
RESEARCH REPORTS AND NOTES

JUANA MANUELA GORRITI AND THE PERSISTENCE OF MEMORY

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Abstract: This study analyzes the work of Juana Manuela Gorriti, one of the most prominent women writers in nineteenth-century Argentina. It unravels the notions that structure Gorriti's ideas of literature, history, and nation and illustrates how her work established close links between memory, continuity, and the role of women in the creation of national identities in Latin America. Her short stories and autobiographical pieces are situated within their historical context and literary milieu. The Rosas dictatorship and its aftermath are examined as played out in Gorriti's fiction, in stories where violence against women, the ghostly, and popular culture became central themes through which Gorriti created myths of personal history and national identity. The essay also explores the ways in which her female characters illustrate the strategies of ordinary women for turning their social constraints into public action.

As Latin American nations struggled with issues of national self-definition after the wars of independence ended, writers and intellectuals played prominent roles in the debates on national identity pervading the political scene in the middle of the nineteenth century. Among the many writers participating in the burgeoning intellectual activity that shaped national politics in Argentina, Juana Manuela Gorriti is one of the few women writers of the period to have earned a significant place in Argentine literary history. During her lifetime, she was the most widely read woman writer throughout Latin America.¹ Although her work subse-

1. See the numerous biographical and celebratory sketches of Gorriti written by prominent

quently slipped into oblivion, it has been recently rediscovered by feminist critics.² Gorriti's fictional and autobiographical corpus affords a window on the Argentine past at a time when few women were writing history. They were concerned nevertheless with finding ways of expressing and resolving the tension-fraught relationship between the country's past and its turbulent present as it affected their gender. Scholars are now moving away from Latin American feminist criticism based on men's views of women (Garrels 1989) and archetypal classifications (Hoberman 1974; Jaquette 1974). As they do so, the theoretical foundation for examining the strategies and ideologies of women's texts should allow us to unearth women's participation in the writing of national history and the negotiation of shared spaces between the genders. My purpose here is to unravel the underlying assumptions that structure Gorriti's ideas of literature, history, and nation and to illustrate how her work establishes close links among memory, continuity, and the role of women in creating national identities in Latin America.

Gorriti was born in 1818, eight years after Argentina won its independence from Spain on 25 May 1810. Independence was declared by the province of Buenos Aires on that date, but it did not extend to the rest of the provinces until 1816. Her father, a hero of that war and an officer in the Unitarian Army, was forced into exile in Bolivia after he was defeated by Juan Facundo Quiroga in 1831. Juana Manuela was thirteen at that time, and she did not return to Argentina permanently until more than forty years later, in 1875. At fifteen, she married Isidoro Belzú, a Bolivian officer who subsequently became president of his country. They had two daughters, but it was not a happy marriage, and Gorriti left him to live in Lima with her children. There she edited journals, organized popular literary salons, and became a prolific writer. Her numerous articles and about thirty short stories were published mainly in the 1860s and 1870s, and her

intellectuals of her time, such as Pastor Obligado (1892, xix), Bartolomé Mitre (Obligado 1892, xxxi), and José M. Torres Caicedo (1907). Even Ricardo Rojas considered Gorriti an exceptional woman, although he dismissed her work as "deleznable desde el punto de vista literario" (1924–1925, 8:796–98).

2. Departing from studies that focused almost exclusively on the fantastic and Indianist aspects of Gorriti's work (Meehan 1981; Regazzoni 1984), several U.S. and Latin American critics have paid recent attention to her views on history and nation. Francine Masiello's (1992) book on women, nation, and literary culture in Argentina established Gorriti as one of the most effective female definers of Argentine national identity, along with other women writers like Eduarda Mansilla, Juana Manso, and Rosa Guerra. Masiello's study navigates the areas between the binary oppositions that have traditionally divided Argentine culture to find the spaces occupied by women that do not fit into the dichotomies of civilization and barbarism, public and private, federalist and unitarian, city and country. See also the studies by Leah Fletcher (1990), Lucía Guerra Cunningham (1987), Cristina Iglesia (1993), María Gabriela Mizraje (1993), Mary Louise Pratt (1990; 1993), and Gertrude Yeager (1989).

three autobiographical works in the late 1880s. Even after her official return to Argentina, she continued to travel back and forth to Bolivia and Peru, settling in Buenos Aires only in the final few years of her life. She died in 1892 at the age of seventy-four.³

The comparatively high degree of literacy enjoyed by nineteenth-century Argentine women (by Latin American standards) fostered the proliferation of public circles that brought men and women together in social, intellectual, and artistic activities. For example, Manuela Rosas played an important part in her father's government as his secretary and hostess. President Domingo Sarmiento's educational reforms contributed to the professionalization of women teachers and led to significant advances in their education and the diffusion of material written by female intellectuals throughout the country. Gorriti herself founded schools and supplemented her income by teaching. Her contemporary Juana Manso, a writer who collaborated with Sarmiento, directed the journal *Anales de la Educación Común* (1867–1875), in which she proposed controversial curricular reforms. Journalism by women grew consistently from 1830, from small literary magazines addressed to a female readership to publications concerned with wider social and cultural topics. By the 1870s, Buenos Aires had become the center of women's journalism in Latin America, with Gorriti as Argentina's representative editing *La Alborada del Plata* (1877–1879) in Peru. Later, Peruvian writer Clorinda Matto de Turner edited *El Búcaro Americano* (1896–1901, 1905–1908) in Buenos Aires. Women writers from all over South America contributed to Argentine magazines and fostered a female inter-American intellectual network.⁴ Exclusively male clubs began to appear only in the 1880s. Until that time, literary gatherings, particularly if hosted by women, brought both genders together in debates on national consolidation (Carlson 1987, 49). Mariquita Sánchez's salons were particularly notorious after 1806 and again in the 1840s for stirring up debates on literature, culture, and patriotism. Gorriti's own weekly discussions on literary and social issues in Lima in the 1870s attracted prominent men and women writers from several Latin American countries. Local newspapers reported enthusiastically on these meetings, where "lo mas notable de nuestras escritoras y escritores nacionales concurren ávidamente á pasar noches de verdadera expansión

3. For more biographical details, see Mary Berg (1990) and Dionisio Chaca (1940), as well as Martha Mercader's biographical novel (1980).

4. Pratt has argued that women tend toward international rather than national links in their political and intellectual activities because their exclusion from the nation's politics and culture pushes them toward associations that are gender-based rather than national (1993, 55). For a history of women's journalism in Argentina, see Néstor Auza (1988). For a bibliography of these periodicals, see Janet Greenberg (1990), and for studies of particular magazines, see Masiello (1992).

para el espíritu y de precioso provecho para la inteligencia" (Gorriti 1892, 141).

The notion of "separate spheres" has been dismissed as a presupposition informing Western culture that obscures the contributions of women in the public arena and the interpenetration of the spaces in which men and women commonly operate.⁵ Despite all the achievements in women's cultural emancipation and the authority and intellectual power with which women writers were endowed as participants in public intellectual debates (Molloy 1991b, 108), the fragmentation of society according to gender roles and the exclusion of women from certain activities remained a concern in Gorriti's time. Constant reminders occurred of how much was yet to be done. As a woman in an unusual public role, she demonstrated a commitment to women's issues, which easily found their way into her literary gatherings in Lima and sparked the interest of both men and women.

In the published records from one of these meetings, an essay entitled "La educación social de la mujer" addressed the question of separate spheres. Author Abel Delgado lamented the fragmentation of society: "El hombre puede estar siempre donde la mujer está, prestarla un inmenso apoyo, dispensarla sus consejos; mientras que la mujer no puede estar siempre donde está el hombre ni ayudarlo, siquiera en su opinión ilustrada, en las diversas tareas y cuestiones de la vida." He distinguished three social spheres, of which the domestic was indisputably a female domain. But Delgado also justified the participation of women in law and politics: "La política interesa á las mujeres lo mismo que nos interesa á los hombres, y sería un grave error asegurar lo contrario . . . , y conviene á la sociedad entera que la mujer ponga en ello sus muy delicadas manos y su agudo entendimiento" (Delgado 1892, 32–38). Although many of Argentina's most vocal women writers at the time advocated educational and cultural equality between the genders (Auza 1988,34), these remarks bespoke social constraints still placed on women that separated them from political action and demonstrated a concern already present in certain groups with widening the extent of their demands for equality.

Nancy Fraser's concept of "subaltern counterpublics"—constituted

5. See Michelle Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere (1974). Linda Kerber commented, "historians now seek to show how women's allegedly 'separate sphere' was affected by what men did, and how activities defined by women in their own sphere influenced and even set constraints and limitations on what men might choose to do" (Kerber 1988, 18). The research carried out by the Seminar on Women and Culture in Latin America has shown that women have operated in the public spaces of church, marketplace, and journalism but that "much male-dominated political decision-making is done in enclosed, exclusive spaces" (1990, 6). Masiello's study points out the many ways in which the public and the private intersected in nineteenth-century Argentina, particularly in the publicization of private spaces (1992, 12, 54).

by women, workers, persons of color, gays, and lesbians—deconstructs the idea of “a single, overarching public sphere” that operates “to the advantage of dominant groups and to the disadvantage of subordinates” (Fraser 1990, 66–67). These other publics are “parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs” (Fraser 1990, 66–67). This model is useful in thinking about the ways in which Gorriti’s literary discourse situates women as actively involved in national consolidation, particularly in areas like war and politics where women claimed a place that was still denied them. Her stories depict male and female characters as inseparable and interdependent, the actions of each having an inevitable lasting effect on the other. Yet the plots are built around the central position of female characters, whose tactics for defining their identity as national subjects and claiming national attention for their specific needs constitute an aspect of Argentine history that official discourse tended to ignore. Through Gorriti’s fiction, as Asunción Lavrin has suggested, readers may begin to account for the strategies of ordinary women lacking Gorriti’s access to intellectual circles to turn their social constraints and limitations into unconventional but effective public action (1985, 10).

Mariano Pelliza’s prologue to Gorriti’s *Panoramas de la vida* (1876) stated the importance of historical background for literature to serve the specific needs of American readers:

Hoy se le pide á la novela algo mas que la pintura de las costumbres y sobre todo, de esas costumbres suntuarias que han llegado al mas completo refinamiento. Esto, por si solo no es de provecho para los pueblos americanos. . . .

Si el romance ha de ser una escuela donde se aprenda á conocer el mundo, conviene cultivar esta rama de la literatura relacionándola con la historia á cualquiera otra faz de la ciencia social o positiva, y no en la rejion puramente subjetiva de la especulacion intelectual. (Gorriti 1876, 12)

This passage assigns a crucial utilitarian function to literature in general and to Gorriti’s work in particular: literature, engaged with history or science, was to provide the new American nations with an important tool of self-knowledge.

The relationship between literature and history is especially important for women, who have rarely had their experiences represented in official historical discourse. Given the scarcity of historical sources written by women in nineteenth-century Latin America,⁶ literature has much

6. Gorriti herself authored several biographical sketches that tackled the history of the nation through its heroes. See, for example, *Vida militar y política del General Don Dionisio de Puch* (1869). Juana Manso wrote one of the first history textbooks in Argentina, *Compendio de la historia de las provincias unidas del Río de la Plata desde su descubrimiento hasta el año de 1871* (1872). In Colombia, Soledad Acosta de Samper wrote several histories and biographies in the 1880s.

to reveal as scholars explore how women perceived and recollected history. Because the distinction between history and fiction is a blurred one at best, as Hayden White has repeatedly argued (1978), women's historical literature in Argentina can and should be read as a legitimate competitor with official history. In Bartolomé Mitre's version at least, official history refused to view the nation "as anything other than the dreamchild of several great men, all porteños by either birth or inclination" (Shumway 1991, 192). Gorriti understood literature's objective, particularly that of fiction, to be "un medio fácil y poderoso de difundir en el pueblo la historia y la geografía descriptiva" (cited in Batticuore 1993, 23). This emphasis on history and geography is echoed in the importance that Gorriti accorded to memory and land throughout her work as the central elements of continuity that constituted the nation.

Memories of Rosas: Stories from Sueños y realidades and Panoramas de la vida

The thematic core of the stories to be analyzed here is the Rosas dictatorship and its aftermath, a period of national turmoil and instability that produced an extensive literature of resistance. The best-known examples are Sarmiento's *Facundo* (1845) and José Mármol's *Amalia* (1851). Gorriti's interest in the past is part of the same phenomenon that gave the great historical novels of the nineteenth century a crucial role in the formation of the modern nations, as Doris Sommer has shown (1991). Yet the past inflects their project differently. Gorriti's stories on the Rosas period are based on the same historical events as *Amalia* but lack the programmatic vision present in this novel and the other writings of the Generation of 1837. Mármol, like Sarmiento and the rest of the members of this group, cultivated what Nicolás Shumway has called "an unfortunate genre in Argentine letters: the explanation of failure" (1991, 112).⁷ Their express intention was to examine the past in order to correct its mistakes in the future. But as Lucía Guerra Cunningham has argued, because Gorriti was a woman, she endured exile without the political ideology or the right to participate actively in the historical process available to men in exile (1987, 61). And she remained abroad much longer. Gorriti's approach demonstrates a stronger concern with Argentina's early national past, removed from the time of writing, as she searched for answers to the troubling questions of the present. She could imagine no future for Argentina until the country came to terms with its past—not as a failure, but as an integral part of its identity.

She became a founding member of the Colombian Academia de la Historia and stressed the need for studies in women's history (Hinds 1975, 34–35).

7. The other main members of the Generation of 1837 were Juan Bautista Alberdi and Esteban Echeverría.

Memory, according to Timothy Robins, is “a process through which identities are constructed or re-constituted in the present by actively articulating a relationship with the past” (1995, 209). His overview of different theoretical approaches foregrounds the study of memory as a constant reworking and modification of the past with “a future orientation.” It is expressed in J. Larraín’s assertion that “identity is not so much what one is as what one wants to be” (cited in Robins 1995, 212).

This notion is useful for understanding Gorriti’s impulse to dwell on the fleeting moment of independence long after it had been distorted by civil war and on the traces of destruction and terror of the Rosas regime long after he was gone. She thus created new images of what she wanted the nation to become again and also to avoid. This process is related to the emphasis in Romanticism on the search for the origins of the collective soul. It also suited Gorriti’s agenda of preserving memory and recording how this significant historical period affected women’s lives. In this regard, it has much in common with the *tradiciones* (1872–1910) written by her Peruvian colleague Ricardo Palma. Gorriti’s Peruvian legends (which lie beyond the scope of this essay) deal with an even more remote past pertaining to indigenous civilizations and the relationship between colonizer and colonized, while her Argentine stories tend to go only as far back as independence. All these writings reflect her attempt to distance herself from a painful present and establish a link between past and present to keep unresolved issues at the forefront of the national dialogue. Toward the end of her life, Gorriti shifted her emphasis gradually toward the local and the immediate. It was heavily inflected by a past that was still alive in her memory but one with which she had despaired of coming to terms. Through all these modes of remembrance, the effect of Gorriti’s stories is one of reconstruction and identity formation.

As a woman, Gorriti was especially concerned with the female victims of the Rosas regime. The dictator’s defeat left many problems unresolved for them. Whether writing of war-torn Argentina or postwar desolation, Gorriti constantly contrasted the present moment of writing with the glorious time of independence, the birth of the nation. She lingered on that defining moment, which came to represent for her and the members of the Generation of 1837 the essence of the authentic Argentina.⁸ What she mythologized and heroicized was what Eric Hobsbawm later termed “an invented tradition.” In reality, this period was cut short almost immediately by fratricidal wars and factional disagreements over what kind of nation Argentina should become, hence the invented nature of these origins. Independence was in reality an irrecoverable moment that took

8. Pratt has argued that men tend to view independence as a new beginning (1993, 58), but this idea can also be found in some of Gorriti’s fiction.

shape as memory, even though it never existed. Nor did Juana Manuela live through it, having been born eight years after the events she narrated.

The idealized nature of that moment of independence links Gorriti's project to the utopian mode, which Darko Suvin has defined as a "verbal construction" through which an author seeks to be removed from his or her environment in order to "point" toward a more perfect sociopolitical order (1973, 121–24). Although this alternative world tends in utopian fiction to be situated in the future, Gorriti's past was equally infused with hope and resulted similarly from a period of social upheaval serving as a simultaneous interrogation of "the moment of its production as a text" (Bartkowski 1989, 6–11). Gorriti's gaze was directed toward the past but was also firmly rooted in the nation's present. The link between memory and utopia is related to the problematic nature of historical origins in Latin American literature. Lois Parkinson Zamora has argued that this body of writing tends to depict its "unusable past" as "a series of ruptures, of discontinuous fragments" (1990, 13). Yet dwelling on the moment of independence was one of Gorriti's strategies for constructing what she believed the nation needed most: historical continuity. She seemed to overlook the rupture inherent in independence or its disjunction from subsequent events, as if she were defending the glory of those days from being erased from the nation's memory. Her narratives sewed together the fragments of the past, foregrounding similarities and differences between them in the same process.

The stories that deal with the Rosas dictatorship and the conflicts between *unitarios* and *federalistas* contrast the futile and savage violence linked to territorial and factional disputes with the meaningful, even glorious violence that brought about independence. The two time lines in "El pozo del Yocci" (1876) exemplify this point. One begins in 1814, when the nation was still fighting to liberate itself from Spain; the other begins twenty-five years later, when Argentina was at war with Bolivia over a piece of territory. The stage is the same, as are some of the characters who lived to fight in both wars. One night, two army officers reminisce that the War of Independence was completely different from the present territorial conflict: "Aquella era una guerra santa; ésta es una guerra fratricida. ¿Qué hay de común entre la una y la otra?" (Gorriti 1946, 198).

Continuity is provided in the story by the characters who survive both wars, forming a human link that reaches across the years into the present. Gorriti's stories keep the violent past alive in order to repay the debt to forgotten heroes and to give voice to a parallel "imagined community" of exiles from different eras that was excluded from the nation, one to which she belonged. In "El pozo del Yocci," Gorriti included even those who were defeated and had to leave because they remained loyal to the Spanish cause. They share with the author an attachment to the land of their birth: "Dispersos como los hijos de Abraham moran en todas las la-

titudes, y en las regiones más remotas encontraré con frecuencia, bajo una cabellera cana, dos ojos negros que han robado su fuego al sol de la pampa, y una voz de acento inolvidable traerá a vuestra mente el radiante miraje de esa tierra amada de Dios" (1946, 168). This description of Argentina's exiles of the past, evoking Gorriti's identification with them, exemplifies Benedict Anderson's assertion that all communities are imagined, not only within spatial boundaries but also across time (Anderson 1983). His ideal figure of the citizen-soldier as the embodiment of the nation, however, excludes women from the imagined community, as Mary Louise Pratt has pointed out (1990, 5–51). In these texts by Gorriti, unity built on male demonstrations of patriotism prevails as the army becomes idealized. But war and exile affected women as well. Yet they were not included in the camaraderie of the "centenares de hombres de razas, costumbres y creencias diversas, unidos por el sentimiento nacional, [que] guerrearán juntos, partiendo la misma vida de azares y peligros" (1946, 170). Cultural barriers were easily overcome by nationalistic sentiment, but gender barriers remained unshaken as long as the nation was being forged on the battlefield.

Guerra Cunningham has argued that Gorriti "contempla la violencia como un fenómeno propio del hacer masculino en el cual la mujer sólo actúa tangencialmente como víctima, como bienhechora o como agente de fuerzas sobrenaturales" (1987, 63). I would argue that women's actions, rather than being "tangential," were catalyzed by violence and paralleled forms of nation building that directly challenged the male models. Violence was something that took place on the battleground, but it was also a force that destroyed the ideal of family and domesticity that Gorriti identified with the nation.⁹ In Argentina under the Rosas dictatorship, the political commitment of women was chiefly demonstrated either through their public support of federalistas or unitarios (Guerra Cunningham 1987, 61) or through allegiances that cut across partisan politics (Masiello 1992, 6, 22).

Margaret Higonnet's proposal of civil war as a metaphor for inner struggle and the battle of the sexes (1989) can enhance understanding of the conflicted relationships between Gorriti's male and female characters. Her heroines tend to be loyal to individuals rather than to political factions. Following their feelings rather than rigid political beliefs, these female characters embody criticism and praise of both the federalist and unitarian causes. For example, Gorriti used the same basic character in two different settings as an effective element of federalist support for and unitarian resistance against the Rosas regime. In "El guante negro," Ma-

9. Gorriti wrote on at least one occasion about a woman who fought in the wars of independence (Iglesia 1993, 6). Recent studies on women and war have highlighted the inaccuracy of the traditional gendered split between war and home (Cooper et al. 1989).

nuela Rosas (the tyrant's daughter) is negatively portrayed as a traitor to her friends and a defender of her father. But a thinly disguised Manuela is also cast positively as Clemencia in "La hija del mazorquero," a story showing how a woman uses activities permissible for her sex to disrupt her father's actions in the public arena. Disgusted by the violence sown by her father throughout the city, Clemencia leaves her home every night to try to alleviate the suffering of the families he is destroying. In the course of her humanitarian actions, she falls in love with Manuel, a unitario being hunted by her father. The lovers conspire to defeat this plan. To save the man she loves, Clemencia exchanges clothes with his imprisoned wife, Emilia, so the couple can escape. Passing for Emilia, she is murdered by her own father, sacrificing her life not only for Manuel but for her father's ultimate redemption. He ends up turning his hatred toward himself, thus sparing further victims.

The entanglement between the personal and the political dimensions produces similar instances of divided loyalties in two other stories in which women are placed in a position where their love for a man is inevitably interpreted as a political betrayal of the father. In "El lucero del manantial," a unitarian's daughter, María, falls in love with a mysterious man who turns out to be an enemy soldier. Their short-lived passionate affair in the wilderness overcomes her will and produces a son, Enrique. Her lover eventually stops visiting her, and María marries another man, who adopts her son. Sixteen years later, she goes to the capital, where her husband, until then a friend of Rosas, is murdered by the dictator for daring to vote against him in the Congreso. The violence escalates, and the boy is about to be executed. María visits Rosas to plead for her son's life and suddenly discovers that the tyrant is none other than her former lover and Enrique's real father. But by the time she reveals the boy's identity to Rosas, it is too late to save his life. María's secret affair with the "evil," "sinister," "somber" young soldier is portrayed as a betrayal of her aging father, yet the betrayal is presented as beyond her control, Rosas's influence over her being almost supernatural.

In "La novia del muerto," the situation is reversed. In this war story, a woman is torn between personal and political allegiances. Modeled on *Romeo and Juliet*, the plot focuses on Vital, daughter of an anti-unitarian father, who falls in love with an officer of the enemy forces named Horacio Ravelo. Vital finds herself caught up in the center of a national conflict: "Si callo, lo pierdo; si hablo, traiciono a mi padre . . ." (1946, 141). Although the lovers get married, the groom decides in favor of patriotism and leaves his bride to answer the call of arms: "el amante había hecho lugar al soldado." Both heroines form an alliance with the enemy behind their fathers' backs. In María's case, her subsequent marriage to a federalist who also refuses to vote along party lines signals a move toward national reconciliation. But for both heroines, the breakup of the family signals

tragedy. Gorriti's desire to put an end to factionalism led her to support the project of the Generation of 1837, who differed from old unitarians in their desire to make peace for the nation across party lines (Shumway 1991, 132).

Thus in Gorriti's fiction, national identity is often formulated through questions of personal identity. Split selves and broken families in a country torn by civil war dominate her work. The tension between the two historical periods that form the background for her stories— independence and the Rosas dictatorship—is paralleled by crises in personal identity manifested by some of her characters, whose split subjectivity indicates a conflict brought about by juxtaposing national history with personal memory. Here the concept of trauma may illuminate how Gorriti reworked history through distorted remembrance. Reflecting on Freud's understanding of trauma as a wound to the mind, Cathy Caruth has explored its role in the recognition of "a history that is no longer straightforwardly referential." She argues, "A rethinking of reference is aimed not at eliminating history but at resituating it in our understanding, that is, at precisely permitting *history* to arise where *immediate understanding* may not" (Caruth 1996, 11, her emphasis). Gorriti's narrative strategies—split selves, cross-dressing, and ghostly figures—can all be explained as attempts to avoid referring directly to painful historical events and to express them metaphorically through psychologically acceptable imagery.

In "Gubi Amaya," a story based on Gorriti's secret return to her childhood hometown in 1842, the narrator-protagonist Emma describes herself as divided internally between present and past, childhood and adulthood, what is and what might have been: "Mientras caminaba, como si hubiera en mí dos personas diferentes, la una, hija agreste de aquellas selvas, la otra, viajera que de lejanos países había venido a contemplarlas, me refería a mí misma la historia de todos esos sitios, que conocía . . ." (1946, 11). Emma sets up a dialogue between her two selves as if they were two different people, a situation reflected by her female sexual identity being clothed in male attire to avoid recognition. But contrary to what might be expected, this external change is not the source of the problem. The division is internal, between the child who grew up in Argentina and the woman who spent most of her life in exile. The disguise enables the protagonist to work through her identity conflict in allowing discovery of previously ignored aspects of the self, as María Gabriela Mizraje has pointed out (1993, 6). Yet Emma's cross-dressing is not generally a strategy employed by female characters in Gorriti's stories to construct an alternative public sphere. Such behavior does not make women into men, nor does it lead to breaking down the boundaries between male and female roles.¹⁰

10. One of the few known examples in this period of cross-dressing for the purpose of entering combat is Juana Manso's *Los misterios del Plata* (1846). This part of the story, however,

As Pratt has pointed out, cross-dressing functions as “a device for imagining the woman as a republican citizen-subject (though not as a man)” (1992, 194). In “Gubi Amaya,” dressing as a man fails to disguise the female protagonist. Emma betrays her identity by speaking emotionally, “like a woman” (1946, 21), and other women easily see through her masculine camouflage.

Gorriti’s heroines are just as likely to attempt to penetrate male spaces by disguising themselves as other women. This act of dressing as another is for Mizraje the opposite of nudity, and it diminishes women’s vulnerability and gives them strength (1993, 6). In “El pozo del Yocci,” the wife of an Argentine army officer who suspects her husband of infidelity tries this strategy. Juana is convinced that men exclude their wives from certain places not to protect them from harm, but so the men can indulge in their forbidden pleasures. Dressed in a costume disguising her as another woman, she finds her suspicions confirmed by the men’s astonished looks in the camp, where only prostitutes are allowed. These women’s presence undermines the gender-based motives for segregation and exposes men’s motives as purely personal and completely unrelated to matters of national interest. Although Juana’s motive for penetrating this male space is also personal, it represents the more general exclusion—not only from war or politics—that many Argentine women felt was destroying their families and their relationships with men.

Guerra Cunningham’s discussion of Gorriti’s vision of history indicated that her stories “omiten la problemática nacional” that is found in *Amalia* (1987, 70). Not until *La tierra natal* (1889) did this omission begin to be noticeable consistently in Gorriti’s writing, although it may seem evident in earlier works because she found history understandable only through the turbulent personal histories of individuals. Moreover, the concept of the nation can only be internalized at the particular level rather than at the general. In her later work, individual questions tend to supersede even the familial emphasis of earlier stories. Beatriz Sarlo has theorized that narrating the private and personal dimension was the way in which nineteenth-century Latin American women writers pushed the limits of acceptable female genres in order to write history (1991, 243). Yet Gorriti wrote focusing directly on the historical and the national. As Josefina Ludmer has argued, if what is personal and private is understood in terms of other broader discourses, then it disappears as personal and private (1985, 54). For Gorriti, the nation as a concept needed to be expressed in the concrete, the specific, the individual, the local. The national dimension is present in her concern over how national events affect individuals. Such subjects are often overlooked in official versions of history, which are

was appended by a male editor in 1924 and is “not consonant with the pacifist course demonstrated earlier in Manso’s novel” (Masiello 1992, 74–75).

more likely to deal with how heroic individuals affected the course of the nation. Whereas Mármol turned general sectors of society into allegorical characters, Gorriti's characters shape the nation's history by forming a mosaic of personal histories in which the idea of citizenship is more prominent than partisanship.

Although Gorriti dwells on individual histories to a large extent in all her work, this connection between the individual and the national dimension is more forcefully pressed in the stories set during the Rosas dictatorship. Even in her more conventionally historical work, *Vida militar y política del General Don Dionisio de Puch*, the history of the nation is channeled through the biography of an individual. The two become indistinguishably intertwined in "Camila O'Gorman," a short story based on a true episode that transformed Camila O'Gorman (1828–1848) into a romantic heroine of Argentine history. The daughter of a wealthy federalist, Camila fell in love with Ladislao Gutiérrez, a priest from a federalist family, and ran away with him under a false identity. The Rosas army ended their illicit love affair by executing them both, despite the fact that Camila was pregnant.¹¹ Gorriti's account shows how the public could not be kept separate from the private in Argentina under Rosas. It also shows how one individual's situation affects the narrator, a woman who visits Camila's resting place and sees the beautiful landscape transformed through her evocation of "el blanco fantasma de una mártir" (Gorriti 1876, 370). While Gorriti's characters at times possess allegorical qualities, she never let her readers forget that they were conceived as real people whose very real sufferings and actions bring home the meaning of the general concepts of history and nation.

Another subtheme in Gorriti's identification of the national with the personal is the breakup of families as a consequence of political struggles, recalling a discursive model prevailing in other writers of her time. In Gorriti's work, the national discourse on independence is articulated through her own family's past, a practice that has the effect of associating the nation with an ideal of family and domesticity. The familial model for national reconciliation was a common metaphor throughout the period of national consolidation in Latin America, not exclusive to women's definitions of national identity (Franco 1989, 84; Sommer 1991, 20; Masiello 1992, 18–19, 47). Mármol's *Amalia* is a case in point, as is the concept of *patria* held by Sarmiento and Juan Bautista Alberdi (Rodríguez Pérsico 1988, 96). This notion is latent in Gorriti's memorialization of her father's work for the national cause.

Gorriti associates the triumph of the colony over Spain with her father's heroism, and his defeat by Quiroga with the beginning of the de-

11. For more information on this episode, see Carlson (1987, 47–48) and Sosa de Newton (1967, 100–105).

struction of the nation-building project. The earlier moment of glory, although imagined, is presented as a memory inseparable from consciousness of personal and national loss. Her father's achievements are also idealized, because what Gorriti herself lived through were the years of his defeat and exile. This disjunction between her actual memory and what she chose to memorialize causes the displacement of Gorriti's nationalism onto her father. Through him she imagined her own vicarious participation in the nation's birth at a time when she was too young to be involved in those events as well as the wrong gender. At the same time, writing about her father and perpetuating his memory allowed Gorriti to carry on his truncated life's work. General José Ignacio Gorriti is portrayed in Juana Manuela's autobiography, *La tierra natal*, as the ultimate patriot, "un hombre al que Salta acudía en esas situaciones extremas" who was "incansable en el servicio de su país," influential in war as well as peace (Gorriti 1889, 87–88). In "Gubi Amaya," the father is evoked as a painful absence. Emma visits the family house that now belongs to someone else, the place where her father expected to rest from the war: "Pero Dios no lo quiso así. El castillo yacía allí en ruinas, las tierras pertenecían a un extraño, y el viejo veterano no vió amanecer para él un solo día de reposo, hasta aquel en que descendió a descansar eternamente en el sepulcro bajo un cielo extranjero" (1946, 16). Gorriti's idealization of her father's stature is accompanied by identifying her own childhood with the nation's, a "genetic link with the country's independence" not unlike Sarmiento's in *Recuerdos de provincia* (Molloy 1991a, 30). Gorriti imagined Argentina as a childhood paradise destroyed by civil wars (Guerra Cunningham 1987, 64), even though it never really existed, thus endowing the country's fictitious existence with heroic and mythological significance.

To reconcile Gorriti's anti-war message that war destroys families with her admiration for her father's military achievements, she cast him as a benevolent man working for peace after independence was attained. A scene in *La tierra natal* recounts how General Gorriti was chosen by the provincial government to mediate a conflict with a fragment of the Colombian Army stationed in the region, whose excesses were terrorizing the city. He combined his military authority with his ability to touch the hearts of the unruly Colombians, convincing them that after giving their best to the wars of independence, they were free. He made them see the uselessness of their weapons and their loneliness, their lack of family and home, and invited them to put down their weapons and work the land. Enthralled by the general's brief speech, the Colombians were transformed into peaceful Argentine citizens, "parte integrante de nuestras familias" (Gorriti 1889, 91). The transformation of their caudillo, the most rebellious of them all, from a man of war into a "man of work" required not only animals and tools for working the land but the love of a beautiful woman. Thus General Gorriti combined American unity with the family

ideal. As in the national novels analyzed by Sommer (1991), the old warriors put down their swords and pick up their plowshares, fall out of hate and into love with loyal women in order to build up a new national family through romance.

In Gorriti's fiction, conflicts between lovers or between fathers and daughters bound by relationships diametrically opposed to her own are embodied in patriarchal figures whose outmoded political opinions are disregarded by daughters seeking love across political lines. These conflicts represent the breakup of the country as a direct consequence of the destruction of the family and attempts to forget the past. Conflicts also appear between male members of the same family, but men's political allegiances appear to be more clear-cut than women's. In "El pozo del Yocci," a young man's estrangement from his Spanish family because of his commitment to the cause of Argentine independence is presented as a necessary evil brought about by "el divorcio de un mundo nuevo, que quería vivir de su joven existencia, y de un mundo añejo, que pretendía encadenarlo a la suya, decrépita y caduca" (Gorriti 1946, 167). The metaphor of divorce, however, does not signal family breakup as much as the birth of a new national family. Furthermore, the young man's decision takes place at a time in the nation's history when, for Gorriti, options were clearer, the enemy was a more unequivocal outsider, violence was more justified.

Rather than portraying exceptional women, or "creatures through or to whom things simply happened" (Elshtain 1981, 13), Gorriti's stories feature ordinary persons thrown by events into extraordinary circumstances, private women who often seek to turn their personal relationships with men into a form of political activity, as Gorriti did with her father. Jean Franco has pointed out that Latin American women were viewed as "guardians of private life, which from Independence onward was increasingly seen as a shelter from political turmoil" (1989, 81). Yet the problems of Gorriti's fictional heroines must be understood in a context in which active participation in national affairs often required a subversive transformation of domestic space and of romantic and familial relationships.

The Ghosts of Memory: Stories of Return from Exile

The relationship between the personal and the political, the family and the nation, memory and history in Gorriti's work finds expression in ghostly figures. In "El lucero del manantial" and "La novia del muerto," the female protagonists turn into ghosts, one dead and one living, due to the impossibility of reconciling their political and their personal allegiances. Unitarian officer Ravelo is eventually killed by Quiroga's army. A priest jealous of Vital's love for Ravelo disguises himself and visits her in the middle of the night, leading her to believe he is her husband. The next

morning, when she goes to the battlefield to bury the dead, she sees Ravelo's dead body and faints. From that day on, Vital becomes "a fantastic being," a ghostly shadow of her former self who never sleeps and never changes, a woman who could find happiness only in madness. In "La novia del muerto," María, unable to recover from the loss of her father, her husband, and her son to the cruelty of her former lover, ends up becoming a ghost who roams the pampas, reminding travelers and natives of a family disaster that is also a national tragedy. Reminiscent of the Mexican legend of La Llorona, these ghosts serve as constant reminders of the unresolved conflicts that are tearing Argentina apart. The women die, but their stories persist to haunt those who come after them.

The ghosts in Gorriti's stories have been discussed almost exclusively as a fantastic element, but they are also deeply linked to her national preoccupations. Her ghosts perpetuate the influence of the past into the present, providing continuity for women's experience at a time when men have laid down their weapons and gone on to political action, leaving women's concerns largely unaddressed and their war suffering unaddressed. A ghostly atmosphere pervades several of Gorriti's short stories as a metaphor for the past and an expression of women's traumatic suffering amidst violent attempts to consolidate the nation. In her later work, ghosts also symbolize the persistence of memory, as a simulacrum of the glorious days of childhood and independence. This association is evident in the stories that narrate her own experience of return from exile, when she found Argentina a shadow of its former self, an empty silhouette of what used to exist.

In "Gubi Amaya," the sight of an old hero of independence with a sick daughter brings to Emma's mind the image of "el fantasma del pasado elevando en sus brazos la sombra del porvenir" (1946, 45). This image carries over into the "mudo saludo" of the ghosts of her dead friends that greets the aging narrator of *La tierra natal* on returning to her hometown of Salta after many years abroad (1889, 37). She calls herself a vestige of "ese mundo de otro tiempo" in Salta, where the living are already looking toward the twentieth century, trying to forget the past that she carries within her: "Y así iba, con gozo y pena a la vez, encontrando en las hijas y los nietos, los rasgos familiares de aquellos que dejé actuando en los caminos de la vida y que ahora ya solo existían en mi memoria" (1889, 46). In this autobiographical retrospective, the furthest removed from her idealized past, Gorriti's reluctance to accept the present as anything other than a trace of the past and to imagine the future at all led her to find threads of continuity in a world constantly changed by men's violence. It also led Gorriti to construct her own version of the national community centered in a local setting as the place least changed in an everchanging political scene. Her emphasis shifts from the remembrance of vanished time to the concrete reality of place and people. Chronologically, *La tierra*

natal (1889), *El mundo de los recuerdos* (1886), and *Lo íntimo* (1893) belong to a new period in Argentine literary history, dominated by the autobiographical writings of the Generation of 1880 and a new nativist tradition depicting the countryside as a lost arcadia and a repository of the authentic Argentina. In Gorriti's search for the rural origins of a remote national tradition, her narrative of return to Salta belongs with contemporary works such as Lucio Mansilla's *Mis memorias* (1911) and Joaquín González's *La tradición nacional* (1888) and *Mis montañas* (1893).

While the stories just analyzed represent episodes of women's history paralleling the wars that divided the nation, *La tierra natal* describes Argentina at peace and exalts women as an element of permanence in a country that has been completely transformed since the narrator left: "Al verlas—Son las mismas!—exclamé—las mismas salteñas, originales en todo lo bello" (1889, 118). The women's efforts to preserve local history parallel Gorriti's own project of preserving national remembrance of independence and the violence that transformed women's lives. The long-absent female narrator may have a general vision of the nation, but in Salta she is limited to patching up distant memories, no longer sufficient in themselves, with their scarce traces in the present. One character named Larguncha allows her to fill the gaps and to construct a female version of history and an intergenerational female community that, in contrast with the male "generations," seeks to live with the past rather than break with it.

Larguncha is a seamstress, as were all her female ancestors. Sewing historically has been an economic activity necessary to support families but one unlikely to lead to security or social mobility. According to Elaine Hedges, sewing was "the quintessentially feminine activity—the one through which a woman most closely identified herself with and accepted her 'sphere' role" (1991, 342). Hedges interprets the negative treatment of sewing in nineteenth-century women's literature as a sign of intellectual seriousness and liberation from the constraints of domesticity, a notion to which Argentine women writers of the nineteenth century also subscribed. Gorriti herself denounced sewing as a thankless task in "Peregrinaciones de un alma triste" (1876, 82–83). Similarly, during a trip to the United States, her contemporary Eduarda Mansilla praised the work of female fashion reporters as more worthwhile than the actual creation of clothes, which she likened to servitude (1882, 115).

But sewing has also received plenty of favorable attention as a unique form of female creativity. Elaine Showalter has used quilting as a metaphor for female narrative tradition in the United States (1986, 227), and Debra Castillo has defined the role of the feminist critic of Latin American literature by using the same image (1992, 21). A Latin American counterpart of the quilt is the Chilean *arpillera*, a cloth canvas that depicts a scene—usually political in content—fashioned out of small bits of fabric. Marjorie Agosín's work on arpilleras as preserving women's collective

memory has pointed out that sewing and other domestic crafts have been women's main means of creative expression throughout history (1986, 71).

Despite Gorriti's negative opinions of sewing, her portrayal of Larguncha exalts the narrative art of the seamstress. Because she is allowed to penetrate the secrets of the families she works for, Larguncha finds within her profession the material for her tales and a vehicle for conveying them. But unlike the making of quilts or arpilleras, her cultural production is oral: the textile facilitates but does not replace the text. Sewing is merely the activity that provides the time, opportunity, and material for storytelling. The writer-narrator pales in comparison, and she turns to Larguncha for information: "Era, además, la crónica de Salta: todo lo sabía; desde que pusieron la primera piedra de sus cimientos, hasta la hora presente: origen de las familias, su historia, con los sucesos más ocultos habidos en el seno de estas: todo" (Gorriti 1889, 68). That categorical "todo" is what separates the illiterate seamstress from the well-educated narrator, who knows only about a time already gone by. Larguncha is familiar with "the present hour," the up-to-the-minute information that her threads skillfully tie to the remotest of times. History as she understands it is exclusively local: her stories take readers back to the "origin of the families," reinforcing the familial concept of the nation. Blood ties become a symbol for historical continuity in storytelling. The narrator's role becomes embedding Larguncha's tales within the national history she is writing, to unravel the family-nation metaphor and thus become herself the link— not between past and present but between two historical dimensions: local and national, folk history and official history.

Larguncha always ends her storytelling by cutting the thread of her work with her teeth, suggesting the identification of body with narration, the rhythm of speech and silence, and the simultaneous fragility and endurance of oral history. She tends to detach herself from the content of her stories: "Gracias al cielo—dijo entonces—el trabajo incesante y fatigoso, la preservaba á ella de esas borrascas en que naufraga el alma" (1889, 83). What brings continuity to history is Larguncha's voice as a vehicle, not her own participation in events that she scorns as less important than their telling. For Larguncha, sewing is not art but work that keeps her anchored in the tangible world and allows detached observation of the spiritual distress of the those with nothing to do. By contrast, the narrator, although physically removed from Argentina for most of her life, is never able to separate herself emotionally from the stories she tells because she is linked to events in which her class had a decisive role.

In Gorriti's own way, the narrator's memory also bridges the discontinuity between her generation, shaped by violence and exile, and the new generation of *salteños*. They live in the oblivious peace of the 1880s and have chosen to forget rather than resolve the issues of the recent past: "Sus padres, en una santa concordia, habían olvidado aquel funesto

pasado que ellos ignoraban, quizá, en tanto que yo, hasta esa hora lo recordaba con culpable rencor" (1889, 60). *La tierra natal* was one of Gorriti's last attempts to cling to a memory that was by then a blurred series of tragic episodes. For the first time, she described the War of Independence and the civil war as a continuous process that contrasts with a peaceful present inhabited by younger citizens ignorant of their bloody past. The narrator is unable to share their happiness and optimism, for her own time has passed. She belongs to another time, and her memory takes precedence over her physical existence. The unpaid debt to the heroes of independence, and the frustrated attempts to consolidate the nation after 1810 fostered a national division between two groups separated by ideology and time. One group lived, like the narrator, in the unfinished past, while the other looked toward an impossible future: "Patria nueva: agrupacion de ilusos y mal intencionados que, al frente el enemigo, siempre pronto á invadir el suelo patrio, pedían instituciones cuando no era todavía posible dar sino combates. Patria vieja: falange de héroes, que, sin tregua ni descanso, guerreaban, hacía diez años, contra las poderosas huestes españolas" (Gorriti 1889, 56).

Another element of historical continuity in Gorriti's work is the land. The return from exile reveals the narrator's separation from Argentina as a temporal rupture, and she finds in the local landscape the tangible reality that anchors history to a specific place. In Sarmiento's *Facundo*, the land is blamed for Argentina's problems and the solution is to bring it under control. For Sarmiento, the land was a blank slate on which he could project the nation's future. For Gorriti, that slate was inscribed with childhood memories, which her narrators had to read back into literature.¹² It was also the receptacle of men's violent actions, and—like the ghost-women of her historical narratives—a symbol of permanence in a rapidly changing world.

Thus in *La tierra natal*, an abandoned church in ruins in the midst of the modern buildings of Rosario is the only reminder of another time. It seemed to say, "Aquí estoy, todavía, porque aquello que me mantiene en pie, es eterno" (1889, 172). The land does not dominate the ideology of this work, however, but serves as the manifestation of an idea and the people who hold it. Here, "native land" refers exclusively to the city of Salta and reflects a sense of intimate attachment to a specific place that overrides nationalism: "todo su mérito, que en muchos es grande, á [Salta] lo deben; y—aunque les pese—cada uno de ellos es tan suyo, que, dormido ó muerto, quien lo mire, diría:—Es un salteño" (1889, 156). At this point in

12. Along the same lines, Pratt has described the American landscape as "hyper-historicized" rather than "dehistoricized" (1992, 194). She argues that this aspect is one of the most significant differences between men and women writers. The history-saturated landscape in Gorriti's work contrasts in her mind with the emptiness found in texts like *Facundo* (Pratt 1993, 57).

time, when the Generation of 1880 had succeeded in building a stable and consolidated state (although one less homogeneous than they liked to imagine), the nation as an abstract concept had become unmanageable for Gorriti. She approached the land through the specific, and in particular places she created a localized microcosm of the nation. Gorriti's identification with the local scene is paralleled in her work by her imagining the nation as a community of individuals. Only they change, only they make changes, but none of these changes ever affects what is essential—the land that prevails through political and military turmoil.

Conclusion

The men of the Generations of '37 and '80 were more attuned to ideas imported from Europe and the United States than to the unique culture of Argentina. Gorriti, by contrast, tended to find in the local dimension the land, the history, and folklore elements that constituted the nation and were directly related to female culture. Unlike Mármol and Sarmiento in his post-exile years, Gorriti was not influenced by the Buenos Aires elite that privileged the interests of the capital at the expense of the interior. Her writings gave the provinces a voice, both political and personal. To her, the provinces were the locale of ordinary people's everyday lives, rather than the barbarous place that Sarmiento described in *Facundo* or the expendable periphery that they represented for Mitre. In Gorriti's view, the descriptions of individuals and places provided a definition of the real Argentina, the backbone that supported a capital city enmeshed in foreign alliances. While the men focused on a break with the past, a new beginning, and a vision of what they wanted the nation to become in the future, Gorriti foregrounded memory and sought to establish a continuity with an equally idealized and nonexistent past that symbolized for her the true essence of Argentina.

By reaching out to the marginal and making it count as much as, if not more than, the central, Juana Manuela Gorriti constructed a series of imagined communities that were not only included in the nation but indeed defined it as a diverse family in which unconventional forms of action and self-identification coexisted alongside war heroism, social elitism, and policymaking. The position from which she spoke as a woman, a provincial, and an exile is not the privilege claimed by male elite writers with access to political power but rather a peripheral, collective, and inclusive stance that gave voice to those who had remained silent. In Gorriti's work, history and memory draw from the natural, the local, the feminine, and the individual to configure a continuity of time and space that provides an alternative view of Argentina.

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