THE MORAL ELECTRICITY *of* PRINT

Transatlantic Education and the Lima Women's Circuit, 1876–1910

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INTRODUCTION

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And here there is a contradiction, though only an apparent one. Poetry teaches and does not teach. In order to resolve this contradiction well, to explain and reconcile it altogether, a book would be necessary. And a wise and profound book, of which I do not feel myself capable.[1]

—Juan Valera, "Apuntes sobre el nuevo arte de escribir novelas," published in *El Perú Ilustrado* (March 1, 1890)

Pedagogy and the Aesthetics of the Novel

This study positions the hotbed of literary discussion that was Lima, Peru (1876–1910), as a point of departure for an analysis of the intersection between aesthetics and pedagogy both in nineteenth-century Spanish American letters and in the broader hemispheric realms of book publishing and educational reform. Lima's *veladas literarias*, hosted by exiled Argentine writer Juana Manuela Gorriti in 1876 and 1877, placed the city at the center of Spanish-language literary discourse. These gatherings, which were widely reviewed in the Lima press, included a veritable who's who of Spanish American writers, many of whom were women: Clorinda Matto de Turner, Mercedes Cabello de Carbonera, Soledad Acosta de Samper, Teresa González de Fanning, and others. In the decades that followed, American and European commentators would refer to this generation of female literary pioneers as Spanish America's Pleiades.

Literature and pedagogy mingled at Gorriti's salons, a fact reflected in the very layout of the house in which they took place. Emilia

Serrano, who wrote under the name "Baronesa de Wilson," chronicled for a European readership the highlights of her travels through Spanish America's social and literary scenes, and her *Vanity Fair*–meets–*New Yorker* picture of the *veladas literarias* included the observation that these evening events happened in a room adjacent to the one where Gorriti ran a school during the day: "a little room connected to the classroom, where there were only benches and slates, maps and student desks" (*Lo íntimo* 149).[2] The intimate proximity of literature and pedagogy might have been considered comically ill-suited for such formal gatherings, were it not echoed in the subject matter as well: it was no accident that readings in poetry and fiction were interspersed with talks on educational reform.

The participants in these *veladas* harbored significant philosophical and political differences, but they were united on two major issues: the need for increased educational opportunities for women and the importance of public morality as a political foundation for a functioning liberal republic. Three of the group's novelists, Matto, Cabello, and González de Fanning, harnessed these imperatives into the development of new theoretical approaches to the novel. They peppered their fictional works with arguments for the novel as a new and highly efficient form of public pedagogy, given the century's industrial development and corresponding increase in capacity for book production and distribution.[3] Cabello's published monographs on both the ramifications of naturalism for the realist novel and the importance of Russian fiction to the inchoate American republics made waves from New York to Barcelona.

The international scope of the *veladas* is, perhaps, best described in the title of Leona S. Martin's article, "Nation Building, International Travel, and the Construction of the Nineteenth-Century Pan-Hispanic Women's Network." Such networks, she writes, were characterized by "a political stance that privileged internationalism and pan-Hispanic ideals" over national literary projects ("Nation Building" 440). While increased communications certainly gave intellectual and professional networks an increased vitality and visibility for writers and professionals of both genders, Martin argues that women writers networked out of professional necessity. She cites Stacey Schlau's argument that, for Spanish American women, "creative survival may have depended on support from colleagues in a society hostile to women asserting themselves in the

Juana Manuela Gorriti

SEMBLANZA

Estaba yo recién llegada de Europa á Buenos Aires, cuando á su vez daba vuelta á su patria la excepcional escritora salteña, que habíase granjeado en toda América envidiable reputación literaria. No perdí momento para conocerla personalmente, pues lo que es por cartas ya estábamos en íntimo contacto. Yo había saboreado con deleite muchos de los escritos que en periódicos y en libros atestiguaban la sin par fantasía de aquella mujer por demás extraordinaria.

Al verme entrar me abrazó como á una hermana, diciendo: «¡Dios mío, qué felicidad! ¡Deseaba tanto conocerla!»

Aun ahora paréceme verla sentada á mi lado, con su erguida estatura; la presencia arrogante y hermosa; la frente ancha, muy despejada; el rostro de un óvalo perfecto, y la mirada perspicaz, enérgica y á veces profundamente melancólica. Su cabello era sedoso y finísimo. Cuando yo la conocí sus rizos parecían de plata, porque los terribles contrastes de su vida los habían blanqueado más que los años.

A la altura de un alma de acero tenía la poderosa fuerza de voluntad y un corazón dispuesto á todos los sacrificios y templado para los grandes infortunios.

Juana Manuela Gorriti era soñadora vehemente; apasionada, con imaginación fantástica, fecunda como pocas, rica en tesoros de ingenio y pródiga en narraciones, ligadas con frecuencia á sus memorias de la niñez y de la juventud.

«Güemes,» «La biografía de Belzu,» «El álbum de una peregrina» son fotografía de su historia.

Hay rasgos en su vida que harán comprender el valor moral de aquel gran carácter, que de suyo se destaca en las páginas legadas á la posteridad.

«Toda mi existencia – decía – ha sido una cadena de luchas y de episodios extraños.»

Un día, siendo muy joven, tuvo que abandonar la casa paterna y el suelo argentino. Hija del patriota general Gorriti, había de participar de las persecuciones y del ostracismo de aquél, empezando entonces su larga serie de viajes, así como á manifestarse sus aficiones literarias, cimiento de su fama.

Estando en el otro lado de la frontera, en el suelo del destierro, la unió el amor con un oficial subalterno del ejército boliviano que el gobierno había confinado lejos de la capital, tal vez temiendo su naciente ambición.

El idilio de ternura que precedió al enlace tuvo sangriento epílogo en el palacio presidencial de la Paz (Bolivia).

Era la época de las revueltas políticas, de los motines de cuartel y de terribles represalias, cuando ocupaba de nuevo la presidencia el general Belzu, que en años anteriores habíase casado con la ilustre argentina. Ídolo de los indios, para quienes todavía hoy es un héroe legendario, sosteníase apoyado más bien en aquel prestigio y á pesar de las grandes dificultades que le creaba el general Melgarejo, soldado de fortuna y uno de los hombres más audaces que figuran en la historia de Bolivia.

Hubo combate y lucha prolongada, y cuando el general Belzu podía juzgarse vencedor, fué de improviso asesinado en su propio palacio.

Las turbas propagaron por la ciudad el funesto acontecimiento, y la noticia llegó rápidamente á la casa donde habitaba Juana Manuela Gorriti, que por incompatibilidades de carácter y de costumbres vivía alejada de su marido y del palacio teatro del drama sangriento.

No vaciló un instante; el deber la llamaba y se sobreponía á desvíos y á ofensas.

Es uno de los rasgos culminantes en aquella mujer insigne.

Sin detenerse se lanzó á la calle y siguió á las masas. Se dirigían al palacio. Al entrar en él Juana Manuela buscó, encontró y colocó sobre su regazo el cuerpo inerte de su marido, y mientras se cerciioraba de si aún tenía un átomo de vida, resonaban en sus oídos los gritos de *¡Viva Melgarejo!*

Todo en torno suyo debía parecer pequeño y mezquino ante la magnitud del grupo.

Juana Manuela tuvo siempre verdadera predilección por el Perú; veía en él su segunda patria, donde muy joven y hermosa le prodigaron ovaciones entusiastas y fraternal cariño.

– Lima, mi Lima, decíame con vehemencia; usted no sabe lo risueña y hospitalaria que es aquella tierra.

Cuando yo llegué al Perú, ya Juana Manuela había regresado de Buenos Aires, y mi primera salida fué para ir con ella y visitar la tumba de su madre, por quien guardaba profunda veneración.

Por entonces vivía de su pluma y de la enseñanza. Era infatigable para el trabajo y su espíritu inventivo no decaía nunca.

Su casa convirtióse en templo, y allí al rendir culto á la literatura descollaban sus geniales condiciones, imponiéndose á todos, comunicando su entusiasmo y sus ideas originales, de un aticismo especial.

Juana Manuela acudía á cada grupo: dejaba caer aquí una frasecilla, una acertada crítica; salía al encuentro de un recién llegado, y en dos palabras le ponía al corriente de lo que en aquella noche se trataba para que sin perder tiempo apoyase ó combatiese el pensamiento.

En aquel piso bajo que tengo tan grabado en la imaginación se reunían las entidades literarias más en boga; se desarrollaban temas nuevos, aplaudiendo y estimulando en veladas inolvidables á peruanos y á extranjeros. Para llegar al salón principal había que atravesar el que durante el día ocupaban las clases y las alumnas, donde desempeñaba su misión educacionista la autora de «La Quená.»

Yo no he visto jamás actividad tan excepcional, y es digno de notarse que Juana Manuela Gorriti ha sido la escritora sudamericana más popular y también aquella que en mayor escala obtuvo producto de sus obras, en una época en que apenas la mujer empezaba á sobresalir y á dar pruebas palmarias de su valor intelectual.

En una ocasión fuí á visitarla en Lima, cosa frecuente porque su amistad tenía tal agasajo que era imposible no abrigar el deseo de cultivarla. Me sorprendí al encontrarla mudándose apresuradamente de traje y arrojando en un cesión las prendas que se quitaba. La miré interrogándola.

– He pasado la noche y algunas horas de la mañana con una amiga querida, que ha muerto de viruelas: ¡tan buena y en la flor de la vida!

– Pero ¿no ha temido usted contagiarse?

– Cuando cumplo un deber no tengo temor á nada.

Esas palabras gráficas son un retrato completo. Otro no menos característico:

Era en los días aciagos de la guerra entre el Perú y Chile. En el antiguo templo de San Francisco de Paula, en Lima, convertido entonces en prisión militar, estaba arrestado por cuestiones de disciplina un hijo de Juana Manuela Gorriti, joven peruano, pero recién llegado de Buenos Aires para batirse en defensa de la patria.

Con él había pasado toda la tarde la noble anciana y, como de costumbre, salió triste y preocupada, atravesando sin darse cuenta de ello la gran distancia que media desde aquella iglesia hasta el río que se cruza por un puente fronterizo con la línea ferrocarrilera de la Oroya – que, entre paréntesis, es la más atrevida de las construídas en América.

Extraña Juana Manuela á cuanto pasaba en torno suyo, sorda por la excesiva preocupación, no vió la lengua de fuego de la locomotora, ni tampoco oyó ni se hizo cargo de los rumores y de las exclamaciones de angustia escapados á los transeuntes de una y otra orilla. Todo fué obra de un segundo: Juana Manuela volvió la cabeza en el instante mismo que el eco de las montañas repetía el bramido del coloso que ya estaba tan cerca de ella que la llama podía chamuscar sus vestidos.

«La sangre fría, que más de una vez me ha servido en casos extremos, salvóme entonces de una muerte horrible.» Así me decía en una carta que recibí poco después en Colombia, frases que ha consignado también en su libro «El mundo de los recuerdos.»

De un salto se puso fuera de la vía cuando el tren pasaba á toda velocidad.

Juana Manuela sintió que la abrazaban, mientras que cien gritos de alborozo poblaban los aires, saludando la milagrosa salvación. Pocos habría entre aquella multitud que no la conocieran y la veneraran.

Hay que contar para esta popularidad que en epidemias ó en luchas habíasela visto siempre en los hospitales asistiendo á los atacados, sin temor á contagio, y curando á los heridos, sin desfallecimientos femeninos. Era un hábil ayudante, á la par que una enfermera cariñosa y consoladora.

Ruegos y súplicas la sacaron del Perú; sus amigos, sus compatriotas deseaban que pasara los días postreros de su vida en el suelo natal. Sobre su asciendad (había nacido en 1818) pesaba ya la vida demasiado laboriosa para atender á las necesidades más perentorias.

Años atrás habíale señalado el gobierno argentino una pensión como hija del prócer valeroso de la Independencia, y por fin abandonó el país predilecto para establecerse en las riberas del Plata.

Razo privilegio, la imaginación de Juana Manuela conservó sus facultades creativas hasta los últimos días de su vida, y aunque su salud era delicadísima y su rostro mostraba las huellas del tiempo, apenas decayeron las juveniles lozanías, lo florido del lenguaje, ni la riqueza de estilo y de pensamientos.

También había en ella una segunda vida: la del pasado; la de los recuerdos, ya risueños muchos ó azarosos otros, los que evocaba con tan pasmosa precisión y lujo de pormenores, que constituían, al decir de aquellos que la rodearon – hasta hace poco más de dos años, – datos preciosísimos para la historia de Bolivia, Perú y la Argentina.

Juana Manuela Gorriti no murió rica, pero sí disfrutado relativo bienestar: rodeada por el respeto y el cariño de todos; acompañada por su hijo Julio; tranquila, serena, con la seguridad de que legaba un nombre ilustre y que su patria y toda América honrarían su memoria.

Pocos meses antes de su muerte leí en Lima cartas suyas dirigidas á dos de sus amigas predilectas.

En una de ellas decía:

«Mi querida hija: Esto se acaba. Creo que no te escribiré más.»

Aun esa postrera frase demuestra la gráfica fortaleza y el alma de aquella mujer notable, que hoy tiene elevado puesto en el templo de la inmortalidad y es luminoso astro en la historia de la literatura hispano-americana del siglo XIX.

LA BARONESA DE WILSON

Emilia Serrano remembered Gorriti's literary salons in this piece, published in the Barcelona newspaper *La Ilustración Artística* on July 1, 1895, under her preferred pen name, Baronesa de Wilson. Courtesy of the Yale University Library.

public sphere" (Schlau 55). Martin also mentions the work of Margaret McFadden, which draws similar conclusions about the network of early feminists in Scandinavia and the Anglophone world.

McFadden argues that the use of the word "network" as a verb first comes into prominence among feminists (McFadden 11) and that the nineteenth century was marked by "a virtual explosion in the number of physical and verbal connections between women" (3). In an era in which communications took on generalized power and importance, the telegraph and the steamship became particularly meaningful for feminists and female intellectuals of all political orientations. Often isolated or denied entry into the cultural institutions endorsed by the nation-state, they formed group and person-to-person relationships that helped raise the public profiles of everyone involved.[4] As a marginalized minority within the field of literature, women writers often linked group and individual success.[5]

The recent critical recovery of Cabello, Matto, and their contemporaries in studies by Nancy LaGreca, Ana Peluffo, Francesca Denegri, Pinto Vargas, and others has been a necessary precondition for even contemplating a broader exploration of the group in connection with like-minded writers and reformers in the United States and Europe. While this study begins with a discrete place and time—late nineteenth-century Lima and the writers who gathered there—it strives to understand that place and time not as an anomaly or a facet of Peruvian literary history, but as part of a hemispheric intellectual movement that undertook pedagogical publishing projects, often international in scope, and imagined them as intellectual tools for continuing the political work of independence. I will argue that a historical period in which careers in letters included professional writing and professional teaching, with a great deal of crossover occurring between these spheres, demands a method of reading that takes this relationship into account. A long line of American authors, from Cabello and Matto to Aurora Cáceres, Soledad Acosta, Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, and Mary Peabody Mann, saw the publication of books and journals as a form of intervention capable of shaping the historical memory and civic life of the Western Hemisphere, and so thought in terms of the most efficient transmission of content useful to these ends.

Moral Electricity proposes, then, an alternate reading of nineteenth-century intellectual history, one in which the burning literary question

is pedagogical: How to create the new generation of reader-citizens who will sustain stable democratic republics? What happens to writing when it seeks at once to be pedagogical and beautiful? What happens to literary aesthetics when they are enlisted in the challenge of transmitting civically impactful content? The result, I will argue, is an integrated approach to publishing, writing, and reading that crosses the borders of genre and nationality.

Moral Electricity—Magic and Persuasion

The phrase "moral electricity" appears in an 1856 article by the US transcendentalist and common school advocate Charles Brooks. Brooks is speaking of an inherent quality of transmission that he believes the products of the nascent US publishing industry should demonstrate going forward. The term itself came into prominence during the French Revolution to describe the mutual political influence among individuals gathered in an assembly (Rosanvallon 44). Early nineteenth-century uses of the term in English and Spanish described influence exercised either by crowds or by individuals.[6] Decades after Brooks's invocation of "moral electricity," the Puerto Rican philosopher and educational reformer Eugenia María de Hostos mentioned *electricidad moral* in an essay proposing that women might be better receptors than men for positive moral influences implanted in books. Both constructions (and neither author cites anyone else on electricity as a metaphor) echo a sentiment expressed by Germaine de Staël's 1799 treatise on the social influence of literature; part of the author's task, she asserted, was to tap into an "electrical commotion" (*commotion électrique*) by which moral messages were transmitted and maintained (*De la littérature* 381).

This metaphor for invisible or insensible transmission—electricity moves from one object to another, creating changes that are visible to the eye even though the process of transmission is not—loops around through time and space to the very circle of writers, many of them feminist women, who kept the Lima literary scene alive on the page and in public life through books, journals, and Gorriti's *veladas*. Charles Brooks, for example, makes an appearance as "Cárlos Brookts" (*La ley* 100–101) in Serrano's *La ley del progreso* (Quito, 1880), a book very much modeled on Domingo Faustino Sarmiento's *Las escuelas: base de la prosperidad y de la república en los Estados Unidos* (New York, 1866),

a fact that Serrano readily acknowledged. Serrano would also follow Sarmiento's lead in championing Horace Mann and Brooks, reformers who made investigative trips to Europe in search of positive educational examples. These US intellectuals were, Serrano attested, exemplary figures for Spanish American educational reform. Sarmiento and Mann had met during the Argentine's educational tour of Europe and the United States, while Serrano had left her native Spain to travel and write extensively of, in, and about the Western Hemisphere. Their textual convergence underscores the global, cosmopolitan nature of educational discourse in the nineteenth century, a discourse that resists analysis confined to a single nation or a single language.

Inherent to this literary cosmopolitanism is the effort of communication and the question of how best to reach a wide readership. Electricity as a metaphor for connection and transmission leads a life to some degree parallel with the role planned for sentiment in a number of nineteenth-century novels.[7] Early on in *Lágrimas andinas*, her comprehensive study of Matto's literary aesthetic, Ana Peluffo points to the author's use of sentiment as an expressive technique. This antiquated literary device, systematically debunked by the priests of high modernism, is, Peluffo proposes, the primary cause of her disappearance from the canon in the decades following her death in 1909 (49). Asking, in essence, what would happen if we were to view sentimentality as an expressive tool rather than an aesthetic (and even moral) weakness, Peluffo suggests that sentimentality's purpose could be the creation of a national community in which emotion transcends differences of language, race, and social class (50).[8]

In Peluffo's analysis, sentiment serves a pragmatic, aesthetic purpose. She argues, for example, that while Matto's dramatization of the lives of indigenous characters for an audience of Creole elites invites the charge of exploitation and lack of authenticity, *some* sort of manipulation is necessary to make the world the novel creates portable and decipherable to its audience (74). Peluffo is asserting that indigenous suffering must become an "aesthetic artifact" (74) in order to reach its Lima audience, or, to put the argument another way, that Matto needed to simplify and underline the injustices faced by the country's Andean indigenous population in order to make them convincing to coastal, urban readers.

The technique Peluffo describes runs counter to at least one commonly held belief about the nature of teaching: the belief handed down from Rousseau that it is the teacher's task to push the student toward the unadorned world itself rather than an expression of it. The Rousseauian directive is deconstructive in that it requires the teacher and student to mistrust and dismantle those expressions rather than be moved by them. Peluffo proposes the opposite, positing the novelist's art as a pedagogical form of adornment calculated to take the reader's biases into account and thus to render as accurate a *perception* of reality as possible. In her view, education performs the sort of presentation that Rousseau's ideal tutor would teach his student to distrust.

Kate Jenckes and Patrick Dove have identified this contradiction between the making and unraveling of myths as a central problem for Latin American cultural studies, as its pedagogical agenda of demystification chooses between a posture that is "either too aestheticist or not aestheticist enough" (16). That is to say, a field that aspires both to "affirm materiality—even within language—as a necessary condition for any relation between subject and world" and "to critique aesthetic ideology and its complicity with structures of domination and normativity" will find itself simultaneously engaged in the dismantling and the construction of aesthetic objects.

The "subject-world" connection to which Jenckes and Dove allude becomes a web of connections when we take into account the world-author-reader-world relationship in which an author such as Matto seeks to deliver a new world to her readers with the expectation that they will be capable of receiving this fictional world and will, in turn, behave differently in the real world they inhabit throughout their everyday lives. As Víctor Goldgel has pointed out, the aesthetic serves, in the context of nineteenth-century Latin American letters, as a category that unites what contemporary observers tend to classify as the scientific and the literary. Far from being a rarified pursuit defined by its distance from everyday life, the aesthetic, which Goldgel defines as the means of perceiving the world, was an essential element of any intellectual community (173). An author who, like Charles Brooks or Eugenio María de Hostos, *believes* in the transformative powers of the book is therefore trusting the medium not only to deliver a world to its readers but also to deliver those readers back to the world with their perspectives and behavior fundamentally changed. Believing in the book the way Matto, Serrano, Cabello, and González de Fanning believe in the book means

giving the book a supernatural task. Electricity comes onstage as the mystical force capable of carrying it out.

The omnipresence of the word "electricity" in all manner of nineteenth-century discourse, from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* to Whitman's "I Sing the Body Electric," demonstrates just how deeply it had ingrained itself in public consciousness. Spanish America was no exception. The February 8, 1890, edition of Matto's *El Perú Ilustrado* (no. 141) would tell its readers that reality had become stranger than fiction by offering as "news" the story of "Jusuah Electricman," the North American inventor of devices such as the *escribógrafo*, the *medicófero*, and the *galvinopater*, devices that used electricity to perform the human offices of writer, doctor, and father. Electricity thus described is an invisible, dangerous, and progressive force that accelerates social change and disrupts tradition while saving labor—a compressed and exaggerated figure for the industrial revolution.

Along with this penchant for disruption, electricity also carried with it connotations of speed. Just as steam travel had effectively shrunk the world and profoundly altered public consciousness of space and time in the first half of the nineteenth century, electricity, by way of the telegraph and the telephone, was creating new networks for the lightning-fast distribution of information in the years surrounding those Lima *veladas*. The "nineteenth-century pan-Hispanic women's network," as coined by Martin, necessitated both the publication and transport of journals and books, and a surge in international travel and conferences. The press release was born in this era, as was the web of correspondents sending dispatches back and forth between American and European capitals. All of these trends made it possible for a relatively modest gathering in Gorriti's classroom annex to reverberate far beyond the experience of those actually present.

On a broader scale, one of the factors that connects the diverse writers and contexts I will be addressing is the consciousness of being part of a newly networked world and the belief that this sense of connection creates new opportunities for the printed word to multiply the civic influence of a single intellectual. Scholars trace the Spanish American faith in the saving power of book publishing at least as far back as 1797, when Pablo de Olavide's *El evangelio en triunfo* proposed the novelistic delivery of enlightened Christian content as an antidote to the French Revolution while aiming at a Spanish and Spanish American readership.

Half a century later, commentators like Charles Brooks urged the rapid creation of an American publishing industry as a countermeasure against the arrival of European books and their dubious political influence.[9]

Pedagogical Americanism

The wide temporal and geographical sweep of the title phrase "Moral Electricity" alludes to the hemispheric dimension of this project. Since it examines the Lima group as an intellectual network in connection with other networks across space and time, the project cannot be neatly contained by national borders. The legacy of book anxiety in the United States and in Spanish America—the sense that the New World must at once create a book market and the means of supplying it—is bound up, I will argue, with moral and political aspirations that cannot be easily untangled. The New World's will to write and will to publish is therefore both commercial and ideological, fueled by a fear of European authority via European imports on the one hand, and by a future-centered belief in the moral superiority of republicanism over monarchy and empire on the other.

The particular hemispheric approach I will be taking also depends on the vitally important connections established by the intellectuals themselves. Most of the Lima writers had at least some familiarity with British, French, and US books, and all of them worked to create a regional Spanish American sensibility that defied boundaries and incorporated allusions to US reformers such as Brooks and Mann, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Abraham Lincoln, as well as writers from Europe whose works were embraced by US and Spanish American readerships—most notably Samuel Smiles, the British author of inspirational biographical collections. In the paradigm of the *veladas*, being hemispheric is a basic qualification for becoming a competent reader in Spanish America. The hemispheric was a historical *condition* of the nineteenth century, not simply a construct imposed by scholars from the twenty-first century.

My use of the term "hemispheric" also references the now-established field of Hemispheric American Studies. In a recent collection of the same title, Caroline Field Levander and Robert S. Levine introduce a series of essays dealing with case studies from the colonial era to the present in which reading hemispherically shifts the critical ground for practitioners of the US-centric field of American studies. Declaring

their intent as that of disrupting the national framework in temporal and geographical terms and "putting different national histories and cultural formations into dialogue" (2), Levander and Levine argue that one of the advantages of this transnational approach is the new lens it provides for observing the nation state: "We are able to see the nation as a relational identity that emerges through constant collaboration, dialogue, and dissension" (5). In their view, hemispheric approaches serve to reopen and reconsider rather than to reify the national categories that have long governed literary and cultural history. The result they describe is "a heuristic rather than content- or theory-driven method" and one that "allows for the discovery of new configurations rather than confirmation of what we think we already know" (9). Levander and Levine's formulation might appear modest on first reading, but by focusing on the disruptive potential of new comparative configurations, they effectively equate being hemispheric with questioning the boundaries and structures upon which cultural and literary studies have been conducted, whether from the perspective of American Studies (their chosen bailiwick) or from that of Latin American Studies.

Levander and Levine cite Walter Mignolo's *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* as a work performing hemispheric thinking from the Latin American perspective. Mignolo speaks not from a self-identified center of cultural production, but from a space that US-centric nationalism has tended to define away as an exotic periphery. Noting that cultural authority tends to translate into the ability to make local ideas pass for universals, he argues that "today it is urgent to confront 'absolute knowledge' with its own 'geopolitics of knowledge,' to focus on the enunciation rather than the enunciated" (Mignolo xiii). For the intellectuals of Lima, for whom gender and geography could be doubly marginalizing categories, print culture served as a great leveling ground from which they could critique and integrate European and US authors and ideas into a literary and educational philosophy that billed itself both as a response to local conditions and as a projection of regional and hemispheric promise. The social reform they hoped to inspire in books would make Peru and other American republics into moral and political prototypes at the vanguard of a long narrative of progress rather than copies of a real or imagined Western Europe. The transnational print network they composed not only served to expose the contingency of the nation-state

but also sought to generate a positive corrective of its own, articulating a particularly American aesthetic that would synthesize what they saw as the unrealized promises of independence.

Gretchen Murphy has pointed out the inherent problem that a hemispheric approach faces when it attempts to posit itself as the neutral eraser of national boundaries. Since the hemispheric concept is itself defined by a boundary between the New World and the Old, it is, she argues, "an unlikely divide for challenging border effects in literary studies" ("The Hemispheric" 566). Murphy suggests that the scholar who wishes to take a hemispheric approach might ask whether the construction serves as "an end in itself or an intermediate step toward a moral globalized literary study" ("The Hemispheric" 567). This study opts for the latter approach—the hemispheric as a step toward the global—by focusing on the process by which nineteenth-century intellectuals shaped themselves as members of global networks. As a conservative national capital that was also a thriving global port, late nineteenth-century Lima was the pinnacle of the hemispheric-to-global sensibility. It is no accident that the reform-minded intellectuals who participated in the *veladas* subscribed to the first-person-plural construct. The "we" of the *veladas* could effortlessly expand from a localized cosmopolitan group in the city to the broader shared consciousness—regional, even global—with which they came to identify themselves. In this paradigm, the youthful intellectual from the provinces arrives in Lima and feels herself entitled to its smorgasbord of European intellectuals and best-selling US authors. Such intellectual freedom of movement, I will argue, was in fact an essential component of an American consciousness that viewed the New World as a political and educational vanguard free to construct its future from a wide array of readings and appropriations.

This consciousness, which I call pedagogical Americanism, functions as one of a trio of concepts—the others being gender emancipation and a belief in the pedagogical utility of literature—that held the Lima group together and sustained its faith in its own publishing program. My hemispheric approach is both circumstantial and ideological, to borrow a distinction Anne Garland Mahler made in her recent article on the Global South. Arguing for the Global South as a more useful interpretive category than postcolonialism in the context of the Civil Rights movement, Mahler distinguishes between categories defined by "trait-based and circumstantial conditions" and those with "ideological

grounds for inclusion," in her case a particular antagonism toward the Global North (113).

In my study the ideological glue that holds the American hemisphere together is a hope for the New World as a grand educational project combined with an anxiety about the baleful influence of a politically and morally decadent Old World that dominated literary output through its powerful publishing interests. The pedagogical Americanists thus coupled their idealism with a keen attention to the literary marketplace. The development of a New World publishing industry and the requisite system of distributors, editors, and writers would necessarily accompany the project to produce a better sort of book, a book produced to educate and attract republican readers.

This spillover between the pedagogical and the literary among the Lima writers is analogous to the shared vocation of literary author and newspaper writer that has come to be identified with the Latin American participants in modernism, a movement that was gathering momentum at roughly the same time. Andrew Reynolds has pointed out that the expanding nature of print journalism "provided them with the necessary networking abilities to form strong ties with literary figures and other agents in the literary field" (15). I argue that the combination of a global press, an expansion in book publishing, and a global discourse on educational reform provided similar opportunities for the Lima group in a historical moment Reynolds associates with "the expansion from a national to a transnational literary perspective" (145).

American Imperatives of Infrastructure and Distribution

Any exploration of the role of pedagogy in nineteenth-century Spanish American letters must contend with a global literary market and a community that crosses national boundaries. The question of what "arrives" on the Spanish American literary scene is, at the final stage, very much in the hands of Spanish American intellectuals. "Influence" obeys a chronology that depends both on publication and on the later acts of reading and being cited. The central argument I will be making is that the emerging discourse of Latin American feminism typified by (though not restricted to) the Lima circle is inseparable from a discourse on pedagogy and

publishing traceable across time and space.[10] On a temporal axis, it engages with decades of republican discourse on intellectual independence from Europe; on a spatial one, it forms itself in dialogue with a rich conversation on publishing, literary aesthetics, and educational reform underway throughout the Americas and Western Europe. Mary Louise Pratt's essay "'Don't Interrupt Me': The Gender Essay as Conversation and Countercanon," neatly sums up the difficulty faced by aspiring Latin American women of letters as that of breaking into "the male monologue that has been canonized as the Latin American essay" (13). In Pratt's analysis, Latin American women who wished to be public intellectuals faced even greater obstacles than those who wished only to be influential writers within an extant literary sphere. Arguing persuasively that what has come to be the canon of the nineteenth-century essay is centered almost exclusively on texts "whose topic is the nature of criollo identity and culture, particularly in relation to Europe and North America," a subgenre she classifies as the "criollo identity essay" (14), Pratt attests that female intellectuals, who were actively excluded from the identity project, justifiably responded by creating a parallel genre, "a tradition that could accurately be called the *gender essay*" (15).[11]

Pratt identifies a number of characteristics of the "gender essay," among them the use of "the form of a historical catalogue" and a lack of dependence on national categories (17). She also notes the relationship between the historical project of emancipation—"Historically, it can be read as the woman's side of an ongoing negotiation as to what women's social and political settlements are and ought to be in the postindependence era"—and a certain ideological iconoclasm that by turns argues against and makes pragmatic use of societal expectations and prejudices: "Ideologically, its discussions of womanhood are eclectic, operating both within and against patriarchal gender ideologies" (16). This analysis has much to recommend it, not least being the widely expressed consciousness among nineteenth-century Latin American feminists that they were indeed inhabiting a world parallel but separate from a dominant male monologue. On the other hand, the possibility of overlap between the gender essay (which also invokes identity) and the Creole identity essay (which tends to employ and sometimes abuse the Enlightenment association with emancipation) suggests a larger project, the identity essay in the Americas, written from differing individual perspectives. One

of the advantages of pedagogy as a hermeneutic lens on the output of Spanish American feminists who saw themselves as novelists, educators, and women of letters is the degree to which it acts as a bridge between the parallel discourses of gender emancipation and Creole identity.

Almost a century before the writers of the Lima group were coming into prominence, Germaine de Staël had suggested that literature might serve as a path to greater political influence for women who were systematically excluded from the formal political process. While lamenting that the French Revolution had failed to advance the cause of female emancipation, and had in fact fallen into the throes of a patriarchal backlash, Staël argued that women writers would need to destroy the arbitrary boundary between the literary and the "real" world in order to bring their writings to bear on the dominant discussions from which they were excluded. Staël's question was, in effect, what's the point of a woman's writing literature if it does not intersect with politics? "Certainly, there is no career so limited, so confined, as that of Literature, if we view it in the light in which it is frequently considered,—as detached from all philosophy" (*The Influence* 139).

Staël's approach to the bearing of literature on politics and society would be heartily echoed by the writers of the Lima group, who spoke unapologetically of producing "social" novels. Frequently cited in Spanish-language periodicals throughout the nineteenth century, Staël also garnered mention in the biographical collections of two of Matto's contemporaries, Soledad Acosta and Aurora Cáceres. Like Harriet Beecher Stowe, she remained a polestar for Spanish American feminists seeking to link literary production and political power.

The political-influence test for literature's artistic merits was a cultural phenomenon that by the end of the century stretched from Buenos Aires to New York. In an 1891 issue of *La Revista Ilustrada de Nueva York*, José Ignacio Rodríguez invoked *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in a review of Helen Hunt Jackson's *Ramona*, remembering Stowe's work as an omnipresent classic—"Everyone can say, without exaggeration, that he or she has read this book" (138).[12] Moreover, the Stowe-Jackson comparison led him to summon a Victor Hugo quote on the power of sentiment—"Sentiment awakens the love of the truth very tear erases something" (143)[13]—before concluding that Stowe's and Jackson's novels had helped change public opinion on slavery and the rights of Native Americans. Rodríguez is likely quoting from Hugo's volume of poetry

Le rayons et les ombres (1840) in which the speaker holds forth on the utility of crying, concluding with a pair of lines that might be translated as "Every tear, child, / Washes something away" (n. pag.).[14] His careful framing and elliptical translation manages to turn the poem's endorsement of sentiment into an aesthetic that calls on the power of emotion to invoke real political action rather than empty cathartic release.[15]

On the other hand, an aesthetic based on sentiment suggested the question of just how effective emotion could be as a tool for reaching across large social divides. In the twentieth century, US critic James Baldwin critiqued *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, in particular its continuing vogue as "Everybody's Favorite Protest Novel." Baldwin saw the book as an aesthetic and political failure. Arguing that it provoked sentimental emotional connection with the reader in lieu of real political change, he effectively dismissed the affective dimension that served as the formal bedrock for the social novel.[16] Baldwin attacks sentiment as a sign of simulated rather than genuine connection between human beings: "Sentimentality, the ostentatious parading of excessive and spurious emotion, is the mark of dishonesty, the inability to feel" (14). As far as the reader's reaction to the book is concerned, Baldwin mistrusts the emotional effect of sympathy. He suggests that the "protest novel" pretends to inspire genuine political action but in reality provides an aesthetic experience that stands in for such action: "We receive a very definite thrill of virtue from the fact that we are reading such a book at all" (19).

Baldwin's critique looms large over the twentieth- and twenty-first-century reception of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Hollis Robbins devote much of the introduction to their 2007 edition, *The Annotated Uncle Tom's Cabin*, to the value of reconsidering Stowe's novel a half-century later. Gates and Robbins argue that Stowe needed sentimentality and melodrama to perform what they see as her great political reframing act: she managed "to remove the question of slavery from the male discourse of Jeffersonian individualism, which had not had much success in ending slavery by 1852, and to resituate it squarely in the heart of the family circle" (xiv). Sentimentality, as they see it, proved a necessary tool for the task of bringing its readers in touch with the domestic reality of slavery, with all of its underlying sexual energy (xx). Where Baldwin sees the use of sentiment as an aesthetic defect and a sign of an author's infelicitous connection with her characters, Gates and Robbins

see a pedagogical technique necessary for a readership obstructed by a web of prejudice and social taboos.

For the writers of the Lima group and for feminist scholars such as their younger contemporary Elvira García y García, sentiment functions as an essential force for an aesthetic experience designed to spur the reader toward political action rather than to substitute for it. García y García makes this vision of the empowered reader an essential aspect of her aesthetic vision. Art, she argues, gives readers and spectators an artificial world that convinces them to act differently in the real one "when it tends to strengthen this calm, beneficent and royal power, that we exercise at first over ourselves, and, secondly, through ourselves, over the environment that surrounds us" (64).[17] Here the aesthetic experience depends on three vectors, the last two stated and the first implied: the ability to be influenced by a reading, the ability to exercise influence over oneself in response to the reading, and the ability to bring that influence to bear on everyone else. Literary value comes about because of influence, and influence is effected through a series of "teaching moments."

Chapter by Chapter

This study is organized into five chapters, dealing respectively with different conceptual manifestations of the teaching book: the republican ideal of the book and publishing industry of the future; the autodidact as exemplary citizen; the biographical collection as a frame for rethinking history through networks; the aesthetics of the classroom narrative; and the theory of the social novel. While most of the primary source materials were published in a period we could define broadly as that of national consolidation—roughly 1830–1898—the textual relationships I will be analyzing often present alliances that stretch the bounds of chronology, as biographical collections blur time and space to create a textual community of heroic figures, and certain reformist moments become touchstones capable of transcending their immediate context. By tracing the intellectual history of the pedagogical imperative in Spanish American letters through a few key examples, I will be dealing with "influences" not so much as the unconscious effects of one writer's work on another, but as narratives of reading. The chronology that governs this study is characterized not by publication dates (the first moment something *could* have been read), but by the contexts in which influences are acknowledged, quoted, and appealed to as sources of authority.

Chapter 1, "Independence and the Book in Subjunctive," takes its title from the well-known passage in *Recuerdos de provincia* in which Sarmiento recounts his "discovery" of Ackermann's catechisms, educational texts published in London for distribution throughout the Americas. As Sarmiento tells the story, his surprise encounter with the catechisms served as physical confirmation of an imaginative "invention" he had already made, that such books should be available for youths like himself who found themselves deprived by circumstances of the voice of a teacher. The book, he believed, could serve as the autodidact's tutor and pedagogue. This chapter discusses the recurrence of this idea among Spanish American and North American intellectuals in the period immediately after independence as a response to the postrevolutionary anxiety over the lack of domestically published books, the dangers of European ones, and the desire to make the products of print culture match the promise of the rhetoric of the independence movement.

Chapter 2, "Exemplary Autodidacts," deals with the American construction of the heroic autodidact, focusing on Benjamin Franklin, Sarmiento, Abraham Lincoln, and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. It argues that the frame of the self-taught hero forces a narrative approach on education and imagines the student-reader as a single category.

Chapter 3, "Collective Feminist Biography," takes the intellectual ramifications of the exemplary life further as it focuses on the surge in production of feminist biographical collections in Spanish America during the last decades of the 1800s. By focusing on a paradoxical American anxiety—the fear, on the one hand, that the story of independence and its positive moral content would be forgotten if not transmitted to future generations and, on the other hand, that traditional historiographic approaches would glorify violence and military virtues above all others—these chapters argue that biography takes on a special importance in the context of postindependence as a kind of "virtuous history" in which heroic figures serve as moral examples to children. This chapter also traces the collective biography's ability to create virtual intellectual communities, a special concern for the writers of the Lima group.

In Chapter 4, "Novelistic Education, or The Making of the Pan-American Reader," I analyze the interplay between pedagogy and literary aesthetics, with a particular focus on how the classroom or the

perception of the classroom shapes the book. This sort of encounter happened literally in book projects by US reformer Bronson Alcott, Acosta, and Serrano, as these writers attempted to recreate classroom dialogue on the page, a leitmotif that served as a backdrop to a number of textbooks and textbook anthologies by authors such as José Martí, William Holmes McGuffey, Juana Manso, and Clorinda Matto. For these textbook/anthology projects, literary or historical merit comes to mean the ability to communicate specific moral content, as the authors justify their selections based on how the texts are expected to influence their readers. This chapter will argue that a form of "pedagogical reading" emerges from these discussions of how texts should be received. Owing a great deal to the connection between beauty and transmissibility explored in Friedrich Schiller's *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* (1794), the pedagogical aesthetic defines beauty as effective literary pedagogy and literary technique as the writer's toolbox for making a message graspable to readers.

The final chapter, "Educational Aesthetics and the Social Novel," takes this notion of the pedagogical aesthetic and applies it to the theoretical discussion of the novel transpiring throughout the Western world in the last decades of the nineteenth century, with special attention to the fervor of the discussion in Lima, where so many threads intersected in person and on the printed page. The international bylines of a publication such as *El Perú Ilustrado* illustrate the global dimension of this debate, as does the interest in explaining and comparing the work of contemporary (and contemporarily read) novelists such as Victor Hugo, Émile Zola, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Leo Tolstoy. The circle of Lima novelists that included Matto and Cabello and that counted Acosta as at least an honorary member, was characterized by feminism (with varying degrees of radicalism), professional experience (as teachers and editors), and ambition (for the political and aesthetic possibilities of the social novel). I will argue that what emerges is an original vision of the novel as a prose form shaped by common, though often contentious, notions of civic empathy and the public good.[18] For novelists such as Matto, Cabello, and Acosta, literary creativity cannot be separated from a very clear notion of public perception and need. Accordingly, their literary aesthetic equates with the responsibility to make the printed page a moral force that, like educational narratives and biographies, connects individual and collective morality in a circuit of perpetual reform.

1

Independence and the Book in Subjunctive

"Moral Electricity," or Writing and Reading Virtue

Charles Brooks's 1856 essay "Moral Education: The Best Methods of Teaching Morality in the Common Schools," appeared in Henry Barnard's *American Journal of Education* as part of an ongoing conversation on the role of books and reading in education. In a twenty-first century climate of educational debate centered on skills such as literacy, arithmetic, and problem solving, Brooks's easy link between reading and morality underlines just how much the grounds of educational debate have shifted in the century and a half since his essay was published. A staunch proponent of the common school movement and the notion of public education as a stay against political corruption, Brooks had, ten years before, asked the rhetorical question "What have the United States to fear from the kingdoms of Europe?" and answered it himself: "Little from their navies; less from their armies; little from their commercial competition; less from their political creeds." With nearly every measure of contemporary state power exhausted, Brooks concluded that it was only by bad moral influence—"their moral and political corruptions"—that the great European powers could ever threaten the United States (*Remarks* 38).

Having established the United States as a world power with nothing to fear from conventional statecraft (a line of argument Abraham Lincoln would take to great rhetorical effect in his declaration, in the years leading up to the US Civil War, that only internal disagreement could wreck the project of independence), the Brooks of 1856 nonetheless finds the US moral identity to be very much a work in progress. Asking himself another broad question—What kind of literature should the new nation be producing?—he rattles off an equally snappy and pro-