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Juana Manuela Gorriti's Narrative Creolization of Salta

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Abstract

Situated in the Andean borderlands of the northwest of Argentina, the province of Salta was a military hotspot for many years after the wars of independence broke out in 1810. This article explores the portrayal of this turbulent landscape in *El pozo del Yocci* and *La tierra natal*, two texts by Juana Manuela Gorriti (c.1818–1892), who was born into a prominent Unitarian family that lived in the region until being exiled to Bolivia in 1831 after federal rule. Gorriti would not return until 1884 but nevertheless celebrated and memorialized Salta's natural environment and its historical and cultural significance, so marked by conflict, in narratives that mourn a lost world, quickly resuscitate forgotten histories of Creole sacrifice, and counter the traditional relegation of the interior in Argentinian culture.

Keywords

Argentina, Salta, war, Juana Manuela Gorriti, landscape

The Hispanist Henriette Partsch has used the phrase “the great unread” to refer to a tendency in the scholarly treatment of nineteenth-century women intellectuals. The term intimates that while their works may have been supposedly rescued at the turn of the twenty-first century, they continue to be side-lined in favour of patriarchal canons.¹ The Argentinian writer and educator Juana Manuela Gorriti (Horcones, near Rosario de la Frontera, c.1818-Buenos Aires, 1892), regarded as Argentina's first woman novelist, epitomizes this trend. Since her re-introduction into Argentinian culture with the publication of Martha Mercader's *JuanaManuela, mucha mujer* in 1980, researchers have often been drawn to the juicy details of her life, her looks, and her loves and, as a result, it is often Gorriti herself who is read, usually with a focus on her political ties, powerful connections and colorful personal life.² Exceptions to this analytical neglect have generally focused on the topic of female subjectivity or Gorriti's writing in the fantastic mode.³ In the first-mentioned area of female subjectivity, Beatriz Urraca, in her 1999 article “Juana Manuela Gorriti and the Persistence of Memory,” looked primarily at the connections between women's personal experiences and overarching Argentinian national questions but also noted that the land in Gorriti's work constitutes a “receptacle of men's violent actions.”⁴ Graciela Batticuore, discussing some of

Gorriti's short stories from an earlier period, states that 'estas ficciones [set in Salta] registran también una escritura gozosa, que se entrega con placer a la descripción pormenorizada de los paisajes nortños: 'parajes', 'romerías', 'mirajes son términos reiterados.'" ⁵

These observations gives rise to the focus of this article which analyzes the historical consciousness reflected in Gorriti's landscapes of the Argentinian northwest. To this end, I will refer to the aspects of her biography that assist in clarifying the history of Salta and textual meaning. These encompass her birth into an influential revolutionary family in war-torn Salta, their political exile to the newly-founded Republic of Bolivia in 1831, her prominent professional life as a teacher and her public life as a salon hostess and journal editor in the cities of Lima and Buenos Aires, all against the backdrop of wars and conflicts that propelled her to these different parts of *la patria grande*, as Spanish America was often referred to in the revolutionary period.

This article scales down, first from *la patria grande* to *la patria*, in the most common sense of the word (Argentina as a nation), and again to *la patria chica* to focus on Gorriti's literary treatment of the history of her birthplace, homing in on the effects of warfare on Salta and its population.⁶ The term Salta refers both to the city founded by Hernando de Lerma in 1582, where Gorriti attended school and the province in which she was born.⁷ David Bushnell argues that this geographical area, located in the Andean northwest of today's Argentina, has been neglected in both Argentinian and Andean history.⁸ In Gorriti's lifetime this marginal status was owed to the great distance separating Salta from the power of Buenos Aires and to the new coastal mercantile and cultural opportunities that came with independence from Spain.

However, the history of Salta—much like Gorriti's life—is a fascinating one, reflecting a rich human history at a cultural crossroads on a major artery of the Camino Real during the Inca Empire, then as part of the route connecting Lima and Buenos Aires during the Spanish colonial period⁹ and most recently as a border territory between the nations of Argentina, Bolivia and Chile. Yet as I shall show, when Gorriti puts her home province on the literary map, portraying it as a proud site of resistance to colonial rule and survival in the face of post-independence civil war, her articulation of Salta is resoundingly Creole (in the sense of Spanish descended) and she is careful to exclude other cultural and racial legacies.

Moving from the geographical to the literary context now, the relationship between men and land in Latin American cultures has often been noted, for example in the hyper-masculine gauchesque tradition from which women are virtually absent. In this mode of

writing local geography is understood to shape human inhabitants. My approach here is to focus on the way that man-made war creates a cultural landscape and environment that is then reflected in the written word, in texts written by a woman. This article will examine the province of Salta as portrayed in Gorriti's two narratives about the region: *El pozo del Yocci*, a work of historical fiction, and *La tierra natal*, a memoir–travelogue about Gorriti's month-long visit to Salta in 1884, more than fifty years after her exile from the province as a child. Although the environment depicted is refreshingly gender-inclusive, I will argue that in these texts Gorriti maps out a territory that is solidly Creole, belonging to Spanish descendants, rather than one which reflects the presence and significance of diverse racial groups in Salta.

The first text examined in this article, *La tierra natal*, was published in 1889 in Buenos Aires not long before Gorriti died. The second, *El pozo del Yocci*, was published posthumously in Buenos Aires in 1929.¹⁰ Both texts were published in an era in which Argentina enjoyed increased internal stability but show a landscape riven by the conflicts of the first half of the nineteenth century. For the most part the narratives are set outside the confines of private homes and take place in the city of Salta and its surrounding areas. This is an important observation since, as we shall see, Gorriti was largely indifferent to the domestic realm (unless as the site of matters of public importance), but was concerned instead by the wider effects of regional political circumstances.

Historical Context

Before analyzing the texts, I will briefly review some of the most significant political and historical events of Salta of interest to Gorriti, since these references may be lost on the contemporary reader. During the final decades of colonial rule, following the creation of the Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata in 1776, Salta was situated near the frontier that separated this newly created territory from the Viceroyalty of Peru, where independence from Spain would be fiercely contested in the century to come. Following the rebellion against the Spanish crown in 1810, Salta would have to resist Upper Peruvian Royalist attempts at reconquest and would be part of northern expeditions for more than a decade.¹¹ In 1816, the independence of the United Provinces of Argentina was declared at the Congress of Tucumán. This body, however, did not admit delegates from the Federal League, who were not long in gaining the advantage and exacting revenge. Salta was represented in the Congress by Gorriti's father, General José Ignacio de Gorriti (1770-1835), the son of a

Basque immigrant who owned an estate in the south of the province. At the time of Juana Manuela Gorriti's birth around 1818, the Congress of Tucumán had not yet reached agreement on a political system for the United Provinces of the River Plate and Salta was still under siege. After years fighting the Royalists in and around South America, Salta-born military leader Martín Güemes (1785–1821) had recently returned home to govern the province and fight off the Royalist invasions, which ultimately cost him his life.¹² While the wars against the Spanish Empire raged in the north, Argentina's civil war between the Unitarians and the Federalists began in 1820 with the Battle of Cepeda, the first major clash between the two groups. The subsequent dominance of Federalist caudillo Juan Manuel de Rosas (1793-1877) across Argentina from his base in Buenos Aires inevitably had a major impact on post-independence life in Salta.

In 1830 Juan Ignacio Gorriti, uncle of Juana Manuela and governor of Salta, wrote to General José María Paz, who was mediating the conflict between the interior provinces and the Province of Buenos Aires, asking that:

en el ajuste mismo del armisticio pongan las bases indestructibles sobre que deba celebrarse el tratado definitivo de paz, y sean tales que inspiren bastante confianza a los pueblos sobre el goce de su tranquilidad, y a los ciudadanos sobre su individual seguridad para que tantas familias desgraciadas que hoy andan errantes huyendo de la persecución que sufren, o por la mera divergencia de opiniones, o cuando más por no prestarse a cosas que resiste su conciencia, puedan volver sin temor a sus hogares a reparar en lo posible los descalabros de su fortuna, y cuidar de las educación de sus hijos para dar a la República ciudadanos virtuosos.¹³

Peace did not, however, prevail and the upheaval for civilians was to continue. The triumph over Unitarian Gregorio Lamadrid at the Battle of La Ciudadela del Tucumán in 1831 by Rosas-ally Juan Facundo Quiroga (1788-1835)—referred to by his moniker “el tigre de los llanos argentinos” in *La tierra natal*¹⁴—consolidated federalism in the north of Argentina. The Gorriti family property was confiscated and the family itself, including a teenage Juana Manuela, was expatriated. José Ignacio Gorriti would die in exile in Bolivia in 1835 and his daughter would not take up permanent residence in Argentina again until she moved to Buenos Aires in 1882.

Following the Gorriti family's forced departure, the situation in Salta remained extremely volatile. The region entered a new phase of liminality as a frontier between the

burgeoning nations of Argentina, Bolivia and Chile, and other conflicts would take their toll. There was an ongoing dispute over the control of Tarija, which remained unresolved until 1889, and then came the war with the Peru-Bolivian Confederation of 1836-1839.¹⁵ This permanent state of upheaval, which is reflected in the personal history of the Gorriti family, made Salta a compelling literary location and therefore one of the literary preoccupations in Juana Manuela's short narratives, both in her historical fiction and autobiographical works. Like her forbears, Gorriti worked to serve the burgeoning Latin American nations and her contribution, as a writer, was to celebrate her heritage, including its war history. To this end, her writing is replete with battle scenes, army camps and secret missions. Finally, in geographical terms, there is the location itself, whose spectacular Andean topography and a natural beauty provide the sublime setting required for Gorriti's Romantic sensibility.

The Creolisation of Landscape through Marginalization of the Other

In this article, the words Creole and creolisation do not refer to a mixing of cultures; the terms denote instead a part of the population in Argentina that was Spanish descended and the myriad ways by which other inhabitants of the land, particularly indigenous peoples, were excluded from government, land and resources. I argue that Gorriti's writing put Salta's physical geography and its history through a process of creolisation, taking possession of the area discursively, and relegating indigenous and African descended culture to the margins. This constitutes a strikingly different literary phenomenon to what took place in the neighboring Andean countries in the nineteenth century.¹⁶

In *La tierra natal*, explaining her connection to Salta and how her family came to settle there, Gorriti, emphasising her own Iberian pedigree, evokes her great grandfather, Agustín Zuviría, who emigrated from the Basque Country to Buenos Aires to seek his fortune, before travelling north to assist in Spanish operations against Túpac Amaru, the last ruler of the Inca Empire.¹⁷ Gorriti's interest in Inca culture is reflected in some of her other works of fiction and a natural starting point for this article is to ask how Gorriti reflects Salta's first peoples, its multiracial population and the race ideologies of her time in her literary construction of Salta. These texts perpetuate the myth of uninhabited South American land while simultaneously drawing attention to the region's pre-Columbian legacy. One of the ways she does this is linguistic, through her use of what Emilio Carilla calls the "lengua Americana."¹⁸ For example, in *El pozo del Yocci* she selects a Quechua-derived toponym for

the title and in *La tierra natal* she refers to the Güemes menfolk as *ñañaos*, or brothers in Quechua, and makes a special request to eat *uchutimpu*, a local spicy stew.¹⁹ In terms of plot, Gorriti presents a particularly tokenistic view of indigenous culture. Her writing implies that the indigenous groups have been all but annihilated and the population is largely Creole, with the solitary indigenous characters who people her writing appearing as remnants of the past. There is, however, one intriguing exception in the hallucinatory episode of Aura's visit to an indigenous shaman in Chapter 6 of *El pozo del Yocci*. This passage appears to draw on the trances portrayed in the opium narratives that were so popular in the nineteenth century, although in this case it is likely that ayahuasca was used instead of opium. The healer, who lives alone in a cave in the remote mountains in Iruya, causes Aura to experience the Andes in an altered state of consciousness, communicate with the spirit world, and glimpse her tragic fate. In *La tierra natal* Gorriti narrates a mystery of the region: the *ninachiri*, a kind of will-o'-the-wisp, "luz mala" or *ignis fatuus* that she claims would appear in Calchequi territory whenever there was an eclipse.²⁰ Thus indigenous culture is reflected minimally in individual words or faces, the odd recipe, ancient lore, all of which amounts to nothing more than singular remnants of an intriguing past.

As I explain here, this intriguing past does not, however, qualify for historic status in Gorriti's writing about Salta. It is telling that Gorriti normally portrays the vast Andean landscape as devoid of human life outwith the towns, referring to it as "desierto," a highly euphemistic form of expression linked to Julio Roca's (1843-1914) "Campaign of the Desert." Roca, hailing from Tucumán, would go on to be president of Argentina (1898-1904) after serving as a general in the army in the 1870s and leading a series of military operations that were nothing short of a genocidal war against the indigenous peoples. Predating Roca, such campaigns stretch back as far as the times of the Conquest and in the Salta region the "Calchequi Wars" were a longstanding series of conflicts between the Spanish colonizers and the Diaguita Confederation.²¹ Gorriti, however, only narrates the violence of the past as it relates to independence and post-independence history and does not memorialize histories that relate specifically to indigenous communities. She only allows the people of Calchequi to be embodied in two unnamed walk-on characters who presumably work for the Church. The literal role of these unnamed women in the narrative is to walk alongside and eventually carry Marta Castellanos, a Creole woman undertaking a pilgrimage, in an episode that fits in with the stereotype of the stoic and passive laboring indigenous person.²² Apart from this minor exception, we see Gorriti as very much in keeping with a post-Roca creolization project; his defeat of indigenous groups in Patagonia is followed by the whitening of Argentinian culture

on paper and the propagation of the myth of Argentina as a country settled by Europeans. Thus Gorriti depicts indigenous people as near-silent, isolated and rarely seen. Customs in existence today, such as the *ayllu* community structure, and visible archaeological sites are absent from her descriptions. Furthermore, in texts dealing with the conflicts of the past, she declines to mention military campaigns against indigenous groups or their forced displacement.

Despite being an integral feature of northwestern life, Gorriti did not view the African-descendent population as historically significant either. When it comes to the struggle for independence she is, to some degree, more inclined to paint a picture of diversity and mestizaje. In Chapter 2 of *El pozo del Yocci* she sets out an idealized and highly exoticized description of the revolutionary troops setting up camp alongside a river lined by peach trees:

Allí se encuentran, al acicalado bonaerense; el rudo morador de la pampa; el cordobés de tez cobriza y dorados cabellos; y el huraño habitante de los yermos de Santiago, que se alimenta de Algarrobas y miel silvestre; y el poético tucumano, que suspende su lecho a las ramas del limonero; y los pueblos que moran sobre las faldas andinas; y los que beben las azules aguas del Salado, y los tostados hijos del Bracho, que cabalgan sobre las alas veloces del avestruz; y el gaucho fronterizo, que arranca su elegante coturno al jarrete de los potros.²³

Yet that this fanciful description conspicuously fails to mention the black soldiers who fought in the wars of independence in Argentina.²⁴ Meanwhile in *La tierra natal* she presents a light-hearted *cuadro de costumbres* in which a mixed-race washerwoman drinks *caña* and banter with a gaucho coachman in a village near Metán, equating Afro-Argentines with recreation and entertainment, rather than national history.²⁵

Creole History and the Changing Landscape of Salta

I now turn my attention to the historical topics that do interest Gorriti, examining *El pozo del Yocci*, which intertwines themes of war and disrupted family relationships in Creole communities with a strong denunciation of federalist brutality. This brutality is embodied by the character of Aguilar, a murderer who, having left the northwest, appears in the final

moments of the text leading the Mazorca, Rosas's paramilitary killing machine in Buenos Aires. The text makes clear Gorriti's Unitarian political sympathies, not just through the violent femicide which brings the central narrative to a close. Nonetheless, not all federals are simplistically portrayed as barbaric and in this regard Gorriti shows a balanced inclusivity. Consider, for example, the nobility of the heroine Aura, and some of her fellow federals, who are sympathetically portrayed—caught up in fratricidal wars, losses and separations, and painful romantic betrayals—in entertaining story lines that fit nineteenth century literary norms that privileged emotional experiences and reflected a traumatized (Creole) population.

The plotlines in *El pozo de Yocci* occupy two different periods, beginning during the wars of independence in 1814, when Salta was occupied by the Spanish military officer and future Viceroy of Peru Joaquín de Pezuela (1761-1830), before skipping forward to the end of the conflict with the Peru-Bolivian Confederation in 1839 and drawing to a close in the 1840s. The narrative incorporates real historical figures, combatants and enemies of the Unitarians, such as the general Alejandro Heredia (1788-1838), his wife Juana Josefa Cornejo,²⁶ and Prussian-born general Otto Braun (1798-1869). We also see some classic nineteenth century literary tropes, such as the aforementioned Aguilar, an irrational tyrant whose misunderstanding of his wife's act of subversion as romantic betrayal leads him to murder her in a jealous rage and dispose of her body in the pool of water that gives the book its title. The book's plot enthralls the reader with a long-lost siblings plot device, disguises, bloody murder, an orphan of high birth, secret missions, treacherous mountain paths, and gothic derivations. Its ending tends towards the fantastic in style, breaking with the historical references of most of the narrative, with Aguilar haunted by the ghost of his wife, which ultimately lures him to his death.

But in Gorriti's work setting is every bit as important as plot. The first chapter of *El pozo del Yocci*—entitled “El Abra de Tumbaya” and depicting the landscape of the Quebrada de Humuaca, a UNESCO site since 2013, and its *abra* (a mountain pass)—immediately links history and locality. The opening lines demarcate a geographic space, with the narrator describing the territory from the Desaguadero River (previously the border with the Viceroyalty of Peru) to Tucumán as “nuestro suelo”:

nuestro suelo era un vasto Palenque, humeante, tumultuoso, ensangrentado, que el valor incansable de nuestros padres, disputaba palmo a palmo, al valor no menos incansable de sus opresores.²⁷

The land in question is Salta prior to the creation of Jujuy and the first-person plural subject pronoun refers to the revolutionaries who fought and won against Spanish rule. This opening scene is one of chaos and displacement; up in the mountains the Royalist combatants who have been driven northwards by revolutionary fighters are passing through León. Here, the narration abounds in clear biblical references: the Royalists are cast out into the wilderness, leaving behind a “tierra amada de Dios”²⁸ and the Abra de Tumbaya is a doorway leading them out of paradise into a terrifying barren landscape:

Figura una ancha puerta, que, cerrando el risueño valle de Jujuy, da entrada a un país árido y desolado, verdadera Tebaida, donde acaba toda vegetación. Enormes grupos de rocas cenicientas se alzan en confuso desorden sobre valles estrechos, sembrados de piedras y de salitrosos musgos. Nunca el canto de una [sic] ave alegró esos yermos barridos por el cierzo y los helados vendavales; y cada uno de aquellos grises y pelados riscos, parece una letra, parte integrante del fúnebre *lasciate ogni speranza* de la terrible leyenda.²⁹

As previously mentioned, Salta is crisscrossed by important roads and routes that date back to pre-Columbian times, most notably the Quebrada de Humuaca—described by Bushnell as “a standard route for armies passing back and forth between the Platine provinces and Upper Peru”³⁰—which is depicted here as the route out of Argentina, away from “la patria.”

Gorriti’s love of homeland is clear: although the altiplano route out of Salta and Argentina is depicted as godforsaken, for the most part, Gorriti’s descriptive mode is vivid when she depicts the province of Salta and the special shapes and features of the regional landscape, with its majestic rivers, and carob and orange trees. Her pride in the region is clear through references to delicious fruits, the taste of the local milk, dark-eyed beautiful people with provincial charm, and the importance of hospitality in gaucho culture. In *La tierra natal* Gorriti shows attractive local people flirting, talking politics, opening their homes and colorful gardens to her and showering her with hospitality. Reunited with old family friends and meeting their children and grandchildren, she reminisces about her bittersweet childhood, remembers the dead and takes pride in her family name. Regional peculiarities are also reflected in references to a man who tans tapir hides and treasure said to have been buried by Jesuits when they were expelled by the Spanish Crown.³¹ There are also instances of a humorous vein of *costumbrismo* in *La tierra natal*. Gorriti’s snobbery and irritation surface

frequently, for example, as triggered by the annoying trivial chatter she is forced to listen to on the train journey from Rosario to Metán and her wincing when she sees people eschewing hygiene to drink mate from a communal *bombilla* straw and witnesses a cockroach infestation in Tucumán,³² but generally she describes Salta in glowing terms.

In her descriptions of the town Gorriti describes Salta's Plaza de Armas—that all important public space in Spanish-American towns—and how it has changed beyond recognition since the days of war:

Una cuadra más allá atravesábamos la plaza de armas, en otro tiempo sitio de revuelta, fusilamientos y fechorías revolucionarias; hoy un ameno jardín, donde los azahares, los jazmines y las rosas, mezclando sus perfumes, embalsaman el aura y llevan al alma anhelos de paz, de concordia y de amor.³³

Now colorful and fragrant, the space has been transformed into a pleasant place for the prosperous community to gather. However, its past as a “sitio de revuelta” is also present, with its moments of fear, violence and executions, some of which are deemed legitimate, worthwhile and historic, while others are shameful and traumatic. The town now enjoys new urban experiences such as educational establishments and a theatre, paving the way for a golden age of learning and culture. The local youth greet Gorriti as an important intellectual figure and gift her with a gold pen. Finally, churches—imprints of Spanish colonialism—have been renovated and beautified.³⁴

Gorriti's romantic reveries and meditations are often punctured by human interruptions and she repeatedly expresses her desire to be left in solitude. For example, during her journey to Salta, when she reaches the end of the railway line at Metán, she must continue her journey in a mail coach drawn by mules. She is struck by a sense of rapture at the dramatic mountain scenery, which puts her very much out of step with her fellow travellers and their reaction to the rough terrain:

Extasiado ante el espléndido paisaje, olvidando que me escuchaban:

-¡Hete ahí—exclamaba- purísimo cielo de otro tiempo! Pintorescos sebilares, serranías de Metán, coronadas de vuestro majestuoso Crestón; ¡Bendito sea Dios, que me permite volver a veros!

-¡Hum! —gruñó alguien en el fondo del coupé —no son pocos los majestuosos barquinazos que van a molernos los huesos a vista de estas rientes serranías y entre esos pintorescos sebilares.³⁵

Gorriti, however, whimsically describes the bumps in the road from the mail coach as like being rocked in the arms of a nursemaid, the dust as incense, the thorn bushes as caresses. This hyperbole is brought to a humoristic end with the memory of the blood-sucking insect the *vinchucha*, which Gorriti unsurprisingly cannot abide or romanticize.³⁶ Meanwhile, Gorriti's fellow traveller, a gaucho and "lúgubre narrador," recounts bloody incidents from his childhood, specifically the civil war between the Unitarians and Federals. He points out a spot where two federal coronels, one of whom was Mariano Boedo (Salta, 1803–1841), who was already facially disfigured at the 1827 Battle of Ituzaingó during the Cisplatine war with the Brazilian Empire over the "Banda Oriental" (Uruguay), were executed under the orders of General Juan Lavalle (1797–1841).³⁷ The gaucho's recounts how the local man, Boedo:

herido en esa batalla por una bala, que le llevó la mandíbula inferior reemplazada por un aparato de goma elástica oculto entre su larga y abundante barba, llegado al momento supremo, así, de una manera imprevista, sin previo juicio, en un paraje desierto y rodeado de enemigos, en un arranque de indignación:

-¡Patria! —exclamó— así dejas acabar al que empleó su vida en servirte, y que por ti perdió en una hora cuanto hace dulce la vida: ¿belleza, juventud, amor?

Y así diciendo, arrancó el aparato que ocultaba la mutilación de su rostro, quedando con la lengua caída sobre el pecho, desfigurado, horrible.

En ese momento sonó una descarga y él y su compañero cayeron, quedando luego sus cadáveres ensangrentados, solos, abandonados por sus victimarios en el lugar del suplicio.³⁸

Such tales of ugly reprisals, betrayals and violent twists of fate, as well ghastly sites of remembrance and mouldering crosses in the ground³⁹ horrify Gorriti, imbuing the landscape with terror.⁴⁰ In another example, her fellow passenger, seeing the final resting place of a well-known and popular local man, Felipe Santiago, remarks that "sería un delito no referir a ustedes quién fue Felipe Santiago y por qué lo llamaron el Decidor".⁴¹ What sounds like an introduction to a fun *cuadro de costumbres* is in fact the preamble to an account of how the man saw Santiago killed with a pike by Federal fighters. Crucially, however, in Gorriti's

eyes, the man does not qualify as a hero in the fight against the Federal caudillos on account of his African descent.

The unavoidable presence of cadavers in the landscape comes up more than once in the work of Gorriti. For example, in *El pozo del Yocci* she describes how jackals eat the corpses of independence fighters⁴² and in *La tierra natal* the interlocutor shrugs off the consternation his tales provoke in the carriage by explaining to the other passengers that these kinds of events were merely regular occurrences (“nada más que hechos diarios”). Relishing his grisly topic, he is reluctant to conclude his tales of beheadings, firing squads and rivers of blood (“degollaciones y fusilamientos” and “ríos de sangre”).⁴³ After her trip to Salta, Gorriti’s writing in her own voice as a woman writer is no different from his; she herself bookends her text with violence. Her departure from Salta sees her every bit as morbid as the gaucho on the mail coach, pointing out sites of violence and damaged earth to her travelling companions, and recounting a harrowing story of the death of a black slave woman attempting to escape her master.⁴⁴ Some of the sites they pass have a personal connection to Gorriti:

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.⁴⁵

This first-hand experience is depicted in *El pozo del Yocci* when the Royalists pass through the Abra de Tumbaya and the otherwise discrete narrative voice interjects, referring to the Gorriti family’s own tale of rupture and displacement:

Nosotros también, un día de eterno luto, paramos en esa puerta fatal, y al contemplar los floridos valles que era forzoso abandonar, y los dédalos de peñascos sombríos que al otro lado nos aguardaban, invocamos la muerte... Y después... después, la alegría y la dicha volvieron; y perdido nuestro edén, bastónos el cielo azul; y encontramos poesía en aquellos peñascos, y los amamos como una segunda patria. ¿En qué terreno, por árido que sea, no te arraigas, corazón humano?⁴⁶

Despite being monumentally significant, combat and exile are only two aspects of conflict. Gorriti’s final personal anecdote is based on a military event from her childhood involving

her father, José Ignacio Gorriti, who was governor of Salta at the time. Her memory jogged by a building, she remembers his brave intervention when he successfully demobilized a Colombian army squadron stationed in Salta, helping the soldiers adjust to peacetime and civilian life. The family memory and pride in the Gorriti family name are heavily emphasized in both works in which bonds of Creole kinship, homeland and friendship are paramount and handed down through the generations, both male and female.

Conclusion

These two works by Gorriti share a particular focus on a landscape that stands out for its dramatic geography and history. The significance of these texts lies in their attempt to place Salta—an unsung location in the history of the making of Argentina and which to Gorriti is beautiful and cultured yet sullied by war—on the literary map. They do so via detailed accounts of its historical national relevance and by promoting a patriotic landscape described by both the narrative voice and fictional characters (*El pozo del Yocci*) and the writer herself and fellow travellers (*La tierra natal*).⁴⁷ Through these voices, Gorriti is able to depict horrifying historic episodes, in texts that are permeated by traumatic histories and memories.

Yet these events are reflected in an extraordinary natural environment and in urban development and rewarding human experience. Although altered and littered with signs of death and suffering, Creole culture thrives and natural beauty continues to amaze. Relationships to the natural world are narrated in various modes: meditative, humorous, and melodramatic. Throughout the text the Quebrada de Humuaca and, more broadly speaking, Salta itself, form a giant and terrifying portal to the world beyond Argentina, through which different groups of Argentinian people are removed in repetitive cycles of exile, the landscape absorbing the casualties of war, the topsoil scarred by past brutalities and the space above filled with vivid mental images. In Gorriti's Salta, the landscape belongs to the Creole ruling classes, men and women, with other social groups portrayed only briefly or symbolically and indigenous cultures appearing only in snatches, fleeting and evanescent, just like the *ninachirri* or will-o'-the-wisp in *La tierra natal*.

¹ University of Strathclyde, workshop by the Scottish Network for Nineteenth-Century European Cultures, 10 February 2017.

² A recent piece on Gorriti's life by historian Felipe Pigna in *El Clarín*, which mentions only one of her literary works by name, is emblematic of this tendency, "Juana Gorriti, la escritora rebelde," 27 July 2018,

https://www.clarin.com/viva/juana-gorriti-escritora-rebelde_0_BJRzgUCX7.html [accessed 27 November 2018].

³ See, for example, Marzena Grzegorcyk, "Lost Space: Juana Manuela Gorriti's Postcolonial Geography," *Journal of Iberian and Latin American Studies* 8, no. 1 (2002): 55-69, Elisabeth L. Austin, "The Material Ethics of Juana Manuela Gorriti's Peregrinaciones de una alma triste," *Decimonónica* 13 no. 2 (2016): 1-17, María Cristina Arambel-Guiñazú, "Decir lo indecible: Los relatos fantásticos de Juana Manuela Gorriti," *Revista Hispánica Moderna* 53, no. 1 (2000): 214-228, and Marie Elise Escalante, "La subversión fantástica del discurso histórico: fantasmas, memoria e historia en los cuentos de Juana Manuela Gorriti," *Revista Iberoamericana* 79, (2013): 1069-1085.

⁴ Beatriz Urraca, "Juana Manuela Gorriti and the Persistence of Memory," *Latin American Research Review* 34, no. 1 (1999): 151-173 (169).

⁵ Graciela Batticuore, *La mujer romántica. Lectoras, autoras y escritores en la Argentina: 1830-1870* (Buenos Aires: Edhasa, 2005), 289.

⁶ José Juan Arrom explains this concept: "al fragmentarse Hispanoamérica en países, se rompe también la visión de continentalidad que animaba a nuestras letras. Para Bello, Olmedo y Bolívar, urgidos de un ideal de grandeza, la patria era América. Para los románticos, disminuyendo el concepto, la patria es cada uno de los fragmentos a que nos redujo la desunión." *Esquema generacional de las letras hispanoamericanas: ensayo de un método* (Bogotá: Instituto Caro y Cuervo, 1963), 140-141.

⁷ At that time Salta included the neighboring province of Jujuy (established as a separate province in 1833) and Tarija in Bolivia.

⁸ David Bushnell, "The Indian Policy of Jujuy, 1835-1853," *The Americas* 55, no. 4 (1999): 579-600 (580).

⁹ G. M. Wrigley, "Salta, an Early Commercial Center of Argentina," *Geographical Review* 1, no. 2 (1916): 116-133 (116).

¹⁰ Leonor Fleming has reported that *El pozo del Yocci* was first published in Paris in 1869. While this is possible, as Gorriti's biography of Dionisio Puch was published at the Imprenta Hispano-Americana de Rouge Dunan i Fresne in Paris in 1869, I have not been able to identify any corroborating information. *El pozo del Yocci y otros relatos* (Madrid: Cátedra, 2010).

¹¹ For information on women in Salta during the period 1812-1824 see Lily Sosa de Newton, "Las salteñas en la guerra gaucha," in *Las argentinas y su historia* (Buenos Aires: Feminaria, 2007), 43-51.

¹² For a detailed account of the Güemes years see Roger M. Haigh, "The Creation and Control of a Caudillo," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 44, no. 4, (November 1964), 481-490.

¹³ *Documentos para la historia argentina*, Vol. XV: Relaciones interprovinciales. La liga litoral (1829-1833), Buenos Aires: Facultad Filosofía y Letras, 1922), 488.

¹⁴ Juana Manuela Gorriti, *La tierra natal* (Buenos Aires: Stockcero, 2005), 36.

¹⁵ The creation of a power block to the north alarmed Argentina and Chile who were concerned about its economic dominance and potential plans for expansion southwards. Chile fought a naval war while Argentina invaded by land. The effects of war were felt on the cultural practices, agriculture, economy and demographics of the Salta region. Lane Carter Kendall, "Andrés Santa Cruz and the Peru-Bolivian Confederation," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 16, no. 1 (1936): 29-48 (42-46).

¹⁶ Indeed Gorriti's vision of a Creole Argentinian northwest differs entirely from her depiction of Peru which readily features histories of conquest, colonization and indigenous cultures. For example, Lisa Burner has argued that in three stories written during Gorriti's long residence in Lima she uses the theme of hidden Inca treasure as a means to consider the consequences of the extraction and export of Peruvian natural resources, namely guano fertilizer, in the nineteenth century. Lisa Burner, "Tales of Incan Gold in an Era of Guano: Juana Manuela Gorriti's Precious Metal Melodramas," *Hispanic Review* 86, no. 3 (2018): 353-376. In terms of

nineteenth-century indigenous experience, the opening sequence of Gorriti's short story "Si haces mal, no esperes bien," also set in Peru, narrates the kidnap of an indigenous child.

¹⁷ *La tierra natal*, 50-51.

¹⁸ Emilio Carilla, *El romanticismo en la América Hispánica* (Madrid: Gredos, 1967), Vol. I, 167.

¹⁹ *La tierra natal*, 15, 18.

²⁰ *La tierra natal*, 20.

²¹ See Christophe Giudicelli, "De la déportation à l'invisibilisation: la dénaturalisation des Indiens calchaquís (Nord-Ouest argentin), XVIIe-XXIe siècles," *Recherches amérindiennes au Québec* 41, nos. 2-3 (2011): 61-82.

²² *La tierra natal*, 30.

²³ Juana Manuela Gorriti, *El pozo del Yocci* (Buenos Aires: Stockcero, 2006), 5-6.

²⁴ Güemes's army, for example, contained a regiment made up of former black slaves. See Armando Raúl Bazán, *Historia del noreoste argentina* (Buenos Aires: Plus Ultra, 1985), 199. On a subject also related to this quotation, Urraca has remarked on the idealisation of armies and "unity built on male demonstrations of patriotism" in the work of Gorriti (159).

²⁵ *La tierra natal*, 10.

²⁶ Juana Josefa Cornejo was the daughter of a local heroine of the independence movement, Gertrudis Medeiros de Fernández (1780-?), who headed a militia, "La heroica Gertrudis Medeiros", *El Tribuno*, 11/04/2016, <https://www.tribuno.com/la-heroica-gertrudismedeiros-n699353> [accessed 31/07/2018]. No author.

²⁷ *El pozo del Yocci*, 1.

²⁸ *El pozo del Yocci*, 1.

²⁹ *El pozo del Yocci*, 3.

³⁰ Bushnell, 587.

³¹ *La tierra natal*, 62.

³² *La tierra natal*, 4, 5.

³³ *La tierra natal*, 16.

³⁴ *La tierra natal*, 16.

³⁵ *La tierra natal*, 8.

³⁶ *La tierra natal*, 14.

³⁷ In Argentinian history, the mere mention of Lavalle's name has grisly connotations that tell us much about the realities of dealing with the casualties of war. After meeting his end in Jujuy, Lavalle's corpse was transported to Bolivia through Humuaca by comrades who, believing it would be desecrated and his head displayed on a spike, stopped to boil it down to bones. This journey was immortalized in the painting "La conducción del cadáver de Lavalle en la quebrada de Humuaca" by Uruguayan artist Nicanor Blanes in 1889.

³⁸ *La tierra natal*, 8.

³⁹ *La tierra natal*, 9-10.

⁴⁰ Members of Spanish-descended social groups were traditionally laid to rest inside a place of worship rather than buried in the ground. The latter practice is more associated with indigenous and mixed-race communities. See Gabriela Alejandra Caretta and Isabel Elicea Zacca, "La muerte y sus indicios. Salta: ciudad y frontera en 1730," *Andes* 21: (2010): 115-129 (119).

⁴¹ *La tierra natal*, 9

⁴² *El pozo del Yocci*, 62

⁴³ *La tierra natal*, 9-10.

⁴⁴ *La tierra natal*, 59.

⁴⁵ *La tierra natal*, 43.

⁴⁶ *El pozo del Yocci*, 3.

⁴⁷ Following Rosi Braidotti on subjectivity, Grzegorcyk reads “perpetual mobility” and transition as a feature of Gorriti’s writing that reflects her own inability to find a place, figuratively and metaphorically, both as someone’s whose physical location had changed beyond recognition and also as a female intellectual (56).