreign artists who painted various scenes in Colombia is significant in revealing the arduous work of this marginalized group. French painter Auguste Le Moyne, who worked on various paintings with Groot, noted some peculiarities about the *bogas*, particularly how not even the most robust Europeans would be able to bear this task under these harsh climate conditions, “no podría bajo este sol de fuego de los trópicos soportar un solo día las fatigas de semejante oficio” (qtd. in Sánchez Cabra, “Antiguo” 321). Furthermore, Le Moyne identifies the *bogas* as Black and Indigenous people of mixed races, including *mulattos*, which were typically pictured wearing minimal undergarments given the gruesome labor and intense

weather temperatures (“Antiguo” 320-321). His regard for the *bogas*<sup>143</sup> also emphasizes their regional location – living in remote, tropical spaces – and farthest from the city life or “a la vista de las ciudades” (320). This understanding adds to the figurative isolation of these *bogas* from the urban centers, especially since these rowers are undressed and half-naked while rowing their wooden raft across the river. Their labor is thus categorized as marginal, shameful, and derogatory, “el trabajo penosísimo a que se iban a entregar” (320).

“Antiguo modo de viajar por el Quindío: Cuadro del Señor Ramón Torres” (Hinestrosa) |

*Modo de viajar en la montaña de Quindío y Sonsón* (Torres Méndez)

The Colombian *cuadros de costumbres* offer various details concerning the rigorous work and custom of the *bogas*, but also of another type known as the *cargueros*, with illustrations that reinforce the marginalization of these distinctive national types. When considering that the *gauchos* or *arrieros* are considered the most iconic national types to represent rural spaces in South America (as in the case of Argentina, for example), in contrast, the “most characteristic Colombian types are the *bogas*, or sailors of the Magdalena River, and the *cargueros*, men that usually carried passengers in their back across the cordillera” through the Andes (De la Maza et al., 63n1). Along the high peak of the “cordillera Central en los Andes colombianos” in the southern region, there is a

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<sup>143</sup> In this excerpt written by August Le Moyne regarding the *bogas*, his perspective captures the essence of these marginalized beings, marked by the rigorousness of their hard labor, their minimal clothing given the extremely hot temperatures, in addition to their divergent racial complexity in being labeled as Other: “Perteneían a esa clase de gente que en el país se llaman bogas y que se reclutan entre los negros, los mulatos y los indios de sangre mezclada. Antes de empezar el trabajo penosísimo a que se iban a entregar, nuestros hombres, como suelen hacerlo en caso semejantes en cuanto no están a la vista de las ciudades, se despojan de todas las prendas de vestir, no conservando más que un calzoncillo corto, unos, y otros unos trapos alrededor de la cintura” (qtd. in Sánchez Cabra, “Antiguo” 320).

dangerous path from Quindío that connects to the city of Bogotá, marked by geographical challenges that limit mobility from one area to another. Hence, a system of “human carriers” became a common but risky method of transportation (González Aranda, *Manual* 170).

The image of the *carguero* in Colombia is explored by scholar Efraín Sánchez Cabra and published in Beatriz Castro Carvajal’s edited book *Historia de la vida cotidiana en Colombia*.<sup>144</sup> In this work, the scholar provides an intriguing historical context regarding the popular modes of transportation as well as the difficulties of travel (and climate extremes) across the geographical landscape of Colombia in the nineteenth century, especially from the mountainous urban centers like Bogotá, Medellín, and Cali to coastal places like Cartagena, Barranquilla, and Santa Marta. With the steamship starting to improve the fluvial transport in Colombia after the 1840s, it was not until the end of the century that the railway was finally launched to facilitate mobility across the nation (Martínez, *El nacionalismo* 114-115). But before this time, traveling across Colombia’s terrains and roads was a very cumbersome task for travelers, from *tierras frías* to *tierras calientes*. Popular modes of transportation included horses and wheels on carriages (brought to the Americas by the Spanish in the early sixteenth century). Since 1825, however, the creation of the steamboat facilitated travel across the Magdalena and other rivers, though earlier forms of navigation such as canoes and *champanes* were more frequently used. Nevertheless, there were much older and more unconventional methods of travel commonly practiced in Colombia, with one consisting of carrying people on a

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<sup>144</sup> Refer to Efraín Sánchez Cabra, “Antiguo modo de viajar en Colombia,” *Historia de la vida cotidiana en Colombia*, edited by Beatriz Castro Carvajal. Editorial Norma, 1996, pp. 311–335.

chair strapped to a person's back through the steep and dangerous Andes. (Sánchez Cabra, "Antiguo" 312, 317).

*Costumbristas* like Torres Méndez have illustrated the marginalized type of the *carguero*. One particular *cuadro de costumbres* was written in reference to an illustration made by him. The lithograph was processed by exiled artists Jerónimo and Celestino Martínez (known as the Martínez brothers, originally from Venezuela), who played an influential role in Torres Méndez's life and artistic training. In 1849, they helped him publish his first lithography in the newspaper *El Museo*, followed by additional works in 1851's *El Pasatiempo* (González Aranda, *Manual* 231). From this experience, Torres Méndez received special training that allowed him to become an even more skillful *costumbrista* artist: "Los hermanos Martinez...le enseñaron a mirar las costumbres con ojo de grabador y difusor" (231). One of his most famous collections, *Costumbres Neogranadinas*, dedicated to illustrating Colombia's *cuadros de costumbres*, was announced and lauded in *El Pasatiempo* (Bogotá, no. 9), released on October 19, 1851:

una serie de láminas iluminadas que representan los trajes, modo de viajar, escenas populares i paisajes tomados de la naturaleza, referentes a varias provincias de la Nueva Granada. Son obra del creyón i pincel del artista nacional Ramón Torres Méndez, ejecutadas con fidelidad i maestría, i reproducidas en la piedra con el mayor esmero, pues la litografía de Martínez hermanos quiere ofrecer también una muestra cuidadosa de su habilidad en el arte" (qtd in. González Aranda, *Manual* 232).

This excerpt shows that *El Pasatiempo* gave Torres Méndez a platform that he could use to share his outlook on popular Colombian attire and practices, national views and

landscapes, and other regional customs. One such example is his painting showing the old-fashioned way of traveling along the Andes Mountains.

Torres Méndez's painting is titled *Antiguo modo de viajar por la montaña del Quindío*, as recognized in the same title given to this *cuadro* published the same year in *El Pasatiempo* (Bogotá, no. 19) and dated December 20, 1851. The sketch is written by *costumbrista* writer José Caicedo Rojas, and it provides an example of an explicit ekphratic reference as a “verbal representation of graphic representation” (Heffernan, “Ekphrasis,” 299, 304). This *cuadro* is later included in Vergara y Vergara's *Museo de cuadros* 1866 version, honoring the esteemed work of the Colombian painter by changing the title to “Antiguo modo de viajar por el Quindío: Cuadro de costumbres de Ramón Torres Méndez” (*Museo* II, 127).

Primarily, the emphasis here is on the nation's emblematic figure of the *carguero* (or saddleman) and the underlying connotations for this society. Caicedo Rojas begins the *cuadro* by introducing Torres Méndez's painting of this scene regarding the traditional way of traveling up the Andes mountains in Quindío on the southwestern region of Colombia: “La litografía de los señores Martínez Hermanos acaba de producir un paisaje, dibujado en la piedra por el señor Ramón Torres Méndez, que representa el modo de viajar por nuestras montañas” (*Museo* II, 127). The reference to the image is addressed in the text, inviting readers to visualize the imagery as they read the *cuadro*. The visuals below showcase some of the paintings by Torres Méndez of this national type, which includes other variations with the same theme but created with different artistic techniques and focal points.



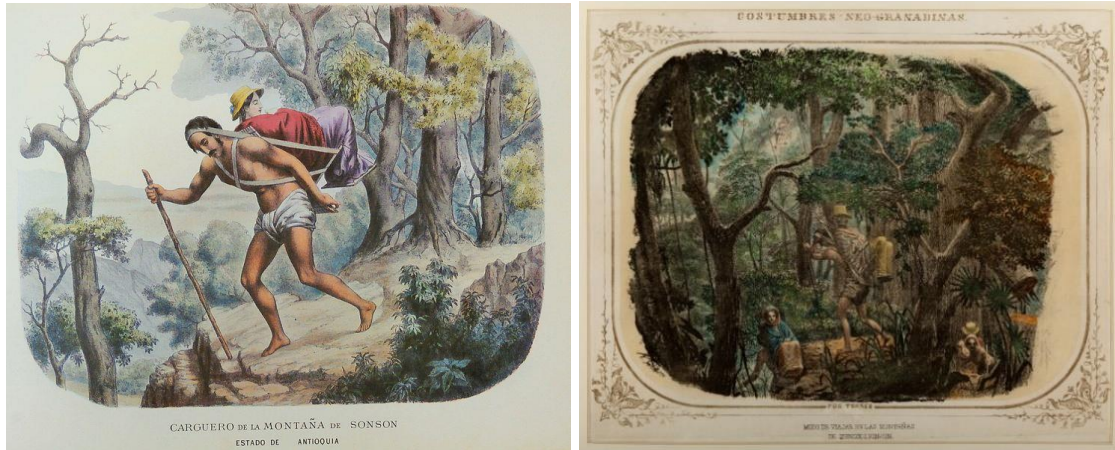


Figure 4.11. Ramón Torres Méndez, *Carguero de la montaña de Sonsón (Estado de Antioquia)* (1851). Lithography. 26 x 33 cm. (Torres Méndez, *Álbum de cuadros* 7).

Figure 4.12. Ramón Torres Méndez, *Modo de viajar en las montañas de Quindío y Sonsón* (1851). Lithography by Martínez y Hermano. 24.8 x 30.1 cm. (Colección de Arte Banco de la República AP3626).<sup>145</sup>

Caicedo Rojas pays homage to the Colombian artist by writing a *cuadro* based entirely on an original work by Torres Méndez, titled as *Modo de viajar en la montaña de Quindío y Sonsón* (1851) which precisely corresponds and complements the verbal and visual representation (Figure 4.12). Furthermore, this illustration appears afterward in a travel chronicle under the title of *Paso de una montaña a espaldas de peones cargueros* (1871),<sup>146</sup> with another version under this same theme, *Carguero de la montaña de Sonsón* (Figure 4.11). Still, the 1851 version best represents the storyline presented by Caicedo

<sup>145</sup> Similar paintings by Ramón Torres Méndez for this type include the original black and white xylography, *Antiguo modo de viajar por la montaña del Quindío*, published in the Bogotá newspaper *El Pasatiempo* (December 20, 1851) to accompany this *cuadro* by José Caicedo Rojas (Sánchez Cabra, *Ramón Torres* 195). The original lithography *Modo de viajar en las montañas de Quindío i Sonsón* (1851) also appears under the title *Modo de viajar en las montañas de Quindío y Nemocón* (Colección de Arte Banco de la República AP3626), and as *Paso de una montaña a espaldas de peones cargueros* (Biblioteca Digital de Bogotá, <https://www.bibliotecadigitaldebogota.gov.co/resources/2083155/>).

<sup>146</sup> See Torres Méndez, Ramón, “Paso de una montaña a espaldas de peones cargueros. Tipos colombianos N°13,” *Impresiones de un viaje a América 1870-1884*. Virtual del Banco de la República, 1851.

Rojas to analyze this ekphrastic connection (Martínez Pinzón, *Museo* II, 127n3; Krieger 9).<sup>147</sup>

According to Colombian contemporary artist José Alejandro Restrepo, the image of the *carguero* is a “pervasive presence in the iconography (in prints and drawings)” of nineteenth-century Colombian travelers and writers, mainly portraying Indigenous people, and later Black people and *mulattos*, who “carried on their backs people unfit to navigate long, perilous paths” (par. 4). He affirms that “[m]en weighing as much as 90 kilos...sitting in bamboo chairs with 60-degree backrests would be taken on journeys that lasted as long as 20 days. Common routes included the mythical Paso del Quindío that crosses the Andes” (Restrepo par. 4). Given that this custom sparked curiosity among locals and foreigners, there are numerous versions made by other artists<sup>148</sup> under this same theme, to which Caicedo Rojas wittingly adds: “paisaje que debe llamar la atención de los curiosos, tanto de los que han atravesado la cordillera, como de los que solamente han dado la vuelta alrededor de su cuarto, como Mr. de Maistre”<sup>149</sup> (*Museo* II, 127).

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<sup>147</sup> The corresponding images have also been included here for analysis. Martínez Pinzón also confirms this evident ekphrastic connection between Torres Méndez’s visual and Caicedo Rojas’s written *cuadro de costumbres*, as it was common in the literary and artistic forms of *Costumbrismo* to find paintings and literary sketches under the same title: “La página de este número de *El Pasatiempo* contiene, aparte de este cuadro de costumbres, la pequeña imagen de un carguero. Esta imagen a blanco y negro no se corresponde con la descripción que Caicedo Rojas hace del cuadro de Torres Méndez. Sin la ilustración que lo acompaña, el cuadro pierde la relación efrástica entre texto e imagen tan cultivada por esta literatura. Como ilustración a esta rendición...la litografía a color de Torres Méndez a la que se refiere el autor de este cuadro” was added to facilitate the image-text connection (*Museo* II, 127n3).

<sup>148</sup> For instance, Alexander von Humboldt made a sketch titled *Paso del Quindío* (1810) drawn by Joseph Anton Koch and engraved by Christian Friedrich Traugot Duttenhoffer. See José Alejandro Restrepo and Madeline Murphy Turner. “Histories of Landscape during the Colonization of the Americas,” *The Museum of Modern Art*, October 6, 2020, <https://www.moma.org/magazine/articles/431>.

<sup>149</sup> Joseph Marie de Mistre (1753-1823) was an ultra-conservative French philosopher who greatly influenced the Latin American conservative mindset of the nineteenth century (Martínez Pinzón, *Museo* II, 127n5).

In this example, the author also adds to our knowledge of this emblematic practice when he mentions how this traveling style through the mountains was not only available for men but also “bastante común entre las señoritas de Bogotá” (128) and even practiced in other regions, such as the eastern town of Sonsón, as referenced in Torres Méndez’s paintings.<sup>150</sup> In a way, this *cuadro* also acknowledges the strenuous service provided by the *cargueros* in order to facilitate travel for its citizens (as depicted in the illustrations by Torres Méndez), considering the risk that these Indigenous human carriers endured along the dangerous paths of the Andes Mountains. Some, in fact, actually preferred this old-fashioned method of traveling, evidenced in the inquiry made by the woman to the narrator asking to learn more about this “Antiguo modo de viajar” (*Museo* II, 128): “Algunos preferían, por su seguridad, viajar a ‘espalda de indio,’ sentados en sillas atadas a las espaldas de aborígenes cargueros, avezados conocedores de los caminos” (*En marcha* 8-9).

Caicedo Rojas identifies and contrasts the two types of men pictured in this lithography to describe this primitive and strenuous “modo de viajar” through the Andes Mountain range (*Museo* II, 128). As shown in the painting of the *carguero* (Figure 4.11), the traveler is carried by a well-built “casi desnudo...fornido ibaguereño” from the central town of Ibagué (128). In this example, the minimally dressed *carguero* “se apoya en el bordón que maneja con la derecha,” as he keeps his balance up the mountain with this

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<sup>150</sup> An interesting query is presented in this *cuadro*, and it has to do with Colombian *costumbristas*’ interest on the perspective of Europeans. After recognizing the beauty of the landscape shown in Torres Méndez’s painting: “¿qué dirán en Europa de nuestro modo de viajar a mediados de este siglo tan vaporoso, tan civilizado y tan romántico?” (*Museo* II, 129). Similar to the prologue of Vergara y Vergara’s *Museo de cuadros*, Caicedo Rojas echoes the targeted audience that the *costumbristas* had in mind when presenting these panoramic visions of the local scenes and types of New Granada.

wooden staff, all while carrying a human passenger on his back (128). In contrast, the traveler, or *viajero*, is dressed in a colorful Colombian *ruana* sitting on a chair made with a kind of bamboo called *guadas* strapped to the *carguero*'s back: "sentado en una silleta hecha de guadas muy livianas pero de mucha consistencia" (129). As the narrator figuratively adds, he also appears to have contracted his legs while being seated on the chair ("lleva encogidas las piernas") (*Museo* II, 128).

In particular, the traveler, dressed in a red *ruana*, gets the immediate attention of the woman observing the lithography: "¿Y quién será ese de la ruanita pintada?" (129). Here, the narrator attempts to identify the characters drawn by Torres Méndez, assuming that the figure wearing the colorful *ruana* is likely one of the senators in Colombia with his wife pictured alongside him, shown in the bottom right corner of the painting (Figure 4.11). These detailed observations by the author provide additional comical notes regarding the visual, which helps to animate it, as it is expressed so flawlessly in the verbal descriptions, helping readers to identify the use of ekphrasis in the *cuadros*.

Through a very dynamic description, the author proceeds by including his interpretation of the lithography by Torres Méndez:

—A lo que comprendo, el pintor quiso retratar a uno de los Senadores de la República, que vino al Congreso el año pasado, hombre enjuto de carnes, macilento de rostro, pensativo y ensimismado, que hablaba solo algunas veces y manoteaba, cual si estuviera perorando en el Congreso, en cuyas sesiones no se atrevió a chistar palabra. (*Museo* II, 129)

This passage emphasizes what "el pintor quiso retratar" defines what Torres Méndez likely wanted to portray. Not only are the artist's brush strokes given words to speak through the

dialogue used in this narrative, but these images are also associated with the context of the times. At the same time, the haggard, boney man (“hombre enjuto de carnes”) traveling up the mountain identified as a Congressional Senator is described as being daydreaming and gesturing with his hands – “pensativo y ensimismado, hablaba solo algunas veces y manoteaba” (129) – as if he were meditatively practicing a speech. In a humorous tone, the author also comments on the senator’s wife, carried by another *carguero* on his back:

Aquella que ve usted en otro carguero es la esposa del senador, muchachota alegrona, de veinte y seis años; que pesaba entonces nueve arrobas, quince libras; y hacia pujar, sudar, estremecer (y maldecir a veces) al miserable carguero que trajo a costas su rolliza humanidad. (*Museo* II, 129)

Here, the writer directs the observation about the woman painted in the lithography (Figure 4.11). One can visualize what Caicedo Rojas describes regarding this Senator and his wife, bringing the still painting to life. She is depicted as a young, heavyweight woman, “muchachota alegrona...que pesaba entonces nueve arrobas, quince libras,” likely by exaggerating to allude to a considerable weight (129). As such, this caused the *carguero* to “pujar, sudar, (y maldecir a veces),” cursing his way through the mountain while he carries “su rolliza humanidad” (129).

Consequently, this kind of reference concerning the “weight” could also allude to a criticism of society concerning an unjust and unbalanced hierarchical system. The *carguero*, as a marginalized servant of society, symbolically carries the weight of humanity to maintain civilization. Because the Andes Mountains greatly limited the transportation route through this complex geographical landscape, the *cargueros* metaphorically took the heavy task and responsibility of carrying human beings as one of the only transportation

methods in these remote areas at the time (Sánchez Cabra, “Antiguo” 332-333). Considering that railroads were not established in Colombia yet (it was not until 1884),<sup>151</sup> the author also recognizes the vital task of Colombia’s *cargueros* and proceeds by adding a few phrases of gratitude towards them when he remarked:

Cada uno viaja como puede; y en la cordillera de los Andes, mientras se establecen los ferrocarriles, lo cual tardara su *poquito*, debemos dar gracias a Dios, si conseguimos un carguero robusto, de anchas espaldas y fornidas piernas, para que nos conduzca; gracias debemos darle también, si hallamos un árbol caído sobre un río invadable;...gracias, si no nos pica una culebra; gracias, si no nos devora un tigre; gracias, si no nos acometen los fríos y calenturas; gracias, si el carguero sale de paso, en vez de salir al trote; y gracias, últimamente, si no nos *riega* por el suelo, como le sucedió al Liberador Simón Bolívar. (*Museo* II, 129)

In this excerpt, the description emphasizes some critical points regarding the role of the *carguero* in offering human transport while combating untamed nature. Indeed, the verbal depiction echoes the pictorial ferociousness of the wilderness the robust *carguero* must cross (similar to the *bogas* rowing along the Magdalena River). The *carguero* is also portrayed as diligently serving the people by carrying and transporting them at a steady and gentle pace. Next, the problem of passing through a feral and dangerous mountain

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<sup>151</sup> Indeed, the last two decades of the nineteenth-century experienced rapid growth in what has been labeled as “la era de las comunicaciones modernas en Colombia” given that “el año 1884 fue especialmente prolífico en avances” (Sánchez Cabra, “Antiguo” 332). This, of course, included the primary “línea de ferrocarril que comunicaba con Tocaima, primera etapa del proyectado ferrocarril entre Bogotá y Giradot,” followed by another one from Noria to La Dorada, “donde se abordaban los grandes vapores del Bajo Magdalena,” as Sánchez Cabra affirms how even the steam-powered vessels (*vapores*) had begun more frequent transportation along the Magdalena River (“Antiguo” 332).

range meant encountering natural obstacles along the way like fallen trees, menacing animals like snakes and tigers, and extreme temperatures. Caicedo Rojas also describes the dangerous trail endured by the *cargueros*, which consisted of “[m]uchas leguas de montaña, y subidas, bajadas, ríos y torrente, precipicios y despenaderos, de todo eso habrá por allí” (Museo II, 129). Finally, the last point alludes to the adversity that Liberator Simón Bolívar encountered while crossing the dangerous territory with his army in 1819 to bring independence to New Granada from Spain.<sup>152</sup>

The narrator’s dialogue with the woman about the painting invites readers to participate as they are concurrently educated about the artist. Caicedo Rojas focuses on identifying and giving credit to the artist, honoring “nuestro célebre compatriota Ramón Torres” (*Museo* II, 129). The woman inquires, “¿Y quién habrá dibujado ese paisaje?” to which the narrator responds, “¿Pues quién, sino nuestro celebre compatriota Ramon Torres?” (*Museo* II, 129). From this example, Caicedo Rojas unravels Torres Méndez’s painting through a casual dialogue with a local woman concerning the details of the image, the artist, and the role of the custom portrayed in this scene, “ese peregrino modo de viajar en cabalgadura humana” (130). Here, the ekphrastic analysis facilitates the association of meaning and imagery revolving around the function of these laden but strong *cargueros*. As shown, the image-text depictions are closely intertwined to allow for a deeper understanding of the representation of an otherwise silenced, suppressed, and marginalized class in Colombia. In effect, these vibrant, ekphrastic descriptions craftily parallel the visual image while exemplifying the distinctive local color of Colombia’s regional people,

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<sup>152</sup> For more information on this historical fact, see Christopher Minster, “How Simon Bolivar Crossed the Andes.” ThoughtCo, Oct. 2, 2020, [thoughtco.com/1819-simon-bolivar-crosses-the-andes-2136411](https://www.thoughtco.com/1819-simon-bolivar-crosses-the-andes-2136411).

presented with a touch of irony, charm, and vividness that is very commonly found in the *cuadros de costumbres*.

Moreover, the details of the paintings and the color palette used by Torres Méndez are significant because it echoes Caicedo Rojas's commentary about the Colombian Andean landscape, bringing to life the regional space that connects with the pictorial descriptions of the *cuadro*. For instance, the light-to-dark green and brown color shades evoke the lushness of the greenery forest in the Andes Mountains. The skyline is almost entirely covered by the overgrown vegetation and tall forest trees surrounding the human figures (especially in Figure 4.11). Describing this natural landscape along the highlands, Caicedo Rojas compliments the visual with the following words: "La selva primitiva, como usted puede ver, esta dibujada con bastante naturalidad y desembarazo. Esos grandes árboles, esos troncos, esas enredaderas que cuelgan formando ricos pabellones de verdura" (*Museo II*, 128-129). The author here draws the attention of the reader to gaze upon the image of this untamed jungle, with a certain awe of the great wilderness that the *cargueros* had to cross through on bare feet and with minimal clothing, using a thin tree twig to hold their balance on these perilous, sloped paths.

Caicedo Rojas further adds that, "la vigorosa vegetación se reproduce admirablemente, ni más ni menos como en la América del Sur se reproducen las revoluciones y desórdenes. Sin embargo, no deja de trabajarse constantemente" (*Museo II*, 132). This quirky observation metaphorically connects the vast wilderness overpowering the visual with the tumultuous revolutions and disarrays that had entangled Colombian nineteenth-century societies, given the ongoing wars and political upheavals. It is a subtle



but poignant commentary on the chaotic (political) jungle that many South American nations had been experiencing during these years.

A final connection is made about the painter at the end of this *cuadro*. In this instance, Caicedo Rojas changes the dynamic by incorporating a poem that captures the essence of the artist's work and recapitulates the role of *costumbristas* as a whole. The narrator hints to the reader that he holds a hidden gem saved for the end of the *cuadro*: “un soneto en elogio de dicho Torres” (*Museo* II, 130). He then incorporates the following poem (*Museo* II, 130):

El azul de los cielos, el celaje,  
Las caprichosas nubes, el torrente  
Y las palmas que ciñen la ancha frente  
De la cascada en medio del paisaje  
  
¡Imita tu pincel!; y hasta el ropaje  
De purpura y de rosa transparente  
Con que se adorna el sol en el oriente ...  
Mas no iba a hablarte de eso: me distraje.

Al niño, al hombre, a la mujer hermosa  
Copia tu mano con destreza suma,  
Los ojos engañando artificiosa;

Y por eso es en balde que presuma  
Disputarle la palma generosa

¡A tu pincel! la más correcta pluma. (qtd. in *Museo* II, 130)<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> This poem made in honor of Ramón Torres Méndez was originally written by Juan Francisco Ortiz (Martínez Pinzón, *Museo* II, 130n7).

In sum, the ending of this *cuadro* with the inclusion of a sonnet dedicated to the creative productions by Torres Méndez brings light to the impact he had on Colombian *costumbristas*. The first stanza evokes the pictorial magnificence of the national landscape captured by the artist's brush strokes. The poet emphatically declares to the artist: "¡Imita tu pincel!" (130). This phrase envelopes the essence of the ekphrastic connection through the role of the *costumbrista*, who is skilled in (verbally) painting a glimpse of their surroundings.

This process also entails the creative process from their subjective "minds' eye" ("copia tu mano con destreza"), reflecting what they envision through each brushstroke and producing an *imagined* version of their reality: "Los ojos engañando artificiosa" (130).<sup>154</sup> The humorous twist of the next stanza shows how the poet takes a turn after getting sidetracked (and letting the audience know) and also captures the personal dialogue that *costumbristas* commonly practiced. The final stanza evokes the significance of Torres Méndez's skill in the artistry of the visual *cuadros de costumbres* made with his creative tool. The interrelation of the words *pincel* and *pluma* symbolically allude to the tools of the *costumbrista*: "¡A tu pincel! la más correcta pluma" (*Museo* II, 130; González Aranda, *Ramón Torres* 3, 6).

Caicedo Rojas concludes the *cuadro* with the following phrase: "tomé mi sombrero y me despedí, hasta otro día en que vendrá otra lámina y con ella quizá otro diálogo" (*Museo* II, 133). This phrase that the author has emphasized posits a beautiful connection of the pictorial expression of the *cuadros* to the notable paintings of *costumbristas* like

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<sup>154</sup> To quote the words of Colombia's noteworthy *costumbrista*, Eugenio Díaz, placed as a header note in *El Mosaico* (Bogotá, December 1858): "Los cuadros de costumbres no se inventan sino se copian" (González Aranda, *Ramón Torres* 3).

Torres Méndez. These illustrative “láminas” are likewise enriched by the written “diálogo,” bringing these “sketches of customs” to life. The emblematic connection of the verbal expression in conjunction with the visuals, like Caicedo Rojas, has masterfully created here with one of Torres Méndez’s paintings, is one of the most exemplary depictions of ekphrasis in Colombian *Costumbrismo*.

#### **D. Final Remarks on Marginalized Identities in Colombian *Costumbrismo***

Through these wide-ranging collections of illustrations and *cuadros*, the popular press made it possible to distribute these “sketches of daily life” to the public reader and made known the intricacies of Colombian national identity (Pini 26-27). As Ana Peñas Ruiz said, “no sólo se piensa la ‘nación,’ sino que se lee y se refleja a través de representaciones visuales y literarias, cuya simbología incrementa su efectividad” (“Entre literatura y pintura,” 634). More importantly, the depiction of the Other by an elite group of writers and artists in Colombia had the specific function of presenting an image that would fit their political purposes. In the end, Conservative and Liberal elite *costumbristas* worked towards one common goal in outlining a national ideology in Colombia: “Todos convergen en el mismo propósito de demostrar que Colombia no es un país de salvajes...sino una república moderna, digna de reconocimiento internacional” (Martínez, *El nacionalismo* 145).

In the effort to establish a national identity, the mid-nineteenth century bipartisan conflict between Liberal and Conservative *costumbristas* was crucial to this development. In particular, their approach to maintain a “homogenización retrospectiva” in their writings

and visuals realized this diverse but unified sense of nationalism, especially “la relación de las poblaciones con el territorio y en las visiones de futuro que se tenían para el país” (D’Allemand, “El *Costumbrismo*” 55, 69). On the one hand, Eurocentric Liberals driven by progressive ideals, representing the “letrado, blanco y masculino” such as Samper, earnestly sought to establish “modern” types of transportation, foreign cultures and practices, and even miscegenation as a way to make the nation’s racial colors appear “whiter” over time (López Rodríguez 161; D’Allemand, “El *Costumbrismo*” Bradford 33). On the other hand, Conservatives understood the value of documenting the old-fashioned methods of transportation (depicted in the *bogas* and *cargueros*) as this permitted the nation to continue travel and commercial exchange, especially considering that the “modern” forms of transportation were not yet fully established in certain areas at the time (roads, bridges, railroads, and steamboats) (Martínez Pinzón, “Tránsitos” 22).

Through the juxtaposition of the visual and written representations, it is possible to (re)construct the “mosaic” of *cuadros de costumbres* and paintings of Colombian in the nineteenth century. In doing so, the sociocultural and political ideologies of the time are transmitted to the readers/viewers appropriately. I believe the mission of the *costumbristas* is fulfilled in many ways as their verbal-visual portrayals serve to emphasize the wonderfully complex picture of Colombian society, its customs, local color, and even those characteristics of the times that were not ideal. The process of including marginalized identities in the scheme of creating a unified yet diverse Colombian national identity was a challenge for the *costumbristas* – and even their sometimes harsh depictions help us to understand and see a glimpse of the current conditions, the good and the ugly, within the context of the times. As such, the work of Colombian *costumbristas*, especially the

characterization of marginalized icons of this society, serves to paint a picture of how they were strategically constructed in the narratives and illustrations to serve a greater vision of national significance. The role of the *bogas* and *cargueros*, more specifically, aimed at reinforcing an economic pursuit that was crucial at the time: providing transportation and facilitating exchange across the nation through its complex topography.

Still, the essence of the *costumbristas*' works reflects the challenges of racial and regional diversity in the approach of the national elite in constructing Colombia's identity. Since the establishment of the independent republic, but more so with the emergence of the two political parties in the mid-nineteenth century, the common goal of establishing a sense of national identity and homogenous unity began to falter as disputes arose on how to classify its varied people, regions, and customs. As influential *costumbristas* of *El Mosaico* and other comparable nineteenth-century works, the elite concurrently assumed political roles, so their contested ideas influenced their overall representation of the nation. Yet, they came together in an effort to create a unified – but still distinctively complex – portrayal of the “*pueblo nacional*” (Arias Vanegas xiii-xiv).

V. **EKPHRASTIC *COSTUMBRISMO* :**

**CONNECTING IMAGE & TEXT IN THE *CUADROS DE COSTUMBRES***

**A. Epilogue: Painting with Words via Ekphrasis in Colombian *Costumbrismo***

*José Manuel Groot escribió  
cuadros de costumbres y lo hizo  
con minuciosidad de pintor realista,  
como también manejaba el pincel.*

—Rafael Maya, “El *Costumbrismo* en Colombia” 21.

*Painting with words.* The essence of this dissertation began with a poem written by José Manuel Groot, which stated the maxim that inspired much of his literary and artistic productions. In the first two stanzas of his poem published in the introduction to the 1858 *Cuadros rústicos de costumbres granadinas* (qtd. in González and Segura, *Groot* 6), Groot boldly proclaimed:

Un cuadro quiero pintar	Costumbres con su lenguaje,
En que represente al vivo	No de la clase del rico.
Las costumbres y maneras	Que no pinto sino al pobre
Del rústico campesino.	Con sus modales y dichos.

Groot’s purpose for his artistic creations is evidenced in these stanzas, concurrently reflected in much of his artistic career. The first sentence of “Un cuadro quiero pintar” embraces that close interconnectedness between the *cuadros de costumbres* and the

*costumbrista* paintings that were popular subgenres within the movement of *Costumbrismo*. More importantly, the insinuation of “painting” a *cuadro* (through image and text) cleverly underlines the ekphrastic essence of this genre and welcomes the juxtaposition of the written and pictorial *cuadros de costumbres*. Groot vividly depicted the “*costumbres y maneras del rústico campesino*,” portraying Colombia’s local color, customs, and regionalisms – the “*Costumbres con su lenguaje*” – as a way to showcase the unrefined, humble depictions of rural peasants in their natural setting, as he said when he states that he wanted to paint the customs: “No de la clase del rico / Que no pinto sino al pobre / Con sus modales y sus dichos” (6).

In effect, Groot’s *cuadros de costumbres* and paintings beautifully portray the immeasurable value found in the quotidian customs and regional dialects of the common people, presenting the countryside as a way to defend the untainted land from the pressures of a Liberal opposition that sought to cleanse, enlighten, and reform the face of Colombia to the rest of the world.

In reference to his aesthetic style, Groot’s works assimilate that of other *costumbristas*, including one of the greatest illustrators of Colombia’s customs in the nineteenth century, Ramón Torres Méndez, who also encompassed a more panoramic view of the genuine view of people of different classes, races, and status through his visual *cuadros de costumbres* (Gaona Rico 41). Groot and Torres Méndez’s works also go hand in hand with their Conservative ideology regarding their vision for the Other, especially in portraying the “*costumbres y maneras / Del rústico campesino*” (qtd. in Gonzalez Aranda, *Groot* 6).

Colombian *costumbristas* that have recognized the verbal-visual connection to Groot and Torres Méndez's oeuvre were part of the renowned literary group called El Mosaico, which included Liberals such as José María Samper as well as José Caicedo Rojas (who turned to the Conservative/Catholic view just like Groot), and other like-minded Conservatives like José Manuel Marroquín, León Hincapié, and Manuel María Madiedo. Their works have appeared in the local newspaper *El Mosaico* (1858-1872) as well as in José María Vergara y Vergara's anthology, *Museo de cuadros de costumbres* (1866), arguably the most important collection of nineteenth-century Colombian *Costumbrismo*.

The principal objective of this research has been to analyze the function of ekphrasis in the descriptive-pictorial *cuadros de costumbres* and its use in the representation of Colombian nineteenth-century reality by painters and writers of this period. In this dissertation, I have demonstrated a detailed overview of the evolution of ekphrasis from classical to modern-day approaches, formulating my own adaptation of this literary device into what I believe has been an effective and enriching tool for studying the creative power of the written *cuadros de costumbres* and their connection to the visual *costumbrista* paintings produced in nineteenth-century Colombia. It is expressed in the colorful, vivid language that the *costumbristas* employed as a way to create a verbal representation of their national identity. As exemplified in the selection of works for this study, the illustrations in reference to these *cuadros* often reflected the same core values and intents of Conservative ideology in nineteenth-century Colombia.

This dissertation, in Part I, outlined the theoretical framework and recent scholarship pertaining to image-text analysis. It also unthreaded the origins of the theory of ekphrasis, from its original implementation in ancient Greek philosophy to its most



recent modern understanding based on the foundational ideas of scholars Murray Krieger, James Heffernan, and W. J. T. Mitchell, in addition to that of other recent critics who have remodeled this tool, conceptualized as a kind of literary device that stimulates the interconnection of the verbal-visual analysis. In approximating this theory to similar contexts for this investigation, especially the works by scholars Kathryn M. Mayers and Pedro Agudelo Rendón, among others, this dissertation was inspired to apply this concept through a novel method by connecting the *cuadros de costumbres* and the arts as showcased in relevant examples of *Costumbrismo* studies.

In essence, based on this modern understanding of ekphrasis, starting with Heffernan's definition of a "*verbal representation of graphic representation*" ("Ekphrasis" 299), noting the divergences of these media and Mitchell's "pictorial" turn (*Picture Theory* 16), I introduce a different application not previously analyzed in detail which juxtaposes the *cuadros de costumbres* with the traditional *costumbrista* paintings created jointly or within a timeframe of relevance. My working theory is rooted in the creative power of writers/artists to convey their subjective interpretation of real-world reflections of society through image and text, juxtaposing these two worlds together. It reinterprets ekphrasis's creative/cognitive process that acts as the engine for connecting visual and textual representations – the "eyes of the mind" or the imagination (Krieger 13), as well as the writer/artist's multiple subjective expressions and political ideologies. As a result, I believe that this analysis offers a new level of understanding of the national imagery that was collectively created in the *costumbristas'* subjective philosophies (of the writer's/artist's mind) and how the variables in the regional, political, and social contexts produced varied,

autochthonous representations, subsequently reflected in verbalized, descriptive (pictorial) *cuadros de costumbres* and the visual arts.

Following the wars of Independence, the postcolonial period produced a shift in ideological and aesthetic movements in Colombia's literature. Colombia and other Latin American nations began publishing short sketches, the *cuadros de costumbres*, infused with a desire to create their own sense of nationalism and distributed through the venues of the press (Pedraza Jiménez 392, 418). Similarly, the visual arts flourished in *Costumbrismo* during these years under the influences of the scientific voyages like the initial *Expedición Botánica* and the mid-century *Comisión Corográfica*. As explored in Part II, these government-led botanical and cartographic expeditions brought a skillful group of foreign scientists and artists to the nation who inspired and taught Colombia's leading *Costumbrista* artists like Groot and Torres Méndez.

Despite the fact that the *Costumbrista* artists were greatly influenced by the scientific desire to categorize and collect, which permeated these expeditions, the *costumbristas* works were guided by subjective ideological perceptions (Maya, "El *Costumbrismo*" 25). The juxtaposition of these writings and paintings reveals the overall *imagined* vision for the nation. As a result, these works provided a network of selected themes that painted the nation's popular culture, traditional attire, and social and religious festivities that collectively created a vision of the nation to gain local recognition but more so to appease their foreign audience (in Europe, and specifically in Spain). Ultimately, Colombian elite *costumbristas* function as orchestrators of their own desired sense of national identity, amalgamating the diverse pieces to form one unified national spectacle –

despite the regional, political, and ethnographic challenges that existed in their diverse and complex territory (Arias Vanegas 133-134).

There are considerable emblematic literary and artistic vestiges in *Costumbrismo* that allow for a modern implementation of ekphrasis. By focusing on some of the most representative Colombian nineteenth-century “sketches of customs” published in *El Mosaico* and *Museo de cuadros de costumbres*, I argue that most *cuadros* painted a collage of the nation with words, which was then reinforced by comparing the verbal representation to the visual arts. This group of *costumbrista* writers is analyzed with associated paintings that correspond to the imagery of the *cuadros* around the time of publication, sometimes found in the periodicals and journals of the time, along with the paintings by Colombian artists such as José Manuel Groot and Ramón Torres Méndez. These writers created textual and visual works that were purposely constructed in an effort to create a unified but beautifully complex representation of this emerging nation’s identity, in contrast to the Liberal paradigm as a way of comparison.

This study also examined the creation of a national identity by these artists through a selected list of examples displaying distinct themes. One aspect was the emphasis on depicting rural customs over urban spaces, especially from the Conservative standpoint, to demonstrate the idealization of a colonial past. The nostalgia of the “*Costumbres de antaño*,” much like Groot’s *cuadro*, is a popular theme of many *costumbristas* who yearned to return to a tranquil time before the Liberal (secular) reforms and the effects of modernity were changing their nation. The importance of following the principles of the Catholic faith was likewise emphasized in order to convey their ideal vision for the nation, given that the Conservatives strongly believed that the Church was the pillar of this foundation.

Another aspect highlighted in this study has been the representation of Colombia's marginalized inhabitants, especially the minorities in the context of a post-independence Latin American society, including women, Indigenous, and Black people. Following nineteenth-century scientific trends, these human types were also "classified" as different categories to be examined, observed, and portrayed in accordance with their outward appearance, often from a prejudiced notion of race associated with a specific region and social status. Female figures were often represented in light of the religious gaze of the *costumbristas*, presenting them through the lens of expected piousness and social decorum that was the norm in these patriarchal societies, and employing essential levels of domestic responsibilities. However, *costumbristas* also showcased women trespassing these boundaries as objects of satire and criticism. Descriptions of clothing also played a major role in how nineteenth-century women were perceived, even above the opinions associated with skin color.

As analyzed in this dissertation, the *costumbrista* writers' and artists' gaze concerning the nineteenth-century national portrayal of Colombia was based on a position of privilege, centered mainly in Bogotá and Antioquia. For instance, they would portray the popular customs of the Andean regions, like the *bambuco* dance and the local instrument called *tiple* but compare them to Spanish versions as a redefined conduit. Regionalisms and popular culture practices were also often highlighted to show the diversity and exemplify its "local color," but other cultural characteristics were sometimes digressed to show a more homogenous nation devoid of racial differences. The obsession with "whitening" through miscegenation, especially from the Liberal perspective, continued past the colonial era.

Given that the coastal lowlands were the farthest from the city center of Bogotá (the hub of civilization), the Indigenous and African people groups who inhabited and worked diligently in the rural lands were regarded as the most “barbaric.” Although the portrayal of the marginalized *bogas* and *cargueros* often portrayed them as outcasts of society, one crucial function was their rigorous labor in serving as old-fashioned methods of transportation. They sacrificially worked to connect the complex geographical regions of Colombia through the Magdalena River and over the dangerous Andean Mountains, extending networks to facilitate the transportation of people and the exchange of natural resources and products across the Atlantic.

Colombian elites’ literary and visual perspectives regarding their portrayal of rural spaces and marginalized beings were filtered from the lens of political paradigms that determined how the nation and its people were depicted. On the one hand, Liberal intellectuals like Samper desired a more Europeanized approach and would alter their national representation to unify the land and people in accordance with their ideal of progress. On the other hand, Conservative *costumbristas* like Groot and Torres Méndez generally envisioned a nation that would adhere to its Catholic ideals and expectations. They often represented the rural regions in a positive light, honoring Spanish family lineage and heritage as a way to preserve the original value of their local traditions. In depicting the perspective of the “rural campesino,” these *costumbristas* desired to show a polished, unified image of Colombia as an emerging nation, maintaining its distinctive cultural traditions while adding political and religious subtones.

## B. Future Research and Final Remarks

The literary discourse presented in the *cuadros de costumbres* combined with the visual paintings merge to accentuate major themes explored in this study: Political ideologies, social and cultural traditions, and representations of its *national pueblo*, its territory, and its inhabitants. Amidst the relentless and contested political fluxes, Colombia profoundly sought to find and establish its own national identity. While there may not have been a specific, unified version of nationalism, given the political discrepancies, there was, nonetheless, an insatiable thirst from all sides for signifying Colombia's *own* (cultural) territorial limits in the scope of collective articulation.

As for future research, several routes can be explored from the baseline established in this dissertation. Within this time frame of the nineteenth century, one possibility is to explore additional works by other *costumbristas*, extending this selection of *cuadros de costumbres* and paintings to that of other local and foreign artists that were relevant at the time. While this study has centered on the contributions of Groot and Torres Méndez, it would be interesting to explore the work of other *costumbristas* who had specifically collaborated with another prominent Colombian artist, namely José María Espinosa.

Another possibility is to examine *caricaturas* or socio-political cartoons more closely. Indeed, “del cuadro de costumbres a la caricatura,” as Beatriz González Aranda affirms, “no hay sino un paso” (*Manual de arte* 207). Both Groot and Torres Méndez partook in this trend by creating political parodies manifested in their national Conservative-minded journal called *Los Matachines Ilustrados* as part of their repertoire (González Aranda, “Las caricaturas” par 16-17). As explained by Veronica Uribe

Hanabergh, the political and social cartoons reflected traces from Francisco de Goya's *Caprichos*, given that he was "un notable precursor de la caricatura de finales del XVIII y principios del XIX" (264). The dynamic between the texts and illustrations published in these satirical cartoons offers new possibilities for analyzing the image-text connections to highlight characteristic political connotations.

Different literary perspectives that can enhance this study include the study of additional genres besides the *cuadro* within *Costumbrismo*, from local to transatlantic representations. It would be of particular interest to devote an entire study to the Colombian novel *Manuela* by Eugenio Díaz, considered a pioneering literary work that interposes various narrative styles and elements within *Costumbrismo* (Reyes 202). This exemplary novel comprises a collection of *cuadros* fused into the same storyline. Finding similarities between the pictorial descriptions depicted by Díaz in *Manuela* would allow other genres to be analyzed under a similar scope of ekphrastic analysis. Also, the study of other subgenres from *cuadros de costumbres* to *cuentos* (short stories) would present a distinct dynamic, as suggested by a critic: "En el panorama literario colombiano, el cuadro de costumbres es el texto que recoge las tradiciones autóctonas y folclóricas del país, junto con todo su acervo cultural, para luego, y después de hecho el inventario narrativo del imaginario colectivo, pasar a la creación y consolidación estética y literaria del cuento" (Berrío Moncada 116). This aesthetic, literary transition would integrate new approaches of other subgenres that can serve as an interesting point of contrast.

Other potential studies would extend this to the changes after the 1880s into the twentieth century. It would specifically concentrate on the shifts produced in the arts, as the *costumbristas* had a redefined focus on political changes at the turn of the century. In

nineteenth-century Colombia, the illustrated press became a catapult of politically infused national emblems and messages. Its propagation swiftly emerged due to the widespread practice of lithography that was becoming increasingly popular, as this also promoted the development of graphic arts in general. Unquestionably, examples of the growth of the periodical press with more colorful illustrations would be a great addition to the image-text connection with newspapers such as *Papel Periódico Ilustrado* (1881-1882) (González Aranda, *Manual* 353).

In his final years, Groot welcomed the new generation of *costumbristas*, taking special interest in the works produced by the Mexican Felipe Santiago Gutierrez, founder of the Academia Vázquez in Colombia. A study of Groot's influence on this Mexican artist and the relations between *Costumbrismo* in Mexico and Colombia would be another possible area of interest. It would also venture into the image-text connection of some of Groot's poems, serving as a vibrant trace of history, art, and politics.

Ultimately, the brilliance of Groot's works as a writer and artist frames him as an excellent focal point for this dissertation, along with the exemplary visual works by Torres Méndez. Groot's knowledge of Colombian history and politics was likewise integrated into his creative works, with his *cuadros de costumbres* treated as if one were to contemplate a very detailed painting. Many of the other *costumbristas* studied exemplified a similar technique. In the end, their *cuadros* also verbalized their understanding of the creative power behind these written depictions that would illustrate and *paint an image with words*.



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Figure 3.1 *Unos yerbateros. Francisco Javier Matís y el doctor Céspedes* (ca. 1845). Watercolor on paper. 33 x 23 cm. Colección Rivas Sacconi, Bogotá. (González and Segura, *Groot* 37).

Figure 3.2 *La venta (Paisaje Sabanero)* (1857). Oil on canvas. 43.3 x 60 cm. Colección Fondo Cultural Cafetero, Bogotá. (González and Segura, *Groot* 35).

Figure 3.3 *Vista de un pueblo* (ca. 1830). Watercolor on paper. 23 x 33 cm. Colección Rivas Sacconi, Bogotá. (González and Segura, *Groot* 34).

Figure 3.4 *La barbería* (ca. 1830). Watercolor on paper. 23 x 33 cm. Colección Rivas Sacconi, Bogotá. (González and Segura, *Groot* 35).

Figure 3.7 *Imitación de la naturaleza del campo de Pueblo Viejo y Ubaque* (1863). Oil on canvas. 103 x 141.9 cm. Centro Cultural de Bogotá, Museo de Arte Miguel Urrutia. (Colección de Arte Banco de la República AP2244).

Figure 3.8 *Agrícolas de Funza* (ca.1850). Lithography. 23 x 33 cm. Colección Rivas Sacconi, Bogotá. (González and Segura, *Groot* 35).

Figure 4.1 *Señora preparando alimentos* (n.d.). Watercolor. Biblioteca Luis Ángel Arango (Castro Carvajal, Beatriz, ed. *Historia de la vida cotidiana en Colombia*. Bogotá Editorial Norma, 1996).

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Figure 3.5 *Paseo campestre* (ca. 1856). Oil on canvas. 107 cm x 170 cm. Museo del Seminario Mayor, Bogotá. (Sánchez Cabra, *Ramón Torres* 154).

Figure 3.6 *Paseo campestre* (ca. 1865). Pencil on paper. 22.5 x 32.3 cm. Colección Biblioteca Luis Angel Arango (Colección de Arte Banco de la República AP1249; Sánchez Cabra, *Ramón Torres* 180).

Figure 4.2 *Criada indígena* (n.d.). Graphite on paper. 22.5 x 25 cm. (Colección de Arte Banco de la República AP3078).

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- Figure 4.7 *Baile de campesinos, Sabana de Bogotá* (1878). Lithography. 26 x 33 cm. (Museo Nacional de Colombia 3765; Torres Mendez, *Álbum de cuadros* 22).
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### PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

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