

Exile, Displacement and Hybridity in Juana Manuela Gorriti

Luz Hincapié

*This article analyzes two travel accounts written by the Argentinean writer Juana Manuela Gorriti whose writing and life were conditioned by her many exiles and her constant experience of displacement. In *La tierra natal* and in “Impresiones y paisajes” we can see the discursive strategies used by the author in her creation of a national identity closely tied to a feeling of belonging to the three different nations she inhabited at different stages of her life: Argentina, Bolivia and Peru. Thus she becomes a hybrid subject in constant transit between these nations. Similarly she establishes a textual identity through the trope of exile, travels, and a nostalgic search for an irrecoverable past as well as a concern with the construction of her nation/s.*

Conoceis algo á la vez tan buscado y tan triste como viajar?

Anhelamos partir, hallarnos donde no estamos; cual los horizontes del porvenir, trasponer tambien los del espacio.

¡Es tan prestigiosa la aureola de lo desconocido!

Realizamos nuestro deseo; alzamos el vuelo en pos de nuevas impresiones, de perspectivas nuevas; y...paseamos el alma de decepcion en decepcion; de nostalgia en nostalgia; á menos de encontrar un país cuyo miraje guarde la mente; y cuyos recuerdos, siquiera sean dolorosos, existan vivos en el corazon.

Do you know anything which is so sought after and yet so sad as traveling?

We yearn to depart, to find ourselves where we are not; to cross the horizons of the future as well as those of space.

The aura of the unknown is so prestigious!

We achieve our desire; we fly to find new impressions, new perspectives; and...we move our soul from disappointment to disappointment; from nostalgia to nostalgia; unless we find a country whose mirage is held in the mind; whose memories, even though painful, will live vividly in the heart. (Gorriti 1878, 12).ⁱ

“Siempre Está Por Marcharse, Siempre Quiere Volver”ⁱⁱ

Juana Manuela Gorriti, the Latin American writer who wrote the above quotation became a traveler, first through exile at an early age, then through several voluntary displacements that became more and more frequent towards the end of her life. The voyage--so sought after yet so sad--was a constant trope in her writingⁱⁱⁱ and a constant event in her life. These voyages are the source and the inspiration for her writing. She spoke of finding a country, but she found three countries, Argentina, Bolivia and Peru; three *patrias* which became her own.

She wrote about these countries, not only in fiction, but also in her travel accounts of which *La Tierra Natal* (*The Native Land*), one of the texts analyzed here, is an example. The title gives the reader an indication as to the destination of this voyage. This was a journey which the author had yearned for and was able to accomplish towards the end of her life. In this text the author traveled from Buenos Aires, Argentina, to the northern province of Salta where she was born. The author, then 68 years old, had not been in her native land since her youth. In this sense, the journey narrated in *La Tierra Natal* is also a journey to the author's past and within the geographical limits of Argentina, her country of birth. For this reason, in order to determine the significance of those two other countries, which were crucial in her displacement experience, a second travel account has been used. In Gorriti's book, *Misceláneas*, there is a short text called “Impresiones y Paisajes” (“Impressions and

Landscapes”), which is a narrative of a voyage from Lima to Buenos Aires and her encounters with cities in Peru, Bolivia, Chile, Argentina, and Uruguay; three of these countries had been Gorriti’s home at different periods of her life.

Using these two texts, *La Tierra Natal* and “Impresiones y Paisajes”, my analysis focuses on the discourses used by the author in the textual configuration of her identity. I analyze the formation of the discursive subject and the strategies used in the creation of a textual identity through the use of the topics of exile and travel as well as nostalgia for the past. These texts function as autobiography; they are a collection of discursive practices used as self representation within the boundaries of cultural ideas of truth and identity. Gorriti assumes a narrating ‘I’ which is both object and subject of her narration. She interprets her experience and creates coherence in her life through the “biographical act.” This act, however, is not able to capture all the range of experience in her life, thus the narrating ‘I’ becomes a fictive persona which reveals more about the present experience of the author and the way in which she situates herself and her own life story vis-à-vis the ideologies and discourses of her period (Smith 1987, 46-47). Consequently, these travel accounts reveal more about the gaps in time and space and the loss which the author feels than about her actual past.

Nonetheless, a biographical account is necessary since it reveals the ways in which exile, travel and displacement pervade and condition Gorriti’s life and the way she represents herself and how they become inevitable tropes in her writing. In addition, this subject in transit is discursively constructed by topics of national identity, the perspective of modernization and progress of a postcolonial state and its subject’s patriotic agency.

The Exiles of Juana Manuela

In her book *Misceláneas*, Gorriti wrote a two-page review of a text, “Apuntes de Viaje” (“Travel Notes”), written by a contemporary traveler, Santiago Estrada. Estrada, in turn, is the author of the biography of Gorriti found at the beginning of *La Tierra Natal*, in which Estrada presented her life in these terms:

Nacida en medio de agitaciones, la vida de Juana Manuela Gorriti se ha desenvuelto entre tempestades. Parece que todos sus actos participaran del aspecto agreste, a la par que grandioso, de los Andes de Salta, su cuna; de Bolivia, su refugio en proscripción; del Perú, su oasis en las penurias de larga peregrinación. Las alas de su espíritu, parecidas a las del cóndor, la llevaron del valle a las alturas de la cordillera. Visitada por la inspiración, divide con la Avellaneda el imperio literario de la mujer americana en la América española.

[Born amidst agitation, Juana Manuela Gorriti’s life has developed among storms. It would seem that all her actions participate in wild aspects as well as grandiose ones, from the Andes of Salta, her cradle; from Bolivia her refuge in exile; from Peru her oasis in the pain of the long pilgrimage. The wings of her spirit, similar to those of the condor, took her from the valley to the heights of the mountain range. Visited by inspiration, she shares with Avellaneda the literary empire of the American woman in Spanish America.] (1889, VI-VII)

Estrada--another Argentinean--shows great admiration for the “elderly woman”.^{iv} She is the pride of his native land, and he declares her participation in “episodios extraordinarios de nuestra historia” [extraordinary episodes of our history] (1889, VIII).

Gorriti, aware of the amazing way in which her life was interwoven with the histories of those countries, chose Estrada’s text to introduce herself in her travelogue *La Tierra Natal*. She asked for permission from Estrada himself to include these “benévolas frases al frente del libro que consagro a la tierra natal, como una carta de presentación a sus hijos que no me conocen, porque de ellos me ha separado medio siglo de destierro” [benevolent phrases at the front of the book consecrated to the native land, as a letter of introduction to its children, who do not know me since half a century of exile has separated me from them] (1889, 1). After half a century of exile the author, who had already become a recognized writer, returned to her native land and devoted a book-length account to this voyage.

Juana Manuela Gorriti was born on June 15, 1818 in Horcones, in the province of Salta (Argentina). She was the seventh of eight children of Independence General José Ignacio Gorriti and Feliciana Zuviría. When she was six years old, she was taken to a convent in Salta for her schooling but became ill due to the confinement and was returned home. Although her formal education ended there, her enthusiastic reading provided her with the kind of education typical of most well-bred women of this era. In 1831, when Juana Manuela was thirteen years old, she experienced exile for the first time as the family was forced to flee to Bolivia when her father and his followers were defeated by his political opponent, Facundo Quiroga. A year later, and only fourteen years old, she met and married Manuel Isidoro Belzú, a populist *caudillo* with whom she shares a second exile when he was expelled under charges of conspiracy against the government. Gorriti and Belzú, now with two daughters, Edelmira and Mercedes, had to flee to Peru.

Once in Peru, Gorriti started her writing career with the publication of her novel *La Quena* in *La Revista de Lima* in 1845, which had been written when the author was only eighteen years old. Many other articles, novels and short stories followed it. By that time, she had separated from Belzú, who returned to Bolivia alone and would later become president there. Gorriti remained in Lima where she established an elementary school and a high school for girls. She also started a literary salon, which attracted many important writers such as Ricardo Palma, Carolina Freyle de Jaimes and many more (Berg 1997, 136). While in Lima, Gorriti had two other children. Though she never revealed the identity of their father(s), both Clorinda Puch (who died very young) and Julio Sandoval lived with their mother (Berg 1997, 136). During this period her writings were published in Lima (in *El Liberal*, *Iris* and *Revista de Lima*) and also in Argentina (in *Revista del Paraná* and *Revista de Buenos Aires*).

In 1865 Gorriti published in Buenos Aires *Sueños y Realidades (Dreams and Realities)*, a two-volume edition of short novels and essays. The book was a success and Gorriti was acclaimed as an Argentinean writer despite the fact she had lived out of the country for so long. That same year she traveled to visit her daughter Edelmira who had returned to La Paz in 1855 and had married her fathers’ successor to the presidency. On March 28, 1865, while Gorriti was teaching at another school for young ladies she had established in La Paz, Belzú was assassinated. Gorriti, who had not spoken to her husband in twenty years, assumed the role of exemplary widow and arranged his burial, which gathered over 8,000 people, mainly women, who demanded justice for the death of their leader. Fearing revolts, the new government of Bolivia (responsible for Belzú’s death) forced Gorriti to leave La Paz. She fled back to Peru and once in Lima, participated in yet another heroic event in the Spanish siege of the port of Callao. Gorriti participated in the resistance and

aided the injured soldiers. For this reason she was given the *Estrella del 2 de Mayo*, the highest military distinction, by the Peruvian government (Berg 1997, 138).

Gorriti continued writing and in 1874 she founded the newspaper *La Alborada de Lima*. That same year a series of short novels were published in the magazine *El Album*, founded by the Peruvian writer Carolina Freyre de Jaimes. In 1875 Gorriti traveled to Buenos Aires, where she received public acclaim as a prominent female writer and was honored at several ceremonies. Furthermore, the Argentinean government approved a pension for her for being the daughter of an independence General. Back in Peru, she reopened her school and the literary salon, which became the most distinguished in Lima. It was attended by prestigious artists and writers like Clorinda Matto de Turner, Mercedes Cabello de Carbonera and her dear friend Ricardo Palma. Thirty to forty people attended the salon every Wednesday to discuss music, poetry, literature and other topics such as the education of women and their role in society.^v

When, in 1877, her Peruvian visa expired, Gorriti traveled again by sea from Peru to Argentina. Gorriti, who died November 6, 1892, made this voyage no less than four times in her life. Along with her many travels, she wrote numerous texts which is why two weeks after her death Clorinda Matto de Turner would write in her biography of Gorriti: “Ninguna otra escritora americana y aún europea puede ofrecer al mundo de las letras un legado más rico” [No other American woman writer nor European one can offer the literary world such a rich legacy] (in Berg 1997, 141). Such a legacy lies not only in her literary achievements but goes beyond the limit of the text where she participated as historical subject and as an active agent in the national construction of the three important countries in her life; Argentina, Bolivia and Peru.

In Latin America, the heroine, tied to a national territory, becomes a figure of struggle during the wars of independence. Policarpa Salavarrieta, for example, is considered a “martyr” by the resistance in New Granada (Colombia) while Juana Azurduy, named “Teniente Coronela de la Independencia” [Lieutenant Colonel of the Independence], took up arms against the Spaniards alongside her husband, Manuel Ascencio Padilla in Bolivia.^{vi} After independence, nationalism is constructed through cultural and scientific discourses when political figures such as Sarmiento and Martí travel outside of Latin America in search of political models for the new nations to follow. Simultaneously, new forms of defining the national identity, based on the power of writing, are born; national literatures, national anthems, constitutions and grammatical textbooks try to establish control of the chaos in the new republics. In this context, feminine access to the creation of an “imagined community” is restricted. In her work on ties between gender, culture and nationalism in nineteenth-century Argentina, Francine Masiello identifies the figure of the *republican mother* as the main model of female participation in the public sphere. Women were allowed public intervention when they assumed the symbolic role of mothers aspiring to direct the national project (Masiello 1994, 40). Along with this form of identification, the concept of hybridity is useful in the understanding of Gorriti’s work. Despite notions of purity and authenticity on which modern identity was based (García-Canclini 1995), Gorriti’s writings reveal a hybridity born from the different reconstructions of her subjectivity which were caused by the displacement experience and by her identification with different nations at different stages of her life. The identity here revealed is temporarily stable yet ephemeral.

Journey to Recover the Ephemeral Past

After a childhood in Salta and youth in La Paz, followed by almost thirty consecutive years in Lima with brief stays in Bolivia and finally numerous voyages between Lima and Buenos Aires, she resides the last eight years of her life in this last city. What national identity could Juana Manuela Gorriti claim as her own? This question comes foremost to the surface when dealing with an author who has spent most of her life in transit. These three nations represent different stages in Gorriti's life and correspond to different parts of her identity: Argentina, on the one hand, is the point of departure and the place where she lived her later years; in other words, the place where she was a daughter and an old woman. Bolivia was the place where she was a wife and a mother and to which she was forcefully exiled. Peru, by contrast, as a scholar of Gorriti so clearly explains, had a different meaning: "Como no habría de volver Gorriti una y otra vez a Peru--con el cuerpo o con el deseo y las palabras--si es el único sitio que en verdad elige en su vida. Y es el espacio de su rol más activo como escritora y el de su gente más amiga. La mujer más independiente es la que ella desempeña allí" [How could Gorriti not have returned again and again to Peru--with her body, her desire and her words--if it is the only place which she really chooses in her life. And it is the space of her most active role as a writer and of her closest friends. The most independent woman is the one she portrays there] (Mizraje online).

Gorriti's affection for Lima was quite strong. This is evident in the text when she has to leave the city and yearns for the return: "Ah! Pudiera regresar pronto á Lima; fuérame dado en breve pisar su florido suelo, aspirar sus embalsamadas auras..." [Alas! If I could return to Lima soon, if I could soon walk on its florid land, breathe its balsamic aura...] (1878, 9). The reader wonders why she is leaving at all and why she chooses to go back and forth at such a late stage in her life specially since she announces that she would gladly retrace her steps if it meant her return to Lima (1878, 20). A possible hint as to why she decides to begin these voyages is found when, during a train stop, she visits the ruins of an old hostel which used to shelter her, "Era una pobre casucha de la cual solo quedaba un monton de piedras denegridas; pero yo habia, allí, en otros dias, descansado bajo su pajizo techo; y buscaba en el recuerdo la huella de mis pasos" [It was a poor house of which only a few black stones remained; but I, in other days, had rested under its hay roof, and was searching in my memory the trace of my steps] (1878, 19). This declaration shows the potential drive behind this woman's journeys; a desire to retrace her steps, in other words, to retrace her past. This driving force is typical of someone who has suffered exile, whose experience has split his being in two: the one before the exile when he/she did not yet know any other place; when love for his/her native land had not been questioned or defied. Then after the exile, he/she struggles with love and loyalty to two, or in Gorriti's case three, different places; as if the anxiety caused by this were the result of unfaithfulness.

With this anxiety and nostalgia and already in her old age, she has the opportunity to return to the land from which she had to escape as a child; she returns to Salta. It would be her last journey and the one which is the fulfillment of her deepest wish to undo her steps, to return to the place where she was born. As she gets closer to Salta, she recognized each of the places she traversed, Trancas, Candelaria, Arenal, Rosario, and they bring memories of her past. "¡Qué delicioso paraíso es Tucumán!" [What delightful paradise Tucumán is!] (1889, 10) she affirms. Finally she arrives in her native Salta, "la heroica, la hermosa, la amada!" [the heroic, the beautiful, the beloved!] (1889, 37).

Throughout both texts, Gorriti often identifies with the places that she traverses on a personal level: "Arequipa es hoy una ruina: sus orientales casas estan desmoronadas; las

arcadas de sus galerías mutiladas; sus alegres habitantes tristes y silenciosos. Sombria y taciturna como ellos la contemplaba yo, arrasados los ojos de lágrimas; y la comparaba conmigo. Ella y yo éramos ambas ruina y dolor!” [Arequipa is in ruins today: its oriental houses are crumbled; the arches of its galleries are mutilated; its happy inhabitants are sad and silent. Somber and taciturn as they, I contemplated the city, my eyes full of tears, and compared it with me. We were both in pain and in ruins!] (1878, 10-11). Gorriti compares her life with the life of this city; she identifies her body with it, both are in ruins; she establishes a relationship between her pain and the ruins of the city. For Gorriti, in addition to the cities--rivers, mountains, the countryside--are a way of identifying with her past, with her suffering, but also with her happy moments such as those of her childhood. The river Pasaje, “río de ilustre y querida memoria” [river of illustrious and beloved memory] (1889, 32), for example, reminds her of those happy moments, “En sus orillas habíanse deslizado los más rientes días de la vida, los días de la infancia” [on its shores I spent the happiest days of my life, the days of my childhood] (1889, 33).

Oftentimes she cannot find anything to remind her of the past or only a small remnant of it as when she tries to find memories in the city of Rosario:

Asomaba a una ventana del *wagon*, contemplaba el pueblo, que el sol de una mañana primaveral alumbraba, mostrándome las huellas del progreso, donde yo buscaba las del recuerdo.

Había un hotel, carruajes, hermosos edificios de moderna construcción, con todo el *confort* de nuestra actual existencia; pero ¡ay! Nada de otro tiempo, nada, sino la vieja iglesia (...) descuidada y derruida (...)

[Looking out of the wagon’s window, I contemplated the town, which the sun of a spring morning illuminated, showing me traces of progress where I searched for memories.

There was a hotel, carriages, beautiful buildings of modern construction with all the comfort of our present existence, but alas! Nothing from other times, nothing except the old church (...) neglected and broken down (...)] (1889 171-172)

She recollects childhood memories of this old church, where she was baptized. There are often only memories and the present is unrecognizable; the search for the past is not always successful. In her melancholic reverie, the author compares modernity--which lacks soul--to the image of the old church and to other memories of the past. Where she looks for memories she finds instead progress, modernity and spaces which no longer exist but which contain the promise of what will be the new republic, the space of the future, a space which hasn’t yet been created for its female citizens (Grzegoryk 2002, 61).

Ruins are a continuous theme in Gorriti’s work; they contribute to the illusive image of the past. For instance, her old house in Salta had been destroyed and “el lugar que ocupaba hallábase vacío como, en la vida, el de sus antiguos moradores” [the place where it stood was empty, as in life, that of its old inhabitants] (1889, 41). The ruins suggest deterioration yet they are the connection between the land and its inhabitants as well as being symbolic of persistence. They build history by evoking unforgettable events: the colonial past, the civil wars, and the author’s childhood (Grzegoryk 2002, 59-60).

Gorriti searches for recognizable buildings but instead finds unknown new buildings. At night she cannot sleep and spends it at the window looking out at the street, “familiar para mí, en otro tiempo, hoy desconocida” [familiar to me in other times, today unrecognizable]

(1889, 49). She also remembers the families that used to live there and the beautiful women who looked out of those balconies; she wonders where they have gone and sadly reflects on the death of most of her contemporaries. Amidst the sadness this causes her, she manages to recognize the houses where her old friends used to live: the house where Costes, where Otero, where Zorrilla, where Puch used to live (1889, 42). Although these old inhabitants of Salta, the ones she knew in her childhood there, no longer exist, the youth, their descendants, come to welcome 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 sólo existían en la memoria” [And so I went, with joy and pain at the same time, finding in the daughters and grandsons the family traits of those I left along the roads of life and which now exist only in my memory] (1889, 46). The ruins become a place of devotion towards the places and lives lost which the author laments; she names the families but does not manage to evoke them in their totality.

The feeling of loss is everywhere; when she refers to her childhood home, her father's country state at Miraflores, which she has never returned to for fear of the pain of remembering her lost childhood (1889, 166). It is also reinforced when the national anthem is played at an evening event, to which she is invited. This brings tears to her eyes, “Lágrimas de doloroso enternecimiento subieron del corazón, al recuerdo del tiempo en que, niña, de pie y con devota unción, asida a la mano de mi padre, escuchaba ese canto sagrado, en los días clásicos de la patria...” [Tears of painful tenderness swelled in my heart at the memory of the time when, as a child, standing with devoted fervor, holding my father's hand, I listened to this sacred song, in the days of the classic *patria* (...)] (1889 48). The national anthem is emblematic of Gorriti's identification with her *patria*, her symbolic nation. It awakens her patriotism and yet she also displays this patriotic feeling for the other two nations that were significant in her life.

The experience of exile looms heavily in Gorriti's narration; it appears here and there intertwined with memories of the lost past. By way of illustration, she mentions her schoolteachers, Doctor Velazco and his wife, both exiled from Bolivia. She recollects having seen them crying over her children, “como después vi llorar a mi madre sobre nosotros, cuando vinieron, para ella, también, los días del destierro” [as I later saw my mother crying over us when the days of exile came for her] (1889, 63). Gorriti remembers words of consolation, “-¿qué importa la patria natal, si se vive en esa patria del alma: un corazón que nos ama?” [what does the native land matter if you inhabit that *patria* of the soul: a heart that loves us?] (1889, 65). Ironically, Gorriti had three *patrias* instead of one nor did she have just one 'heart' to love her; she was loved and admired by many in the literary world as well as in her family.

There is another reason behind her intention to return to the place where she was born. When she is invited to the countryside while everyone is talking and laughing, Gorriti thinks:

yo, silenciosa, la mente en las lejanías del pasado, volví a ver ese campo que medio siglo antes crucé, parte integrante de una numerosa familia, entre los restos de un ejército, huyendo de la muerte, ante las lanzas sin cuartel de un vencedor inexorable que nada respetaba, ni sexo, ni juventud, ni belleza.

De toda esa multitud proscrita, yo solo, en la cabeza y el corazón la nieve de los años, volvía al punto de partida. Los otros, esparcidos como hojas que arranca el viento, cayeron, y duermen bajo la tierra extranjera...

[I, silent, my mind on the distant past, saw again that field that half a century earlier I crossed, as part of a numerous family, amidst the remains of an army, escaping death, in front of the spears of an inexorable conqueror who did not respect anything, not sex, nor youth, nor beauty.

Of that entire exiled multitude, only I, the snow of age on my head and on my heart returned to the point of departure. The others, dispersed like the leaves blown by the wind have fallen, and sleep under foreign lands...] (1889, 115)

Part of her wish to return is to die in her country of origin despite her love for those other countries to which she was exiled. This desire is ambiguous as she is torn between these nations, especially between her desire to return to Lima and her desire to see her *patria*. In Buenos Aires she exclaims, "--Señor ya puedo morir; porque he visto la aurora de la felicidad para mi pueblo!--" [Lord, I can now die because I have seen the dawn of happiness for my people!] (1878, 28). Gorriti is aware that her lifecycle is about to close and for this reason wishes to die in her *patria*, where her people are now at peace at the end of the bipartisan wars which she detested. Her concern with the construction of the nation is manifested in this quotation.

Besides Lima and Salta, she describes other cities in her accounts --cities, which are just as dear to her. These cities evoke her wanderings; their descriptions give meaning to her exiles, displacements and deterritorializations. Valparaíso is a beautiful city, full of trees and very clean (1878, 24). In Montevideo, she feels happy to have arrived in a known and loved place (1878, 28). She describes Arequipa:

Aquí un grupo de casas, alegres, aseadas, sombreadas de sauces; animadas por el canto de los gallos y la risa de los niños; mas allá, verdes sementeras, donde mujen las vacas y trinan las aves; mas allá, en fin, en el fondo del paisaje, entre jardines y verjeles, sentada á la falda del majestuoso Misti, la blanca ciudad de amorosas tradiciones, aparece como un ensueño maravilloso á los encantados ojos de viajero.

Arequipa, es, lo he dicho ya en otra parte, una metrópoli oriental, trasplantada de las riberas de la Siria á las floridas orillas del Chili. Falta el turbante; pero al traves de las celosías que encierran sus ojivas ventanas, véñse brillar ojos dignos del paraíso de Mahoma.

Cual la poética Atenas tiene una belleza inalterable hasta en sus ruinas.

[Here a group of houses, happy, clean, shaded by willows, animated by the chant of roosters and the laughter of children, further ahead, green stables where cows moo and birds sing, even further, at the bottom of the landscape, among gardens and orchards, sitting at the base of the majestic Misti, the white city of amorous traditions appears as a marvelous dream before the enchanted eyes of the traveler.

Arequipa is, I have said it elsewhere, an oriental metropolis, transplanted from the shores of Syria to the flowered shores of the Chili. The turban is missing, but through the lattices of its ogival windows, eyes worthy of the paradise of Mahomet shine.

Like the poetic Athens it has an inalterable beauty even in its ruins.] ('1878' 16-17)

Arequipa is compared to an oriental city using constructions of the orient as an allegory of the exotic--of the paradise of Mohammed. Nevertheless, Gorriti does not use the

negative descriptions of the orient which are so typical of other nineteenth-century travel writers where the Orient lacks civilization in comparison with Europe (Said 1979).

La Paz with “sus anchas y accidentadas calles pobladas de recuerdos” [its wide and rough streets full of memories] (1878, 13) is another city loved by Gorriti. According to her, La Paz has the “virile strength” needed to survive the many civil wars which have plagued it. She describes the city and its surroundings:

Sus valles son valiosos graneros que provéen á la subsistencia de millares de pueblos; sus *Yungas*, paraíso, donde, á media hora de las nieves eternas, crecen el naranjo y el limonero, que elevan hasta esos páramos el perfume de sus flores. Sus mujeres son tipo de beldad y abnegacion: verdaderas compañeras del hombre, así en la adquisicion de la fortuna como en los peligros del combate. En la Paz florece hoy una brillante juventud que puede exhibirse con gloria, tanto en una batalla como en la arena científica ó literaria.

[Its valleys are valuable granaries that provide subsistence to a thousand towns, its *Yungas*, a paradise where, half an hour away from perpetual snow, the orange tree and the lemon tree lift the perfume of their flowers to those moors. Its women are examples of beauty and abnegation: true companions of men in the acquisition of fortune as well as in the dangers of battle. In la Paz today a brilliant youth flourishes, which can be exhibited with glory, in battle and in the scientific and literary arenas] (1878, 13).

The language Gorriti uses to describe these Latin American cities is generous and not tied to any binary ideas of civilization and savageness so notorious to nineteenth-century writers.^{vii} To her all these cities, even the ones where she has not lived, are beautiful, clean, and strong, as are their inhabitants, “la bella ciudad de la Paz, donde encontré con las afecciones de la familia, las más exquisitas atenciones de sus amables habitantes” [the beautiful city of la Paz, where I found among the affection of my family, the most exquisite attentions of its amiable inhabitants] (1878, 11).

Nonetheless, her interpretations of the cities are not without criticism for she also considers the disadvantages of these metropolitan centers when compared to life in the provinces. For example, in Salta, Gorriti views the youth as morally superior to her because they preserve kindness in their hearts; a kindness she once had but lost along the way precisely in those urban places, “reconociendo con profunda pena que el caudal de bondad que de allí llevé conmigo, habíalo ido dejando, como su vellón el cordero, en las zarzas del camino, a través de esos grandes centros de civilización, de descreimiento y de egoísmo” [recognizing with great sorrow that the amount of goodness I had carried with me, I had left, like lambs their fleece, in the brambles of the road, through those great centers of civilization, of disbelief and of egotism] (1889, 61). Not only has Gorriti lost her youth, her friends and family, her childhood home--her irrecoverable past--, she has also lost certain values in those centers that represent civilization; centers which full of egoism and disbelief also represent corruption. This comparison between province and metropolis is yet another point of view contrary to the binary construction in Sarmiento’s *Facundo* where civilization resides in cities like Buenos Aires.

To summarize, Gorriti’s voyage is a means to search for the lost past for which the writer yearns in her old age. Her voyage is also a farewell to those places of her youth, which she will not see again, but it is also farewell and homage to her own life about to conclude.

She uses the experience of displacement, evident throughout her work, as a way to make sense of her life and a way to identify and define herself in the constant spatial fluctuation of her life. Spatial displacement, more than physical movement, becomes a way of experiencing a changing and fragmented world and it is also a response to it (Grzegorcyk 2002, 60). Gorriti compares herself at a physical level with the places, cities and natural environment around her. This allows her to deal with the past and to discover a contradictory, elusive and hybrid self to which she gives meaning through her sense of belonging to three different nations.

References

Berg, Mary G. "Juana Manuela Gorriti: narradora de su época." *Las desobedientes: Mujeres de nuestra América*. Betty Osorio and María Mercedes Jaramillo (eds). Bogotá: Panamericana Editorial, 1997. 131-146. Also online <http://www.evergreen.loyola.edu/~tward/Mujeres/critica/berg-gorriti.htm>.

García-Canclini, Néstor. *Consumidores y ciudadanos. Conflictos multiculturales de la globalización*. Mexico City: Grijalbo, 1995.

_____. *Culturas híbridas. Estrategias para entrar y salir de la modernidad*. Mexico City: Grijalbo, 1989.

Glave, Luis Miguel. "Letras de mujer." *Fractal*, No. 3, Vol I, Oct-Dec, year 1, 1996: 93-125. Also online <http://fractal.com.mx/F3glave.html>.

Grzegorcyk, Marzena. "Lost Space: Juana Manuela Gorriti's Postcolonial Geography." *Journal of Iberian and Latin American Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 1, 2002: 55-69.

Gorriti, Juana Manuela. "Impresiones y paisajes." *Misceláneas. Colección de leyendas, juicios, pensamientos, discursos, impresiones de viaje y descripciones americanas*. Buenos Aires: Imprenta de M. Biedma, 1878.

_____. *Peregrinaciones de un alma triste*. In *Obras completas*. Salta: Fundación del Banco del Noroeste, 1993.

_____. *Sueños y realidades*. Buenos Aires: Casavalle, 1865.

_____. *La tierra natal*. Buenos Aires: Félix Lajouane, 1889.

_____. "Un viaje al país del oro." *Panoramas de la vida; colección de novelas, fantasías, leyendas y descripciones americanas*. Buenos Aires: Casavalle, 1876.

Masiello, Francine. *Between Civilization & Barbarism. Women, Nation, and Literary Culture in Modern Argentina*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992.

Mizraje, María Gabriela. "La escritura velada (historia y biografía en Juana Manuela Gorriti)". <http://www.lanic.utexas.edu/project/lasa95/gorriti.html>

Pratt, Mary Louise. “‘Don’t Interrupt Me’ The Gender Essay as Conversation and Countercanon.” *Reinterpreting the Spanish American Essay: Women Writers of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*. Doris Meyer (ed). Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995.

_____. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. London: Routledge, 1992.

Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. London: Routledge, 1979.

Sarmiento, Domingo Faustino. *Facundo: civilización y barbarie*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Losada, 1945.

Smith, Sidonie. *A Poetics of Women’s Autobiography Marginality and the Fictions of Self-Representation*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987.

AUTHOR

Luz Mercedes Hincapié was born in Colombia and migrated to the US as a child. She graduated with honors in Intercultural Studies at Simon's Rock of Bard College with a thesis describing the migration(s) of her family, “Crónica de una familia emigrante”. In 2002, Luz finished an MA in Post-Colonial Literature at the University of Wollongong with her thesis, “Immigrant, Exiled and Hybrid: Nineteenth-Century Latin American Women Travel Writers”. She returned to live in Colombia where she now works as a researcher at the Instituto Caro y Cuervo and as English language professor at the Universidad Externado de Colombia. She has published several articles dealing with women’s writing, travel narratives, displacement and migration.

NOTES

ⁱ The original spelling and accent marks in Spanish have been kept. From now on, all passages appear in their original in Spanish; I provide my translation into English.

ⁱⁱ [She is always about to leave, she always wants to return] (Mizraje, (n/d).

ⁱⁱⁱ Her fiction often deals with voyages and travelers as in *Peregrinaciones de un alma triste* (1876) and “Un viaje al país del oro” (“Voyage to the Country of Gold” 1876).

^{iv} This biography by Santiago Estrada was first published in 1888, a year before *La tierra natal*, in the newspaper *El Diario* in Buenos Aires (1889, V); at that moment Gorriti was 70 years old.

^v At the time, many women writers were interested in the ‘woman issue’ and women’s education: Juana Manso, *Emancipación moral de la mujer* (1858); Mercedes Cabello de Carbonera, *Influencia de la mujer en la civilización moderna* (1874); Clorinda Matto de Turner, *Las obreras del pensamiento en la America del Sud* (1895); y Soledad Acosta de Samper, *La mujer en la sociedad moderna* (1895). See Pratt 1995.

^{vi} Gorriti, as a child, met Azurduy and later would write about her: “algunos caudillos tuvieron envidia de esa gloria femenina”. See Glave online.

^{vii} In his famous work *Facundo: Civilización y Barbarie*, Domingo Faustino Sarmiento (Gorriti’s contemporary with whom, paradoxically, there was no direct communication) manifests that the building enterprise of a modern Latin America is situated in “la lucha entre la civilización europea y la barbarie indígena, entre la inteligencia y la materia” [the struggle between European civilization and indigenous barbarism, between intelligence and matter] (1945, 35), in the encounter between two forces “La una civilizada, constitucional, europea;

la otra bárbara, arbitraria, americana” [one civilized, constitutional, European; the other barbarous, arbitrary, American] (1945, 129).