

FERTILIZER DREAMS: PERUVIAN AND CHILEAN CULTURE
OF THE GUANO AND NITRATE ERAS

BY

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DISSERTATION

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Abstract

This dissertation provides a new reading of modern Peruvian and Chilean literatures through the tumultuous history of the global trade in fertilizer. Focusing on the guano era in Peru (1840s-1870s) and the nitrate era in Chile (1880s-1930s), it demonstrates that the literature of the period is animated by what I call “fertilizer dreams,” that is, the hopes and fears of elites with regards to guano and nitrates. On the one hand, cultural production gives voice to the hope that Chile and Peru could be just on the verge of achieving the ever-distant ideal of European-style modernity. At the same time, however, the texts are haunted by the realities of economic instability, resource depletion, and violent dispossession that accompanied the export booms. The dissertation is divided into four chapters, each of which considers a different literary genre that I have identified as a key expression of the Fertilizer Dreams of Peruvian and Chilean elites.

The first half of this dissertation examines what I call “Foundational Myths of Resource Extraction,” which present allegorical origin stories for the extractive industries of Chile and Peru. Chapter One analyzes nineteenth-century tales of buried Incan treasure that I call “Precious Metal Melodramas.” Focusing on three texts written by Juana Manuela Gorriti, the chapter demonstrates how the Precious Metal Melodramas allegorically engage with guano-era concerns related to coloniality, resource depletion, and the perils of enrichment without labor. Chapter Two analyzes what I call “Legends of the Chilean Miner,” featured in politician Benjamín Vicuña Mackenna’s three-part history of mining in Chile. It examines how the legends condense conflicts within the mining industry between domestic and foreign interests as well as between capital and labor in a single mythic figure of the Chilean Miner.

Chapter Three examines the canonical novels of Clorinda Matto de Turner. Focusing on the less-studied novel *Índole* (1891), the chapter highlights the centrality of counterfeiting and debt to Matto's *oeuvre*. I argue that these novels are "Romances of Capital Investment" which seek to rekindle Peruvian faith in the promise of resource extraction made possible through foreign capital investment via the joint stock company. This romanticization of investment is achieved through a sentiment-laden portrayal of investment as an act of charity, specifically associated with the moral value of creole, republican womanhood. Chapter Four brings together two novels that have been previously been read as the most iconic literary expressions of the guano and nitrate eras: Luis Benjamín Cisneros's novel *Julia* (1861) and Luis Orrego Luco's *Casa grande* (1908). The chapter proposes that these novels are "Accounts of Fictitious Prosperity" which seek to make sense of the financialization of the guano and nitrate economies through the concept of its inherent fictitiousness and propensity towards ceaseless repetition.

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Introduction: Fertilizer Dreams

This dissertation studies the literature of a time when salt and bird excrement turned into gold. In the South American nations of Peru and Chile during the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, two worthless substances were transformed, seemingly overnight, into high-value commodities, sold as fertilizer on the world market. These substances were guano, that is, seabird excrement accumulated on rocky islands off the coast of Peru, and *salitre*, or sodium nitrate, embedded in the driest desert in the world, the Atacama. Guano and nitrates brought new fertility to depleted soils in Europe, the United States, and the Caribbean, enabling the Global North to exceed what many had believed to be the ecological limits of its rapid industrialization.¹

In South America, the boom in fertilizer demand yielded two consecutive periods of economic euphoria, known as the guano era in Peru (1840s-1870s) and then the nitrate era in Chile (1880s-1920s). The two eras were punctuated by the War of the Pacific (1879-1883), a resource war in which Chile fought against Peru and Bolivia to gain control of the nitrate-rich Atacama Desert. Chile's victory had lasting consequences for the economic trajectories of the three nations. The miraculous prosperity created by fertilizer exports, however, came to an end only too soon in both the guano and nitrate eras. Global financial crises made profits evaporate, guano became depleted, and scientists produced a synthetic substitute for nitrates that made the Chilean industry obsolete. Then, as now, people have repeatedly sought to explain what went so wrong. If so much wealth could disappear so soon, was it ever real to begin with? Or was the prosperity of the Fertilizer Age somehow only a fiction?

¹ See Cushman, James, and Bellamy Foster.

This dissertation examines the ways in which Peruvian and Chilean cultural production of the guano and nitrate eras sought to make sense of a socioeconomic system swept up in this dramatic, transformative moment. I argue that the literature of the period is animated by what I call “fertilizer dreams,” that is, elite hopes and fears about guano and nitrates. On the one hand, the literature gives voice to a wishful sense that Peru and Chile were just on the verge of achieving that ever-distant ideal of European-style modernity. On the other hand, the texts are haunted by concerns about economic instability, resource depletion, and violent dispossession. My corpus consists of novels, short stories, and essays, the majority of which have never previously been studied in relation to the fertilizer economies of Chile and Peru. These texts range from Peruvian novelist Clorinda Matto de Turner’s famous novel *Aves sin nido* (1889) to Chilean politician Benjamín Vicuña Mackenna’s relatively obscure (particularly for literary scholars) three-part history of mining in Chile. Legends of buried Incan treasure and novels plagued by ghosts and doubles also acquire new interest when read as “fertilizer dreams.” Methodologically, I identify tropes and narrative structures that repeatedly appear in the texts of the era, giving rise to four key genres: the Precious Metal Melodrama, the Legend of the Chilean Miner, the Romance of Capital Investment, and the Account of Fictitious Prosperity.

The Fertilizer Age

The scope of this dissertation is delimited by what I call the Fertilizer Age, a term that indicates its particular geographic, temporal, and thematic scale of analysis. In assigning the label of Fertilizer Age to period 1840s-1930s in Peru and Chile, I am following the conventional characterization of this time period as the guano and nitrate eras.

Beginning with the first commercial exports of guano in 1841, the Fertilizer Age covers

much of the nineteenth century into the early twentieth. It comes to a close with the collapse of the nitrate industry in the 1930s. Temporally speaking, this period overlaps with what Ericka Beckman classifies as Latin America's Export Age (1870-1930), in which "market integration acquired unprecedented speed and intensity" throughout the continent (204). The Fertilizer Age thus offers a particular manifestation of this broader wave of export boom and bust in Latin America's Export Age. With the export of guano and salitre, Peru and Chile became enmeshed in international financial circuits to an extent never before unseen in each country. Moreover, as guano and salitre became the dominant export commodities, Peru and Chile became increasingly dependent on fertilizer export revenue as a principal source of state funding.² By centering my analysis on the Fertilizer Age as imagined by the elites of Lima, Peru and Santiago, Chile, I am able to account for the specificities of the guano and nitrate industries and of the socio-historical contexts within which cultural production sought to narrate the possibilities and dangers of economies based in the extraction and export of fertilizer.

This dissertation illustrates how the economic euphoria of the guano era in Peru and the nitrate era in Chile fertilized intense booms in intellectual and creative productivity. As a result, this dissertation brings Chilean and Peruvian literature into

² In Peru, the government declared ownership of guano and maintained its budget based on guano revenues and (increasingly) guano-backed loans from domestic and foreign lenders. As Contreras describes, "lo que hacía era convertir los yacimientos transables de materias primas en su patrimonio fiscal máspreciado" (39). The Chilean government, in turn, depended on the taxation of private nitrate companies, as Collier and Sater describe, "from the late 1880s until 1930, the nitrate industry generated more than half of all ordinary revenues—and employed more people than any other industry. In short, for forty years *salitre* almost single-handedly propelled the economy and supported the Chilean government" (168-9). In both countries, the reduction or elimination of taxes on other populations/sectors of the economy furthered state dependence on fertilizer export revenue.

dialogue in a new way. Despite the geographic proximity and historical entanglements of the two nations, Peruvian and Chilean literatures are rarely studied together. Peruvian literature has been predominantly read in conjunction with texts from Ecuador and Bolivia as part of Andean literature, whereas Chilean and Argentine literatures are frequently paired as making up the Southern Cone. This dissertation challenges the established regional divisions of literature by demonstrating transnational patterns in Peruvian and Chilean cultural production of the Fertilizer Age. I thus reveal how the challenges addressed by the cultural production of each country have far more in common than those invested in the idea of Chilean exceptionalism might wish to acknowledge. As a fundamental moment in the elaboration of Chilean discourses of racial superiority, which I discuss in Chapter Two, the Fertilizer Age offers an ideal perspective through which to explore and question the unspoken assumptions that underlie our disciplinary divisions between the Andes and the Southern Cone.

It should be noted that the category of “fertilizer” that I use to designate guano and nitrates is a reductive term. European demand for nitrates was not only prompted by the substance’s utility as a fertilizer but also as a key ingredient in explosives that were used in mining and, especially, in war. Nevertheless, my decision to place guano and nitrates together under the shorthand “fertilizer” is supported by the work of historians Rory Miller and Robert Greenhill. In a piece titled “The Fertilizer Commodity Chains,” Miller and Greenhill persuasively argue, “the evolution of the guano and nitrate trades should be viewed as a continuous process” (230).³ As nitrates came to replace guano as a key source

³ Adopting a slightly different classificatory approach, environmental historian Gregory Cushman classifies nitrates as an important commodity of the Guano Age, and describes

of fertilizer for Europe, they explain, several of the same British and U.S. commercial houses were involved in the extraction, shipment, and/or financing of both commodities.

The conventional designation of 1840s-1870s in Peru and 1880s-1930s in Chile as the guano and nitrate eras, respectively, speaks to the preponderant importance that has been attributed to the two fertilizers in helping to shape the experience of each time period. Even so, the implications of the dominance of these export commodities for cultural production within these historical moments remains unexplored.⁴ My work proposes that concerns about guano and nitrates inform and shape cultural production even beyond those essays that expressly analyze the science and economics of these extractive industries. Indeed, as I hope to demonstrate, it is in the realm of literary fiction where we find the most compelling and contradictory accounts of elite hopes and fears about guano and nitrates.

It may come as a surprise that the material substances of guano and nitrates make no appearance in the fictional works examined in this dissertation. My claim that the elites of Lima and Santiago were dreaming about fertilizer, therefore, merits some clarification. First of all, my work takes up Coronil's proposal that Latin American export economies should be studied not only in terms of the circulation of the commodity's material form—as a use value—but also the circulation of the commodity's exchange value—as money.⁵ As

how the period that was “not built just on guano but more broadly on a number of raw chemicals that allowed the Industrial Revolution to move into its second phase” (66).

⁴ My work therefore follows the suggestion of Fernando Coronil, who writes in *The Magical State*, “The remarkable fact that this rather common manner of identifying a neocolonial nation by its major export product seems unremarkably natural only highlights the need to understand why some nations have become so bonded to some commodities that they have come to be identified with them” (67).

⁵ Coronil writes, “What would happen if sugar and other commodities were analyzed also as exchange values, as material vehicles for capturing ‘hard’ metropolitan currencies, that

commodities extracted for the purpose of export, guano and nitrates were principally experienced within Chile as Peru as sources of currency and credit, rather than as fertilizers or explosives. Indeed, the majority of Peruvians and Chileans had no direct, material interaction with guano and salitre. While employment in nitrate mines peaked at around 50,000 in the period 1910-20, there were only about 1,000 - 5,000 people on the guano islands and nearby anchored ships at one time (Loveman 159; Méndez 16-19). It is quite plausible that few of the writers studied in this dissertation ever set eyes on guano or nitrates. When considered from this perspective, it would seem logical that the form of appearance of guano and nitrates within Peruvian and Chilean literature should be as money (or debt) rather than as white, fertilizing matter. Although this is primarily the case, I will demonstrate that the materiality and social relations of resource extraction also leave their mark in cultural production.

Modeling Fertilizer's Value

As elite cultural production grappled with a historical moment in which—so to speak—salt and bird excrement turned into gold and then disappeared into the airy world of finance, economic value became a site of intense preoccupation and exploration. In works of political economy and fiction, writers sought to ascertain where value was located and how it functioned. Value seemed to be inherent in precious metals such as gold, but

is, as export commodities whose dominant function is to serve as means of exchange? The examination of their 'consumption' would entail an analysis of how they are transformed into money, and specifically into international currency" ("Beyond" 64). He demonstrates the benefits of this approach in his study on oil in Venezuela, in which he asserts, "Oil's effects on Venezuelan society are most pervasive not in its form as a commodity with specific physical properties but in its form as money, not as a use value but as an exchange value. In this respect, oil's social impact occurs after it has been sold in the international market" (*Magical* 110).

what about nitrates? Or was it instead only produced out of the exertions of human labor? Or perhaps, was economic value all an illusion, based solely on social conventions or, worse, potentially false appearances?

These questions of course, were not exclusive to the Fertilizer Age, and mark cultural production from at least the days of Spanish colonization of the Americas. As Elvira Vilches has demonstrated in her study of Spanish mercantile, historiographical, and literary production of the long sixteenth century, the influx of bullion to Spain, the subsequent inflation, and the intensification of the credit economy provoked anxious textual explorations about the nature of economic value.⁶ In nineteenth century, in turn, Latin American economies became more closely tied into the rhythms of global finance, with novel opportunities for growth, but also greater economic instability. Independence and the end of the Spanish imperial monopoly enabled Latin American nations to integrate into global finance centered in the London Stock Exchange. British investors were eager to reap the benefits of expanding Latin American export production, and Latin American governments likewise sought loans to cover military and promote economic expansion.⁷ Within the realm of cultural production, Latin American literature throughout the nineteenth century is shaped by an insistent preoccupation with questions of finance and value, as Richard Rosa and Ericka Beckman have demonstrated. The literature of the Fertilizer Age offers a particularly dramatic case study of how cultural production negotiated shifting and competing conceptions of value in time of intense, whirlwind

⁶ See also Lynch.

⁷ For an overview of this transition across Latin America, see Bulmer-Thomas pp. 19-45 and Marichal.

integration of Latin America into global economic and financial circuits through the export of extractive commodities.

My analysis of the ways in which Fertilizer Age fiction grapples with questions of value builds on a significant corpus of scholarship that has explored how literature—and the novel in particular—has offered, since its eighteenth-century emergence, a prime site for the exploration of shifting notions of value, understood both in terms of truth-value and worth.⁸ James Thompson offers a productively concise and compelling theorization of the relationship between the novel and political economy in his notion of novels as “models of value,” that is, “a kind of cultural laboratory/imaginary in which various forms of social evaluation can be modeled and tested” (7). Much like the essays of political economy, Thompson argues, the novel “describes or represents or figures value and at the same time is charged with explaining it” (3). Eleanor Courtemanche proposes a similar conceptualization of the relationship between the novel and political economy, describing the two as “rival ways of representing complex social systems” (3). Joining their approach, I believe that fictional narratives, and the richly detailed worlds they imagine, can be read as forms of economic theory in their own right. Certainly, the models offered do not adhere to the standards of logic, consistency, dispassion, and verisimilitude that one might seek (quite futilely, I may add) in a work of political economy. Yet, precisely for this reason, literary fiction is a particularly rich site for the study of elite conceptualizations of the Fertilizer Age, because it engages with the messy, passionate, irrational, irreconcilable, and fantastic elements of lived and imagined economic experience.

⁸ See, for example, Thompson, Poovey, McKeon, Courtemanche, Michaels, and Goux.

Imagined Ecologies

A central interest of literary scholars has been the ways in which nineteenth-century Latin American cultural production sought to dream into being national body politics—“imagined communities,” to use Benedict Anderson’s term—with specific race and gender characteristics in the wake of independence.⁹ Building on the extensive critical corpus that examines how literature invokes elite imaginations of national polities, this dissertation turns from a consideration of human resources to how literature imagined the natural resources of the nation.¹⁰ This move builds on the scholarship of Mary Louise Pratt, Ericka Beckman, Jennifer French, Paul Gootenberg, and Fernando Coronil, who have beautifully demonstrated how elite ambitions to produce ideal, “modern” nations were inseparable from visions of environmental transformation through resource extraction, agriculture, and infrastructure projects. Or, as Coronil writes, “if national imaginings are partly sustained, as Anderson argues, by means of communication such as print-capitalism, they also depend on the very materiality of the nation as life-sustaining habitat—on different modalities of configuring the metabolism between society and nature” (8). These scholars illustrate, moreover, how such environmental interventions were directly seen as

⁹ For some of the most famous examples, see Sommer, Cornejo Polar *Escribir en el aire*, and Masiello. In deploying the term “foundational myths” I am explicitly referencing Doris Sommer’s classic *Foundational Fictions* (1991) which proposes an allegorical reading of nineteenth century novels as national allegories that promote the unification of a national body politic across differences in race, class, political allegiance, and geography through plots driven by heterosexual romantic desire. As I will demonstrate, this interpretive model is highly relevant for an analysis of the tragic interracial romances of the Precious Metal Melodrama, although less so for the heroic quest narrative of the Legend of the Chilean Miner, in which the primary romance is between man and ore.

¹⁰ As such, I situate myself within the emergent field of Latin Americanist ecocriticism, which is gaining energy, as demonstrated in the 2014 special issue of *Revista de Crítica Literaria Latinoamericana* which features a compelling range of innovative ecocritical theory and criticism.

containing the potential to improve or degenerate body politics, offering an important reminder of the ways in which nineteenth-century conceptions of ecology included the human.¹¹

Fertilizer Dreams

This dissertation is divided into four chapters, each of which considers a different literary genre that I have identified as a prominent expression of the Fertilizer Dreams of Peruvian and Chilean elites. The first half of this dissertation examines what I call “Foundational Myths of Resource Extraction”: the Precious Metal Melodrama and the Legend of the Chilean Miner.¹² These texts present allegorical origin stories for the extractive industries of Chile and Peru, which repeatedly reenact the foundational moment of what Marx calls “primitive accumulation.”¹³ In doing this, the tales position resource

¹¹ Moore proposes a definition of ecology such that “The shorthand, ‘ecological,’ crystallizes the matrix of human and extra-human natures, and the historically-specific ways through which symbolic and material relations are interwoven and provisionally stabilized in the modern world-system” (5). For a discussion of the concepts of nature and society, see Williams, Moore, and Smith.

¹² In his influential study *Underdeveloping the Amazon* (1985), sociologist Steven Bunker defines “extractive commodities” as “resources which occur in nature and in whose existence or continued reproduction there is no deliberate human intervention” (24). Thus, the term “resource extraction” designates a category of activities—including mining and guano excavation, as well as oil drilling, logging, fishing, and rubber tapping, for example—which take natural resources directly from the environment, rather than playing an active role in the good’s production, as one would in agriculture or manufacturing, for example. Extractive economies, which are principally located in rural, peripheral spaces, bring previously unexploited resources into circulation in the world economy. In this way, they provide vital inputs to other sectors and regions in the form of energy and raw materials, thus exacerbating global *ecological* inequality, in addition to economic inequality, Clark and Bellamy Foster draw on Marx to describe this ecological inequality as a “global metabolic rift,” and highlight, “Nothing so demonstrated this unequal ecological exchange in the nineteenth century as the international guano trade” (70). See also Bunker, Coronil, and Hornberg.

¹³ See Marx *Capital* vol. 1. Central to my understanding of primitive accumulation is David Harvey’s concept of “accumulation by dispossession” as a process that repeats with each subsequent cycle of capitalist accumulation. See *Spaces of Global Capitalism*.

extraction as foundational to the origin of each nation.¹⁴ I open with an iconic Foundational Myth of Resource Extraction—the tale of Incan gold. Specifically, I analyze the Fertilizer Age manifestation as of these tales, which I call “Precious Metal Melodramas.” These tragic, interracial romances center on the desire for Incan gold that was buried at the time of the Conquest and remains guarded by the descendants of Inca nobles. Through an analysis of three texts written by Juana Manuela Gorrit—*La quena* (1851), “El tesoro de los incas” (1865), and “El chifle del indio” (1878)—I demonstrate how the Precious Metal Melodrama allegorically engages with guano-era concerns related to coloniality, resource depletion, and the perils of enrichment without labor. Moreover, I argue that they portray Peru as a land that cursed by its very natural resource wealth to be endlessly torn apart by violence and greed. My analysis of these texts builds on work of Antonio Cornejo Polar, Sara Castro-Klarén, Mark Thurner, and Cecilia Méndez, who examine the ambivalent appropriation of an Incan past by nineteenth century creoles in literature, historiography, archeology, and political discourse.

Moving to the Chilean context, the second chapter turns from myths centered on the violence of the Conquest to another key foundational narrative, that of Discovery. Here, I analyze what I call Legends of the Chilean Miner, featured in politician Benjamín Vicuña Mackenna’s three-part history of mining in Chile: *La edad del oro en Chile* (1881), *El libro de la plata* (1882), and *El libro del cobre y del carbón de piedra en Chile* (1883). This chapter situates Vicuña Mackenna’s Legends of the Chilean Miner within the contexts of discourses of Chilean racial superiority and Chile’s imperialist ambitions in the War of the Pacific

¹⁴ Within the field of ecocriticism, there is a growing interest in the study of literature and resource extraction. For example, the theme of the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment’s 2015 conference is “Notes From Underground,” in part, to indicate its focus on “Cultures and Poetics of Extraction: mining, fracking, drilling, quarrying...”

(1879-1883), of which Vicuña Mackenna was a vocal advocate. These Legends reflect on the questions of who has the right to the natural resources of the Atacama Desert and who should benefit from their extraction. I argue that the mythic figure of the Chilean Miner, seeks to seamlessly unite the tensions between domestic and foreign interests as well as between capital and labor.

The second half of this dissertation analyzes what I call “Accounts of Fictitious Prosperity.” These novels dramatize the enmeshment of the guano and nitrate economies in the intangible networks of international finance, and seek to make sense of the movements of what Marx calls “fictitious capital.”¹⁵ The description of guano-era wealth as “prosperidad ficticia” derives from an 1876 essay by Juan Copello and Luis Petriconi entitled *Estudios sobre la independencia económica del Peru*. Chapters Three and Four demonstrate how the idea that the prosperity of the Fertilizer Age was essentially fictitious or false recurs in Peruvian and Chilean literature across the guano and nitrate eras. Moreover, I show how literature, and particularly the novel, offered an ideal site for the exploration of the fictitious nature of fertilizer wealth as it dematerializes in the realm of financial exchange. In this section, Jean-Joseph Goux’s analysis of the trope of counterfeiting as a signifier of a crisis of value across what he describes as the “structurally homologous” realms of economy, language, and familial lineage, provides crucial insights that inform my interpretations of the literary manifestations of “fictitious prosperity.”

An important subset of the Accounts of Fictitious Prosperity is what I call the Romance of Capital Investment, which simultaneously denounces the fictions of the fertilizer economy while seeking to cultivate faith in the power of foreign investment in

¹⁵ See Marx, *Capital* vol. 3. Here again, my understanding of Marx is based on Harvey, this time his analysis of “fictitious capital” in *The Limits to Capital*.

mining as a source of real, durable prosperity. In Chapter Three, I examine the canonical novels of Clorinda Matto de Turner, which were published in the aftermath of the decline of the guano boom and Peru's defeat in the War of the Pacific: *Aves sin nido* (1889), *Índole* (1891), and *Herencia* (1893). Placing the less-studied *Índole* at the center of my analysis, I highlight the importance of counterfeiting and debt to the novel and to Matto's trilogy as a whole. I argue that these Romances of Capital Investment seek to rekindle Peruvian faith in the promise of resource extraction, this time made possible through a model of foreign capital investment in mining based in the joint stock company. In these novels, investment becomes sentimentalized as an act of charity associated with the durable moral value of creole, republican womanhood.

The final chapter takes a new approach by bringing together the two novels that are widely considered to be the iconic literary expressions of the guano and nitrate eras: Peruvian author Luis Benjamín Cisneros's novel *Julia* (1861) and Chilean novelist Luis Orrego Luco's *Casa grande* (1908). I analyze how these novels, which were published at comparable periods of credit-based expansion of the fertilizer economies, exhibit remarkable repetitions at the level of content, structure, and form. I propose that these novels are Accounts of Fictitious Prosperity, which seek to take account of the financialization of the guano and nitrate economies through the concepts of its inherent fictitiousness and its propensity towards ceaseless repetition.

Beyond Fertilizer

In recent years, Latin American scholars and social movements have drawn increasing attention to the limits and consequences of the current ecological-economic model of resource extraction, calling for a movement towards post-extractivist

alternatives.¹⁶ At the same time, with the rise of left-leaning governments across the continent, there has been a turn to neo-extractivism, a model that relies on the revenue of natural resource extraction to expand funding for social programs.¹⁷ As we look towards the future, it is my hope that the Fertilizer Dreams of the guano and nitrate eras may help us gain a richer understanding of our present moment, shaped as it is by our own hopes and fears about resource extraction.

¹⁶ See for example Velardi and Zeisser's collection of essays *Desarrollo Territorial y Extractivismo*.

¹⁷ See Bebbington, Gustafson, Gudynas.

Chapter 1: Tales of Incan Gold in an Era of Guano: Juana Manuela Gorriti's Precious Metal Melodramas

¡Cuántos tesoros enterrados! Los de los Jesuitas, si es verdad lo que de ellos se dice; los de los españoles que huyeron del país en los días de la Independencia; las *huacas* de los Incas! ¡Riqueza sin explotarse en el seno de las cordilleras, en las arenas de los ríos! ¡Riqueza mirada con indiferencia en los dilatados bosques, en los risueños valles, en las sublimes montañas! ... en las fértiles e incultas campiñas! ¡Riqueza inmensa en las islas guaneras! ... ¡Oh! ... Es muy rico el Perú... Pero ¡ay! son muy pobres los peruanos... (2.198)
- Narciso Aréstegui, *El Padre Horan* (1848)

The Spanish Conquest of Peru is inseparable from the story of the quest for gold. Francisco Pizarro imprisoned the Inca Atahualpa and asked him to fill a room with the coveted precious metal as the price of his freedom. The Inca complied, but he was executed nevertheless. Before his death, however, Atahualpa succeeded in sending a message to his noble subjects, instructing them to bury the empire's riches beneath the capital city of Cuzco. And there the gold remains, despite the generations of non-indigenous fortune hunters who have tried, and failed, to get their hands on it. The Inca Empire was conquered, but even so, the underground city of gold persists, tantalizingly out of reach. So the legend goes.¹⁸

The tales of buried treasure that have proliferated over the centuries imagine gold as the ultimate symbol of the Conquest, the inescapable origin of Andean nations—a past of theft, deception, and murder, which undermines the very legitimacy of these nations. And yet, in the same breath, the stories evoke the seductive future potential of the Andes as a region that still encloses unimaginably vast stores of natural resources. These tales of Incan gold are Peru's foundational myth of resource extraction, which symbolically condense the

¹⁸ The above is my own retelling of the story, based on the multiple versions I have read and heard.

promise, the obstacles, and the dangers associated with resource extraction across different historical moments.

In the wake of Peruvian independence, the idea of an Andean El Dorado captured the imaginations of poets and politicians, prospectors and investors. Tales of Incan gold appear in the texts of nineteenth-century canonical authors Ricardo Palma, Juana Manuela Gorriti, Manuel González Prada, and Clorinda Matto de Turner. When Peruvian and foreign scientists and antiquarians travelled the Andes, they too wrote of legends of Incan gold and of the Indians who continue to guard their treasures in the present. Looking out at the territory of Peru, their texts see not a virgin landscape, but instead one inscribed with the history of the Incan empire and Spanish colonization. Thus, while the tales express awe over the immense potential of the veins of precious metals remaining in the Andes, they grapple with the colonial legacy of mining.

Within Peru's expansive corpus of tales of Incan gold ranging from the colonial era to the present, I have identified a subset of nineteenth-century works that I call "Precious Metal Melodramas."¹⁹ These texts develop the archetypal legend of Incan gold into full-fledged, melodramatic interracial romances. Specifically, the texts overlay the tale of Incan gold with a plot of sexual seduction and betrayal in which a greed-driven Spanish man seduces an indigenous woman of noble descent in order to gain access to her secret treasure trove.²⁰ These stories always end with the death of the indigenous woman who,

¹⁹ Examples include Juana Manuela Gorriti's *La quena* (1851), "El tesoro de los incas" (1865), and "El chifle del indio" (1878); Manuel González Prada's *Baladas peruanas*; and Clorinda Matto de Turner's "La peña del castigo" (1884) and *Hima Sumac* (1892).

²⁰ This is not strictly true for all of the Precious Metal Melodramas. The Spaniard in *La quena* does not seek Incan treasure, and the seducer of "El chifle del indio" is a creole dandy rather than a Spaniard.

driven by love, breaks her ancestral vow to protect this underground treasure.²¹ Notably, several of the best-known authors of the era—including Ricardo Palma, Manuel González Prada, and Clorinda Matto de Turner—have written at least one, if not multiple versions of this story. In this chapter, I focus on Precious Metal Melodramas written by Juana Manuela Gorriti, *La quena* (1851), “El tesoro de los incas” (1865), and “El chifle del indio” (1878).²²

Despite the fact that Peru’s most famous authors of the nineteenth century penned the Precious Metal Melodramas, they have attracted little critical attention. Indeed, since the early twentieth century, literary critics have generally dismissed the literary genre *indianismo* to which these melodramas belong as embarrassing fantasies by authors who were out of touch with contemporary Andean realities, who wrote about Incan princesses when they should have been writing about indigenous laborers.²³ In more recent years, with increased critical attention to the works of women writers, Gorriti’s fiction has become the object of literary analysis, particularly with respect to constructions of race, gender, and nationalism.²⁴ Nevertheless, Precious Metal Melodramas have remained marginal even within studies of Gorriti.

²¹ For a discussion of the French “Inca Operatic” of Marmontel among others, see Poole. For a discussion of the influence of the Inca Garcilaso’s *Comentarios Reales*, see García Pabón, Ferreira, and Denegri.

²² Born in Salta, Argentina, Gorriti was a central presence in the literary society of Lima. Gorriti was a contributor to the periodical *La Revista de Lima*, and established regular literary salons attended by the city’s principle elite writers, forming what Batticuore has called a “literary aristocracy” (47) that included Ricardo Palma, Clorinda Matto de Turner, and Mercedes Cabello de Carbonera. For more information, see See Rocío del Águila’s article “(A)filaciones femeninas.”

²³ For important early analyses of the genres of *indigenismo* and *indianismo*, see Mariátegui and Meléndez. Kristal’s *The Andes Viewed From the City* offered a significant contribution in productively shifting the terms of the debate away from the relative verisimilitude or “authenticity” with which narratives represented its indigenous characters.

²⁴ See Denegri, Ferreira, Masiello, García Pabón, and Earle.

In this chapter, I propose that Juana Manuela Gorriti's Precious Metal Melodramas allegorically engage with key issues facing Peruvian elites in the guano era. Could guano hold the key to economic progress and prosperity in Peru? Or is an economy based on the extraction of a finite natural resource simply the perpetuation of a Spanish colonial model in which greed and consumption supplant hard work and production? Is guano wealth a blessing, a curse, or just an illusion? As I will demonstrate, Gorriti's economic allegories transform over the course of the guano era, offering three different perspectives on the value, potential, and consequences of the commodification, extraction, and export of Peru's natural resources.

An Andean El Dorado

First and foremost, Juana Manuela Gorriti's precious metal melodramas—and indeed all of the tales of Incan gold—are animated by a sense of wonder at the immense mineral wealth that may exist right beneath the Andean soil. Although critical of the avarice of Spanish men who will stop at nothing to gain possession of Incan treasure, part of the very appeal of these tales is the awe inspired by imagining these secret cities of gold. “El tesoro de los incas” begins by promising the reader a magical, exotic tale of Incas and gold, a glimpse into the secrets of Cuzco:

El tesoro de los Incas! Estas palabras llevan desde luego la mente á la sagrada metrópoli de los hijos del Sol, al emporio de su pasada grandeza—al Cuzco! El Cuzco es la ciudad de las leyendas fantásticas, de las maravillosas tradiciones. El piso de sus calles es sonoro cual si cobijára inmensos subterráneos; bajo el pavimento de sus templos murmuran las ondas de ignotos raudales; las piedras de sus cimientos están asentadas sobre las minas de oro (89).²⁵

²⁵ When available, I have used the orthography of original publications.

This opening welcomes us, as readers, to fantasize about these buried treasures. Like the underground rivers of unknown origin that irrigate the fertile valleys at the heart of the former Incan empire, so too the mysterious deposits of precious metals remain an unseen source of potential abundance. We are encouraged to imagine what secrets might rest beneath our very feet—perhaps entire gold mines! —without our ever knowing. Exceeding the quantity of gold that could be contained within any individual tomb or stash that a fortune hunter might come across, this secret city would be the ultimate goldmine. It evokes the promise that could be held by the Andes as a whole, the remaining mineral deposits of unknown magnitudes that were not mined under Spanish colonial rule.

Already from this opening passage, a key internal tension of the precious metal melodrama comes to light. On the one hand, these are morality tales about the destructive effects of the lust for gold. And yet, even so the precious metal melodrama absolutely depends on the contagious allure of gold. It cultivates this very lust in order to captivate its readership, even encouraging at certain moments the reader's direct identification with the Spaniard seeking the gold. To turn again to "El tesoro de los incas," the narrator encourages the reader to adopt the gaze of the Spaniard when his indigenous lover leads him down into the city of gold. Taking time to evoke this magical world of buried treasure in detail, the narrator describes:

Deslumbrólos un campo inmenso, fulgoroso, en cuyo instantáneo espacio el aragonés vió acumuladas todas las maravillas que pudo soñar la fantasía. Templos alumbrados por infinitas lámparas; salones y galerías donde estaba amontonado el oro bajo todas las formas. Allí en estatuas, vasos, altares; y aquí en jardines cuyas flores eran constelaciones de piedras preciosas (123).

The melodrama indulges in the fantasy of personal discovery of the gold, delivering the reader the vicarious pleasure of access to an underground world in which Incan grandeur

remains perfectly intact. Like a scene from *The Thousand and One Nights*, the magnitude of the city's riches overwhelms the senses with an excess of aesthetic stimulation, dazzling the onlooker to near blindness. As the narrator rattles through the series of objects made of gold, the futility of this effort becomes evident—any list would be woefully incomplete compared to the dizzying infinity experienced within the underground city. As the indigenous woman in *La quena* describes, “Mis pies descansaban sobre masas enormes de oro que cubrían el suelo y las paredes de una inmensa galería prolongada en círculos interminables” (27). As these descriptions seek to express the sublime encounter with gold, the image of reflected light frequently appears. For, it is not simply the aesthetic beauty that overwhelms, but even more, it is the fantastic power that seems to be latent within the precious metal. A character in *La quena* describes, “Allí reposan tesoros tan inmensos que si los alumbrara el sol, su brillo solo sería bastante para alumbrar el mundo” (24). This image of light expresses a sense of the overwhelming power that the gold could exert if it were brought above ground. It is imagined as a force that, if activated, could disrupt all existing social hierarchies and make those who possess the treasure the most powerful people in the world. On the one hand, the solid materiality of gold seems to present itself as a reservoir of intrinsic wealth. However, the use of the conditional tense—*sería bastante*—is key here. As long as the minerals remained underground, they could only represent potential power, inspiring dreams but not worldly economic or political benefit. The gold must be brought above ground and into the realm of social relations in order for this latent value to be expressed.

In their assertion of the existence of unfathomable quantities of precious metals beneath the soil, tales of Incan gold offer an Andean-specific version of the myth of El

Dorado. Since the sixteenth century, this city of gold floated in the dreams and folklore of Europe and the Americas, epitomizing the elusive utopian promise of the New World as a site of radical transformative possibilities.²⁶ The dream of El Dorado was at once the emblem of the highest aspirations of each era and, at the same time, almost obscenely literal as it drove the quest for the material substance of gold.

El Dorado and its dreams of gold are of course most commonly associated with the colonial, mercantilist era, when a kingdom's power was measured in the volumes of accumulated gold (or more frequently, silver) bullion. During this time, however, the high volumes of precious metals exported into Spain provoked intense inflation, leading scholars to question previous beliefs about the inherent and unchanging value of gold and silver.²⁷ Even so, Vilches notes, gold maintained a strong symbolic importance within both economic essays and literary works as an icon of inherent value and "the indispensable foundation for the welfare, power, and prowess of the nation" (191).

Although the nineteenth century is commonly remembered as a century of industry, rather than of gold, it is important to recognize that precious metals still played a significant, albeit not identical, economic role. For, with the rise of global capitalism and the modern nation state, gold was not dethroned to the extent that kings were. The gold rushes in California (1848-55), Australia (1848-84), and South Africa (1886-90) speak to the persistent allure of gold. Even as the material presence of gold and silver periodically receded behind flurries of financial exchange, these precious metals remained the

²⁶ As Flores Galindo discusses, in the Andean context a transculturated myth of El Dorado emerges in the idea of Paititi, the lost city of the Incas.

²⁷ See Vilches's discussion of the intellectuals of the School of Salamanca, who developed a "quantitative theory of value," according to which the price of precious metals fluctuated according to the same laws as all commodities (138-198).

international “measure of value” and material “means of circulation” (Marx 188-226).²⁸ While national economies employed a variety of currency forms, including paper money, coins of precious metal were the dominant currency of international economic transactions. Moreover, precious metals served as the global measures of value, in the gold standard and the silver standard.²⁹ Likewise, even as nineteenth century creoles claimed to be radically different from the Spanish Conquistadors of the past, the myth of an Andean El Dorado continued to inspire with the promise of an inexhaustible supply of gold, albeit in new ways, under new conditions.³⁰ As an infinite source of stable economic value, the treasures of the Incas would vault its discoverer into the realm of pure plenitude and excess, a utopian space of total fulfillment.

Guano Dreams of Gold

When we move from the world of literature, however, into the economic contexts in which these stories emerged, we are confronted by a stark contrast. For, in nineteenth century Peru, it was not gold, but guano—the excrement of marine birds, which had accumulated over centuries on coastal islands—that formed the basis of the Peruvian economy. Long used as a fertilizer by indigenous farmers on the coast of Peru, Europeans scientists such as Prussian naturalist Alexander von Humboldt became interested in this

²⁸ Here, I am employing Marx’s conceptualization of money as discussed in Volume 1 of *Capital*.

²⁹ As Marx writes “in the form of gold and silver general wealth itself appears as concentrated in a particular substance...the concept of wealth, so to speak, is realized, *individualized* in a particular object” (*Grundrisse* 218). Thus, as the individual possession of wealth gained increasing importance as a determinant of social power, gold and silver held their rank as the physical substances through which such power was represented.

³⁰ For a discussion of creole writings about gold in the years following independence, see García-Caro.

other sort of treasure on the Chincha Islands in the early 1800s.³¹ The remarkable fertilizing properties of the bird excrement offered new fertility to the depleted soils of Britain, Germany, the U.S. South, and the Caribbean. Peru declared state ownership of guano in 1840, and over the next forty years, a total of approximately eleven million tons of the substance, worth about 750 million dollars, was shoveled onto ships for export to Europe and the United States.³²

And so the guano era began. In Peru's capital city of Lima, guano provided spectacular profits for the businessmen who were awarded government contracts to extract and export the fertilizer, giving rise to a new social class which, as some remarked scornfully, had "salido del guano." That the British commercial house that managed the European end of the trade accrued its hefty share of the profits, but this did not prevent Peruvian businessmen from making, in the words of historian Heraclio Bonilla "una colosal fortuna" (39). These Peruvian merchants founded Peru's first banks, and lent money to the government at high rates of interest.³³ Lima's high society celebrated this influx of wealth with galas, opera, and the conspicuous consumption of French luxury goods. Guano money also facilitated Peru's first literary boom. "Bohemian" artists such as Ricardo Palma and Luis Benjamín Cisneros received government posts and an emergent generation of women writers, including Juana Manuela Gorriti, was supported by the patronage of guano elites.³⁴

In this period of economic euphoria for elites, this "bird dung bonanza" in the words of historian Paul Gootenberg, the literature of Peru is dreaming of Incan gold. Guano, the foul-smelling, excremental basis of the Peruvian economy offered no poetry to the literary

³¹ See Cushman pp. 1-8, 23-27.

³² Flindell Klarén 158

³³ See Bonilla pp. 34-76.

³⁴ See Denegri pp. 21-42.

imagination. Instead, we find a literary fixation on gold. And yet, can we really be so surprised that what captures the fantasies of writers is not the immense mounds of bird excrement piled on coastal islands, but gold, that most precious of all metals, the symbol of economic value itself buried deep unseen within the Andes? I would like to suggest that Gorriti's texts, through symbolic inversion, could perhaps be performing a poetic transubstantiation of bird excrement into the ideal form of value as pure gold. It is not that we should reduce these stories to being *only* about guano, but that we consider how anxieties about a guano-based economy filter into each of Gorriti's precious metal melodramas. In the remainder of the chapter, I will analyze *La quena* (1851), "El tesoro de los incas" (1865), and "El chifle del indio" (1878) individually, to consider the ways in which the texts offer specific visions of the opportunities and dangers of natural resource wealth at the beginning, middle, and end of the guano age.

La Quena

Published in 1851 in the newspaper *El Comercio*, Juana Manuela Gorriti's *La quena* offers a view from the early days of the guano boom. It is also by far the most complex and least conventional of Gorriti's precious metal melodramas. Through nested narratives, *La quena* tells the tale of two generations of interracial romances in the late-colonial era of Peru. In addition to María, a descendant of Incan nobility entrusted with the buried treasure, who falls in love with a Spaniard, *La quena* also includes the story of their mestizo son, Hernán. Unlike other precious metal melodramas, moreover, María's Spanish lover does not seek her Incan gold. Instead, he kidnaps their son, Hernán, and brings him to Spain. It is María alone, then, who descends into the underground city of gold to steal the

treasure she is meant to guard. She takes the gold to buy passage to Spain so that she may see her son one last time and pass on the secret of their ancestral treasure.

As Efraín Kristal has noted, the Spaniard's kidnapping of Hernán echoes the Conquistador's theft of gold from the Americas that appears in other precious metal melodramas. Likewise, in the beginning of *La quena*, both the Incan gold and María's mestizo son seem to contain within them incalculable utopian potential. The text includes a pair of prophecies that offer glimpses of potential future worlds that could be created if sun were to shine upon the Incan treasure. One indigenous noble foresees the creation of a neo-Incan kingdom, stating that the gold will some day be used to "restablecer el trono de nuestros padres, y la antigua gloria de nuestra patria" (25). This prediction gestures towards the rich and diverse cultural imaginary that Flores Galindo has called "la utopía andina." As Flores Galindo describes, the idea of the return of the Inca has expressed the desire for a radically different ideal society from sixteenth century millennialism to the Incaist discourse of the Tupac Amaru rebellion and beyond. *La quena*, however, juxtaposes its nod towards this "utopía andina" with a second indigenous noble's prediction, which ecstatically foretells of the emergence of a *liberal* utopia:

Y fijando en el vacío una mirada profunda que parecía penetrar la inmensidad del porvenir exclamó: "¡Vendrá un día en que la ciencia de los hombres descubra esos tesoros; pero entonces ellos serán libres é iguales, y los harán servir á la dicha de la humanidad. El reinado de las preocupaciones y del despotismo habrá pasado, y el genio solo dominará el mundo, ya erija por solio la frente de un europeo, ya la de un indio" (14-15).

Pausing before speaking, the elder seems to be overtaken by the vision of a beautiful future in which science "discovers" Incan treasures and brings them into circulation. He imagines a day in which individual political equality will march hand in hand with scientific advancements such that the foretold appropriation of Incan treasure will no longer be an

act of violent conquest. For, unlike the Spanish conquistadors, these anonymous scientific men will use the gold to serve “la dicha de la humanidad,” rather than personal interests, so that Incan treasure may extend the promise of economic prosperity and political power to all people, regardless of race. The prophecy thus presents readers with a vision of the Peruvian nation that Mark Thurner has characterized as the “illusory logic of liberal utopia” based on “one free and united republic of national citizens” (5). Of course, *La quena*’s prophecy that an indigenous person could ascend to a position of political power based on merit alone likely surpassed even the utopian imaginings of those “enlightened liberals” whose perspective, as Thurner is careful to highlight, “would never be hegemonic, nor orthodox” in nineteenth century Peru (18). At the same time, however, the fictional prophecy is consistent with the “enlightened liberal” ideology discussed by Thurner in that it predicates indigenous accession into this national community of equals on their renunciation of particularist claims to territory and resources.³⁵ As Thurner describes, “the Creole citizenmaking project which renamed ‘Indians’ as ‘Peruvians’ logically implied the negation of the separate *derechos*, or colonial ‘privileges,’ and status derived from membership in the colonial Indian republic, in favor of the unitary civil model of liberal nationhood under the Peruvian Republic” (16-17). The motivations behind these liberal policies were both ideological—the desire to establish a nation—and practical—to get access to indigenous land and labor.³⁶ Therefore, as we have seen, *La quena* presents its readers with two conflicting utopian visions with timely resonances: the “Andean utopia”

³⁵ Here, Thurner is specifically discussing the abolition of indigenous tribute as part of Ramón Castilla’s liberal reforms.

³⁶ Thurner writes, “the Creole drive to dislodge colonial native claims involved more than images and identities: the postcolonial state’s fiscal solvency as well as access to land and labor were at stake” (17).

based on indigenous claims to Incan gold, and the “enlightened liberal utopia” in which indigenous dispossession paves the way for the construction of a society in which all “humanity” may benefit from the treasures of the Andes. Notably, is the latter of these two prophecies that receives priority.

Moreover, this dream-like vision of a future in which natural resource extraction is associated with widespread wellbeing and even political freedom and equality resembles a narrative mode that was prevalent within a range of economically-oriented writings and speeches across nineteenth century Latin America, which Ericka Beckman has identified as “export reverie,” particularly its most utopian incarnations in the early writings of José Martí.³⁷ As Beckman describes, the liberal discourse of export reverie offers “an ecstatic prediction of the wealth and happiness that export commodity wealth would bring” (5). By imagining the amazing potential of the region’s natural resource wealth, Beckman explains, the enunciators of export reverie seek to spur the actions necessary to turn such dreams of an imagined future into reality. In addition to the writings of José Martí, Beckman cites Peruvian guano-era politician Manuel Pardo as well as Domingo Faustino Sarmiento as offering examples of export reverie in their works.

When we turn from the non-fiction works discussed by Beckman to *La quena*, certain temporal ambiguities emerge. For, although the indigenous sage predicts both the scientific discovery of Incan gold and the arrival of political freedom, it is not clear which of these events will come first. Does the gold enable the construction of a society based on freedom and equality, or is a free social order a prerequisite for the legitimate extraction

³⁷ For a discussion of the radical liberalism of Martí’s “Guatemala,” see Beckman 2013. The vision of racial equality offered in *La quena* is perhaps even more radical, although also coded in Gorriti’s novel as impossible in Peru’s current moment.

and circulation of Incan treasure? Will both phenomena occur simultaneously? Moreover, as guano-era readers imagine an indigenous man from colonial era forecasting the future, to what extent are they to understand that the prophecy has been fulfilled in the nineteenth century?

On the one hand, Peru was now an independent republic, and scientific knowledge had advanced, discovering in guano a miraculous source of wealth and great possibilities for social change. As guano exports increased from less than \$700,000 in 1845 to over \$4 million in 1852, with approximately sixty percent of revenues accrued by the state, president Ramón Castilla had the funds to usher in a period of political stability from 1845-51 known as the *pax castilla* (Gootenberg 38; Flindell Klären 169). In this respite from civil war, basic elements of the Peruvian state were consolidated. Additionally, guano would soon provide the fiscal liquidity for liberal reforms such as the 1855 abolition of slavery (former slave owners were remunerated government bonds) and the lifting of the indigenous head tax. Lima's liberal elites were filled with a sense of euphoria at the future's potential, which Francesca Denegri characterizes as:

una intensa ilusión de que el Perú pisaba los umbrales de ese mundo moderno que hasta entonces había parecido lejano y elusivo... una sensación de haber dejado atrás de una vez por todas tres siglos de aislamiento y estancamiento colonial, y de ser, por fin, parte de una dinámica y prometedora modernidad (51).

And yet, in 1851, it was evident that the prophesized liberal utopia of *La quena* had not become a reality—or at least, as the most optimistic could wish, *not yet*. For, outside of the city of Lima, guano era prosperity was felt less dramatically. Even within Lima, the benefits of the guano economy were concentrated in the hands of a small, though growing, elite. This concentration of wealth was epitomized by the Castilla government's fraud-ridden

“consolidation” or repayment of its \$25 million internal debt to 126 Peruvian merchant and landed elites in 1850, which was a foundational act in the consolidation of the guano-era elite (Gootenberg 5). As a result, Carolos Contreras notes, “La palabra ‘consolidado’ es citada entro los ‘peruanismos’ de Juan de Arona como un término despectivo para calificar a gente enriquecida ilícitamente” (136). For those left out, however, including Lima’s artisans and poor, the guano boom meant a rise in the cost of living in Lima paired with growing unemployment.³⁸

Moreover, even within the fictional world of *La quena* the prophesized utopian vision of liberal equality remains an unrealized fantasy, one that stands in stark contrast to the oppression, violence, and betrayal that drive the plot. To return to the thread of the narrative, after the indigenous woman María steals gold from the underground city of Incan treasure, she uses it to buy passage to Spain and reunite with her son. In Spain, María passes on the story of Incan treasures to her son Hernán, and asks that he vow to return to his homeland to fight for the liberation of his people. Here, she introduces a third prophecy into the narrative:

Las profecías de nuestro pais nos prometen un libertador que habiendo vivido largo tiempo entre nuestros enemigos, y aprendido de ellos la ciencia de las conquistas, romperá las cadenas de nuestra patria, y la dará mayor gloria y felicidad. Prométeme que tu serás ese libertador, y que para redimir á nuestros hermanos no emplearás el odio que pida la sangre de sus amos, sino la ilustracion que los haga sus iguales, la ilustracion, el mas sublime y seguro medio de libertar los pueblos. (33)

La quena thus offers a vision of how its second prophecy could be fulfilled. Through the study of the sciences in Europe, Hernán will acquire the knowledge such that Incan gold can be used towards the liberation of his people. The language that María uses here in

³⁸ See McEvoy 82-83 and Flindell Klären 169-170.

describing a *libertador* that will break the chains of the *patria* clearly calls to mind the discourse of the Wars of Independence. Indeed, Leonardo García Pabón proposes that Hernán's mission is to fight for the independence of Peru (43). However, this interpretation overlooks the fact that, in the above quote, María explicitly entreats that her son not engage in armed conflict, saying “no emplearás el odio que pida la sangre de sus amos, sino la ilustracion que los haga sus iguales, la ilustracion, el mas sublime y seguro medio de libertar los pueblos” (33). In this way, it is clear that María is not calling for her son to be a revolutionary who will fight to change the social structure, but rather to be an educator. He will spread knowledge among his fellow indigenous and mestizo countrymen so that they may ascend in the ranks through individual merit, peacefully earning equal status with their Hispanic oppressors. Thus adding the voice of the indigenous María to that of the previous indigenous wise man, *La quena* emphasizes the vision of a liberal utopia as that which is most worthy of being desired.

In accordance with his mother's wishes, Hernán completes his education in Spain and returns to colonial Peru. There, he falls in love with a creole woman named Rosa. Their beautiful interracial romance points towards an allegory of national unification along the lines of the foundational fictions analyzed by Doris Sommer, and the novel cultivates our desire to see Hernán, a cuzqueño descendant of Incan nobility, united with this creole maiden whose name recalls that of the patron saint of Lima. Their romance invokes the dream of an indigenous sierra and creole coast brought together in an ecstatic amorous union as the future Peruvian nation. The problem, however, is that Rosa is betrothed to the evil Spaniard, Sr. de Ramírez, who plots to drug her and whisk her off to the Philippines, where he has been named governor. In this way, the plot of *La quena* stages a repetition of

kidnappings by Spanish Conquistadors, first Hernán's father and then Sr. de Ramírez, who take steps to rip the people of Peru away from their homeland. When Rosa escapes from Sr. de Ramírez to reunite with Hernán, the Spaniard tracks her down and murders her, stabbing her in the heart. Allegorically, then, this agent of conquest and colonization destroys the possibility for the blissful realization of the Peruvian nation.

In the final scene of the novel, Hernán sits by Rosa's unburied corpse, playing an indigenous flute—the *quena* of the novel's title—for all eternity. As García Pabón discusses, this image of unending mourning forms a stark contrast with the novel's description of the underground tomb of Incan treasure.³⁹ The Incan tomb was filled with an unimaginably vast quantity of gold, with great potential to promote a liberal, prosperous society. In this aboveground crypt, however, there is only Rosa's desiccating body and "metallic" hair (65). Thus, the hope for the future inspired by the golden treasure is replaced by despair at the hopeless decay of the creole woman's body, devoid of all reproductive capacity. All that her body produces now is endless mourning. The *quena* with which Hernán is playing an endless funeral dirge, we discover, is carved out of Rosa's leg bone. Along with Hernán, the reader laments Rosa's death and the ill-fated interracial romance that fails to produce a new generation of Peruvians. After Hernán, no one remains that knows the location of the

³⁹ Here, I am building on García Pabón's important observation that the novel sets up these two entombed spaces that stand in stark contrast to each other, when he writes: "La muerta que guarda no es una noble inca, es una criolla, y el tesoro no es oro que serviría para desarrollar una etapa utópica de la humanidad, es apenas un desarreglo emocional" (60). However, my interpretation of the meaning of this contrast differs from that offered by García Pabón, who argues that Hernán's love for Rosa is his downfall, making him unable to be an agent of Andean liberation or nation-building. My reading of the novel sees the ending as sad not because Hernán was unable to be a revolutionary (indeed, he had promised his mother he would not engage in violent conflict), but because the persistence of colonial structures of oppression as manifested in the institution of slavery made their union impossible.

buried Incan gold, and it is evident that Hernán will never leave the side of his dead, unproductive lover.

However, in the complex narrative world of *La quena* the differences between guilt and innocence are not quite so clear. For, while the beautiful and wealthy Rosa was a victim of the violence of the Spanish Conquistador, it is also her role as an *agent* of colonial oppression that enables her tragic demise. For, Rosa is a slave owner who is betrayed by her personal slave, Zifa. The novel highlights Rosa's association with slavery when she faints in church, "en los brazos de las esclavas que la rodeaban" (46). Notably, Sr. de Ramírez bribes Zifa to betray her mistress by offering her gold with which to buy her freedom. As Magda Vergara has described, therefore, the novel's portrayal of Zifa is deeply ambivalent. On the one hand, Zifa is portrayed as a menacing vessel of deep racial hatred against whites that takes pleasure in her betrayal of Rosa as an act of vengeance. Yet, on the other hand, the novel expresses sympathy for Zifa's plight as a mother who was separated from her children in Africa. This becomes particularly evident when we consider how Zifa's actions perfectly mirror those of Hernán's mother. For just as María broke her vow to her father, taking some of the Incan gold to buy passage to Spain and see her son who had been kidnapped by his Spanish father, so does Zifa commit an act of betrayal to gain possession of the gold coins needed to reunite with her children in Africa. Zifa expresses the trade-off: "Por una madre restituida á sus hijos, dos amantes han sido hundidos en una inmensa desesperacion" (41). The character of Zifa, therefore, condenses the "paradox" that Francine Masiello has identified in the depiction of race throughout Gorriti's writings, namely that her texts express both solidarity with and hatred towards the indigenous and

black characters in her fiction. In the end, the extent to which Zifa's actions are justified is left up to the reader of the novel.

Therefore, even as the Spanish Conquistador Sr. de Ramírez is the character to directly stab Rosa in the heart, this creole woman's death is also the result of the conquistador that resides within her as a slave owner who separated a mother from her children. In this way, the novel figures creoles as occupying the position of both colonized and colonizer and critiques the coloniality of the structures of dominance and oppression in the nineteenth century. In 1851, it should be remembered, enslaved afro-Peruvians still labored within Lima, guano islands, and especially coastal sugar plantations.⁴⁰ For the past decade, articles condemning slavery in Peru and calling for its abolition appeared in the liberal newspaper *El Comercio*, which is where *La quena* was first published (Ramos Núñez 26). Slavery would finally be abolished in 1854, although, notably, the law included a provision that stated that if formerly enslaved people could not find work within three months, they would be declared vagrants and sent to the guano islands (40). In addition, indigenous laborers were recruited through system of debt peonage called "enganche," and convicts were obligated to work on the guano islands.⁴¹ Moreover, a new form of coerced labor emerged in Peru in the 1840s: indentured laborers from China. Through lies, coercion, and kidnapping, Chinese laborers were brought to Peru on a five-month passage in which 25-30 percent of workers perished (Clark and Foster 77). Upon arriving in to the guano islands, the conditions of labor were horrific, described by observes as "absolute

⁴⁰ See Hünefeldt; Méndez; Clark and Foster. Méndez estimates that "unas decenas de esclavos negros" worked on the guano islands in the late 1840s and early 1850s (43).

⁴¹ For example, Méndez calculates that in 1854 there were approximately 198 "trabajadores libres," likely debt peons, 50 slaves, and 183 convicts working on the Chincha Islands. At this time, there were about 500 Chinese indentured laborers working on the islands (47).

slavery...the worst and most cruel perhaps in the world” in which “few, if any, of the Chinese survived more than a few months” (“Chincha Islands” and “Chinese Coolie Trade” cited in Clark and Foster 79). Forced to live in guarded barracks on the guano islands, many men committed suicide to escape an emaciated existence of shoveling the 80 to a hundred wheelbarrows of guano per day, breathing in the acrid, foul-smelling dust that caused blindness. Guano extraction, one article described represented “the infernal art of using up human life to the very last inch” (“Chinese Coolie Trade” 79). Over the period from 1850-1850, an average of one thousand men—the majority of whom were Chinese indentured workers—labored on the guano islands at any one time, excavating from 350,000 to 450,000 metric tons per year (Méndez 50). It is worth noting that the literary production of guano era Peru omits any direct depiction of the horrors that took place on the guano islands. The only partial exception is the unfinished novel, *Nuredin-Kan* (1872), which denounces the inhumane conditions on the ships that brought Chinese indentured laborers to work in Peru.⁴² In *Nuredin-Kan*, as I will discuss in the Epilogue, the protagonist of the novel is sent to work on a sugar plantation, so the guano islands remain unseen.

I do not wish to claim here that in *La quena*'s depiction of slavery, Gorriti is intending to make any sort of direct reference to the African, convict, and Chinese workers who provided the unfree labor force on which guano prosperity was based. I have no evidence that this matter in particular was of concern to Gorriti. At the same time, *La quena*'s depiction of the socially-destructive effects of slavery on both enslaved people and

⁴² At the time of the novel's publication in 1872, the guano boom was coming to an end, and xenophobic outcry about the deleterious effects of Chinese immigrants in Peruvian society was becoming increasingly common. See for example, two letters by “Un Agricultor Peruano,” published in *El Correo del Perú* on September 28 and Oct 17, 1873, under the title, “La cuestion inmigrantes asiáticos” offering a defense of the use of Chinese indentured laborers in response to the growing public outcry against such practices.

on Peruvian society as a whole speaks not only to the presence of slavery within Lima, but also in sugar plantations, on guano islands, and the “disguised slavery” of Chinese indentured servitude (Marx and Engles 123).

Ultimately, therefore, *La quena* presents an allegorical vision of Peruvian history in which the ceaseless repetition of the Spanish Conquest, and its legacy in through violence against indigenous peoples and enslaved Africans is driving the nation to self-destruction. At the story’s conclusion, the narrator explains that years pass, and even so, the mournful song of the *quena* plays on and on: “repite eternamente durante el silencio de las noches, en lo hondo de nuestros valles y en las plazas de nuestras ciudades la voz del instrumento que él consagró á su dolor” (66). In this way, the novel establishes continuity between the colonial era in which the romance took place, and the contemporary time of the reader in guano era Peru. In the final sentence, the narrator warns the reader to avoid listening to the song of the *quena*, because: “develará á vuestros ojos la pálida imájen del siniestro porvenir” (67). The implication, I believe, is that—like the song of the *quena*—the violence of the colonial period has persisted into the nineteenth century, and continues to impede the construction of a prosperous and egalitarian society that—with the utopian potential of Incan gold and guano—seems like it should be just out of reach.

El Tesoro de los Incas

With *El tesoro de los incas* (1865), Gorriti offers the most archetypal version of the precious metal melodrama. The story features an indigenous girl named Rosalía Yupanqui who lives with her father and brother on the outskirts of Cuzco in the days of Spanish colonialism. Rosalía and her family are the last descendants of Incan nobility, and as such, they are the only people remaining who have access the underground city of the Incan

treasure. The plot begins when Rosalía falls madly in love with a young Spaniard named Diego de Maldonado. Diego came to the Americas with the hopes of getting rich quick and returning to Spain. So, when he learns that Rosalía has access to the legendary city of Incan gold, he sets out to seduce her. He achieves this conquest without difficulty, and soon he even convinces Rosalía to bring him—blindfolded—to the underground city of Incan treasure. However, before Diego can take any of the gold, Rosalía's little brother suddenly appears, picks Diego up and carries him away from the city against his will. Diego is furious, and seeks out a local government official for help. The official kidnaps Rosalía, her brother and her father, and tortures them in an attempt to learn the location of the buried treasure. However, all three die under torture without revealing the secret of the Incan treasure. Diego, in turn, wanders off in a gold-induced daze in search of the city of gold, and disappears.

Thus, this second incarnation of the precious metal melodrama, published at the peak of the guano boom, no longer dreams of the utopian potential of the city of Incan gold. Nor does the text feature a mestizo son born of the interracial romance who promises to spread freedom and enlightenment through just use of the treasure. Instead, "El tesoro de los incas" focuses the allure of precious metals as a force of social corruption that incites the desire to accumulate wealth without work. The idea of gold as a force of corruption has a long history dating back to ancient times, including the tales of Midas and the Golden Calf. What I am interested in here is how this particular concept of gold emerges in Gorriti's work in concurrence with anxieties about guano as a force of social corruption at the peak of the guano era. In this precious metal melodrama, the gold destroys both those who seek it as well as those who hoard it.

As we saw in *La quena*, “El tesoro de los incas” deploy the figure of the Spanish Conquistador who sacks the Americas. While the Conquistadors in *La quena* kidnapped Peru’s most precious human resources, “El tesoro” offers the classic vision of the Conquistador who is driven mad by the lust for gold. Since Bartolomé de las Casas’s sixteenth-century *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las indias*, the Conquistador of Black Legend fame circulated in textual and pictorial discourse as the exemplar of a bad colonizer, frequently cited by rival imperial powers who were longing for their own share of the wealth of the Americas. When creoles fought for independence from the Crown, they appropriated this figure as the icon of a barbaric empire they sought to defeat.⁴³ In the aftermath of independence, he remains in the Peruvian imaginary—and over time transforms into an emblem of the backwardness that creoles must overcome within themselves in order to build a productive, modern society. He becomes the conquistador within.

For the Conquistador in “El tesoro de los Incas”, gold offers the means to purchase luxury goods, social prestige, and even a Spanish wife, as the narrator describes: “Era este uno de esos nobles de rica alcurnia y escuálida hacienda...cuyo agujereado manto venían á remendar sus hijos con el oro de la América, y muchas veces á costa de infamias y crímenes” (106). In this way, the Spanish Conquistador stands as an emblem of the entire project of colonization in which the people and minerals of the Andes exist simply as things to be exploited for the personal enrichment of Spaniards, and perhaps, also their descendants. However, like we saw in *La quena*, the line between “barbaric” Spaniards and “civilized” creoles is far from clear when both are identified as agents of oppression.

⁴³ See García-Caro.

Moreover, in the Precious Metal Melodramas an uncomfortable identification arises between the reader and the Spaniard. Both are entranced, fascinated by Incan gold, and—as I have said—it is this very fascination that draws writers and readers alike to these tales again and again. The Spanish Conquistador thus lingers into the nineteenth century as the alter ego of the enlightened creole, embodying those character traits that creoles must learn to overcome in order to become truly modern. His story is repeated as a warning to creoles that this time, they must not destroy the Andean El Dorado through greed, hoping that they may finally learn this lesson.

In “El tesoro de los incas” another key characteristic of the Spaniard emerges, one that was a particular concern in Peru of the 1860s: the desire to get rich quick without having to plan or work for it. The narrator describes:

Al llegar al nuevo continente [Diego] encontró todas las decepciones que prueban aquellos que se dan á buscar maravillas. Habíase imaginado que las minas del Perú eran gruesas venas de plata y oro abiertas al cincel de quien quisiera cortarlas; y halló el largo y prolijo trabajo que arranca á la tierra sus rocallosas entrañas para pulverizarlas y extraer grano á grano el preciso metal que él creyó encontrar amontonado en su rica superficie. Vió, es verdad, muchos hombres enriquecidos en aquellas labores; pero en ellas habian empleado muchos años; y él no tenia tiempo que perder” (108).

Here, the dreams of El Dorado contrast harshly with the mundane, laborious experience of overseeing a mining operation. Although gold and silver exist within the Andes, the precious metals are not at arms reach as Diego had imagined. He cannot simply gather it all up in a moment and return to Spain to live happily ever after. To get rich from mining would require an investment of time, planning, and patience, none of which Diego is willing to contribute. Therefore, Diego heads to a gambling den, which the narrator describes this hellish space dedicated to the lust for gold:

Era aquello una escena mágica, un continuado deslumbramiento. El oro corria á torrentes, y su armónico sonido hacia vibrar las mas íntimas fibras del alma. Todos los semblantes estaban pálidos, unos de gozo, otros de desesperación; y en todos los ojos fulguraban los relámpagos siniestros de la codicia (114-5).

This scene provides an eerie double of the underground city of Incan treasure. Here, gold maintains its magical captivating powers. Yet, in contrast to the Andean El Dorado, with its utopian promise to transform the world the gold here acts as a force of degradation, slowly consuming those entranced by the sound and sight of the precious metal. The Spaniard departs the scene without a coin in his possession.

The story's critique of Diego's aversion to labor is further emphasized when Diego goes to Rosalía asking for help paying off his gambling debts. Rosalía immediately agrees, but she says: "Yo trabajaré; labraré la tierra con mis manos y reuniré real á real la suma que has perdido" (101). This, of course, was not the answer that Diego was looking for. He does not want to wait for Rosalía to slowly earn the money through labor, "*real a real*". He wants the money now, in the form of Incan treasure. This contrast is reinforced with the narrator's description of Rosalía's father, who despite having been robbed of his land and material possessions by the local government official did not despair: "Quedábale un tesoro que no podia quitarle la injusticia de los hombres—el amor al trabajo" (92). Whereas the value within precious metals could be expropriated, leaving the owner empty handed, the human capacity to labor offered a lasting, renewable source of value creation.⁴⁴ Thus we see how this story refines the general critique of Spanish greed into a more specific critique of the people wanting to make money without having to work for it.

⁴⁴ Gorriti's emphasis on the creation of value through labor in this text is consistent with the labor theory of value proposed by classical economists in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

I suggested earlier that one of the ways to understand the relationship between these stories and guano is through symbolic inversion; the infinite, dazzling Incan gold was everything that the odorous, rapidly depleting guano was not. Now, the story's depiction of the Spaniard's aversion to labor brings us to an additional connection to the guano economy. During the guano era, a fear emerged that the easy money made from guano was eroding the work ethic of Peruvian elites. Indeed, guano was a high-value commodity that produced spectacular profits for the elites with government contracts to export the substance. The extraction and export of guano required minimal capital investment, with minimal technology and labor costs, given the atrocious labor conditions that I described earlier. Moreover, much of the wealth produced during the guano era was in the banking sector, and often speculative in nature. One editorialist lamented that the guano economy, "ha despertado el deseo de el deseo de improvisar fortunas sin trabajar y se ha creído encontrar la piedra filosofal en cada uno de los contratos que celebran con el gobierno."⁴⁵ The philosopher's stone is a mythical object used in alchemy to turn common substances into gold, and the critique is directed at these merchants for thinking that they can get rich without putting in the hard work required of factory owners, for example. Here, we can see a discourse that asserted that true value could only exist through labor. Guano, perversely, was identified as the epitome of wealth without labor. On the one hand, this discourse makes sense: much of the wealth produced during the guano boom was financial, riding a wave of speculative euphoria.⁴⁶ On the other hand, and concealed by this discourse of guano as wealth that simply fell from the sky, "el milagro de la multiplicación de los panes,"

⁴⁵ Osorio, J.M. "Economía domestica." *El Correo del Peru*. 1874.

⁴⁶ See Bonilla; Contreras and Cueto.

is the grueling labor of the enslaved African, indentured Chinese, and convict workers tasked with shoveling the excrement onto ships for export (Contreras and Cueto 146).

Critiques of the guano economy as a form of personal enrichment without work emerged most prominently in the 1860s, as elites became aware of guano's imminent depletion. As early as 1855, scientist Mariano de Rivero warned that that Peru was going to run out of guano. Of course, guano is technically a renewable resource, but the birds were not producing the substance at nearly the rate in which it was being exported. The guano on the Chincha Islands had accumulated there over thousands of years. To make matters worse, Rivero notes, the activities of guano excavation were scaring away the guano-producing birds, which had once flown by the "millones... que poniéndose en movimiento forman una espesa nube de muchas leguas de largo" (I. 167). Therefore, Rivero writes: "Grandes sumas de dinero se han sacado y siguen sacándose de ella; pero es fácil de calcular, con cierta aproximación, el momento en que quedará agotado el huano" (243).⁴⁷ He recommends that Peru invest in other sectors of the economy, and particularly in transportation infrastructure that would facilitate commerce from the mountainous interior of Peru. In the 1860s, therefore, with the hopes of establishing economic alternatives to guano, the Peruvian government embarked on a massive project of railroad construction across the Andes.

In this period Peruvian and foreign scientists travelled the Andes, seeking alternative sources of export wealth that could replace guano. Notably, they too wrote of legends of Incan gold and of the Indians who continue to guard their treasures in the

⁴⁷ In the nineteenth century, both *guano* and *huano* were acceptable spellings. *Huano* is closer to the Quechua word *wanu*, meaning manure or fertilizer, from which the term derives.

present. In contrast to the classic trope of imperial and expansionist travel writing, which looks out over a virgin landscape, their texts describe the Andes as a space inscribed with the history of the Incan empire and the violence of Spanish colonization. An example appears in *Antigüedades peruanas* (1851), Peru's first archeological study, which was written by guano scientist, Mariano de Rivero—who also was a mineralogist, and mining investor—along with Swiss naturalist Johann Jakob von Tschudi. This text transitions seamlessly from a discussion of unexploited mineral veins into buried Incan treasure and back as it imagines the precious metals that have not yet been brought into circulation. For example, describing Incan metalworking, they state:

se adquiere la certidumbre que los Indios tenían conocimientos de veneros de esta preciosa materia que nunca alcanzaron á descubrir los conquistadores y sus descendientes, y no creemos atrevido pronóstico pretender que llegará un dia en que el Perú descorrerá el velo de riquezas mas asombrosas que las que en el dia ofrece la California (213).

Given that *Antigüedades peruanas* was published during the California gold rush, this was certainly a dramatic prediction. Rivero and Tschudi turn directly to a discussion of “las inmensas masas de metales preciosos enterrados por los indígenas” from Huascar's gold chain to the eleven thousand treasure-laden llamas buried upon Atahualpa's death (213). This past grandeur of the Incan empire is thus presented as evidence to support the writers' faith in the magnificent wealth that, at any moment, could be uncovered in Peru. Although the gold was hidden at the violent moment of the Spanish Conquest, the text expresses the hope that an independent Peru will someday reunite with the lost wealth of the Incan Empire. Rivero and Tschudi conclude the text with a call to the youth of Peru to recognize “que huellan distraidos una mina arqueológica no ménos rica y opulenta que las celebradas minas de oro y plata de su pais, y como estas, apénas cubiertas de una ligera

capa de arena” (309). Here, buried treasure and veins of minerals are placed side by side as sources of cultural and economic wealth that lie just below the surface, waiting only for Peruvians to awaken from their stupor and start digging. As we have seen, Juana Manuela Gorriti’s Precious Metal Melodramas contain this same longing for Andean gold. At the same time, however, her tales echo with a warning of the tragic consequences that such a passion for precious metals can unleash.

The Indian Hoarder

This image of buried treasure lying just out of reach encapsulates a discourse about the Peruvian Andes shared by Peruvian and European elites, in which the desire for wealth is blended with a sense of frustration at the seeming intractability of the region’s geography and inhabitants to integration into global markets. For example, in “Estudios sobre la provincia de Jauja” (1860) liberal Peruvian politician Manuel Pardo describes the Andes as made of pure metals waiting to be mined, “Puede decirse sin exajeración, que los cerros que encastillan el departamento son todos cerros metálicos, más o menos explotables” (94). Yet, this potential is wasted, he explains, due to a lack of motivation, technology, and transportation infrastructure that would make exploitation profitable. Rich veins of silver are “abandonadas tan frecuentemente como descubiertas” (95). Frenchman Héctor Dávalouis, director of the Peruvian Mint captures this sentiment of longing in an 1862 report advocating for government investment in mining technologies: “somos todos como Tántalo, ahogados en un océano de riquezas de que no podemos aprovechar” (cited in Contreras *Aprendizaje* 120). Or, as novelist and guano merchant Luis Benjamín Cisneros writes in *Ensayo sobre varias cuestiones económicas del Perú* (1866): “Las vetas auríferas de

nuestras montañas y la fabulosa fertilidad de nuestros valles son elementos de futura riqueza, pero no son la riqueza misma, ni lo serán hasta que el trabajo humano no lo haya transformado en valores sociales” (52). Only when the minerals have been mined through human labor and soil fertility absorbed through the production of plantation agriculture can this Andean nature be valued as commodities for sale on the world market. As historian José Deustua notes, creole and European reports frequently overstated the extent of the abandonment of silver mining, which in fact played a central role in the Peruvian economy throughout the nineteenth century (7-12). More than mere empirical observations, therefore, they speak to the desire for increased mineral extraction and the sense that current levels of production were dwarfed to insignificance when compared to the endless quantities of wealth that had not yet been mined.

In the tales of Incan gold, all of the obstacles that stand between this unexploited wealth and its worldly circulation are condensed in the image of a single stock character that I call the “Indian hoarder.” The Precious Metal Melodramas imagine a past in which the Incas, faced with their empires impending defeat buried their gold to protect it from the unquenchable greed of the Spaniards. Throughout the generations, the keys to the underground city have been passed down, along with the vow to protect the gold from all who would seek it for personal use. This act of resistance entails self-sacrifice, as the descendants of Incan nobility must restrain the urge to use the gold even to meet their basic needs. The narrator of “El tesoro de los incas” describes the results of this solemn pledge over the years:

la mágica ciudad finje dormir indolente y olvidada de su grandioso pasado. Sus guerreros se han convertido en pastores; sus vírjenes, apagado el fuego sagrado, han abandonado el templo; y sus ancianos acurrados cual mendigos al borde de los caminos y las canas cubiertas de polvo, tienden al viajero una

mano desecada por el hambre. Pero aproximaos y mirad de cerca á esos ancianos, á esas vírjenes, á esos pastores, y vereis brillar furtiva en sus ojos abatidos la sombría luz de un misterio (89-90).

In the passage above, the visible degradation of Incan nobles into indigenous peasants only reveals a part of the story. The gleam in their eyes speaks to a deeper truth, the inner nobility concealed by their dusty exteriors. It is the knowledge that they guard an incalculable hoard of hidden wealth that—at any moment—could reverse this transformation and reveal the Incan warrior within the shepherd. And so these indigenous hoarders suffer from hunger and scarcity, guarding their treasure as the invaluable patrimony of their people. By refusing to release their buried treasure into circulation, they maintain a connection with the past of the Inca empire. For, any individual price that an Incan treasure might fetch on the market would pale in comparison to the collective cost of relinquishing the gold to their Hispanic oppressors.⁴⁸

The Indian hoarder is a stock character, a racial stereotype that appears in Peruvian discourse of the guano era beyond Gorriti's precious metal melodramas. While the Precious Metal Melodramas portray the hoarder as an Incan noble guarding ancestral wealth, in other texts he appears simply as backwards peasant whose hoarding is as puzzling as it is frustrating. Either way, the hoarder's defining trait is that his gold is not for sale. Nor, frequently, is his labor, especially if it means working in the mines. The Indian hoarder baffles creole and European observers with his relative self-sufficiency and lack of demand

⁴⁸ My reading thus offers a different interpretation than that provided by Ferreira, who argues that Gorriti's stories emphasize the essential difference between "Western" and "Andean" meanings of gold. For example, whether the gold is imagined as restoring the Incan empire or contributing to the progress of a liberal state in *La quena*, there is a "commercial value" that is attributed to the precious metal in addition to its "sacred value" (166). In this way, while the gold is portrayed as sacred, it is more significant in the Precious Metal Melodramas as an object of Incan patrimony.

for consumer goods. The effective hoarder is almost always portrayed as male, for women generally only appear as failed hoarders. In his tenacious resistance to complete dispossession and integration into the capitalist economy, the Indian hoarder serves as a symbol of the obstacles faced by Peruvian creoles and Europeans in their efforts at economic expansion through resource extraction.

For example, in his 1847 travelogue the same Jakob von Tschudi who collaborated on *Antigüedades peruanas* offers multiple accounts of Indians who withhold both labor and mineral resources from extraction. With frustration, he writes:

It is a well-known fact that the Indians are aware of the existence of many rich mines, the situation of which they will never disclose to the whites, nor to the detested mestizos...For centuries past, the knowledge of some of the richest silver mines has been with inviolable secrecy transmitted from father to son. All endeavors to prevail on them to divulge these secrets have hitherto been fruitless (344-345).

In another variation on the Indian hoarder, British traveller David Forbes reports in the 1870s that the scarcity of currency in the Peruvian and Bolivian highlands was due to the fact that Indians “as a rule, hide all their riches, *i.e.* their silver or gold, generally burying it in earthen pots in the ground” (35). As a result of such indigenous hoarding, according to “well-informed merchants of Tacna and La Paz,” over ten million dollars in silver currency simply “vanished from circulation” (36). These travelers’ accounts speak to the agency of Andean peasants who resisted dispossession through a range of strategies. At the same time, the hyperbolic figure of the Indian hoarder rises out of such tales with larger than life powers to conceal precious metals. Scapegoated specifically for bullion drain by Forbes, he is also a general symbol of all of the obstacles that arise between Peru and the ever-distant ideal of “modernity.”

As a result, the Indian hoarder bears a resemblance with the classic scapegoat of capitalism—the Jewish miser. On the one hand, we have the Jewish miser, a frightening figure of the total absorption into a perilously global, deterritorialized circulation of capital. In diametrical opposition, the Indian hoarder is deeply rooted in the particularity of territory. And both figures are marked in liberal discourse by a non-normative attachment to gold and a mysterious power to accumulate precious metals. In between these two poles of Indian and Jew reside an array of hoarders and spendthrifts, including the lecherous priest, the Spanish conquistador (who later morphs into the degenerate dandy and the corrupt government official), the undesirable immigrant, and the woman. This cast of characters populates liberal creole discourse throughout the nineteenth century (and beyond), as those bearing responsibility for keeping money out of the hands of the “productive” members of society—imagined as industrious creole men and their Anglo-Saxon role models.⁴⁹

The Last Inca

In their fusion of Incan noble and indigenous peasant, the Precious Metal Melodramas dialogue with a foundational trope of the nineteenth-century nationalist discourse. The precious metal melodrama seeks to ritualistically sever Incan from Indian by allegorically mourning the end of the Incan empire in the death of the Incan hoarder and his beautiful daughter. In a wish-fulfilling fantasy, the melodramas seek to negate indigenous sovereignty over Andean resources by allegorically conjuring the death of the Incas. As Mark Thurner, Rebecca Earle, and Cecilia Méndez have discussed, creoles defended their presence and supremacy in Peru through the idea of an absolute split

⁴⁹ See Masiello, Beckman, Nugent

between the imagined grandeur of the past Incan empire and the misery of indigenous people in the present. In this way, they embraced the Incan past as a source of national pride while simultaneously denigrating and infantilizing actually existing indigenous people of the present as subjects in need of salvation by creoles.⁵⁰ The Indian hoarder of the precious metal melodrama thus appears as a troubling remainder, which melancholically insists upon a connection to an Incan past.

With their unhappy endings, the stories construct a space to mourn an imagined end of the Inca empire as the foundation upon which the creole-controlled nation may be built. To accomplish this, the stories draw on a trope that Jean O'Brien aptly calls "lasting." Common to nineteenth-century literature and historiography throughout the Americas, the trope of "lasting" proclaims the death of the final remaining descendent of an indigenous nation.⁵¹ In the Peruvian context, where to declare the death of all indigenous people was beyond the scope of the literary imagination, the stories enact the death of the last of Inca nobility. However, they frame Inca nobles as the only ones with a legitimate claim to Incan gold, and therefore, really, the main obstacle to the appropriation of those minerals by the Peruvian state. The Precious Metal Melodramas describe how in the past, a hundred noble families possessed keys to the underground city of gold, but now only one family remains. For, although the Indian hoarder is intransigent in his commitment to protect Incan treasure, he must eventually grow old and die. And this final Indian hoarder must pass on the last key to the treasure to his young, impressionable daughter.

This girl is the icon of an imagined last remnant of that once illustrious empire, the sole remaining link between glorious Incas of the past and miserable Indians of the present.

⁵⁰ See Thurner and Méndez.

Inevitably, however, she meets a shiftless Conquistador and must choose between her ancestral vow and romantic love. And unlike her stronger forefathers, the wayward daughter gives up her Incan heart, body, and—most importantly—her ancestral gold to the Hispanic oppressor. Like the figures of La Malinche or her Incan equivalent Isabel Chimpu Ocllo (mother of El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega), the young woman's inability to withstand the advances of her Spanish seducer dramatizes the consummation of the Conquest, marking the death knell of the Incan empire. In this way, the tales seek to discursively relegate indigenous peoples' claims to mineral resources to a tragically irrecoverable past. For if the blood descendants of the Inca leaders really were gone, then perhaps creoles in the post-independence era could be the rightful heirs to Andean mineral resources. Perhaps.

Moreover, the Precious Metal Melodramas place the ultimate responsibility for the extinction of the Incan noble line not on the Spanish villain (or his potential creole descendant), but instead on the girl's father, the Indian hoarder. Although the daughter is killed in a variety of ways, her father's agency always emerges—even from beyond the grave—to protect the Incan treasure at the cost of his daughter's life. In "El tesoro de los incas," Rosalía, her brother and father all submit to death under torture rather than to reveal the location of the gold. The obedient daughter accepts her fate not out of commitment to the treasure, but instead to regain her father's esteem, as the narrator describes: "A cada vuelta de la rueda se volvía al cacique y le decía sonriendo: 'Padre! estás contento de mí?' Y al exhalar su último aliento, despedazado su cuerpo: 'Padre' repitió '¿estás contento de mí?'" (131). Thus, the barbarism of the Spanish Conquest is exceeded only by the unfathomable stoicism of the Indian hoarder who is willing to watch his daughter suffer and die rather than give up his hidden gold. In this way, the Precious Metal

Melodramas not only allegorically proclaim the death of the Incan empire, they also attribute responsibility for this death to the unwavering despotism of the Indian hoarder who would rather destroy his own people than share his wealth.

“El tesoro de los incas” ends with a brief epilogue. It says that one day an *apacheta*, or mound of stones, appeared on a hill overlooking Cuzco. The stones mark the spot where a shepherd found the Spaniard’s bloody corpse. And to this day, the narrator explains: “todo indio escupe á su paso arrojándole en seguida una piedra y una maldicion” (133). Through this image of indigenous people ceaselessly spitting and throwing stones on the grave of the Spanish Conquistador, “El tesoro de los incas” echoes the gesture that we saw in *La quena* of connecting the violence of the colonial era into the present of the reader. The reader is thus presented with a society that remains divided, in which the quest for Incan gold only leads to the repetition of violence and tragedy.

El Chifle del Indio

Juana Manuela Gorriti’s third precious metal melodrama, “El chifle del indio,” was published in 1878, after the guano boom went bust. Notably, unlike most precious metal melodramas, including Gorriti’s other two works, “El chifle” is not set during the colonial era, but directly in the nineteenth century. The Spaniard of “El tesoro de los incas” morphs into a Peruvian *criollo* dandy named Arturo, and the noble Rosalía Yupanqui becomes Lauracha Quispe, a common peasant girl with a passion for the fashions of Lima. The narrator describes, “Lauracha, desdeñando el faldellín y la lliclla de las hijas de su raza, codició las galas de esas pálidas beldades que Lima envía a la sierra en busca de la salud” (392). No longer the self-sacrificing virgin and mother or previous tales, Lauracha dreams of abandoning her indigenous *serrana* identity to become a lady of Lima’s elite society:

“¡Lima! —repitió Lauracha—¡Lima! ¡Anhelo de toda mi vida! muy luego, rodeada de todos los esplendores de la dicha: riquezas, juventud, amor, seré la reina de tus fiestas y la envidia de tus hijas, esas beldades de tez nacarada y sedosas caballeras, que dejan en pos de sí una atmósfera perfumada” (405). As I will discuss in Chapters Three and Four, the guano boom’s influx of banking credit and imported luxury goods transformed the lifestyles of Lima’s elites, who celebrated their financial liquidity with conspicuous consumption, as famously portrayed in Benjamín Luis Cisneros’s *Julia* (1862), Mercedes Cabello de Carbonera’s *Blanca Sol* (1889) and Clorinda Matto de Turner’s *Herencia* (1892).

In “El chifle del indio” (1878), Gorriti portrays the consumerist passions of the guano era as infiltrating the countryside, corrupting even the moral center of the precious metal melodramas—the Indian maiden. Mirroring this degradation of character, Lauracha’s father Bernardo is a weak and ineffective hoarder. Although the industrious Bernardo is content subsisting from his small plot of farmland, he is unable to deny the requests of his daughter, and regularly takes Incan gold from a secret cave in order to indulge Lauracha’s taste for fine dresses (391).⁵²

When Arturo “el dandy” travels to the highlands to escape his accumulating debts in Lima, he claims to be a mining prospector. As such, he quickly learns of “la existencia de vetas riquísimas en la vertiente oriental de uno de los ramales de los Andes, sobre los lineros de la montaña de Chanchamayo” (394). Through the character of Arturo therefore, “El chifle del indio” offers a farce of the guano-era dream that Peru would escape from its escalating debts by turning to resource extraction in the highlands. As we shall see

⁵² In Claudia Llosa’s *Madeinusa* (2006), we find a contemporary version of the tale of Lauracha, and the deadly consequences of her desire to shed her indigenous, highland culture for the cosmopolitan life of Lima.

throughout this dissertation, this is a dream that maintains its hold throughout much of the nineteenth century. Arturo, however, like the Spanish Conquistador from “El tesoro de los incas,” is not interested in putting in the work required to prospect for gold. Therefore, when he hears rumors of Lauracha Quipse’s mysterious fortune, his dreams seem to have come true in this goldmine that requires no labor. Lauracha, likewise, believes that Arturo is her ticket out of the highlands. United by the narcissistic ambition to flaunt their wealth in Lima, they fall in love at first sight. Arturo speaks ecstatically about the power and prestige he will gain from the treasure, how it will enable him to reconquer Lima’s high society: “¡Millonarios sin dinero! —murmuraba—¡ricos a crédito, que después de haberme explotado me despreciabas, yo os haré ver lo que es riqueza!...y caeréis a mis pies” (404). In this way, Arturo identifies the tangible gold of Incan treasure as a substance of solid, intrinsic value that contrasts sharply with the apparent wealth of the “Millonarios sin dinero” (like himself) whose luxurious lifestyles are purchased on credit.

Arturo soon convinces Lauracha to bring him to the secret cave of Incan gold.

However, when Lauracha takes Arturo to see the treasures, the scene is far more sinister than in previous versions of the tale:

Todo cuanto el dandy pudiera imaginar de extraño, magnífico y terrible quedara muy atrás ante el espectáculo que se presentó a sus ojos. En toda la vasta extensión de la caverna, apoyados a la roca, mirábase una línea de esqueletos. Sentados en la actitud de la momia, tenía, cada uno delante de sí, su arco, sus flechas, y un enorme montón de gruesas pepas de oro. Aquella sucesión infinita de aglomeraciones auríferas que el rayo de sol hacía resplandecer en la oscuridad del antro, bajo los ojos vacíos de los esqueletos, formaba un cuadro extrañamente fantástico (404).

Here, a scene of death—an infinite line of skeletons seated with bows and arrows—greet the reader before any mention of the Incan gold. And while the trope of sunlight gleaming on the gold recurs here as in previous tales, the intricate descriptions of jewel-incrusted

flowers, condors, and corn, are nowhere to be found. Instead, there are only mounds of unshapen gold nuggets, guarded by the hollow eyes of the skeletons. For, this is not the great tomb of Incan rulers, the underground city of gold below Cuzco. Instead, we are in the resting place of anonymous Incan soldiers who committed suicide along with their treasures when they learned that Atahualpa had been betrayed. It is as if even the reaches of Gorriti's fantasies of Incan gold have become diminished by the depletion of guano and Peru's subsequent economic crisis. The treasure is still infinite—it is true. And yet, it is certainly not as vast or as grand as it once was.

Faced with this frightening scene of intermingled death and wealth, Arturo doubts if it can be real. The narrator describes: "Arturo se creyó, de pronto, juguete de una pesadilla. —¡Laura—exclamó—dime que estoy despierto y que la maravilla que contemplo no es la visión engañosa de un sueño!" (404). We see here that those treasures that seemed to hold such utopian promise in *La quena* are now, in the aftermath of the guano boom, greeted with suspicion. Even Incan gold has become suspect—perhaps it is all just a mirage. In this moment, therefore, the dandy questions whether the wealth in the cave before him is any less of an illusion than the apparent millions of the debt-based conspicuous consumption in Lima.

Ultimately, we do not discover if the gold is real or a dangerous illusion, for suddenly, Lauracha's father, the Indian hoarder, enters the cave, surprising the young lovers. He has followed the couple and is and is prepared to do what it takes to protect the treasure. He pours Arturo and Lauracha a glass of chicha, which he poisons with the tip of a skeleton's arrow, and then drinks from the cup as well. As the three die in the cave, Bernardo states: "Éstos también—dijo señalando la línea de osamentos—éstos también,

cual tú, palidieron más y más, antes de llegar al estado en que ahora yacen, teniendo delante, inútiles, sus tesoros y sus armas impregnadas de mortal ponzoña” (408). In this way, Gorriti piles the ruins of the guano boom onto the wreckage from the Spanish Conquest in a vision of history as a series of repetitions of the inability to turn Peru’s natural resource wealth into lasting prosperity.

Chapter 2: The Peasant, The Scientist, and The Entrepreneur: Legends of the Chilean Miner in the Writings of Benjamín Vicuña Mackenna

In *El libro de la plata* (1882), Chilean statesman Benjamín Vicuña Mackenna proposes that if a cataclysmic event were to hit the earth destroying all of Chilean civilization, the anthropologists of the future would only need to study the remains of a single Chilean miner buried in his underground workplace “para reconstruir por completo la raza estinguida” (215). With this dramatic statement, Vicuña Mackenna identifies the Chilean Miner as a “tipo nacional” who condenses the essence of the Chilean nation (215). As if conducting the work of the anthropologist, Vicuña Mackenna describes the Miner with *costumbrista* flair as a hard working, fiercely independent, and hyper-masculine character. He is also a dreamer and a poet, “el bardo nacional” who provides the raw materials for the spirit and matter of the development of the Chilean nation (239). A wanderer by nature, “el minero chileno es esencialmente migratorio como el cóndor i como el huanaco,” he is a man who seeks opportunity beyond his nation’s borders, from the California gold rush to the silver mines and nitrate fields of Bolivia and Peru, t acting as an agent of Chile’s territorial expansion (215). The mythical Chilean Miner, as conceptualized within the writings of Vicuña Mackenna, thus embodies the strength of the Chilean nation and consequently marks Chile as a country whose greatness derives essentially from the mining industry.

From the nineteenth century into the present, the figure of the Chilean miner has held an important place within the Chilean cultural imaginary, a mutable symbol available to populist, revolutionary, and nostalgic discourse from a wide range of ideological positions. For example, as Lessie Jo Frazier has eloquently discussed, the 1907 Santa María de Iquique massacre of striking nitrate workers by Chilean armed forces has been a

poignant touchstone within Chilean cultural production whose meaning has changed as the story is retold under varying circumstances, from the rise of organized labor and socialism, to the Pinochet dictatorship and Chile's transition to democracy. What is more, the highly televised rescue of trapped Chilean miners in 2010 speaks to the continued symbolic power of the Chilean Miner in the neoliberal era. Over the years, the miner has embodied the strength and potential of the Chilean people, however defined, whether struggling against exploitation and state violence, or advancing national interests in the global economy.

Vicuña Mackenna's image of an anthropologist studying the corpse of a miner that met his death "dejado en el fondo de las labores," however, offers a somber note to his picturesque ode to the roving, virile miner. It is an image that recalls the bodies of miners who have died—not from some civilization-eclipsing apocalyptic disaster—but rather as a regular consequence of mine labor. For, the idea of the Chilean Miner as the emblem of national strength also carries with it the notion of the miner as Martyr who suffers and dies for his nation. As Vicuña Mackenna writes, "El minero, semejante al soldado, muere soldado, es decir, muere minero" (217).

This fusion of the figure of the miner and the soldier at the moment when Vicuña Mackenna was writing *El libro de la plata* (1882) was not a frivolous reference. From 1879-1884, Chile was engaged in the War of the Pacific, in which it conquered the mineral-rich territories of Tarapacá and Antofagasta from Peru and Bolivia. Nitrates were the main coveted source of wealth in both regions, although Tarapacá also contained some of Peru's last guano deposits, and silver mining had recently experienced a (short-lived) boom in Antofagasta, Bolivia. Through this impending victory, Chile was poised to surmount a

decade of economic and political disarray with the global economic crisis of the 1870s, and gain access to much-needed tax revenue for an increasingly insolvent state.⁵³ Therefore, in the War of the Pacific, also known as the Saltpeter War, resource extraction and military conflict were inextricably linked. As Gregory Cushman describes: “The War of the Pacific ...provided a preview of the massive wars fought over phosphate, petroleum, *Lebensraum*, and other resources during the twentieth century. It violently confirmed the significance of nitrogen compounds to global history during the nineteenth century” (73).

A vocal defender of the Chilean war cause, Benjamín Vicuña Mackenna wrote extensively on the War of the Pacific in the newspapers *El Ferrocarril* (1856-1885) and *El Nuevo Ferrocarril* (1879-1881). As editor of *El Nuevo Ferrocarril*, Vicuña Mackenna also regularly published the correspondence of journalists, soldiers, and other eye-witnesses to the war, and in this way became, as Carmen McEvoy describes “una de las voces más autorizadas de la sociedad civil chilena durante el conflicto con Bolivia y Perú” (*Guerreros* ch. 2). Additionally, he authored a three-part history of the War of the Pacific and compiled a collection of soldiers’ letters titled *Álbum de la gloria de Chile* (1883-1885). Although Vicuña Mackenna frequently critiqued Chilean president Aníbal Pinto’s handling of the war, he never wavered from the assertion that Chile had the right, and even the duty, to possess the nitrate-rich territories of Antofagasta and Tarapacá.

It is therefore significant that, as Chilean troops were in the midst of occupying Peruvian and Bolivian territory during the War of the Pacific, Benjamín Vicuña Mackenna made the choice to publish three voluminous texts dedicated to the history of resource extraction in Chile: *La edad del oro en Chile* (1881), *El libro de la plata* (1882), and *El libro*

⁵³ See McEvoy *Guerreros civilizadores* ch. 1.

del cobre i del carbon de piedra en Chile (1883).⁵⁴ Tentative plans for a fourth book, which was to be dedicated to guano and nitrates, never materialized.⁵⁵ As scholars including Benedict Anderson, Homi Bhabha, and Beatriz González Stephan have extensively demonstrated, the military and political process of nation building comes accompanied by the textual project of constructing a national history, which takes part in the ideological task of naturalizing the borders of a country as timeless.⁵⁶ I argue that in constructing curated archives of tales and histories of mining in a period when the Chilean state was aggressively seeking to expand its borders through warfare against Bolivia and Peru, Vicuña Mackenna proposes to establish the official contours of the expansionist nation's Foundational Myths of Resource Extraction. In this way, he offers a vision of Chile as essentially a *país minero* whose past and destiny is rooted resource extraction in the desert of the North.

⁵⁴ *El libro del cobre i del carbon de piedra en Chile* is primarily dedicated to copper, and only mentions coal in the contexts of its function as a necessary energy input to the copper industry following the deforestation of copper mining regions. It is also worth noting that these are not the only texts that Vicuña Mackenna wrote during the period 1881-1883; he also published *Vida del general don Bernardo O'Higgins* (1882) and *Juan Fernández, historia verdadera de la isla de Robinson Crusoe* (1883), in addition regularly publishing articles on the war, government, and presidential elections.

⁵⁵ In *El libro del cobre...*, Vicuña Mackenna writes of potential plans for this fourth book: "I, en seguida, consumando en su tiempo un plan premeditado i que va ya en los dos tercios de su carrera, llegaremos probablemente a hacer conocer cómo dos sustancias fósiles, antes viles hasta el menosprecio i el asco, el guano de las islas i el salitre de los médanos, han venido a tener una influencia capital, si no en la sana prosperidad de Chile, en sus destinos i en sus mas señalados acontecimientos" (23).

⁵⁶ For a discussion of the process of construction of a textual imaginary of the Chilean nation in the nineteenth century, see Gabriel Cid and Alejandro San Francisco's essay collection *Nacion y nacionalismo en Chile. Siglo XIX*. See also, Sara Castro-Klarén and John Charles Chasteen *Beyond Imagined Communities*.

To date, Vicuña Mackenna's three mineral histories have not been studied as elements of his nationalist war propaganda.⁵⁷ What is more, the texts have hardly stood out within Vicuña Mackenna's colossal publication record, which totals 192 books and over 1,500 periodical pieces (Gazmuri 134). Historian Cristián Gazmuri characterizes the books as some of Vicuña Mackenna's weakest publications due to their paucity of statistical analysis and tendency towards exaggeration (133). Even so, these texts, described by Simon Collier as "rhapsodic but useful" are cited by historians to this day as unique sources for details and perspectives on Chile's nineteenth century mining industry (673).⁵⁸ In this chapter, I wish to consider Vicuña Mackenna's trilogy of mining histories in terms of what I believe to be a central motivation for their publication, that is, as narrative interventions that seek to shape the ways in which readers thought, felt, and even dreamed about the place of mining in Chile during the War of the Pacific. As a result, some of the very weaknesses from a historiographic perspective take on new interest as elements that drive the fantasy work of the texts.

Vicuña Mackenna's mining trilogy constructs a Chilean history of each respective metal—gold, silver, and copper—through an accumulation of chronicles, histories, travelogues, *tradiciones*, legends, oral accounts, personal correspondence, and statistics.

⁵⁷ Previous studies of these issues have focused on his periodical publications and *Álbum de la gloria de Chile* (1883-1885). See McEvoy *Guerreros civilizadores* and "Civilización, masculinidad, y superioridad racial," and Beckman "The Creolization of Imperial Reason."

⁵⁸ Gazmuri critiques how "cuando, exagerando la nota, sus libros o artículos fueron escritos apasionadamente, usando material insuficiente o sobre sucesos contemporáneos, como los que se refieren a la Guerra del Pacífico, su validez histórica es débil. Más débiles resultan, incluso, algunas de sus obras sobre temas que requieren información estadística seriada. Vgr. sus libros sobre la minería de la plata, el cobre, o el oro" (133). For historical studies that cite Vicuña Mackenna's mining histories, see for example: Bravo Quesada *La flor del desierto*; Illanes *Chile des-centrado*; Méndez Beltrán *La exportación minera en Chile*; Millán *Historia de la minería del oro en Chile*; O'Brien *The Revolutionary Mission*; Ortega Martínez *Chile en ruta al capitalismo*; Salazar *Labradores, peones y proletarios*.

Although the histories are organized in a roughly chronological fashion, the central organizing element is geographic, with approximately one chapter dedicated to each of the principal mining sites. As Vicuña Mackenna textually traverses the territory of Chile as well as the contested Bolivian territory of Antofagasta, the most prevalent narrative that emerges is what I call the Legends of the Chilean Miner, which offer heroic accounts of the discovery of each mineral deposit. The Legends emerge repeatedly across the texts, particularly *El libro de la plata* and *El libro de cobre*, and introduce the reader to an array of character types. I divide these types into four principal categories—the Peasant Miner, the Scientist Miner, and the Miner-Entrepreneur—each of which embodies aspects of the mythic Chilean Miner. In this way, the Legends offer a composite origin story for both the Chilean mining industry and the Chilean Miner. The thing about legends, however, is that they can take on a life of their own, at times exceeding and even contradicting the ideological aims of their storyteller.

Sergio González Miranda has discussed how the emphasis on the “discovery” of ores that I identify in Vicuña Mackenna’s histories also characterizes later historiography that specifically focuses on the nitrate industry, such as Roberto Hernández’s *El salitre* (1930), Óscar Bermúdez’s *Historia del salitre* (1963), and even the work of contemporary historian José Antonio González (231). This historiographic discourse, González describes, casts “los primeros ‘descubridores’ o los primeros ‘elaboradores’” as heroic pioneers who represent “los pilares de una identidad y una sociedad nacional (o regional)” (231). He concludes, therefore “La hazaña de la ocupación (y dominio) del desierto sería el mito fundacional” (231). Although González does not discuss Vicuña Mackenna’s work in this context, I believe that my analysis clearly situates Vicuña Mackenna’s work within what Sater and

Collier have described as a “somewhat hagiographic” tradition of narrating Chile’s nineteenth century history of mining (77).

As Foundational Myths of Resource Extraction, Vicuña Mackenna’s Legends of the Chilean Miner address some of the same concerns that are raised by Gorriti’s Precious Metal Melodramas. For example, who has the right to control natural resources and who (if anyone) should benefit from their extraction? Can mining promote civilization and progress? What role (if any) should Europeans have in resource extraction in the Americas? These are fundamental questions that are explored in both narrative types. The answers they offer, however, and the disparate strategies they use to illustrate these answers, points towards the great differences in the ways in which the promise and dangers of resource extraction have been imagined in the Fertilizer Age.

The Miner and the *Roto*

The War of the Pacific was a pivotal, even foundational moment in the construction of Chilean nationalist ideology.⁵⁹ The most famous symbol of the era is the *roto chileno*, the mestizo soldier who stood as an emblem of Chilean bravery and racial superiority over and against the people of Peru and Bolivia. Nicolás Palacios’s 1904 *La raza chilena* presents the most extensive elaboration the figure of the *roto* as the embodiment of Chilean racial superiority, but, as Gabriel Cid and Carmen McEvoy have demonstrated, the War of the Pacific was the defining moment in the creation of the myth of the *roto*. Whereas prior to the war, the *roto* had been an icon of the marginalized underclass laborer and “vagrant,” this figure was now recast in elite and popular discourse as a symbol of national valor and

⁵⁹ See Beckman, Cid, and McEvoy.

exceptionalism, precisely as laborers throughout Chile were being recruited and conscripted into the military.

A defining characteristic of the *roto* is his inheritance of the bravery and vigor of the “indomitable Mapuche” in the tradition of Alonso de Ercilla’s *La araucana* (1569-1589), which marks his racial superiority over the descendants of the conquered Incas in Peru and Bolivia. This notion is graphically depicted in an 1879 article in *El Mercurio de Valparaíso* entitled “¡A la guerra! ¡A la guerra!” which states: “Las afiladas tizonas españolas se mellaron en el pecho granito de los hijos de Chile, mientras que en la sedosa piel de los Incas no hicieron más que afilar más” (quoted in Cid 235-236). This image, which imagines Chileans as descendants of men of granite and Peruvians as descendants of men of silk, moreover, offers insight into a racial ideology in which physical strength, masculinity, and economic ways of being were imagined as interrelated elements of one’s racial makeup. To associate Chileans with granite evokes masculinity, hard work and mining, whereas to associate Peruvians with silk evokes femininity and luxury consumption. As Ericka Beckman and Carmen McEvoy discuss, these assertions of inherent racial-sexual-economic difference appear extensively in the Chilean press as justifications for Chile’s expansionist ambitions in the War of the Pacific.

In the writings of Benjamín Vicuña Mackenna, there is significant overlap between the figure of the *roto* and that of the Chilean Miner. At the same time, however, while mine labor was one of the realms in which people considered to be *rotos* found work, not all *rotos* were miners. Nor, as I will show, can the mythic category of the Chilean Miner be reduced to a subset of the figure of the *roto*, particularly as each figure is imagined within the writings of Vicuña Mackenna. Instead, the unstable distinction between *roto* and Miner

remains a troubling tension throughout his mining histories. Beyond the works of Vicuña Mackenna, I believe that it would be most accurate to state simply that each figure occupies its own symbolic trajectory, in which the categories overlap to varying extents within different contexts and historical moments.

The Peasant Miner

The Legend of the Peasant Miner tells the story of a humble peasant worker, perhaps a muleteer or a llama herder, who by chance stumbles across a rich deposit of ore. In *El libro del cobre* Vicuña Mackenna asserts the importance of this figure in the major mineral strikes of the Americas:

es el humilde labriego, guiado por su instinto o por la antorcha sorda de la casualidad, quien ha descubierto en todas partes las mas ricas minas del universo. No fueron Colon, ni Pizarro, ni Diego de Almagro, ni Hernan Cortes los que en el Nuevo Mundo descubrieron a Potosí ni a Chañarcillo, a Guanajuato i Agua Amarga o Cerro de Pasco. El que descubrió a Potosí era un indio cazador. El que descubrió a Pasco fue un pobre pastor de llamas. El que descubrió a Chañarcillo era un arreador de borricos (431).

Here, Vicuña Mackenna asserts that the Foundational Myth of Resource Extraction in the Americas not to be found in the Spanish Conquest. Rather than a tale of enrichment through violent dispossession, the Legend of the Peasant Miner presents an ordinary worker who suddenly—whether by following a sixth sense or sheer luck—comes upon a great opportunity for wealth within his own land. It is a tale that imagines a pure discovery of minerals on which no one has made any prior claims. The Americas are thus imagined as a territory laden with unseen mineral wealth, available for the taking. The naïve simplicity attributed to this mestizo or indigenous peasant worker invites the reader to imagine a land in which anyone could come across a great treasure. Moreover, whether the peasant is indigenous or mestizo, he is explicitly not an Indian Hoarder. When he discovers the silver

or copper ore, he spreads the word, so that it may be extracted, refined, and sold as a commodity. His life, therefore, presents a populist rags-to-riches story, even if, as we will see, the peasant miner is not necessarily the one who profits most from the riches he has discovered.

In *El libro de la plata*, the Legend of the Peasant Miner appears in Vicuña Mackenna's reproduction of two accounts of the discovery of silver at Chañarcillo in 1832. Sources agree, he states, that Juan Godoy, "un simple arreador de borricos," (154) happened upon an immensely valuable outcropping of silver. But, how it was that he came to make such a discovery, no one can say for certain. Perhaps he was out collecting firewood or hunting *guanacos*. Or perhaps someone had told him of the existence of the silver. Notably, the two versions that Vicuña Mackenna includes report that Juan Godoy had indeed learned about the silver from an elderly relative, although Vicuña Mackenna notes that Godoy himself firmly denied these theories. Nevertheless, the suggestion that Godoy was not the first to know of the location of the silver alters the image of the chance discovery that Vicuña Mackenna presented in the passage quoted above, bringing—as we shall see—the story of Juan Godoy a step closer to the tales of Incan gold.

The first version of the legend that Vicuña Mackenna recounts is based on the work of the famous *costumbrista* writer José Joaquín Vallejo (Jotabeche). According to Jotabeche, Juan Godoy was deeply in debt to his boss, the mine owner Miguel Gallo, who had provided him with firewood and burros on credit. Without any means to repay Gallo, Godoy recalls a story that his peasant aunt had told him about a mineral deposit located out in the desert. Godoy follows his aunt's indications and successfully locates Chañarcillo. Returns to his boss with two burros laden with silver, Godoy tells Gallo about the location of the rich

silver deposit. Here, we see how the knowledge of the mine (and access to its wealth) is passed from an elderly, potentially indigenous, woman to a mestizo peasant laborer and ultimately to a creole mine owner. In notable contrast to the Precious Metal Melodramas, moreover, this transfer of wealth involves no physical violence. Instead, debt has become the mechanism through which the creole gains ownership of precious metals. Thus, we see that while Jotabeche's legend is not framed as a repetition of the Spanish Conquest, it does indicate a certain level of concern for economic forms of coercion in the relationship of the mine owner to the muleteer. Had Godoy not discovered Chañarcillo, he never could have repaid the debts accrued through the purchase of the animals and fuel he needed to fulfill the demands of his profession.

While Jotabeche's narrative only obliquely evokes the idea of mysterious indigenous knowledge about underground precious metals, the second version, directly transforms the Precious Metal Melodrama into a Legend of the Chilean Miner. Vicuña Mackenna quotes this account from historian Carlos María Sayago, who expands on the idea that Godoy had received information about the location of the mine from a relative. Specifically, Sayago proposes that it was Godoy's indigenous mother who told him about the silver, and moreover, that she had made her son promise to pass this information along to the mine owner, Miguel Gallo. Sayago explains that Miguel Gallo had frequently visited the old woman's rustic home to rest and talk. A sexual relationship between the two might be implicitly assumed, but is never stated outright. Over the years, Gallo tells Godoy's mother of his financial troubles, and the indigenous woman offers to show him the location of a great source of wealth. However, Gallo does not believe Godoy's mother, and ignores the woman's story, imagining it to be "exceso de agasajo por parte de la buena india, o mas bien

como un deseo de prosperidad en sus negocios” (168). Therefore, on her deathbed, she passes along the knowledge to her son, “en sus últimos instantes, como una sagrada herencia, cuyo secreto debía guardar sin hacer partícipe a ningún otro sino al señor Gallo, en obediencia a la promesa que ella le había hecho en diferentes ocasiones” (Sayago quoted in 169). In this way, Sayago offers a radical revision of the precious metal melodrama such that the woman willfully bequeaths indigenous treasure to a creole without him even asking for it. The sacred vow therefore, that is passed from mother to son, is not that Godoy protect the treasure against creole greed, but instead that he extract the silver and place it into the possession of a creole mining entrepreneur. Primitive accumulation through indigenous dispossession is imagined in Sayago’s narrative not only as free of violence, but moreover, as something that is passionately desired and embraced by the dispossessed.⁶⁰

Sayago and Jotabeche’s stories of Juan Godoy present greater contour to the archetypal Legend of the Peasant Miner by suggesting the existence of prior indigenous knowledge of the deposits. In this way, they call into question whether the peasant’s discovery of minerals was, in truth, a discovery at all. Nevertheless, Vicuña Mackenna frames these narratives in a way that seeks to minimize their destabilization of the Legend of the Peasant Miners. As if the discovery had occurred in a past far more distant than the 1830s, Vicuña Mackenna emphasizes the inability to know for certain the truth of the

⁶⁰ This revision further stands out in contrast to the tales narrated in *La edad del oro en Chile*, where Vicuña Mackenna repeatedly notes how the indigenous people of the South refuse to reveal the location of gold mines as an act of continued resistance against Chilean conquest of their lands. Perhaps the most emblematic foundational myth of resource extraction in the southern territories is that of the assassination of Spanish Conquistador Pedro de Valdivia; some say he was forced by his indigenous captors to drink molten gold.⁶⁰ No comparable myths of anti-colonial violence appear in Vicuña Mackenna’s tales of mining in the North.

events, noting that “Muchas son las versiones que de aquel hallazgo se han dado a luz en los cincuenta años corridos de fama i de bonanza” (154). In addition, he expresses his decision to draw from Jotabeche’s account based on its richness of detail as well as the fact that he found the text “como el crestón de Juan Godoi, por casualidad” (155). In this way, Vicuña Mackenna emphasizes the notion of a chance discovery even as the two sources he cites directly contradict this claim. Overall, he states:

La cadena de oro que los Incas arrojaron a las aguas del Titicaca al primer anuncio de la aparición de los castellanos, según la tradición vulgar, había sido al fin encontrada... Pero sus eslabones no eran de aquel preciado metal sino de montículos de plata blanca que salía a flor de tierra, en poderosos crestones tostados por el sol i oxidados por el viento i la niebla, que el caminante i el minero iban pisando en su camino desde el rio Coquimbo al rio Loa (148).

The true treasure of the Incas, the *El Dorado* of South America, Vicuña Mackenna insists, is not to be found in the gold that was possessed by the Inca Empire, but in the silver of Chile that had not yet been discovered.

The idea that the discovery of the mineral deposit is a truly novel *discovery*, rather than an identification or recovery based on previous information, is essential to the ideological work of the Legend of the Peasant Miner. First of all, it sustains the populist narrative that anyone, regardless of background, could discover an unimaginably vast source of wealth. Secondly, it assures that the wealth is imagined as completely available, free for the taking, without any prior claims of possession. When we recall that Vicuña Mackenna was writing in the context of the War of the Pacific, the stakes of this second element of the Legend of the Peasant Miner come sharply into view. For, in establishing the Foundational Myths of Resource Extraction in his mining histories, Vicuña Mackenna is not only allegorically engaging the question of coloniality within Chile but also, and for Vicuña

Mackenna, more urgently, with Chile's imperialist bid for territorial expansion into Peru and Bolivia.

In particular, Chilean pro-war rhetoric justified the Chilean annexation of Bolivian territory was based on the claim that Chileans had discovered nitrates and silver there. On the day that Chile declared war on Bolivia, Chilean writer and politician Máximo Lira spoke at a ceremony in Valparaíso, in which he asks his audience to imagine the mythic moment of the Chilean discovery of nitrates:

Un día se oyó en los tristes desiertos de Bolivia el ruido de unos pasos repercutidos por los ecos prolongadas de aquellas pavorosas soledades. Eran, señores, los pasos atrevidos de los exploradores chilenos que iban a arrancar a aquella tierra que parecía maldita, el secreto de los tesoros que ocultaba en su seno ("Ceremonia" 249).

The scene is marked by absolute emptiness and desolation only broken by the echoing sounds of Chilean footsteps. No counter-claim can be imagined for this uninhabited wasteland. For Bolivia to now assert a claim over this territory meant that they were the true aggressors and "nosotros los provocados, nosotros los engañados, nosotros los despojados" (249).

Read allegorically through the lens of the War of the Pacific, Vicuña Mackenna's Legend of the Peasant Miner justifies Chilean imperialist expansionism along the same lines as Lira, albeit through a softer, less militaristic framing. Indeed, in imagining a humble peasant stumbling across a vast deposit of previously undiscovered minerals, the legend employs what I would describe as a Chilean variation of the discourse that Mary Louise Pratt calls the "anti-conquest." A set of rhetorical strategies employed in European travel writing of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the "anti-conquest" portrays the European man in Latin America and Africa as deeply innocent. In this way, it frames the

imperial ambitions he represents as radically different from the Spanish Conquest of the Americas, indeed, as not a conquest at all. Although neither the protagonist nor authors of the Legend of the Peasant Miner are European, the narrative shares two key traits with the “anti-conquest” discourse that Pratt describes: 1) the attribution of naiveté and weakness to the wandering protagonist and 2) the characterization of the spaces he traverses and the resources he encounters as unclaimed and therefore completely available.

In appropriating elements of European imperial discourse to the service of Chile’s own imperialist ambitions, the Legend of the Peasant Miner offers one of several examples that I explore in this chapter of what Ericka Beckman calls “the creolization of imperial reason” through which “Chilean elites ventriloquized a key set of images and tropes belonging to a larger repertoire of nineteenth-century European imperial discourse” during the War of the Pacific (75). Likewise, as Carmen McEvoy describes, Chilean nationalist rhetoric, epitomized in the writings of Benjamín Vicuña Mackenna, cast the War of the Pacific within the framework of the “civilizing mission” in the tradition of French justification of its imperialist wars in Africa (*Guerreros* “Reflexiones”). In this way, Beckman explains, Chilean leaders presented themselves as “agents of empire” fighting a local front of a “world-historical struggle for European supremacy” (76). As Beckman notes, however—and as we will see in this chapter—Chilean “self-fashioning” as agents of empire through the creolization of imperial reason runs up against tensions as Chilean elites must negotiate their own position in relation to European, particularly British interests.⁶¹

⁶¹ With the term “self-fashioning,” I am referring to Pratt’s discussion of the rhetorical strategies through which Latin American creoles sought “to legitimate creole hegemony over and against not only old Spanish domination but also French and English imperialism, and perhaps most important of all by the 1820s, the democratic claims of the subordinated mestizo, African, and indigenous peoples” (188). In the context I am studying, of course, we

The Scientist Miner

The Legend of the Scientist Miner introduces a second persona contained within the composite character of the Chilean Miner. Whereas the Peasant Miner is a populist figure of “un pobre borriquero del desierto,” who discovers ores by chance, the Scientist Miner, “un químico tan intelijente como sagaz,” brings the wisdom and magic of European science and technology to identify high-value ores were none were previously believed to exist (158). In *El libro del cobre*, Vicuña Mackenna recounts a Legend of the Scientist Miner that had been preserved by his family “como casera tradición” (163). The story begins with four brothers from a creole mining family who jointly own an unproductive copper mine near Coquimbo, Chile. Then one day, in 1831, a mysterious man with a French accent arrives at the doorstep, offering to buy the mine. The brothers happily agree, feeling somewhat sorry for the strange foreigner, who they imagine must be out of his mind: “un insano o algo parecido” (163). However, their surprise grows greater when the man sets to work transforming massive mounds of *arenillas*, which they had believed to be worthless, into pure copper:

levantando (segun unos) en el puerto de Coquimbo, rodeados de altas murallas, dos hornos de reverbero, por el moderno sistema frances, púsose a convertir en un rio de cobre de finísima calidad las escorias de Tamaya, mayorazgo de millones que el sagaz alsaciano habia cambiado por un plato de lentejas (164).

This tale reenacts a foundational moment of unequal imperial exchange. Like Columbus trading worthless baubles for Caribbean gold, the mysterious European buys the copper mine for a pittance from unsuspecting Chileans who had not recognized the value of the land they possessed. Vicuña Mackenna continues: “¿Quién era, entre tanto, el ingenioso

have the Chilean assertions of superiority over Bolivia and Peru as an additional relational axis negotiated by Chilean elite discourse.

aparecido de Guamalata que así trocaba una tonelada de arena por una onza de oro?” (164). The man is Charles Lambert, a chemist and manager of a British mining company who arrived in Chile in the speculative fever of the 1820s. While visiting the province of Coquimbo, Lambert had picked up some rubble from the ground, and recognizes a source of great value that had remained previously unseen: “no necesitó sino alzar del suelo el primer fragmento de escoria en que tropezara, para cerciorarse a la simple vista de que tenia en las manos un trozo de *regulus*, o eje adetantado de cobre, es decir, una inmensa fortuna” (164). To accomplish the subsequent miracle of alchemy, transforming sand into copper, all that Lambert needed were reverberatory furnaces for smelting, of common use back in Europe. Through the introduction of these smelters, Lambert takes “aquellas despreciadas *arenillas*” and converts them “de basura i escoria en opulento caudal” (285). In this way, the Legend of the Scientist Miner imagines European science as an alchemic force that can create value out of wastes.

The real magic of Lambert’s alchemy, however, was less the introduction of European technology into the Americas but more importantly, the ability to recognize a substance’s potential exchange value where others have not. It is this personalized, inherent savvy or superior vision of Lambert that is responsible for wealth creation. To emphasize this point, Vicuña Mackenna dedicates a section of *El libro del cobre* to a series of legends narrating the discovery of a copper deposit, which is overlooked because the prospector does not recognize the true value of copper, seeking silver instead. When the prospector realizes his mistake, and attempts to return to the site, the copper is nowhere to be found. Vicuña Mackenna notes that a similar failure to recognize a substance’s true value had once occurred with guano and nitrates, “dos sustancias fósiles, ántes viles hasta el

menosprecio i el asco” (23). These narratives therefore offer a conceptualization of the creation of value through a refined entrepreneurial vision. That is, value exists when its potential is recognized. In contrast, the labor of mineral extraction merits no narration here, for it is not seen as producing value.

In the Legend of the Scientist Miner, we again find strong resonances with the discourses used to justify Chile’s expansionist efforts in the War of the Pacific. Importantly, Chile’s claim to Bolivian territory was not only based on the right of discovery, but in addition, on the assertion that Chileans had effected a miraculous transformation of Antofagasta as a result of having discovered wealth where others had only seen sand. To return to Máximo Lira’s speech on the day of Chile’s declaration of War against Bolivia, we recall how Lira invoked the sounds of Chilean footsteps in the vast emptiness of the Bolivian landscape. Lira explains, however, that after the discovery of nitrates, new sounds broke through the silence of the desert:

Más tarde se oyó en esos mismos desiertos el ruido de la azada, de la barreta y del combo. [...] Y después se escucharon allí todavía los agudos silbidos de la locomotora y los multiplicados rumores de un enjambre de hombres de acción, cuyo genio creador logró hacer del desierto un emporio de riqueza (“Ceremonia” 249-250).

In this passage, Lira celebrates Chilean presence in Bolivia as a force of economic momentum and progress. The sounds of the spade, pick, and sledgehammer drown out the echoes individual footsteps with the generalized din of caliche extraction. Even though the tools mentioned are the basic implements of manual nitrate extraction rather than the latest steam-powered processing technologies, the clanging sounds of tools splitting rocks and breaking open the earth invites the listener to imagine a great, powerful transformation achieved through the coordinated movements of tools as if set in motion by

machine rather than human labor. For, the human energy exerted in nitrate extraction is less significant than the superior intellect of those who identified the value of nitrates and organized their exploitation. Soon following comes the sound of the train, that nineteenth-century epitome of European technological innovation and progress, announcing its arrival to Bolivia and the successful transformation of the Bolivian desert into a source of wealth for Chileans through the commodification and extraction of its natural resources. Likewise, in *Historia de la Campaña de Tarapacá*, Vicuña Mackenna describes how the inhabitants of Antofagasta, Bolivia were simply “Humildes pescadores” and “agrupaciones de arrieros que tenían sus asientos i sus microscópicos [sic] alfalfaes” living lives of subsistence rather than transforming their surroundings into a site of extraction of export commodities (34). With the arrival of Chileans, Vicuña Mackenna proposes, the Chilean annexation of Antofagasta was an inevitable event, “a la verdad, cosa tan imposible evitar que el litoral boliviano fuese con corta diferencia de años, territorio chileno” (35).

Nevertheless, the story of Charles Lambert and his magical copper drums can only awkwardly function as an allegory of Chilean imperial conquest. For, within the tale, it is *Chileans* who are the ones who fail to recognize the potential exchange value of their copper mine, and happily hand it over to the European. Therefore, this legend also brings up the question of European involvement in mining. Does the presence of European scientists and businessmen enhance or pose a threat to Chilean interests? The Legend of the Scientist Miner told here would seem to suggest that Chileans should be wary of Europeans who would mobilize disparities in knowledge or resources to take advantage of Chileans. Indeed, this warning is one of the lessons that the legend offers.

At the same time, however, Vicuña Mackenna works extensively to show that, despite the risks, foreign participation in mining offers great benefits to Chile. Charles Lambert, he describes, was not an imperial adventurer seeking to extract the riches of the Americas and return to Europe. Instead, Lambert and his earnings become incorporated into the Chilean nation. Settling down in Chile, Lambert purchases a second mine and becomes involved in local government as a municipal official. Moreover, Vicuña Mackenna highlights that the British mining company that had previously employed Lambert had provided one of the first loans to the Chilean government in 1825, providing it funds to support the continued fight for independence from Spain in the island of Chiloé. In this way, the profits of foreign investment in mining are reinvested in Chilean nation building. Even the story of a speculative fever in British investment in silver mining is reframed as a positive event in Chile, because it attracted scientists like Lambert to Chilean shores, as Vicuña Mackenna describes:

la manía minera de los ingleses no fué del todo infructuosa para Chile. Visitáronla entonces intelijentes viajeros que dieron a conocer su verdadera riqueza [...] I fué de esa manera como los europeos, que no eran españoles, nos transmitieron con el ejemplo, las primeras gotas de la sangre propulsiva del sajón (101-102).

This Legend of the Scientist thus presents the potential risks of foreign participation in mining while simultaneously proposing that it precisely through mining that Chile might successfully incorporate foreign elements—people, capital, and territory—into the nation, and become much stronger for it.

The Miner-Entrepreneur

The Miner-Entrepreneur combines the Peasant Miner with the Scientist Miner and then adds a spark of passionate vision all his own. Although chance, prior knowledge, and

scientific advancements might all play a role in his discovery of minerals, the most important element is the single-minded energy that the Miner-Entrepreneur dedicates to his quest for valuable ores, his willingness to strike out into the wilderness against all odds in pursuit of his dream. As such, the Miner-Entrepreneur is the most heroic of the character types that make up the composite figure of the Chilean Miner. The books *El libro de la plata* and *El libro del cobre* each begin with a portrait and dedication to a particular embodiment of the Miner-Entrepreneur: José Santos Ossa and José Tomas Urmeneta, respectively, and their stories provide the contours of Vicuña Mackenna's Legend of the Miner-Entrepreneur.

Vicuña Mackenna describes José Tomas Urmeneta, “el iniciador mas acaudalado, mas valiente i mas perseverante de la ántes abatida i casi menesterosa industria del cobre en Chile” (25). The legend goes that Urmeneta was managing an hacienda, when he learned of Lambert's copper smelters and, “sin dificultad prendiera en su ánimo la idea de aprovecharse del secreto del afortunado industrial frances destinado a transformar una provincia entera en una vasta faena” (175). Receiving an unproductive copper mine as a gift from his brother, he unearths a block of bronze that can be smelted into copper. With this strike, a passion overtakes Urmeneta, “la persuasion, sólida como el granito de sus minas” that he would discover far greater riches, “una *veta real*, que era el riñon escondido de una colosal si bien tardía riqueza” (32). For the next fourteen years, Urmeneta dedicates his time and money exclusively to the quest for this unseen mineral deposit. The rumor spreads that Urmeneta has gone insane:

que el explorador en roca viva de una riqueza fantástica habia perdido positivamente el juicio, i comenzaron a decir que estaba “loco” [...] I como para dar a éstos razon, al fin de la jornada no quedaba ya al obstinado minero sino un asno, en que tarde i mañana recorria sus faenas: lo cual, i el verle así caballero, aumentaba la creencia de sus postrer demencia... (33).

As Urmeneta wanders the desert with nothing but a mule, he comes to resemble the figure of the Peasant Miner. His birth into an elite family, who provide him with financial support on repeated occasions, fades into the background, ceding ground to the mythic image of a ragged madman and his mule, a Don Quijote of the mines. Vicuña Mackenna describes:

Sepultó allí [...] sus provechos, sus empeños, sus ahorros posteriores, hasta el pan i el techo de sus tiernos hijos a quienes llevó a vivir con la abnegada madre en la áspera serranía; pero siempre revestido de la fé de un precursor. --¿No ha dicho el proverbio o la parábola que “la fé allana los montes”? (33).

Pratt's discussion of the discourse of the anti-conquest becomes relevant again here, as we imagine the physically debilitated Miner-Entrepreneur suffering the travails of his journey, devoid of material comforts, following only his faith in copper. It sounds almost blasphemous or even parodic, unless we recognize that the quest for copper here is not portrayed as a search for personal wealth. Instead, as I will explain further below, the mineral deposits sought by the Miner-Entrepreneur are envisioned as sources of vitality, progress, and civilization. Therefore, and in accordance with a moral framework in which there existed, as McEvoy describes, “una armonía entre el progreso material, la moral y la espiritualidad” (*Guerreros* ch. 3) the quest for ores could be imagined, quite un-ironically as a spiritual mission.

Then one day, Urmeneta's quest is rewarded; he strikes a unprecedentedly rich mineral vein: “encontróse una mañana el hombre mas rico de Chile i de la América del Sur” (33). Urmeneta's madness had not been a delusion, but a superior vision, rooted in a passionate faith in the existence of economic prospects that no one else recognized. This heroic figure of the Mining-Entrepreneur appears in a speech given by Chilean writer and politician Isidoro Errázuriz in the ceremony that I discussed earlier, which honored Chile's declaration of war against Bolivia. Errázuriz states,

Nuestros políticos y hasta nuestros sabios afirmaban que el desierto de Atacama era una arrenal improductivo y maldito; y sin embargo, los cateadores chilenos, animosa vanguardia de la industria y la civilización, lo recorrían en bandadas, persiguiendo las huellas seguras del cobre y el salitre (246-247).

Willing to follow his independent, internal conviction in the existence of minerals in the desert, the Miner-Entrepreneur becomes as force of national history.

Moreover, the Legend of the Miner-Entrepreneur proposes a tentative resolution to some of the concerns raised by the Legend of the Scientist Miner with respect to foreign participation in the Chilean mining industry. With Urmeneta's story, European technology introduced by Lambert facilitated the great fortune of a Chilean Miner-Entrepreneur. This incorporation of foreign elements for the benefit of Chile is likewise mirrored within the person of José Tomás Urmeneta himself. Urmeneta received his education at a boarding school in the United States and lived a comparable length of time in England. As a result of these experiences, he acquired many of the habits and mannerisms of the countries to the North, while never ceasing to remain essentially Chilean, as Vicuña Mackenna writes:

El señor Urmeneta, bajo la corteza glacial de un *gentleman* ingles, escondia uno de los corazones mas abiertos i mas jenuinamente chilenos que hayamos conocidos [...] Participaba en su índole i hasta en su organismo físico, del vizcaino i del ingles; dos razas afines, aunque no lo parezcan; tercas i hasta bruscas en la superficie, jenerosas i magnáminas en sus secretos arranques. El alma de los mineros felices aseméjase, por otra parte, a las montañas de su faena, en que es preciso descender a su fondo para encontrar el inagotable venero... (38).

In this way, Urmeneta represents an ideal fusion of Chilean and British elements that enhance his character (and perhaps it is implied, his business savvy) without diminishing its Chilean-ness. At play here is a racial ideology that claimed Chilean descent from Basques, and for this reason more similar to northern Europeans and racially superior to

the descendants of “Latins” from other parts of Spain in the rest of Latin America.⁶² The passage asserts a notable likeness between Basques and the British, emphasizing the ease with which these racial types can coexist. Chileans, after all, proudly claimed the title of the “English of South America.”⁶³ The presence, then, of British personality traits and scientific knowledge—or British people and businesses, for that matter—would certainly pose no threat to the integrity of Chile. The mine that Urmeneta is compared to in the final sentence of the passage remains, in its depths, inexhaustibly Chilean.

José Tomás Urmeneta, in his capacity to absorb foreign elements while maintaining an incorruptible core of Chilean-ness, functions also as a metonym for Chile’s extractive industries as a whole. Vicuña Mackenna repeatedly lauds the beneficent role of European people and investment, especially British, in facilitating the expansion of copper mining. He characterizes “capital británico” as a “verdadera trasfusión de la sangre del norte a su cuerpo escuálido” (127) and describes how “el oro ingles, cayendo sobre sus áridas colinas como fecundante rocío, abrió camino al pico, a la pólvora, i a las habitaciones” (253). British investment is thus imagined as a vital liquid that flows through Chile, giving it life. This indispensable ingredient does not change the inherent make-up of Chile, but simply enables it blossom to its full potential. Likewise, when Urmeneta becomes a millionaire, he exhibits no desire to personally possess the copper of Tamaya. The discoverer of fabulous riches does not hold fast to his money, but instead invests it in railroads, coal, copper, and shipping, adding his capital to the free-flowing, quasi-British lifeblood of Chile. Vicuña

⁶² The most famous expression of this racist construction of Chilean superiority is found in Nicolas Palacios’s *La raza chilena*.

⁶³ See, for example Horace Rumbold’s 1876 “Report on the Progress and General Condition of Chile,” submitted to British Parliament in which he comments on the Chileans’ “not altogether unreasonable claim to be considered ‘the English of South America’” (311).

Mackenna explains “Sostenia que la fortuna i la riqueza no podian ser sino un medio reparador i creador; jamas un miserable egoismo cifrado en la acumulacion de la moneda o sus equivalentes, dentro de una arca de hierro” (41). Neither covetous Conquistador nor Indian hoarder, Urmeneta is a model capitalist of “la mas ilimitada jenerosidad” who extracts the buried treasures from the desert, and sets them into circulation (38). As Vicuña Mackenna describes in *El libro de la plata*: “El minero del norte es la mas progresista de todas las ramificaciones de la familia chilena. [...] Allí con su dinero se ha hecho fundaciones de beneficencia, se ha abierto escuelas, se ha ofrecido jenerosas suscripciones a la filantropía i a la patria” (236). Imagined as a philanthropist, the Miner-Entrepreneur may become as rich as he wants, for this wealth will always serve the common good.⁶⁴

The Chilean Miner, the *roto*, and the worker

A second emblematic Miner-Entrepreneur is José Santos Ossa, an “infatigable explorador” to whom *El libro de la plata* is dedicated (321). The tale of Ossa’s discovery of nitrates is narrated in *Historia de la campaña de Tarapacá*, one of Vicuña Mackenna’s histories of the War of the Pacific. Here again, the Legend of the Miner-Entrepreneur highlights the material lack and suffering that the fortune hunter endures in his quest for minerals. Vicuña Mackenna describes how Ossa wanders the Atacama, suffering from the heat and thirst. By the time Ossa discovers nitrates, his animals have already died of thirst. Ossa makes his way to the closest town “desnudo, demacrado i hambriento” (99).

As Vicuña Mackenna portrays the Miner-Entrepreneur enduring the harsh elements while traversing the desert, his narratives offer echoes of other accounts that Vicuña Mackenna published: the letters of soldiers who crossed the Atacama en route to battle in

⁶⁴ The image of capitalist as benefactor will reappear in the fiction of Clorinda Matto de Turner, which I discuss in chapter three.

the War of the Pacific. In *Álbum de la Gloria de Chile*, Vicuña Mackenna published a collection of soldiers' letters in which, as Carmen McEvoy highlights, narratives of desert crossing figure prominently. In these letters, the soldiers describe the physical hardships they endured from the wind, dust, disorientation, and thirst on these long marches through the desert. McEvoy describes how the journey is described as a rite of passage, a message which was reinforced by the head of the Chilean armed forces, Manuel Baquedano, who triumphantly declared just prior to the Chilean occupation of Lima that the experience of desert crossing "lo habían enseñado [al soldado chileno] a vencer" (quoted in ch. 4). In this way, suffering is framed as a test that proves the valor and strength of the Chilean soldier who is able to survive the arduous trek through the desert. I propose, therefore, that the descriptions of the Miner-Entrepreneur confronting the elements of the desert in his quest for metals establish an implicit analogy between the soldier and the Miner as men who suffer for the good of the nation.

This comparison between Miner and soldier is expanded in a quite different way in a passage in *El libro de la plata*, in which Vicuña Mackenna describes how miners are some of the fiercest soldiers in the Chilean army:

Luchador ardiente i tenaz contra todas las formidables resistencias de la naturaleza, el minero contempla a su adversario humano solo como una grieta blanda en la labor i lo acomete sin esfuerzo i sin jactancia, siendo igual para él la individualidad, el grupo, la cuadrilla i el batallón, porque el panizo es el mismo [...] Por lo mismo, el minero es peleador como el indio i pependenciero como el roto (226).

In this image of a miner mindlessly slaughtering enemy soldiers as if they were no different than the blank face of a sheet of ore, we are presented with a drastically different type of miner than we have seen in any of the Legends of the Chilean Miner. Neither humble, clever, nor a prophetic dreamer, in this passage Vicuña Mackenna refers—as he rarely does

in his mining trilogy—to the men who labor in the mines. These miners, for whom no legends are told, represent a force of brute strength. Notably, Vicuña Mackenna describes these men as being like *rotos*, not identical to them. And yet, he offers no means through which to differentiate these two types. Indeed, Vicuña Mackenna includes key defining traits of the *roto* in his description of the “minero chileno”: his inherent propensity towards travel, “el minero chileno es esencialmente migratorio” (215), his Mapuche ancestry, “De todas las castas i derivaciones de la conquista, la que mas se asemeja al araucano primitivo i no domado, es el minero” (218), his violent tendencies “El minero, como todas las naturalezas concentradas, suele ser vengativo, i de aquí el corvo, o mas bien la cuchilla maulina rebajada, su fiel compañera” (221-222), and of course, his virility, “La vida del minero es esencialmente masculina, *vida macha*, como la llamaba espiritualmente Jotabeche” (225). *El libro de la plata* even quotes extensively from Juan Rafael Allende’s famous poem “El roto chileno,” which identifies *rotos* as miners, without ever commenting on the content of the poem. Instead Vicuña Mackenna uses the text as evidence that miners are poets. In this way, the text (albeit quite ambiguously) identifies the writer, rather than the *roto* as the embodiment of the Chilean Miner. I propose, therefore, that this distinction between the two types—*roto* and miner—that Vicuña Mackenna’s texts unstably seek to maintain, exists so that the labor achieved by these miners who do the physical work of mining might be symbolically absorbed by the figure of the Chilean Miner without simultaneously including the *roto* within this icon. In the end, it is a distinction that remains troubling throughout the trilogy it seeks to celebrate the hard work of the Chilean Miner without celebrating the actual laborers of the mines.

The ultimately irreconcilable tension between the Chilean Miner and the miner who labors is perhaps most visible in Vicuña Mackenna's discussion of the practice of *cangalla*, that is, the theft of ore by workers in the mines. Vicuña Mackenna presents this discussion in a playful tone, casting the miner as crafty *pícaro*, as he describes "algunos de los mil arbitrios con que los cangalleros de la plata barra se ingeniaban para sustraerla a sus dueños" (229) in the silver mine of Chañarcillo. First, he explains they would smuggle silver in their belts. Once the overseers became aware of the trick and prohibited the belts, the workers began removing the center from their daily rations of bread before entering the mines to hide the silver within. Finally, Vicuña Mackenna describes: "Derrotados por la suspicacia de sus patrones en todos estos ardides, inventaron al fin el bárbaro de depositar la plata barra en sus propias entrañas, con dolores i peligros que les causaban no pocas veces la muerte" (230). Such acts, Vicuña Mackenna explains are linked to "la doctrina comunista que rige entre los mineros" according to which "el metal 'lo da el cerro' i que el cerro, como todo lo que forma el territorio, es mas o menos propiedad común del chileno" (228-232). The lengths to which miners have to go, however, to gain possession of the metal they extract through their labor, replacing their food with the metal and finally ingesting it into their bodies at risk of death, graphically illustrates that the mine is not common Chilean property, that despite the mythology of the Chilean Miner which seeks to imagine a seamless union of the interests of the mining industry with the interests of all Chileans, that the Chilean Miner in whose name the War of the Pacific was fought and won does not include the miners of many nationalities who extracted fertilizer from the Atacama.

Chapter 3: Romancing Capital Investment: The Novels of Clorinda Matto de Turner

Un día apareció en el mar una riqueza inagotable. Todos creyeron que ella bastaría á llenar la vorágine política, y la esperiencia ha sido cruel con la Nacion. Tan cruda decepcion ha hecho caer la venda del pueblo, y hoy busca en sus propias fuerzas, en la industria, la posesión de una existencia real y positiva... estrayendo de la tierra las riquezas que deben asegurar su porvenir (4).

--Chabot [pseud.]. "El Peru en 1871." *El Correo del Peru*. No. 1. 1872.

Clorinda Matto de Turner's novel *Índole* (1891) opens with an image of accounting books strewn about on the table of a rural businessman floundering in debt: "Sobre el escritorio de caoba estaban revueltos multitud de manuscritos, hechos con tinta de carmín y anotados en todas direcciones con lápiz azul. Al alcance del brazo, abiertos medio á medio, un LIBRO MAYOR, un MEMORANDUM DE CAJA y un COPIADOR DE FACTURAS" (1).⁶⁵ Faced with impending bankruptcy, the man sits at his desk with a revolver, contemplating suicide. Although the novel is silent on the details of how Antonio López accrued this forty-two thousand *soles* debt, we are told it is likely related to his involvement in the export of cascarilla bark as well as the import of sundry goods.⁶⁶

With this opening scene, Clorinda Matto de Turner identifies debt as a central preoccupation of the novel *Índole*. In *Aves sin nido* (1889) and *Herencia* (1893), Matto replays this situation in which overwhelming debt drives a man to the brink of suicide. Each novel presents a debtor from a different sector of society. *Índole* portrays a rural import-export dealer in the late 1850s. In *Aves sin nido*, the debtor is an indigenous, alpaca-

⁶⁵ Portions of this chapter will be published in "Spinning Wool into Silver: Romancing Investment and the Wool Export Boom in *Aves sin nido*." *Siglo diecinueve (Literatura hispánica)*. 21 (2015): 99-122.

⁶⁶ Cascarilla was an important extractive industry of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The bark was stripped from cascarilla trees and exported for use in the production of quinine. It is possible, although unclear, that Antonio's debts may be linked to mining investments, because he repays his debts to the commercial house under an account labeled "Minas" (38).

herding peasant caught up in the wool export boom of the 1860-70s, and, in *Herencia*, an “aristocratic” but unemployed customs agent of 1880s Lima. These individual debt crises present the precarity of livelihood at different nodes of the global economy as the guano boom went bust.

In this chapter, I propose to read Clorinda Matto de Turner’s novels, *Aves sin nido*, *Índole*, and *Herencia*, as a trilogy that responds to Peru’s economic crisis in the aftermath of the guano era. Matto’s novels, I argue, dramatize the notion that the wealth of the guano boom had been essentially an illusion, what was called “fictitious prosperity.”⁶⁷ In particular, this chapter calls attention to a dominant plotline within *Índole*, which to date has been entirely overlooked by literary scholars—the story of an indebted businessman who becomes a counterfeiter. An analysis of this plotline reveals the economic anxieties that pervade *Índole* and the trilogy as a whole, especially in relation to debt and illusory wealth. For this reason, this chapter repositions the prioritization of the novels within Matto’s trilogy such that *Índole* becomes the dominant text, rather than *Aves sin nido*.

Of course, Matto was not the only author to be concerned with debt at the end of the nineteenth century. Latin American, U.S., and European *fin de siglo* fictions abound with debtors, particularly in the aftermath of the global financial crises of 1876 and 1890.⁶⁸ In contrast to the pessimism of other works of the time, however, Matto’s novels repeatedly

⁶⁷ Copello and Petriconi

⁶⁸ Within Peru, Luis Benjamín Cisneros’s novel *Julia* (1861), which I discuss in chapter four, famously portrays the conspicuous consumption of Lima’s indebted elites as “un engaño mútuo permanente,” achieved through excessive use of credit (243). Likewise, as we saw in chapter one, Gorriti’s protagonist of “El chifle del indio” flees to the highlands to escape his creditors in Lima, where he had lived a life of material excess among the capital’s “millonarios sin dinero...ricos a crédito” (404). And Mercedes Cabello de Carbonera’s scandalous *Blanca Sol* (1889) narrates the female protagonist’s downfall from haughty millionaire to penurious sex worker who pawns her possessions.

present miraculous resolutions to characters' financial problems through the intervention of an external source of wealth. Whether in the form of a dowry, charity, or lottery winnings, I argue that these *deus ex machina* solutions allegorically invoke the figure of British and U.S. capital investment. Therefore, I propose to read Matto's novels as a trilogy of "romances of capital investment," which seek to rekindle liberal faith in the promise of natural resource extraction— this time, made possible by foreign direct investment—to transform Peru into an ideal, modern nation.

A Subterranean Narrative Vein

Set during the late 1850s, *Índole* brings its readers back to the guano era and uncovers a society riven with false appearances. The novel is structured by two main plotlines that offer parallel accounts of deception.⁶⁹ In the first scenario, the businessman Antonio López is faced with spiraling debts and turns to his friend, Valentín Cienfuegos, for help. Valentín is only too willing, and offers to pay Antonio's debts for him if he signs onto a scheme that, Valentín promises, will yield spectacular profits. Only at the end of the novel do we learn that the business consists in minting counterfeit coins, literally making money—or at least objects with the appearance of money—without having to work for it. Antonio agrees, setting in motion the second melodramatic plotline of the novel. Sensing that something is amiss, Antonio's wife Eulalia seeks the consultation of her confessor, Isidro Peñas, against the wishes of her husband. Isidro Peñas, however, is not the honest man of faith he appears to be. Taking advantage of Eulalia's emotional vulnerability for his sexual pleasure, he sets out to seduce her.

⁶⁹ For a discussion of a similar plot structure in the British novel *The Prime Minister* (1876), which is also features guano investments, see Jaffe.

With its scandalous release in 1891, *Índole* gained notoriety for its lurid depiction of a priest's sexual desires for a married woman. As the subject matter of *Índole* has become less shocking over time, however, general interest in the novel has waned, leading Cornejo Polar to assert: "*Índole* perdió vigencia conforme el problema religioso se diluyó en la conciencia nacional" (75). Today, the novel is frequently considered to be an inferior prequel to *Aves sin nido* that lacks the *indigenista* commitment of its predecessor, a naturalist rehash of Narciso Aréstegui's *El Padre Horán*, or a poorly-crafted literary enunciation of Manuel González Prada's anticlerical ideology.⁷⁰

To date, critics have completely overlooked the fact that *Índole* is a novel about debt and counterfeiting. Despite the primacy that Matto gives to debt as the central problem that spurs the events of the entire novel, the criticism that exists on *Índole* has focused instead on the anticlerical plot of sexual seduction, with a secondary focus on the novel's portrayal of indigenous characters and *sierra* culture. If even mentioned, counterfeiting appears only in the form of background plot summary, as if it were a mere McGuffin, with no real significance. Far from this, however, the debt and counterfeiting plot in *Índole* is the first to be introduced and the last to be resolved within the novel. Having opened with the scene of Antonio's accounting books, the novel comes to a close when Antonio identifies a way to repay his debts that is not based on counterfeiting. I therefore propose to read the sexual adultery plot within *Índole* as a counterpart of the principal plot about the adulteration of money. As both plotlines explore concerns with false representations and corrupted value,

⁷⁰ See, for example Efraín Kristal's *The Andes Viewed From the City* and Antonio Cornejo Polar's *Clorinda Matto de Turner, Novelista*. In *Lágrimas andinas*, Peluffo offers an important corrective to such interpretations by demonstrating the ways in which Matto's novel rewrites the (often misogynistic) anticlerical narratives of Aréstegui, Palma, and González Prada, offering a vision of productive female agency rather than passivity or guilt.

the narrative of sexual seduction by a depraved priest offers the novel a means through which to convey abstract concerns linked to the collapse of the guano economy in a more immediate, tangible manner.

The critical absence of scholarship that considers the role of economic concerns within *Índole* may stem from the novel's setting in the rural Andes, a space that has too often been characterized by critics and novelists alike as existing outside of and separate from the global economic flows that characterize "modernity."⁷¹ As I discuss later in this chapter, in *Aves sin nido*, Matto draws strategically on this discursive construction of the Andes as backwards and disconnected from capitalism to advocate for increased mining investment in the region. At the same time, however, the plots of both *Índole* and *Aves sin nido* are explicitly shaped by the export economies of *cascarilla* bark, wool, and silver, and—I argue—allegorically address of post-guano economic concerns. What is more, the non-urban settings of these novels make *Aves sin nido* and *Índole* particularly interesting cases to study, precisely because the rural Andes is not the typical setting for novels about economic crisis.

In *Clorinda Matto de Turner, novelista* (1992), Cornejo Polar criticizes what he characterizes as *Índole*'s "manifiesto descuido" of economic detail (79).⁷² It is true that the novel leaves much unsaid, including the manner in which Antonio accrued an overwhelming debt. Nor is the activity of counterfeiting named until the final pages of the novel. However, far from treating financial concerns with careless inattention, *Índole*

⁷¹ For example, Cornejo Polar describes the *indigenista* novel as "el signo de una modernidad que se hunde, cada vez con distintos resultados, en un mundo arcaico" (*Escribir* 197).

⁷² Cornejo Polar launches the same criticism against *Aves sin nido*, which I will address later in this chapter.

shrouds such matters in deliberate mystery, withholding information from the reader to cultivate the suspense that drives the plot. In marked contrast to the narrative silence around Valentín and Antonio's illegal business, the novel's recounts Eulalia's relationship with her confessor in sensuous detail. Each meeting in the confessional, the impassioned handholding, even when the priest attempts to rape Eulalia, all of this is made visible to the reader. Eulalia and the priest openly discuss adultery, which the priest dismisses as "un accidente sin importancia en la vida humana" (145). The sexual plot, it seems, requires no insinuation or mystery.

Counterfeiting on the other hand, remains unnamed for most of the novel, even as the sinister Document #3 appears at key moments, propelling narrative action forward. Indeed, the adulteration of money, rather than sexual adultery, becomes *Índole's* truly unspeakable crime. The novel presents a series of pivotal scenes in which we observe first Antonio, then the priest, and finally Eulalia reading a document about Valentín's illicit business plan. The narrator describes the surprise, horror, or pleasure on the characters' faces, but does not permit the reader direct access to what is referred to as "el pliego signado número tres, con lápiz rojo" (135). For example, when Valentín introduces the scheme to Antonio, he does not speak of it out loud, but instead hands over a stack of documents (including #3), which contain the details of "una sociedad cuyas bases puedes ver en estos pliegos" (25). The very existence of such paperwork deserves attention for the way it mimics the documents that would exist for legitimate commercial endeavors. Why would Valentín create an official paper trail to formalize the creation of a clandestine business operation? In a novel preoccupied with false appearances, Document #3 stands as an intriguing example of a *faithful* representation of reality, the reality that Valentín and

Antonio are engaged in fraud. Although the reader never has direct access to the language of this document, the reactions of the characters that read it are sufficient evidence of its value.⁷³ Instead of words, then, the novel offers a series of affective corporeal responses that mark the severity of the men's unnamed crime represented in the document.⁷⁴

The material referent of the illegal operations detailed in Document #3, the counterfeiting operation itself, appears in a single scene in the novel. Antonio is portrayed descending into an underground counterfeiting lab, which the narrator portrays as a hellish space of darkness:

agarraba en la mano izquierda una lámpara de minero y en la diestra una enorme barra de platina, y entrando á una claraboya, abierta en la tierra, comenzó á bajar unos escalones improvisados con troncos y adobes [...] la luz de la lámpara iluminó mortecínamente el tétrico recinto, oscuro como boca de lobo, dejando ver diversas herramientas en un taller de herrero y grabador á la vez (121).

The space offers an eerie simulacrum of a mine, barely illuminated by the flickering flame of a miner's lamp. However, there is one striking difference: instead of mineral ores that could be formed into coins of pure silver, this underground cavern contains the tools of a counterfeiter. The objects brought up and out of the lair will appear to be made of precious metal, but such appearances will be deceiving. Rather than a source of pure value, this underground space is the origin of fraud. The treasure of the Andes has become counterfeit.

Fictitious Prosperity

⁷³ For example, when the priest discovers Document #3, and decides to steal it, he "repasó la escritura maquinalmente, como suele hacerse en casos semejantes; pero cuando llegó a la conclusión saltó en su asiento, como herido por un rayo, paseó en su semblante una sonrisa satánica, y volvió a leer el contenido con suma atención" (135). At the novel's climax, Peñas attempts to blackmail Eulalia with the document, in an attempt to force her to have sex with him. As Eulalia reads, she trembles, and nearly faints (151).

⁷⁴ For an excellent discussion of sentiment and affect in Matto's fiction, see Peluffo.

A reading of *Índole* that positions the counterfeiting plot as a subterranean double of the sexual plot illuminates the novel's preoccupation with questions of deceptive appearances in ways that extend beyond its well-noted critique of the Church. Throughout, *Índole* establishes an analogy between religious and economic realms; as the priest is revealed to be a scoundrel robed in religious garments, so Antonio's coins—although bearing the imprint and gilt of legitimacy—are made of worthless, base metal. Jean-Joseph Goux identifies a similar logic at work in André Gide's novel, *The Counterfeiters* (1925), in which "the 'counterfeiting' in the title reaches beyond monetary fraudulence to broach the question of the ground upon which values and meaning are based," including the value systems of religion, economy, paternity, language, and the law (3). Importantly, Goux posits the existence of a deep interrelationship between monetary crisis and literary expressions of "a crisis of representation" through tropes such as counterfeiting and unfaithful religious leaders (11). In a similar fashion, *Índole* dramatize a crisis of faith in the basic institutions of society as it seeks to find a way to distinguish between real and apparent value. As the novel looks back to the 1850s, taking account of the guano era, it suggests that the abundance of the past may have been only an illusion, a glittering surface too soon revealed as counterfeit.

The final decade of the guano era had been particularly spectacular. In the 1860s, as guano exports reached around \$20 million per year, the centrality of guano to the Peruvian economy rose precipitously. While guano revenues only comprised five percent of the national budget in 1846-1847, it reached seventy-five percent of the budget by 1861-1866 and peaked at eighty percent of the budget between 1869-1875 (Bonilla 128-129). Moreover, despite the fact that about sixty percent of guano revenues were accrued by the

Peruvian state, government spending consistently outstripped available funds. To meet its ever-growing budgetary needs, the state turned to the guano merchants-turned-bankers who facilitated loans from British capital markets. Banking flourished in this period of speculative wealth and free-flowing credit.

This guano debt-based economic model reached what Contreras has called “su máxima expresión” in the 1869 Dreyfus Contract, when Peru turned over monopoly control of guano exports to a French commercial house (82). This deal offered Peru even greater access to foreign credit. Thus, Peru plunged headlong into an elaborate state-sponsored project of railroad construction, intended to stimulate economic development in the Peruvian Andes and thereby reduce dependence on guano. Dreyfus served as the key point of contact between Peru and European finance, facilitating massive foreign loans backed by the promise of future guano exports, even as guano reserves began to run dry. Ultimately, Peru’s external debt rose to 35 million pounds sterling, making Peru one of the most indebted nations on the London bond markets (McEvoy 269). By 1872, Peru’s guano revenues went almost exclusively towards debt payments.

When financial panic spread through Europe in 1873, followed by a string of unseasonably cold winters, agricultural demand for guano collapsed.⁷⁵ Unable to meet its payments on its spiraling foreign debt, the Peruvian government declared bankruptcy and went into default in 1876. Peru’s defeat in the War of the Pacific compounded such economic distress. Chile annexed the nitrate-rich Atacama Desert, dashing Peruvian officials’ hopes that nitrates would replace guano as Peru’s next fertilizer export commodity. In the aftermath of the war, bankruptcy spread among individual Peruvians,

⁷⁵ See Cushman

and it was estimated that the number of people occupying the upper and middle classes dropped from more than 33,000 to fewer than 4,000 people (Flindell Klarén 192).

Although concerns about the potentially ephemeral or illusory nature of guano prosperity had pervaded elite writings since the 1860s, it was as this crisis shook Peru that essayists Juan Copello and Luis Petriconi coined the lasting phrase through which to characterize the guano boom: “prosperidad ficticia.”⁷⁶ To this day, the guano era is remembered as a time of “fictitious prosperity.”⁷⁷ Copello and Petriconi’s essay, *Estudios sobre la independencia económica del Peru* (1876), presents a scathing critique of Peru’s deindustrialization and dependence on guano to meet rising import demand. However, I believe that the enduring power of the expression “fictitious prosperity,” speaks to the term’s poetic and emotional appeal, the way it condenses the complex history of the guano era into a deep sense of indignation and disillusionment.

Índole’s portrayal of the guano era centers on a couple whose apparent economic wellbeing conceals the realities of their unpayable debts. Dressed in stylish imported attire with a house filled with elegant furniture, Antonio and Eulalia López hold the status of a principal family within the Andean town of Rosalina. They host a picturesque wedding for a local couple with an abundance of typical food, drink, and music. So little do economic troubles affect their lifestyle that not even Eulalia is aware of Antonio’s debts until the end of the novel. Antonio’s decision to become a counterfeiter is prompted by his inability to tell his wife about the fictitious nature of their lifestyle and “arrancarle el velo de las ilusiones para obligarla á vestir el sudario de la realidad!” (6). Thus, we see Antonio’s

⁷⁶ See for example Pardo, Cisneros, Rivero, Lissón

⁷⁷ For example, Peruvian historian José Basadre famously uses the phrase “la prosperidad falaz” to characterize the guano era.

motivation to prolong his charade of fictitious prosperity, to continue to enjoy the pleasures of illusions rather than face the reality. The available solution, therefore, is to sign onto Valentín's illegal scheme and produce counterfeit money, to defer the encounter with reality by multiplying the layers of fictitiousness.

In contrast to Antonio, Valentín's interest in the counterfeiting business stems not from lack, but instead from the fantasy of the life this counterfeit wealth can provide him. He tells Antonio of his ambition to live in Lima, a city he describes as "esa llama de placer en cuyo torno revolotean las mariposas de la dicha, donde dicen que hay mujeres como sirenas, cocheros como caballeros, y caballeros como cocheros [...] donde se reunen los Congresos y se reparten los empleos de la Nación; donde existen Clubs y Lógias ¡cáspita! que sé yo qué más" (36-37). In both structure and content, Valentín's fantasy echoes the enunciation of similar dreams in Gorriti's "El chifle del indio," among other texts, in which the idea that one is about to become spectacularly rich sets off a spiral of fantastic visions of city life.⁷⁸ In each case, the texts pathologize such luxury-induced reveries as corrupting incursions of irrational desires that lead daydreamers astray from productive economic investments, such as agriculture.

The contrast between wholesome economic activities and the detrimental effects of greed is captured in the narrator's description of Valentín's picturesque agricultural estate:

la hacienda *Palomares*, de gran nombramiento en todo el departamento de *Marañón*; primero, porque produce maíz blanco de un tamaño sorprendente, tanto que disfruta de la gollería de haber obtenido medalla de oro en varias exposiciones extranjeras; segundo, porque sus frutillas son de notoria estimación por sabor, color y tamaño; y tercero porque se dice que Pumacahua pernoctó allí la última noche de sus correrías patrióticas y dejó

⁷⁸ Here we see a version of the export reverie, but on an individual scale. This is no civic vision, just the fantasy of excessive individual wealth.

enterrado un grueso capital en onzas, tesoro que, hasta hoy, es el comegón de multitud de gentes dadas a buscar lo que no han guardado (7).

The passage locates two potential sources of wealth on the grounds of Valentín's hacienda. On the one hand, the estate's exuberant agricultural fertility produces such surprisingly large *choclo* and strawberries as to attract international acclaim, perhaps signaling potential export markets. On the other hand, there are rumors that the property may contain buried treasure dating to the 1814 Cuzco Rebellion against the Spanish Crown. Although this rumor receives no further elaboration in the novel, Pumacahua's treasure, whether or not it exists, is signaled here as "el comegón de multitud de gentes dadas a buscar lo que no han guardado," a corrosive obsession for those who seek easy money without having to work for it. Like the Spaniards of the precious metal melodramas, Valentín stands in the novel as the epitome of this lust for enrichment without honest work. Rather than devote his time and energies to developing the impressive agricultural production on his hacienda, Valentín schemes up a counterfeiting plan.⁷⁹

To further illuminate the particular theorization of "fictitious prosperity" that is presented in Matto de Turner's *Índole*, it is useful to turn directly to Copello and Petriconi's essay. *Estudios sobre la independencia económica* provides an extensive treatment of the concept of "fictitious prosperity," offering a compilation of possibilities for what it means to define guano wealth as essentially based in fiction. In addition, it presents a model for how Peru might achieve prosperity that is (the writers hope) rooted in the production of real value. In the essay, Copello and Petriconi lay out their assessment of the Peruvian economic

⁷⁹ As we will see, however, Matto's trilogy is more interested in the development of mining rather than export agriculture. The picturesque agriculture of the Peruvian highlands appears in Matto's work as ultimately of greater value as a form of cultural capital (through its representation in literature) than as a potential export sector.

situation in stark terms: “tenemos la íntima convicción, que si bien el guano nos ha proporcionado algunos goces de la civilización y del lujo, en el fondo nos ha hecho mal, y nos ha causado una prosperidad ficticia” (15). Despite the flood of imported goods—including “ropa hecha, muebles, zapatos, artefactos de toda clase de lino, de cáñamo, de fierro, papel, tintas, perfumerías, conservas, licores, vinos, cerveza, libros, cigarros, juguetes, relojes, máquinas, coches”—despite all of these external representations of wealth, the economy of guano era Peru was essentially “artificial y postizo” (14-17). Here, we see urban luxury consumption, like that of Valentín’s fantasies of Lima as a “llama de placer,” as the defining symbol of the guano economy. Wrapped up in the ephemeral pleasures of luxury, society has consumed beyond its means in the present, with no long-term plan for the future.

One reason that the guano boom produced “fictitious prosperity,” Copello and Petriconi explain, is that guano is a resource is an exhaustible resource. Therefore it can only produce ephemeral wealth: “cada tonelada de guano que se exporta, se pierde para siempre y no puede reemplazarse, como sucede con otros productos de la industria agrícola, minera y manufacturera” (17). When the guano is exported, only rocky islands remain, bereft of economic potential. The writers call for Peru to invest in alternate sectors of the economy—such as mining, agriculture, and manufacturing—which they believe will produce more renewable sources of wealth. Similar to what we saw in chapter one, mining here is imagined as the inverse of guano; the unseen, potentially infinite minerals of the Andes offer a counterpoint to the visibly depleting guano. At one point Copello and Petriconi do qualify this statement by noting that mining is not *as* renewable as agriculture and industry (30). Nevertheless, the notion that mining produces durable wealth is central

to the essay's proposal that the first step in Peru's economic recovery should be the expansion of mineral extraction (69).⁸⁰ While the islands of guano off the coast offered a temporary, "postizo" injection of wealth into the Peruvian economy, true and durable wealth would come by unearthing the minerals "de un valor inestimable" within the heart of the Andes (34, 29).

However important the material exhaustibility of guano, it does not in itself sufficiently account for the designation of guano prosperity as fictitious. It does not explain how guano had produced appearances that misrepresented the reality of Peru's economic situation. The second factor that Copello and Petriconi identify is the centrality of credit to the guano economy. The essayists criticize the Peruvian government's dependence on domestic and foreign loans, writing "*á nada sirven los empréstitos sino á producir el pan de hoy y el hambre de mañana; y solo han servido para darnos una prosperidad ficticia, y agotar nuestro crédito y nuestros recursos fiscales*" (8). Guano-era prosperity is fictitious in this second element of the definition because it is based on borrowed money. This reliance on loans resulted in a disjunction between the material representations of wealth within Peru, "el pan de hoy," and the ever-increasing levels of government indebtedness, "el hambre de mañana."

In the case of Peru, government debt was backed by the promise of repayment with future guano revenues. As Hunt describes, these loans to the government functioned

⁸⁰ "[L]a riqueza minera es mas efímera é inconsistente que la riqueza inherente á la agricultura y á las artes" (30). Nevertheless, they write that investment in "los productos minerales" should come first, followed by agriculture and wool because such sectors "no solo prometen un seguro provecho á los industriales que tengan valor de acometerlas, sino que en pocos años llevarian el deseado equilibrio económico, y resolverian el problema de la Independencia Económica del Perú" (69). Manufacturing, they propose, should come after the development of the above listed sectors of the economy.

essentially as “devices for spending guano income before it was earned” (273), particularly on infrastructure projects, bureaucracy, and the military.⁸¹ The deals brokered between the Peruvian government and commercial houses (first British in the 1850s, then Peruvian in the 1860s, and finally French in 1869-1873) granted contracts to extract and export guano. In order to acquire a contract to exploit guano, which was property of the Peruvian government, a commercial house needed to extend a cash advance to the Peruvian government, which could be recouped with interest from part of the guano revenues. As a result, holders of guano concessions acted as intermediaries between the Peruvian government and British capital markets. However, the borrowing did not end there. In the 1860s, Peruvian guano elites founded the country’s first banks, which extended additional loans to the government, as well as businesses, coastal plantations, and individuals. Substantial speculative profits were reaped in this financial boom, accompanied by the ever-growing insolvency of the Peruvian state.⁸² The consequences of this coexistence of apparent prosperity and the rising debt came into stark relief when the depletion of guano deposits and the collapse of foreign demand for guano combined. It then became clear that the imagined future extractive/productive activities required to pay off Peru’s 35 million pound debt had not materialized, and simply were not going to. Copello and Petriconi describe:

Está pues demostrado que el guano ha formado el equilibrio económico y aun la prosperidad comercial de estos últimos años, pero que este equilibrio era falso y artificial [...] nadie se apercibía del abismo en que estábamos. Pero una vez agotado el crédito, agotada la hipoteca del guano, aplicados los productos del guano á pagar los intereses y la deuda externa; ya ha caído ó ha debido caer la venda de nuestros ojos [...] Esa decepcion, esa dura lección de la experiencia obliga a los hombres pensadores á buscar en otra parte que no

⁸¹ See Cushman 54-58.

⁸² See Bonilla 34-60, Flindell Klarén 170-171, and Contreras and Cueto 137-138.

es el guano el modo de salvar nuestra situación económica, y equilibrar el comercio de consumacion hoy paralizado (16-18).

The economic liquidity of the 1850s though early 1870s, created by guano-backed loans, is rejected in retrospect as having created a façade of economic prosperity. As the loans piled up and guano became depleted, it became increasingly evident that the promise of future guano exports that were necessary to repay such loans could never be fulfilled.

Currency's Fictions

Antonio and Valentín's counterfeit coins offer a material referent for the notion of fictitious prosperity. As long as the coins are successfully passed off as real, then they can be exchanged for objects priced at the value printed on the face of the coins. Yet, at the same time, they are a risky source of wealth, because as soon as the coins are discovered to be counterfeit, their value will be immediately reduced to zero. In this way, the presence of the coins within *Índole* gives expression to concerns about the counterfeit nature of an economy sustained through loans backed by nonexistent guano.

It makes sense that concerns about the fictitious nature of the guano economy would be expressed through the figure of counterfeit coins, because the economic instability of the guano era was directly experienced through the shifting, and even evaporating, value of currency. As a result, in addition to the broader economic concerns I have discussed thus far, the figure of counterfeiting also expresses specific anxieties about the value of money itself. For, as counterfeit coins circulate their fictitious representations of value, they call attention to the essential structural fictions within the money form itself, which become augmented by the rise of paper money, and—even more—by unconvertible paper money.

In the nineteenth century, Peru experienced a series of currency transformations and overlapping monetary regimes, including the introduction of paper money. Moreover, the latter part of the century was marked by skyrocketing inflation and currency devaluation, in which Peruvians watched their money fall to half, and then one-eighth of its guano-era value. In this context, the capacity of different forms of money to embody or represent economic value was repeatedly called into question. In *Genres of the Credit Economy*, Mary Poovey notes that in periods of economic upheaval in eighteenth century Britain, the representative function of currency as a signifier of economic value becomes denaturalized and experienced as “problematic” (6). In nineteenth-century, Peru, however, conceptualization of money as problematic was the norm, rather than the exception. This is evident in the constant production of essays and literary texts concerned with money in its various forms. For example, periodicals such as *La Revista de Lima* (1860-1862) and *El Correo del Perú* (1874-1874) regularly published essays and short stories discussing the definition of value and concerns about the quality of Peruvian currency. For example, J.V. Camacho’s “Un banquero como hay pocos,” published in *La Revista de Lima* (1861) features a banker who steals his bank’s money and replaces himself with a mannequin so that no one notices. Spanish satirist Luis Rivera’s “El hombre del duro” (1866), published in *El Correo del Perú* (1871), portrays a future moment in which only one coin remains, and it is discovered to be counterfeit. Finally, Clemente Palma’s “La última rubia” (1904) imagines a world in which all gold has vanished, and the only way to create more is through an alchemic process that requires blonde hair. Unfortunately, the protagonist discovers that “la última rubia” is also counterfeit; naturally dark-haired, she had dyed her hair blonde.⁸³

⁸³ Benn Michaels identifies similar panicked discourses about money, and especially fears

It could seem that the danger posed by the counterfeit coin is that the value inscribed on its face is not equivalent to the value of the metal of which the coin is made. However, the same is true of paper money, which always represents a value far greater than the value of the paper itself. Even coins, which have the potential to contain precious metal of equal value to the quantity stamped on the face, are subject to becoming worn down in circulation (or intentionally clipped and abraded). In Peru, such abraded coins—known as *astillas* or *arañas*—formed a significant component of the money supply. In addition, Bolivian coins, which contained twenty-five percent lower precious metal content, circulated as equivalent to Peruvian *soles*, particularly in rural regions.⁸⁴ As a result, the denomination of a coin as a *sol* did not provide a consistently faithful representation of its precious metal content. The disjunction between face and intrinsic value, therefore, is not a feature specific to counterfeit coins, but rather, an aspect of money itself.

Marx explains the disjunction between monetary signifier (bill or coin) and its material referent (a specific weight of precious metals) in terms of a tension between money's dual function as a measure of value and a means of circulation. As a measure of value, money serves as the standard against which the value of commodities is measured. That is, x commodity is equivalent to y number of ounces of silver or gold. In this function, what is important is that the substance, gold or silver, is uniform and does not degrade

of the impending disappearance of gold, in U.S. discourse and literature of the turn of the twentieth century (146-147).

⁸⁴ See Contreras. *La economía pública en el Perú* pp. 131-132. In "Apuntes económicos con referencia a la situación actual," published in *La Revista de Lima* (1861), Carlos Tedesco writes that Bolivian currency was particularly easy to counterfeit: "Hablamos de la falsificación [...] Por desgracia, no solo la baja ley de la moneda boliviana ha contribuido mucho al desarrollo de esa *industria*, sino también su cuño tan tosco como vulgar y digno del siglo de los Incas, que la hace tan fácil y cómoda imitación" (253)

over time. As currency, however, money is serving as a means of circulation. Its purpose is to facilitate economic transactions across space and time, lending greater convenience and efficiency to a system than could be achieved through barter. As such, it is not necessary that the physical matter of gold or silver actually be present.⁸⁵ Perhaps, then, the danger posed by the counterfeit coin could be that it is a floating signifier of value whose referent, the ingots of gold or silver that should lie somewhere in a vault, does not exist. However, even in a monetary system where paper money can be theoretically exchanged for hard currency, in practice, banks always print paper money in excess of the reserves of precious metals that exist in their vaults, in order to facilitate economic transactions. The specter of the run on the bank whose coffers are empty offers a stark visualization of this phenomenon.

The difference between counterfeit and real money, therefore, resides solely in the question of authority, of whether the issuing mint is backed by an institution officially declared to be legitimate. The line between legitimate and counterfeit money is therefore, precariously delicate, particularly in contexts when public confidence in official institutions is eroding. In the case of guano-era Peru, bank emissions of paper money came as a response to the problem of bullion drain. At this time, international commerce continued to rely on payment in precious metal such as Peruvian silver *soles* and British sterling pounds. Therefore, in order to import the European manufactured goods that Peruvian elites so desired, Peru became a net exporter of hard currency. The paper money emitted by the newly established banks compensated for the resulting scarcity of silver coinage. The value

⁸⁵ Marx explains, “the circulation of money itself splits the nominal content of coins away from their real content, dividing their metallic existence from their functional existence, this fact implies the latent possibility of replacing metallic money with tokens made of the same or other material, i.e. symbols which would perform the function of coins” (223).

of these bank bills were sustained by the general belief that they could be exchanged for the quantity of silver that they represented. During the boom times of the 1860s, these unregulated emissions of paper currency provoked debates among intellectuals, but nevertheless functioned to sustain the brisk commercial exchanges of the era.⁸⁶ However, by the early 1870s, as guano revenues were channeled directly to debt payments and imports continued apace, the fiction of paper money's convertibility became harder to sustain. The value of the bills began to rapidly depreciate; between 1875 and 1877, the value of paper money fell to half the value of silver currency.

In 1877, in an effort to stem such devaluation, the government assumed responsibility for all of the paper money printed by the banks. Optimistically renaming the currency "billetes de responsabilidad fiscal," the government declared that in the future—with the guano and nitrate revenues it hoped would materialize—these bills would be once again be convertible to silver. In a public ceremony, which for a time was repeated on a monthly basis, the government exchanged a portion of the bills for silver, and burned the bills in a bonfire. To further restore public faith in the currency, this spectacle was imprinted on a commemorative medallion, an ironic counter-currency that served as a token of the wish for a secure currency in the absence of gold and silver. The ceremony and its medallion temporarily achieved the desired results, and the value of paper money began to recover (Contreras 111).

Things took a turn for the worse with the outbreak of the War of the Pacific (1879-1883). To finance the war, President Nicolás Piérola demanded that banks turn over their reserves of gold and silver currency, causing all but one bank to collapse, and bankers to

⁸⁶ See Quiroz pp. 29-30.

flee the country. Piérola subsequently instated a new currency, the *inca*, which the government declared would be backed by gold—at a future date. However, even the notion of Incan gold was not strong enough to compensate for the well-known absence of the precious metal within the Peruvian Treasury. Five million *incas* were printed, but foreign banks refused to accept this new worthless currency. With the Chilean occupation of Lima in 1881, the provisional president Francisco García Calderón declared the *incas* void, and reinstated the former currency, the *sol*, stores of which were shipped in from New York and Panama. Peru emerged from the war without guano or nitrates, with its agricultural plantations decimated, its banking system collapsed, and inflation reaching eight hundred percent (McEvoy 254, Flindell Klarén 191).

Assays of Character Value

In the face of such economic upheaval, Peru's currency—from the *billetes fiscales* torched in bonfires to the *incas* that would never be exchanged for gold—must have felt very much like counterfeit, a once-useful fiction that devolved into a nation-wide fraud. If the value of currency can evaporate so quickly, did it ever really exist? How can one know? Situating the origin of such currency disarray within the guano era, *Índole* asks how to distinguish counterfeit from real. However, as I mentioned, the novel shrouds the direct act of monetary counterfeiting in silence. In the one scene of the novel that portrays the underground counterfeiting lab, the activity is never named, and the reader does not learn the substance of the men's scheme until the end of the novel. The trope of counterfeiting, however, is refracted through the interpersonal relationships among the principal characters. Are Eulalia and Antonio offering accurate accounts of themselves in the words and promises they exchange? Or are such verbal representations also counterfeit?

The novel presents its readers with the following question: “en estos tiempos de los falsos amigos y de la moneda feble,” is there a way to correctly decipher external appearances and behaviors in order to determine the true inner value of a person or a coin (213)? To recall, *moneda feble* refers to those coins whose silver content was less than that indicated by the face value, such as the Bolivian currency that circulated in Peru or intentionally debased Peruvian currency. The construction of the quoted phrase is revealing, for it pairs interpersonal falseness with the deception exercised by the circulation of debased coinage. In this way, the potential disjunction between a person’s words and actions is compared with the disjunction between a coin’s value by face and value by weight.

As a result, it is in the realm of moral—rather than economic—value that *Índole* explores the distinction between surface appearance and inner truth. By turning to the exploration of the extent to which one’s inner being is consistent with one’s public words and deeds, *Índole* moves into rich territory for the novel as a genre. In a range of contexts, literary critics have noted examples in which novelistic probing into the relationship or disjunction between the outer appearance and inner truth of characters has coincided with moments of instability and/or transition in the monetary regime.⁸⁷ Indeed, James Thompson argues that the novel itself as a literary form developed as a response to a “crisis over the concept of value,” that occurred with the rise of paper money and credit in eighteenth century England, and which was expressed in novels through the question of how to determine the value of a person (17). Walter Benn Michaels, in turn, emphasizes U.S. naturalist literature’s insistent portrayal of the failure of subjects (and objects) “to be

⁸⁷ See, for example Beckman, Benn Michaels, Goux, and Thompson.

equal to oneself,” that is their failure to achieve complete plenitude of presence without any division between body and soul, appearance and being, signifier and signified (22). Benn Michaels connects this “internal division” within subjects that so preoccupies naturalist writers to the tension contained within the money form between face value and intrinsic value (22).

Within *Índole*'s theorization of value, the inner value of a person is conceived in terms of his or her “índole,” that is, the inherent, moral character, “la tendencia ó inclinación natural, peculiar á cada individuo” (189). In naturalist fashion, *Índole* places Antonio and Eulalia in circumstances that test how they respond, as each is tempted to engage in immoral sexual and financial activities. The object of these experiments is to determine the intrinsic value of each character. As the novel tests the *índole* of its protagonists, will they be revealed to be pure inside and out, or corrupted counterfeits?

Eulalia's test comes in the form of her lascivious confessor, who seeks to seduce, and then force the young, married woman into sexual adultery. Although Eulalia briefly deceives her husband by going to confession without his permission, when the priest tries to rape her, she draws on the strength of her *índole* to successfully fight him off: “ella sintió acudir en su auxilio una fuerza misteriosa como la impulsión de la índole de la persona nacida para el bien” (152). In this way, Eulalia's purity of body and character is proven to the reader. The woman's external traits—the statuesque perfection of her face and whiteness of her skin and hair—are revealed to be reliable indicators of strength and moral purity of her *índole*.

The novel's assessment of Antonio's *índole*, however, is less straightforward. On the one hand, Antonio becomes swept up into Valentín's counterfeiting scheme, which places

the strength of his moral character in question. At the same time, the narrator seeks to counteract any doubts that the reader might have about Antonio's character, insisting that he is ultimately a good person who got mixed up with the wrong people. Early in the novel, the narrator asserts: "Por fortuna [Antonio] López estaba dotado de buena índole y ésta debía actuar en las situaciones solemnes de su porvenir" (36). In this way, the novel asks readers to accept on faith the narrator's interpretation of Antonio's *índole*, even in the face of evidence to the contrary. Can we trust the narrator, or is this statement seeking to deceive us and to pass off a debased character as morally upright? In her analysis of *La vorágine* (1935), Ericka Beckman demonstrates how the mere mention of monetary counterfeiting within a novel can open up the entire verbal economy of the narrative to suspicion as readers are faced with "a narrator who, both literally and figuratively, might be passing false coins" (174).

The extent to which the reader is able to give credit to the narrator's statement about Antonio's *índole* will determine whether the novel's conclusion is experienced as poetic justice or an expression of pure cynicism. After witnessing the priest's assault of his wife, Antonio ceases his involvement in counterfeiting, explaining, "acabo de comprender lo que vale la honra y por la honra lo sacrifico todo" (169). Valentín Cienfuegos, however, is furious, and writes an anonymous letter to the local government official denouncing his former business partner as a counterfeiter. The official, on receiving the anonymous note, does not believe the accusation. He is familiar with Antonio's public reputation as an honest businessman, and suspects that he has been falsely accused. The official decides to call Antonio into his office, confident in his ability to determine, based on Antonio's external appearance, whether or not the man is guilty of the accused crime. The official expresses

his interpretive approach to uncovering the truth, saying “Su fisonomía me dirá lo que calla su lengua franca” (204).

Antonio replies to the summons, and successfully convinces the government official that he was never involved in counterfeiting. Moreover, in a final twist, the official arrests Valentín for slandering Antonio’s name, that is, for “falsely” accusing Antonio of a crime that we as readers know he actually committed. What are we to make of this? Does Antonio’s lie to the government official reveal the deeper truth that, at the core, Antonio is a man of honest *índole*, who got caught up with the wrong people? In order for this ending to be poetic justice, we must trust that prior to becoming a counterfeiter, Antonio had always been honest in his business dealings, and that he only strayed in a moment of weakness under the nefarious influence of Valentín. It is a fragile basis on which to rest our faith, especially given the success with which Antonio is able to present a counterfeit version of himself to the government official, passing off his feigned innocence as real.

Eulalia’s Gold Treasure

The results of Antonio’s character assessment are therefore inconclusive. He may be counterfeit, and yet the narrator insistently seeks to pass him off as legitimate. However, regardless of what the reader concludes about Antonio’s character, there is no doubt about Eulalia’s legitimacy. This angelic creole woman stands as an impeccable reservoir of unadulterated morality. Her love for her husband is as pure as gold. Indeed, while Antonio is associated with the fictitious prosperity of commercial debts and counterfeit coins, at the end of the novel we discover that Eulalia possesses objects of unquestionable value and purity: gold jewelry. Therefore, when Antonio resolves to get out of the counterfeiting business, it is Eulalia’s jewels and her dowry that make such a decision economically

feasible. By selling Eulalia's jewelry, the couple is able to repay Antonio's debts. Indeed, had Antonio been willing to sell the objects in the first place, none of the conflicts driving the novel's plot would have occurred. Antonio explains to Eulalia why he did not recur to her jewels in the first place: "La quiebra amenazaba mi casa y, como caballero, no podía tocar tu dote ni tus joyas. Valentín vino trayéndome la salvación, pero á cambio de mi honor..." (190).

In this way, the novel allegorically critiques how the elite gender conventions that kept women and their possessions out of the commercial sphere were creating senseless problems for the nation. Women, in this way, are positioned as an underutilized resource, a treasure full of potential that has yet to be exploited. In her analysis of *Índole*, literary critic Ana Peluffo proposes that Eulalia's gold jewelry stands in the novel is a symbol of her moral strength, and that this plot resolution allegorically portrays feminine virtue as an underutilized treasure that should serve the good of the nation.⁸⁸ She writes, "Esta virtud femenina desaprovechada por Antonio se representa en la novela por medio de un tesoro que Eulalia tiene escondido y que eventualmente salva a la familia-nación del fracaso económico" (188). While I believe that Peluffo is correct in this reading, I would propose that the symbolism works both ways. That, rather than reducing Eulalia's gold to a figure for her virtue, I would like to propose that Eulalia herself can be read as a figure for gold. Or, perhaps better, I would argue that both Eulalia's feminine virtue *and* her gold represent the ideal of pure, stable value. To use a formulation proposed by Jean-Joseph Goux, they are archetypes of value, "this unique immobile standard (generally placed in the *sanctuary*),

⁸⁸ As Meléndez discusses, Matto's essays also highlighted the important role that women should play, "como un elemento vital y visible para el progreso de la nación" (575). Davies and Bryan has likewise argued that *Aves sin nido* positions women as a force of national progress, by being what Bryan describes as the "good mother of the *patria*" (114).

which governs exchanges without participating in them” (34-35). They are the imagined embodiment of ideal Woman and Gold in the material form of woman and gold.⁸⁹

Read in this way, the solution offered by *Índole*'s resolution is to bring women and gold out of the sanctuary and into circulation. They should not be hoarded as treasure but become value in motion, that is, capital. And, by circulating in the material form of woman and gold, this value will maintain its purity; it will not risk becoming debased. To enhance this avenue of allegorical interpretation, the novel introduces an additional piece of information about Eulalia's gold jewelry. The narrator describes: “Antonio tomó el brazalete de brillantes, deslumbrado por el brillo de las piedras ricamente engastadas en oro de diez y ocho quilates; oro inglés, importado al Perú por solo una joyería de gran nombre, única entonces con privilegio de patente de fábrica” (206). Thus, we learn that Eulalia's treasure, the domestic objects that bring salvation to the couple have their origin in England. The jewels are made of “oro inglés,” English gold. Now, of course, it cannot really be “oro inglés,” for there are no goldmines in England, although (and famously so) there is plenty of gold mined in Peru. Nevertheless, the narrator insists, the bracelet is made of “oro inglés,” informing us that at some point in the precious metal's circulation in world trade, it was on British soil. Only after passing through that center of global capitalism, could the gold then be imported with prestige by an elite Peruvian jeweler with the confidence that this gold is pure, and nothing like those base counterfeit coins that Antonio and the mestizo hacendado were fabricating in rural Peru.

⁸⁹ This is precisely what Benn Michaels calls “the possibility of identity without difference” (22). In *Art & Money*, Marc Shell discusses this ideal in his comparison between gold and Eucharist. This is also expressed in Marx's comment about how in financial crisis people become Catholic, that is, they want the thing in itself, not a paper representation.

So in Peru, the legendary land of gold, Eulalia and Antonio pay off their debts with gold—from England. And yet, in the aftermath of the guano era, it was precisely to English “gold,” or at least capital, that the deeply indebted Peruvian government turned. I would like to propose, therefore, that in Eulalia’s jewelry, the novel offers a material figure for British capital as the solution to Peru’s economic strife. Emerging from the War of the Pacific with damaged infrastructure and without nitrates, Peruvian officials sought foreign investment as the answer to the nation’s economic woes. The problem, however, was Peru’s massive unpaid external debt, in default since the 1870s, which made potential foreign investors avoid the country. The highly controversial solution to this dilemma came in the form of Grace Contract, an agreement that marked the denouement of the guano era and the transition to British and U.S. companies’ direct investment in the extraction of Peru’s natural resources (Bonilla 125; McEvoy 277).⁹⁰

Though the Grace Contract, British bondholders of Peru’s foreign debt were converted into shareholders in a newly formed Peruvian Corporation, which gained ownership of Peru’s railroads, guano, navigation rights of Lake Titicaca, and a stretch of rainforest. The debate over the Grace Contract raged from 1886-1889, but ultimately Peruvian officials determined that it was worth the costs and signed the agreement. Indeed, investment did arrive, in what Thorp and Betram call a “brief honeymoon with British

⁹⁰ McEvoy describes: “la reconstrucción de la posguerra fue posible por un cambio sensible la naturaleza de las inversiones que de préstamos al Estado devinieron en colocaciones directas en las áreas más importantes de materias primas, y por la fusión y monopolización interna de los recursos productivos, particularmente tierras y minerales” (277). In 1878, Peru had passed a law allowing foreign ownerships of mines, but significant foreign investment did not arrive until after the Grace Contract dealt with the issue of Peru’s foreign debt (Contreras and Coeto 185). Foreign investment in plantation agriculture of sugar also experienced a boost in the aftermath of the Grace Contract.

capital,” but the good times soon ended with the global financial crisis of 1893 (24).⁹¹

Published in the period 1889-1893, Matto’s novels express the optimism of this fleeting honeymoon moment, what she describes in an 1890 article in *El Perú Ilustrado* as “las esperanzas abrigadas en el gran contrato Grace” the foreign capital ushered in by the Grace Contract would rescue Peru from the economic distress of the post-guano era.

Thus, we see how *Índole* presents British “gold” as the solution to Peru’s post-guano economic crisis, and the symbol of real value in contrast to guano’s “fictitious” prosperity. An irony that arises here is that the reason why Peru was turning to the British in this moment of crisis is because they were the holders of Peruvian debt. That is, the so-called fictitious prosperity of Peru’s guano era was made possible, in large part, by the fictitious capital of the London bond market. That is not to say that the Grace Contract simply promised more of the same. On the contrary, this marked the transition from an economic model dominated by government ownership of Peru’s natural resources with foreign capital functioning principally in the form of loans to foreign direct investment in resource extraction. Nevertheless, for the novel to imagine an inherent stability in capital due to its “Britishness,” is clearly a sign of wishful thinking, as was unfortunately demonstrated with the crisis of the 1890s.

It was not, however, a fantasy that was exclusive to *Índole* or Matto de Turner. As Beckman has shown, the Argentine novel *La bolsa* (1891), which was published during the

⁹¹ As Flindell Klarén describes “The Grace Contract quickly had its intended effect as foreign investment, particularly from Great Britain under the leadership of the same Michael Grace, began to flow into railroad construction, the oil industry, mining, cotton textile manufacturing, and sugar production. This investment boomlet between 1890 and 1892, however, was short-lived. It was punctured by the outbreak of the Baring Crisis, which triggered the international depression of 1893, and the sudden plunge in the price of silver, the latter severely affecting countries like Peru that were on the silver standard. British capital investments largely dried up” (197).

Baring Crisis, also turns to the ideal of “British” capital as a source of secure value that held out the promise of economic recovery for an indebted nation. In this way, *La bolsa* imaginatively solidifies “the bonds of affection between British bankers and the Argentine nation” (113).⁹²

As Peru was making concessions to British bondholders to achieve debt forgiveness and usher in its “brief honeymoon with British capital,” it is precisely the “bonds of affection” with capital that are being redeemed in the realm of literature. In *Índole* and, as I will briefly demonstrate below, *Aves sin nido* and *Herencia* as well, Clorinda Matto de Turner constructs what I call Romances of Capital Investment. Each novel allegorically sentimentalizes capital investment in the figure of the beautiful and virtuous creole woman who is in possession of pure precious metals and generously resolves the debt crises of her fellow characters. The generosity that this woman displays towards the debtors offers a model of capital investment as an act of unconditional love. Eulalia forgives Antonio for having strayed into the illegal activities of counterfeiting, and restores the bonds of their marriage through the gift of her British gold.

Spaces of Fictitious Prosperity

At the conclusion of *Índole* Antonio and his wife prepare to move to Lima to live happily ever after. Antonio describes how he will be: “contento allá donde se rinde culto al trabajo, donde uno puede confundirse entre cientos de personas, con garantías para el hogar, y sin que la vanidad y las exigencias sociales me empujen al camino de la estafa”

⁹² Nor were the points of similarity only at the level of literature. As *Índole's* emerged in the aftermath to the Grace Contract, so was the publication of *La bolsa* followed by significant Argentine concessions of gold and territory to British bondholders. While I do not wish to overstate this parallel, what I would like to highlight here is the importance of British capital within the literary imaginaries of Latin America, in addition to the economies.

(195). As a result, the city of Lima, becomes the novel's ideal space of honesty and hard work, away from the vanities and social pressure of the countryside. This is an unusual characterization of the city, to say the least. As I discuss in chapters one and four, guano-era Lima was conventionally portrayed as the ultimate space of deception and vanity, perverted from traditional values by the rise of the market and consumerism. But not in *Índole*, where Lima is a refuge of honest work, and the Andean highlands are corrupted by fraud.

It is an unusual inversion, without a doubt, and yet it is the available conclusion within the novel's moral logic. For, the novel insists that Valentín—the mestizo hacendado—is the evil character and that the good guy is Antonio, the creole businessman involved with the import/export trade. So, allegorically speaking, the vagaries of global commerce itself are not the root of the problem as much as commerce coming under the influence of the wrong types of rural and racialized people, who turn honest business into fraud. By moving to Lima, the novel insists, Antonio will be able to avoid such personalist entanglements through the increased anonymity and depersonalization of market relations: “donde se rinde culto al trabajo, donde uno puede confundirse entre cientos de personas” (195). Fictitious prosperity is therefore located as a rural problem whose origin resides in the alleged backwardness of Andean society. Never mind that Antonio went into debt in the first place through his involvement with global commerce. In spite of this, the novel's solution to Peru's crisis of faith in social institutions in the wake of financial crisis is a turn towards Lima and Britain. And so Eulalia's bracelet, mined in the Andes, fabricated in London, and purchased in Lima, enters back into circulation, offering the Peruvian couple a fresh start, that is, the opportunity to start the cycle all over again.

The Gift of Silver in *Aves sin nido*

My reading *Índole* as a romance of capital investment drew attention to the parallels in the novel between the untainted morality of the creole woman and the purity of gold. I suggested that the novel's resolution, which is based on the sale of Eulalia's gold jewelry, allegorically proposes that the moral value of the creole woman and the economic value of gold should be brought into circulation to save Peru from its post-guano debt crisis. Moreover, through the specific identification of Eulalia's gold as "oro inglés," the novel invoked England as the source of the capital that will bring salvation to the nation.

This interpretation is strengthened when we turn to the other two novels in Matto's trilogy. Like *Índole*, *Aves sin nido* (1889) opens with a debt crisis that sets the plot in motion. An indigenous woman named Marcela Yupanqui appears at the doorstep of the creole newlyweds Lucía and Fernando Marín, pleading for help. Marcela's family is in debt to a local wool merchant, and her husband is considering suicide as an act of desperation. When Lucía learns of the Yupanquis' financial woes, she commits to helping the indigenous family by paying off their debts. The couple's attempts to help the family are interpreted as a threat to the power of the town's political and religious authorities that plot to drive out the meddling newcomers by any means possible. Therefore, as Peluffo aptly notes, "De la misma manera que en *Índole* Eulalia salva a su marido del suicidio y de la bancarrota, Lucía salva a Juan Yupanqui en *Aves sin nido*" (*Lágrimas* 198). Once again, therefore, a beautiful young creole woman is the bearer of the means through which debtors find salvation. Compared by the narrator to the Virgin Mary, Lucía exceeds Eulalia as the embodiment of

pure womanly virtue.⁹³ Not only does Lucía maintain her own purity, she steps out into the world through her charity to the Yupanquis. In this act, she challenges the authority of the corrupt priest and government officials, commencing, as Lucía envisions it, “la sangrienta batalla de los buenos contra los malos” (24).

As Peluffo discusses, Lucía’s sympathetic bond with Marcela is a central affective nexus in the novel. Peluffo expands on Doris Sommer’s allegorical reading of the novel by focusing on charitable love or *amor-ágape* as a force of national consolidation. Peluffo defines *amor-ágape* as “un tipo de afecto sentimental, no erótico, asociado con la caridad cristiana, que fue utilizado en la cultura latinoamericana del siglo XIX para regular la interacción entre diversas etnias, religiones y clases” (“Bajo las alas” 103).⁹⁴ While Peluffo interprets Lucía’s aid to the Yupanquis on a metonymic level in relation to the discourses and practices of charity, my reading of *Aves sin nido* as a romance of capital investment turns to the ways in which the energies of *amor-ágape* sentimentalize capital investment, gift wrapping it as an act of charity towards the needy Peruvian Andes.

Notably, the salvation that Lucía brings to the Yupanqui family materializes in the form of pure precious metal, specifically silver coins. The narrator states that these silver coins are “soles fuertes” (25), thus emphasizing that they are not debased, Bolivian, or counterfeit coins, but the pure, silver Peruvian *sol*. To recall, in the aftermath of the War of the Pacific and Pierola’s fiasco with the implementation of the *inca* (backed by gold that did not exist), Peru returned to the *sol* as its official currency in 1881. Moreover, in 1886, the

⁹³ As Peluffo has observed, Lucía’s name evokes a combination of light (Lucía-luz) and the Marian ideal (Marín-marianismo) (*Lágrimas* 81).

⁹⁴ As a result, she proposes that *Aves sin nido* allegorizes a hierarchized model of national integration in which “los indígenas son incorporados a la familia-nación de forma infantilizada, como ‘hijos adoptivos’ de un ángel de caridad que los educa, acultura y ‘civiliza’ desde el ámbito del hogar” (*Lágrimas* 21).

Peruvian government attempted to eliminate the rapidly devaluing paper money, those “billetes de responsabilidad fiscal,” by declaring that only silver *soles* would be considered legitimate currency.⁹⁵ In practice, however, *soles fuertes*, also known as “moneda buena” or “dura,” were virtually unavailable in rural villages like that in which *Aves sin nido* is set, and especially among indigenous peasants. Instead, economic transactions in Andean regions were conducted using either paper money or “monedas malas,” that is the Bolivian *feble*, currency with a lower percentage of precious metal. The result, as historian Carlos Contreras describes, was “la coexistencia de dos monedas de distinta jerarquía, no solo económica, sino también social” (131). The novel’s description of the coins as *soles fuertes*, therefore, would have caught the attention of Matto’s contemporaries, who would have recognized Lucía’s gift to Marcela Yupanqui as something truly exceptional. In this gesture, Lucía offers Marcela the ideal form of monetary value at the time, the emblem of a wish for a stable currency where none existed.

At each moment of exchange in the novel, the *soles de plata* exert a powerful, almost magical, influence on the recipients. For example, when Lucía hands Marcela four *soles*, the narrator describes her reaction: “Eran tales las emociones de la pobre Marcela, que le temblaban las manos de modo que apenas pudo contar el dinero, dejando caer las monedas a cada momento en una, tres, y cuatro piezas” (25). Then, when Marcela goes to pay her debt to the priest, he initially refuses to accept repayment and accuses her of having received the coins in exchange for sex. However, upon seeing the silver coins, the priest “distrajo su primera intención, soltó el breviario que había colocado debajo del brazo, y se

⁹⁵. For a discussion of the Peruvian government’s efforts to impose the silver *sol* as the single currency, see Contreras, *La economía pública en el Perú después del guano y del salitre* (2012) pp. 162-168.

puso a recontar y examinar la ley de las monedas” (30). He insults Marcela, but accepts her coins, entranced by their authenticity and purity. Thus, Lucía’s gift of silver coins breaks the chain of ceaselessly multiplying debts, freeing the Yupanquis from being “eternamente deudores” to the priest (24). In this moment, we are offered a glimpse of the promise of silver, this pure materialization of capital, to facilitate the liberation of indigenous people from centuries of colonial oppression.

In addition, the specification of the coins that Lucía gives to Marcela Yupanqui as “soles de plata” draws an explicit link between these coins and silver mining. Notably, the reason that Lucía and Fernando Marín move to the Andean highlands is that Fernando has recently become the manager and principal shareholder of a silver mining company. Therefore, Fernando’s mining investments have provided the Maríns with the economic liquidity that makes Lucía’s charity to Marcela possible. To further highlight the connection between mining and the “soles de plata,” the narrator indicates that Lucía’s servant goes directly to the mining company office in order to withdraw the silver coins that Lucía then gives to Marcela (18-25).⁹⁶ With an overdetermined redundancy that arises from silver’s function as money, the coins are both made out of silver metal and represent the profits achieved through silver mining. They therefore act as a visible indicator in the novel of mining investments and its effects on rural society.

In *Aves sin nido*, therefore, we can see how silver stands as a figure for pure, incorruptible value, much like gold in *Índole*. In addition, I propose that it also invokes the promise of silver mining as an export industry that could offer Peru a source of real, not

⁹⁶. Fernando tells Lucía: “ahí tienes la orden para que el cajero de la compañía te mande los doscientos soles” (18). Lucía then “llamó a un sirviente y le entregó la orden escrita que tenía, mandándole traer el dinero en el momento...El sirviente fue el primero que volvió con el dinero” (25).

fictitious, prosperity. Turning briefly to *El Perú Ilustrado*, the Lima-based periodical in which Matto worked as editor, one finds a similarly utopian perspective on foreign investment in mining. The newspaper *El Perú Ilustrado*, with its masthead adorned with the image of miners with pickaxes excavating a burst of pure light, set its sights on mining as the key to progress.⁹⁷ As editor of the newspaper, Matto advocated for increased foreign investment in mining, regularly published reports of new mining ventures, technologies, and prospecting expeditions. For example, publishing the prospectus of the new International Mining Company Ltd. she highlights: “los beneficios que reportará de ella la minería peruana que es, en realidad, la veta de vida y progreso que la Providencia ha reservado a este desgraciado país” (1014).⁹⁸ In this way, Matto designates the expansion of mining as Peru’s best, and perhaps only, hope for economic recovery and progress in the aftermath of the collapse of the guano era.

⁹⁷ The periodical’s first masthead (1887-1888) included multiple icons of modernity: a sunrise, train, miners, globe, telegraph, compass, lyra, and Grecian-style bust, contrasted with the icons of traditional backwardness: a feather-adorned Amazonian Indian shooting a bow and arrow, a rope bridge, llamas, sugar cane, an Andean-style house, and pottery. The second masthead (1888-1892) was simplified so that the images of barbarism were eliminated and only three icons of modernity remained: the train, the telegraph, and the miners. See Victoriano for an analysis of the pictorial representation of progress in *El Perú Ilustrado*.

⁹⁸ The prospectus was actually published in two issues of *El Perú Ilustrado*, first in English and then in Spanish translation. Such enthusiasm for mining had been a feature of *El Perú Ilustrado* even prior to Matto’s employment there. For example, an editorial published in August 1888 emphasized the periodical’s commitment to promoting the development of the mineral export sector: “Del incremento de la industria minera debe esperar en el Perú gran parte de su futuro bienestar. Cuanto se relacione, pues, con ese importante ramo debe merecernos especial preferencia y es obligación impuesta por el patriotismo llamar la atención de propios y extraños á las inagotables riquezas que la pródiga naturaleza ha querido depositar en nuestro suelo...Nosotros, por nuestra parte, faltos de luces; pero ricos de voluntad y constancia colaboraremos en ese sentido ocupando preferentemente, como ya hemos hecho, las páginas de nuestro modesto semanario con grabados y artículos referentes á minas” (246).

Through the idealized figures of Fernando and Lucía Marín, who use their money only for social good, *Aves sin nido* portrays the mining investor as a benefactor that bequeaths both economic and moral progress to the Peruvian Andes. In the 1880s, the silver mining industry was experiencing a short-lived rebound through the collaboration of foreign and Peruvian capitalists.⁹⁹ Lucía and Fernando Marín likewise present function as hybrid figures, neither quite domestic or foreign. As well-educated, creole newcomers to Kíllac, the Maríns occupy an in-between position in which they are rejected by the town's officials as "forasteros" who are not "peruanos legítimos," while remaining Peruvian in the eyes of the narrator (22). As a result, they symbolize the best of both worlds: financial prosperity through access to capital *and* a patriotic commitment to the wellbeing of people in rural Peru.

The issue of foreign investment in Peru is allegorized in more direct terms in a scene at the end of the novel that is set on a train. When the train crashes, a Peruvian passenger speaks ill of the Anglo-American conductor, saying: "estos *gringos* brutos son capaces de llevarnos a los profundos" (152). While Austin, Davies, and Harvard have read this scene as indicating Matto's hesitancy or ambivalence with regards to "modernity" and foreign investment, I propose that the narrator portrays this xenophobia of the poker-playing passenger ironically. For in the face of adversity, Míster Smith stands as an epitome of bravery and hard work as he tirelessly displayed "la energía que distingue a la raza" in getting the train back on track (152). Foreign control of Peru's unfinished railroads was a crucial element the Grace Contract, and proponents of the Contract highlighted the

⁹⁹ Cite Deustua, Thorp, McEvoy. This recovery ends with the collapse of silver prices in 1892, after which silver mining is overshadowed by the rise of copper mining, especially at Cerro de Pasco.

potential benefits to Peruvian mining should the new foreign-controlled Peruvian Corporation complete the construction of railroads to the mines. I read this scene, therefore as a dramatization of the debates as to whether or not Peru should agree to the terms of the Contract, with the novel answering with a resounding yes.

Even so, the novel offers no direct depiction of silver mining. Indeed, the greatest level of detail appears near the beginning of the novel, when the narrator takes a short pause from chronicling the events of the novel in past tense to comment:

Kíllac ofrece al minero y el comerciante del interior, la ventaja de ocupar un punto céntrico para las operaciones mercantiles en relación con las capitales del departamento; y la bondad de sus caminos presta alivio a los peones que transitan cargados de los capachos del mineral en bruto, y a las *llamas* empleadas en el acarreo (10).

This sentence, which forms its own paragraph, stands as a brief incursion of promotional rhetoric into the novel, highlighting the benefits that towns like Kíllac offer to readers with an interest in mining and commerce.¹⁰⁰ The novel's characters have receded for the moment, making the town and its roads the agents of the sentence. Notably, no matter where the reader may geographically situate the fictional Kíllac, which could be any of a number of small towns between Cuzco, Puno, and Arequipa, it is imagined as available and welcoming to investment. In the passage's description of laborers carrying sacks of unrefined silver ore through the mountain roads, readers are offered a brief glimpse into the experience of mining industry workers. Indeed, it is an image that in twentieth century *indigenismo* will become a symbol of brutalization of indigenous people, framed as turning humans into "beasts of burden." Here, however, the description is picturesque rather than

¹⁰⁰ As Kristal has discussed, Matto's fiction was interpenetrated by the world of advertising, including plugs for the companies who purchased advertisements in *El Perú Ilustrado*, in a nineteenth-century example of product placement.

denunciatory, as the narrator directs the reader's attention towards the "relief" offered to workers by the benevolence of the mining company that located its office in a town relatively less difficult to reach. Entirely out of sight are the coercive labor practices of the mining industry of the time.¹⁰¹ It must be emphasized, that although silver mining in the novel symbolizes the promise of a modern economy, free from the legacy of colonial exploitation, the actual silver mines of the era employed a combination of old and new exploitive practices to extract the backbreaking mine labor from peasants.

Throughout *Aves sin nido*, readers see mining only from a distance, as it appears to the Maríns from the space of Kíllac—that is, as a source of money that sustains their lifestyle and enables their acts of charity. This partial view makes it possible for mining to stand as the novel's force of economic and moral progress, for silver to appear as a token of pure exchange value and morality, untarnished by the human labor engaged in the metal's excavation from Andean soil. Therefore, no matter how striking the disjunction between the novel's idealized vision of silver mining as a force of moral progress and the violent realities of mining on the ground, it is this partial view of silver mining that has power in

¹⁰¹ As I discuss elsewhere, these including the use of forced advances of cash and goods not unlike those employed in the wool trade, which the novel famously denounces. Also absent is the use of debt, violence, and surveillance to recruit migrant laborers and prevent them from escaping the toil of the mine, for as historian Florencia Mallon notes, "given the hardships of mine labor, the only way to retain a labor force was through coercion" (73). Like the wool trade, mining was an example of non-wage labor producing commodities for export. Indeed, as Mallon discusses in the context of the central highlands, a mining proletariat did not consolidate until the 1920s, and this development was largely the result of the fact that the pollution from mineral refinement made agriculture and livestock pasturing impossible (226-229). Only when peasants had no other alternative did they become wage laborers in the mines. Any mention of the conditions of mine labor in *Aves sin nido*, however, would muddy the difference between the supposedly "modern" mining sector and the "barbaric" wool trade, and therefore must remain unspoken. See Burner, Deustua pp. 94-95, and Mallon pp. 73-75. Deustua explains how debt was a central element of keeping contract laborers tied to the mines.

the novel. This transfixed, fetishized vision of silver as money subsumes all of the violence of the mining economy under the single glimmering token of the silver coin so that it may stand as an emblem for the promise of foreign and Lima-based capital ushered in by the Grace Contract to arrive from the outside and rescue the highlands from its own barbarism and promote progress and prosperity for all people in Peru.

Herencia and the sociedad anónima

In *Herencia* (1893), Matto's trilogy moves at last to Lima, that city of dreams for corrupt and pure characters alike in *Índole* and *Aves sin nido*. Critics have regularly argued that the idealized vision of Lima offered in Matto's two earlier novels falls apart on closer inspection in *Herencia*.¹⁰² Indeed, within this urban space, a new character type is introduced, the elite woman corrupted by the temptations of sex without love and luxury purchased on credit. In its portrayal of the debased *limeña* as the epitome of the guano era's fictitious prosperity, *Herencia* dialogues with a constellation of tropes that I explore in chapter four, which were frequently employed within novels, including Luis Benjamín Cisneros's novel *Julia* (1860) and Mercedes Cabello de Carbonera's *Blanca Sol* (1889), as well as essays which critiqued the guano era's culture and economy.

While *Herencia* offers a strong critique of the conspicuous consumption and sexual immorality by members of Lima's elite, I think it is important to recognize the ways in which *Herencia*'s portrayal of capital city *does* live up to the expectations of the young creole couples. Notably, *Herencia* diverges from *Julia* and *Blanca Sol* by offering a model of true love and wealth based on investment in the extraction and refinement of the human and mineral resources of the highlands. This is made possible in the novel thanks to an

¹⁰² See, for example Berg 2006, Rodríguez-Luis.

emergent economic arrangement that was gaining increasing importance in the aftermath of the guano era, the joint-stock company or *sociedad anónima*.

The plot of *Herencia* picks up a few years after *Aves sin nido*, with Lucía and Fernando Marín happily settled into their new lives in Lima. To recall, at the end of *Aves sin nido*, the creole couple makes the decision to leave the Andean highlands and move to Lima, much like Eulalia and Antonio López in *Índole*. The Maríns' departure is, in part, the result of their being driven out by a cabal of religious and government leaders who will stop at nothing to expel the reform-minded *forasteros*. As one character explains, "Los lugares donde no se cuenta con garantías para la propiedad y la familia, se despueblan: todos los que disponen de medios suficientes para emigrar a los centros civilizados lo hacen" (122).

In addition to such concern for their lives and property, moreover, the Maríns leave because Lucía cannot bear to continue witnessing the misery and exploitation of indigenous people in the highlands. At the beginning of *Aves sin nido*, when Marcela Yupanqui first arrives at Lucía's doorstep and tells her story, Lucía is deeply moved. This affective response instills in her a sense of responsibility. Now that she has seen this woman, and heard her story, she must take action. She expresses to her husband, "¡Nosotros no podemos vivir aquí! Y si tú insistes, viviremos librando la sangrienta batalla de los buenos contra los malos. ¡Ah! ¡salvémoslos!" (24). Here, Lucía presents her husband with two options: either they leave the highlands, so that they no longer have to bear witness to suffering, or they must get involved, to fight the forces of evil and rescue those in need. At this point in the novel, the question is simply rhetorical; of course they will fight the battle of good and evil, or else there would be no story.

As time passes, however, Lucía can no longer bear to witness suffering, which she feels impotent to irradiate. She exclaims, “¡Quisiera ya estar lejos de Kíllac para no ver estas cosas!” (126). Here, we see the counterpoint to Lucía’s initial determination to engage in the battle of good versus evil. Where the witnessing of suffering had initially prompted Lucía to take action, now it has all become too overwhelming, and she longs for retreat. This escape is made possible when “unos judíos” (113) agree to purchase the Maríns’ house and majority stake in the silver mining company. The anti-Semitic content of this plot point implies that Jews, unlike the Maríns, would not be troubled by moral scruples in the pursuit of profits, and warns against the Peruvian economy falling into the hands of such people.

Aves sin nido does not end entirely in failure, however. Lucía and Fernando take with them two orphan children from the highlands, the beautiful mestiza Margarita and her indigenous half-sister, Rosalía, whom they educate and raise as their own. These adopted girls signal the inherent potential of the highlands to become civilized if only it could be taken under the wing of enlightened creole society. *Herencia*, then, picks up where *Aves sin nido* leaves off. Several years have passed, and although Rosalía falls out of the picture somewhere in the interim between the novels, Margarita has prospered from her extraction from rural society.¹⁰³ She appears in *Herencia* completely transformed by Lucía’s beneficent influence into a refined creole lady.

As Julio Rodríguez-Luis aptly notes, *Herencia*’s Lima offers precisely a space where upper-middle class citizens can live peaceful, comfortable lives without having to see the suffering of the countryside (48). The plot is structured around a comparison between two young women: Lucía’s adopted daughter Margarita and Camila Aguilera, the daughter of a

¹⁰³ For a discussion of the racial politics of the omission of Rosalía from the plot of *Herencia*, see Cornejo Polar, Lewis, Rodríguez-Luis.

sexually promiscuous woman who believes that the appearance of wealth can cover all moral and economic flaws. The “herencia” indicated by the novel’s title, therefore refers most directly to the moral inheritance bequeathed from mother to daughter. While Margarita benefitted from the positive influence of Lucía, Camila was raised by a mother who lives by the slogan, “la plata todo lo tapa, lo disculpa, lo abrillanta, lo rectifica, lo ennoblece” (258).

Doomed by this upbringing, Camila fails to acquire a strong moral character. When an Italian shopkeeper sneaks into her house and kisses her, therefore, not only does Camila fail to put up any resistance, she also develops sexual desire for her attacker. Within the moral/sexual logic of Matto’s trilogy, therefore, Camila stands as the opposite of Eulalia from *Índole*, whose inner morality was strong enough to resist even the sexual assault of her priest. Although Camila appears to be a proper young lady, her internal moral value is empty. In like fashion, Camila’s mother takes out a second mortgage on their house to pay for Camila’s marriage to the Italian, as well as to cover the expenses for the false papers that certify the man’s nobility. Too late, the socially ambitious Italian learns that “la gran fortuna de los Aguilera consistía más que en fincas realengas en las apariencias sostenidas” (330).

In diametric opposition to the Aguileras’ fictitious wealth, false titles, and vacant morals, the novel situates the Maríns, who live quiet lives based in true love and real wealth. To prevent any doubts on this matter, the novel explicitly spells out this contrast through a clunky inner monologue of Fernando Marín, who thinks to himself:

“Estoy seguro de que mis negocios descansan sobre base sólida. Las acciones compradas á los mineros del Cerro de Pasco han triplicado el capital, y realizaremos nuestros ideales” se decía don Fernando, ordenando varios papeles sobre su carpeta. “Mi mujer es de las pocas que conservan el buen

fondo. Que contraste, Dios mío!.....Las fortunas del vecindario se desmoronan á la luz del gas de las tertulias que obligan á sacrificios que no son más que el fruto de ostentar ante el mundo lo que no se tiene” (201-2).

Once again, the promotional rhetoric of advertising makes an appearance within Matto’s novel, which comes just to the verge of directly telling readers: “Buy shares in Cerro de Pasco and all of your dreams will come true!” Through this passage, we learn that mining remains the source of the Marín’s economic prosperity. Unlike in *Aves sin nido*, however, Fernando no longer manages the mines. Instead, he is a shareholder of a joint-stock company, and can watch his mining profits multiply from the safety and comfort of his desk in Lima. In this way, we can see how Lima has fulfilled the expectations of Antonio López from *Índole*. To recall, Antonio hopes that Lima will be a place where he can avoid the personalist entanglements of rural life, “donde uno puede confundirse entre cientos de personas” (195). He seeks, in short, anonymity, not unlike that achieved by the shareholder of a joint-stock company, or *sociedad anónima*, whose relationship with the company in which he invests is, at least in theory, absolutely distant and depersonalized.¹⁰⁴

This ideal of anonymous or depersonalized economic relations that forms the root of the joint-stock company is manifested in *Herencia’s* scene of debt and charity. In the middle of the novel, a mysterious creole woman appears at the Maríns’ house. She greets Lucía, saying, “mi nombre no la ha de indicar nada á usted: le soy desconocida en absoluto, y básteme decirle que vengo en nombre de la caridad cristiana” (142). The woman explains that her husband lost his job due to political favoritism. Unable to find alternate employment, and unwilling to face further destitution, the couple has determined to poison their children and then kill themselves. Deeply moved by this tale of distress, Lucía agrees

¹⁰⁴ As Weber, discusses in *Economy and Society*, “depersonalization” is a central element of economic ethics under capitalism.

to help the stranger. She gives the woman money—this time in the form of paper bills—and writes a letter of recommendation for the woman’s husband to find employment as the accountant for a sugar plantation. Overjoyed, the mysterious woman departs, and makes no further appearance in the novel.

The shift from charity in the form of silver coins that we saw in *Aves sin nido* to that of paper money in *Herencia* captures that additional distance between the Maríns and the source of their wealth. Now that Fernando is a stockholder rather than manager, his connection to the mining industry is increasingly dematerialized. At the same time, however, *Herencia* casts no doubts as to the validity of this source of wealth. It may be paper money, but Lucía had been carrying it in “una monísima carterita de cuero de Rusia, en cuya tapa estaban grabadas con oro las iniciales L. de M. y al pié 12 de Junio” (153). The gold engraving of the purse connects it to the purity of precious metals as well as that of Lucía. Her initials identify the purse with herself and the date—although its meaning is not specified—could likely indicate her wedding date. The signs of Gold, Woman, and Love thus unite in this Russian leather purse to confer legitimacy onto the paper money contained within.

The legitimacy of the Maríns’ wealth is further confirmed in the scene when Lucía brings Margarita to a party of Lima’s high society. Lucía arrives dressed in a blue velvet dress with diamond buttons on the bodice that draws the envy of the woman at the party. Enviously, the women whisper among themselves asking, who could these moneyed newcomers from the *sierra* be (47)? They debate over the price of Lucía’s dress and the “legalidad” of its adornments (54). Could those really be diamond buttons, or were they just rhinestone imitations? Ultimately, a friend of the jeweler who sold the buttons to Lucía

confirms that they are indeed, “piedras finas,” and moreover “engastadas en oro” (55). He adds, “puedo asegurar á ustedes que esa botonadura representa una fortuna” (55). The gossiping ladies are thus convinced that Lucía’s glamorous dress is not mere glittery ostentation, but the sign of a truly wealthy woman.

It is at this party that Lucía’s *ahijada* Margarita meets Ernesto, her true love. The problem is that Ernesto is a poor law student who lives in a small apartment with his mother. He cannot hope marry a woman of such wealth like Margarita. This potential conflict, however, disappears almost as soon as it emerges when Ernesto wins the lottery. Thus, as occurred in *Índole* and *Aves sin nido*, an outside source of money miraculously appears within the plot to resolve the characters’ economic difficulties. Here, however, instead of a gift from the charitable hand of a creole woman, Ernesto’s good fortune is bequeathed by the invisible hand of the lottery. That the lottery should serve this unquestionably positive function within the novel is notable, as the lottery has been frequently associated within cultural production as a corrupting source of wealth, acquired through gambling and luck rather than hard work.¹⁰⁵ Indeed, the figure of the lottery has been frequently invoked in critiques of financial markets, which posit that speculation in stocks and bonds has converted the global economy into a giant lottery.¹⁰⁶ In *Herencia*, however, the lottery, much like the stock market, functions as a vehicle through which good people acquire the means to make their dreams come true. The narrator describes: “Desde el momento en que el *suertero* cojo llevó la buena nueva á Ernesto y á su madre, [...] Ella

¹⁰⁵ Frank Norris *McTeague* (1899) offers a dramatic depiction of the corrupting power of lottery earnings, where the sudden acquisition of wealth destroys the dominant relationships in the novel and converts a wholesome woman into a “little miser.”

¹⁰⁶ See Molesworth. Of course, the lottery itself can serve as a source of speculative revenue for indebted governments, such as in the dramatic example of the South Sea Bubble. See Brantlinger.

comenzó á soñar con cosas reales. Él á realizar cosas soñadas” (217). In this way, *Herencia* rebrands the lottery, this symbol that has epitomized the dangers of finance, and portrays it as a source of good. That a man should be spontaneously enriched due to the timely purchase of a piece of paper, whether a lottery ticket or stocks, is definitively—almost defiantly—not a problem in *Herencia*.

With Ernesto’s financial problems resolved, he is free to marry Margarita. This happy conclusion of the novel is sealed with two toasts that emphasize the purity and legitimacy of the young couple’s love. Fernando Marín offers his toast, “Por la felicidad de ustedes, hijos míos, sean tan dichosos como yo, y gocen de la ventura del hogar sin ocuparse de las apariencias del mundo que, casi siempre, suelen poner oropel donde hay llagas que cubrir y deformidades que disimular” (319). In this way, Fernando expresses his hopes that Margarita and Ernesto will follow in the footsteps of Lucía and Fernando, living contented lives based on true love and the real wealth of mining investments rather than the fictitious prosperity of guano debts. Ernesto echoes this sentiment to Margarita, saying, “Brindemos por la eternidad de nuestro amor, esposa mía, nadie, ni nada podrá separarnos y seremos felices á despecho de este siglo egoísta, metalizado, y de la sociedad falsa” (341). In this final toast, Matto’s romance of capital investment reaches its ultimate incarnation. The geographic distance between the couple and the Cerro de Pasco mines that sustain their economic wellbeing is sentimentally transmuted into an emotional distance from all economic concerns. Their position as shareholders in a joint-stock company has liberated them, the novel implies, from the mundane materialist concerns of metals and money. As Ernesto repeats three times in the final pages of the novel, “Poseer es triunfar!” (343).

Chapter 4: Fictitious Prosperity and the Curse of Repetition: Luis Benjamin

Cisneros's *Julia* and Luis Orrego Luco's *Casa grande*

Luxury envelops a generation, sweeping young men and women into a whirlwind of silks and jewels. Carriage rides along the boulevard, box seats at the opera, *tertulias* in elegant drawing rooms, each provide an opportunity to see and be seen as part of an elaborate performance of elite status. Amidst this profusion of lavish excess, a young couple meets and falls in love. Too soon, however, the lovers must confront the disillusionments of married life without the romance of courtship. They learn that within this grand “comedia del buen tono” (Orrego Luco 1.197), it is not only the smiles and the compliments that are false. What is more, the dresses and the jewels, the carriages and the imported furniture, even the mansions have been purchased on credit. And it is only a matter of time before the bills will come due.

It could be Lima of the 1860s. It could be 1900s Santiago. The disparate narrative structures of guano and nitrates converge in the two novels best remembered as the emblematic literary expressions of their respective eras: Luis Benjamín Cisneros's *Julia* (1861) and Luis Orrego Luco's *Casa grande* (1908). The texts stand as *the* novels of guano and nitrates, which portray elite society transformed by the sudden influx of wealth from fertilizer exports.¹⁰⁷ However, despite the notable similarities of the two novels, *Julia* and *Casa grande* have not previously been studied together. While each novel is canonical within its national literary tradition, the works are not widely read as part of a broader Latin American canon.¹⁰⁸ It may be that the very characterization of each novel as the

¹⁰⁷ See, for example, Goic, Rojo, García Cunningham, Denegri, and Díaz.

¹⁰⁸ Each text holds an important place within its national literary history, with *Julia* representing an early example of the Peruvian novel along with Narcisso Aréstegui's *El*

classic expression of the guano or nitrate era has contributed to limiting interpretations of these works to a national scale. That is, as novels of guano and nitrates, *Julia* and *Casa grande* are read as engaging with concerns particular to Peru and Chile, but lacking transcendence on a continental level. They are, quite simply “novelas de época” whose interest lies in their ability to paint a vivid picture of the excesses of elite society within their historical moments.¹⁰⁹ I propose, however, that the repetitions between *Julia* and *Casa grande*, which exist at the level of both form and content, offers clear evidence that the novels engage with concerns whose relevance should not be reduced to 1860s Lima and 1900s Santiago.

In this chapter, I propose to read the novels *Julia* and *Casa grande* as what I call “Accounts of Fictitious Prosperity,” which seek to create narrative models of the economic phenomena of the guano and nitrate eras. With the term “account” I wish to invoke both the literary sense of the word—an explanatory story—and also the financial sense—a text that seeks to create a legible record of economic phenomena.¹¹⁰ These novels are accounts of “fictitious prosperity,” moreover, because the explanation they offer hinges on the notion

Padre Horán (1848) and *Casa grande* as a critique of the Chilean “aristocracy” in the tradition of Alberto Blest Gana’s *Martin Rivas* (1862) and José Donoso’s *Casa de campo* (1978).

¹⁰⁹ Cedomil Goic notes that criticism of *Casa grande* has been particularly dominated by a reading of the novel as a *roman à clef*. However, he lays the blame with the novel itself for failing to transcend its historical moment, writing “La vinculación servil de la obra a un período o época histórica determinada ha falseado largamente los criterios de la crítica literaria y sus efectos pueden percibirse todavía. La exactitud de los detalles contemporáneos llegó a ser más importante que la plenitud o el vigor y la exactitud de la imaginación” (95).

¹¹⁰ See Beckman’s discussion of *La Bolsa* as a “literary supplement.” The play on *cuentas/cuentos* has a long history in Hispanic literature, with a classic example being *Don Quijote*.

that the economic booms of the Fertilizer Age are essentially based in fiction.¹¹¹ That is, the novels seek to expose how illusions have successfully supplanted reality in a dangerous, fiction-based social order.¹¹²

My comparative analysis of *Julia* and *Casa grande* reveals similarities in the ways in which the economic rhythms and structures of the Fertilizer Age infuse the novels at in terms of style, plot structure, and tropes. The dominant points of convergence that I identify are 1) an extended analogy between the passions of romance and finance, 2) the characters' use of credit to create deceptive appearances of wealth, and 3) haunting and doppelgängers. This chapter also attends to divergences between the novels, which I explore in relation to the particular manifestation of the Fertilizer Age, such as the different systems of resource ownership and extraction in each context. As a result, I wish to destabilize the standard literary-historical narrative, which a) separates the two novels

¹¹¹ As have seen, the specific characterization of guano wealth as “prosperidad ficticia” first appeared in Juan Copello and Luis Petriconi's essay, *Estudios sobre la independencia económica del Peru* (1876). However, concerns about the potentially ephemeral or illusory nature of guano prosperity had appeared in elite writings since the 1850s. Moreover, In Chile, Francisco Antonio Encina describes nitrate wealth as “prosperidad ficticia” in his 1911 essay *Nuestra Inferioridad Económica* and Julio Zegers uses the term in his *Estudios económicos* (1908) to describe the speculative euphoria in Argentina prior to the Baring Crisis of the 1890s. As I will discuss, the precise meaning of the term “fictitious prosperity” varies across these different texts, with possible referents including the perils of financialization as well as the economic and ecological unsustainability of the fertilizer industry.

¹¹² Not only does *Casa grande* follow in the wake of *Julia* and other novels of Peru's fictitious prosperity such as Mercedes Cabello de Carbonera's *Blanca Sol* (1888), it also appears at the tail end of a string of financially themed novels published in a variety of countries at the turn of the twentieth century, including Anthony Trollope's *The Prime Minister* (England, 1876), Émile Zola's *L'Argent* (France, 1891), Julian Martel's *La Bolsa* (Argentina, 1891), and Frank Norris's *The Pit* (United States, 1903). As Ericka Beckman describes, these novels accompany the rhythms of global finance, popping up in urban centers along with banks and stock exchanges: “Just as finance capital traversed the globe, so too did the stock market novel” (96). Again and again, the novels seek to distinguish between durable and ephemeral wealth as they tell tales of fantastic riches that always disappear too soon.

into their respective national traditions and/or b) classifies the novels according to the chronology of European literary currents, such that *Julia* is a romanticist novel and *Casa grande* a blend of naturalism and modernism. While I do not wish to discard these classifications altogether, it is important that they not blind us to patterns that cross national and temporal boundaries.

In studying the recurrence of literary tropes cross-cutting historical periods, my work build on Steven Shapiro's analysis of what he calls "gothic periodicity." Shapiro highlights the periodic emergence of gothic tropes in literary production during a sequence of time periods—namely the 1780s-1790s, the 1880s-1890s, the 1950s, and the 1990s-2000s—which he maps onto key moments of transition between "long-wave" cycles of accumulation within the history of global capitalism (30-31).¹¹³ Shapiro proposes that we can understand repetitions within literary history as an expression of the cyclical rhythms of capitalism.

The concept of "gothic periodicity" offers a fruitful model through which to approach an analysis of the repetitions that occur between *Julia* and *Casa grande* in relation to the fertilizer export economies. Notably, the publication of these novels occurred at similar moments within the guano and nitrate eras, which could be roughly described as periods of "credit-based expansion," to draw on David Harvey's characterization of the cycles of boom and bust that Marx sketches in *Capital* (302-303). During this phase of

¹¹³ Specifically, Shapiro proposes that the gothic appears at those times when one cycle of capitalist accumulation is coming to a close and the next wave of accumulation by dispossession is poised to commence, which he describes as "the synapses that both link and distinguish the dendrites of two time-spaces of capitalist development and its reformation of inter-regional trade relations" (31). As a result, Shapiro proposes, the gothic repeatedly stages conflicts between two competing sectors of the bourgeoisie over control of the world's resources.

increasing availability of credit, Harvey describes “the quantity of fictitious capital moves steadily ahead of actual accumulation, and the gap between the monetary basis as a real measure of values and the various forms of paper moneys in circulation begin to widen” (303). I should make clear here that I am not claiming that the 1860s Peru and 1900s Chile offer precise manifestations of this stage, which is meant to serve as a conceptual model. I do believe, however, that Marx’s theorizations of the cycles of capitalist accumulation that Harvey describes can help to illuminate certain patterns of repetition across the guano and nitrate eras, which are thematized in cultural production. Put simply, both *Julia* and *Casa grande* express concerns about the increasing role of credit in a moment of economic boom based on fertilizer exports. The precise manifestations of such concerns in the narrative structure of *Accounts of Fictitious Prosperity*, and the variations that this form exhibits in each case will be the focus of this chapter

The Illusions of Material Lust¹¹⁴

The plots of *Julia* and *Casa grande* trace the interlinked ups and downs of their characters’ romantic and financial circumstances. *Julia* (1861) tells the story of a young lawyer named Andrés who falls madly in love with a beautiful woman named Julia, the daughter of a moderately affluent lawyer. However, when Julia meets a prestigious businessman named Alberto X... she forgets her young suitor and marries the big spender. However, their married life, although opulent, is not what she had envisioned. Alberto spends all of his nights gambling, leaving Julia isolated in their extravagant mansion as they plunge deeply into debt.

¹¹⁴ As I discuss below, the term “material lust” derives by an essay by literary critic Lee Skinner who analyzes the intertwinement of economic and romantic desires in nineteenth century fiction in Chile and Peru.

Casa grande (1908) opens when Angel, a handsome young man with a prestigious family name but no fortune, falls in love with a beautiful and wealthy young woman named Gabriela. Too soon after the young couple marries, however, the fantasy wears off. Angel and Gabriela discover that their personalities are inherently incompatible.¹¹⁵ To make matters worse, Gabriela's inheritance turns out to be less than Angel had hoped it would be. Even so, Gabriela lacks all concept of money, and she has a troubling habit of buying luxury items on credit. Faced with mounting debts, Angel throws himself ever deeper into the world of finance, speculating in increasingly risky stocks with the goal of transforming himself from a "millonario ficticio" into the real one his friends believe him to be (2.25).

Through the blending of romance and finance in their plots, both novels establish an analogy between the dreams of young love and the optimism of a society in economic boom. Like we saw in the novels of Clorinda Matto Turner, *Julia* and *Casa grande* employ an extended analogy between romance and finance to explore a central economic preoccupation of the Fertilizer Age: the need to distinguish between real and fictitious prosperity. One important way in which these novels examine this issue is through the (unstable) distinction between real love and lustful infatuation, and in particular, what Lee Skinner has called "material lust," in which "romantic love, sexual desire, and material consumption are inextricably bound together" (796). The plots of both novels center on marriages that go bad because the characters fail to distinguish between love and "material lust." Swept up in external factors, they do not take the time to learn the true character of their potential spouses. For example, In *Julia*, the title protagonist explains her reasons for marrying Alberto:

¹¹⁵ For a discussion of the inherent compatibility of Angel and Gabriela based on their sanguine versus lymphatic makeups, see Goic.

Mi alma de niña confundió la ilusión del sentimiento con la fantasía del orgullo, y como algunas mujeres en nuestra sociedad, busqué, no un hombre que llenara mi vida de amor y de paz, sino un marido que me permitiera cumplir, en una escala más ó menos brillante, ciertas fórmulas exteriores que el mundo exige á la mujer (186).

Julia's beliefs about Alberto's wealth and prestige had spurred her fantasy of being in love. She highlights her longing to fulfill societal expectations to perform outward signs of economic prosperity, and the sense that marriage to Alberto would enable such a performance on a spectacular scale. In like fashion, in the beginning of *Casa grande*, Angel and Gabriela's emotions are buoyed by the euphoria of youthful attraction amidst the bucolic luxury of Gabriela's country estate, such that they believe that they are in love. The narrator describes the force of this illusion:

No había tenido tiempo de analizar el sentimiento algo artificial, el lirismo hechizo, con reminiscencias de novela, de hablar de aquel joven, cuya imaginación se exaltaba con el sonido de su propia voz, al rumor de sus propias ideas. Era que las impresiones de Angel sufrían la influencia del medio, la sensación de lujo y de abundancia de la casa, el bienestar de la vida, los detalles elegantes, los refinamientos de cultura, de buena sociedad y de tono, y, junto con esto, un vapor embriagante de sensualismo, el mareo de la belleza y de la plenitud de formas de una joven, de la morbidez de sus contornos, de actitudes inocentemente provocadoras, el ardor de fuego de los veinticinco años, exaltado en la poesía de tibia noche de verano [...] (1.69).

Here, the contemplation of Gabriela's voluptuous body, family wealth, and social status merge to provoke in Angel a state of delirious pleasure. Animated by this sensation, Angel plays the part of a young lover, expressing his devotion to Gabriela according to a script crafted by social convention. He fulfills this role with such precision that he ends up believing his own performance, mistaking the rituals of courtship for genuine emotion. Gabriela, likewise makes the same error; enraptured by Angel's dark eyes and muscular physique, she "ignoraba las falsificaciones inconscientes del sentimiento que no viene de

adentro y es despertado por de fuera” (1.34). Due to youthful inexperience, Gabriela fails to recognize the artificial, even counterfeit, nature of emotions incited by sexual attraction, and believes them to be true expressions of her heart.

From Angel’s perspective, the narrator makes clear, Angel’s perception of Gabriela’s family’s wealth played an integral role in provoking those feelings he mistakes for love. While Angel’s motivations cannot be reduced to that of a crass “cazador de dotes,” at the same time, the desire that Angel feels for Gabriela is inextricable from economic considerations. In a moment of introspection, Angel recognizes this truth, thinking, “Si esa joven tan hermosa fuera pobre, pensaba entre sí, tú no acercarías a ella, no pensarías en ella; acaso no te hubieras dignado buscarla, ni perseguirla como lo haces” (1.86). Angel’s lust for wealth and lust for Gabriela are not identical, but they are both means to achieve a certain style of life in which Angel can drive an elegant carriage pulled by thoroughbred horses in the main square on Sunday with a beautiful wife on his arm dressed in the latest Parisian fashions.

The Fictions of Credit

Adding another layer of fictitiousness to the fantasy of love prompted by material lust, in both *Julia* and *Casa grande*, after the characters are married, they discover that the very wealth that had helped to prompt these love-like emotions is also, in part, an illusion. Although they are rich, they do not possess nearly the sums necessary to support their spending habits without going into debt. Both novels describe how the rise of consumer credit has created distortions in the marriage market by enabling families to display an outwards appearance of affluence without possessing the money to back it.

The narrator of *Casa grande* in part blames such post-marriage disillusionment on parents who seek to attract husbands for their daughters by throwing lavish parties they cannot afford. As a result, they present their daughters

en atmósfera de ostentación falsa, de aparato y de lujo efímero que sólo tienen la superficie exterior, la corteza de la fortuna aparentada [...] La gran casa y la hacienda se encuentran hipotecadas, los dividendos no se pagan desde hace años y el lujo es de similar, como ciertas joyas de fascinadoras apariencias, exhibidas sobre el fondo peligroso de terciopelo azul, hermosas á la vista, pero sin peso alguno para quien las toca, ligeramente cubiertas por baño de oro (1.165-166).

Here, the narrator identifies the use of credit as an act of deception that creates a fictitious appearance of wealth exceeding what one's spending power would be otherwise. For, just as jewelry that seems to be solid gold may be gold-plated or even imitation gold, so is it difficult to determine if a person's possessions were purchased with cash or on credit. Indeed, even worse than gold-plated or artificial jewelry, items bought on credit are materially identical to those purchased with cash. Therefore, until the debt collectors arrive debt can pass itself off as wealth.

The narrator of *Julia* likewise explains how widespread availability of credit sets off a dangerous trend in *limeño* society. As each couple competes to outspend the others through the purchase of increasingly lavish luxury items on credit, the appearance of widespread opulence conceals the harsh economic realities of an indebted society:

No es un exceso de rentas, no es la superabundancia de fortuna lo que representa el fausto exterior que reina en Lima. Es la honra empeñada [...] El nuestro es un lujo facticio, excitado imprudentemente todos los días por el recíproco y falso ejemplo de unas familias hácia otras. Es un engaño mútuo permanente (240-3).

Here, the narrator proposes that debt should not be interpreted as the isolated concern of a few spendthrifts, but instead something that is increasingly the norm among Lima's elites.

Lima may seem like a prosperous city, but this is largely an illusion; the city's luxury is essentially "facticio"--artificial, false. The novel, therefore, seeks to shake its readers out of this state of perpetual mutual deception, to make them aware that they are living in what comes to be known as "fictitious prosperity."

Guano Debt's Fictitious Prosperity

In *Julia*, the dangers of excessive spending on credit become the focus of the novel, with debts playing a key role in provoking the crisis at the novel's climax. In particular, Julia's husband Alberto X... stands as the epitome of this trend of creating a false image of affluence by spending beyond one's means. Although Alberto dissipates his income through luxury consumption and gambling at the card table, in the short run, he is able to sustain this lifestyle through the regular access to credit he achieves as a bookkeeper at "una de las principales casas de comercio del país" (93). As the narrator describes, "La vida que llevaba exigia sin embargo una renta mayor que la señalada á su destino, pero como esto acontece á cada paso en Lima, era necesario tener algun motivo para fijarse en ello" (93). Although the novel does not explicitly state that Alberto is involved in the guano trade, it would be a likely source of his income.¹¹⁶

In the 1860s, as guano exports reached around \$20 million per year, the centrality of guano to the Peruvian economy rose precipitously. With the abolition of indigenous tribute payments in 1854, guano replaced taxation as the principal source of funds for the Peruvian government. While guano revenues only comprised five percent of the national budget in 1846-1847, it reached seventy-five percent of the budget by 1861-1866 and

¹¹⁶ Even if the reader is not to assume that Alberto is necessarily working for a guano export company, his job explicitly links him to money that is made through the world of (potentially unscrupulous) commercial exchange.

peaked at eighty percent of the budget between 1869-1875 (Bonilla 128-129). Moreover, despite the fact that about sixty percent of guano revenues were accrued by the Peruvian state, government spending consistently outstripped available funds. To meet its ever-growing budgetary needs, the state turned to the guano merchants who facilitated loans from British capital markets. Banking flourished in this period of free-flowing credit.

I propose that *Julia* offers a fundamental dramatization of the notion that guano-era Peru is a time of “fictitious prosperity.” In this way, the novel lays the groundwork for the later explicit expressions of this concept within economic and historical writings. As we have seen, *Julia* highlights the dangers of credit as the mechanism that creates fictitious prosperity. While the direct portrayal focuses on debts accrued by individuals, these concerns also resonate on an allegorical level in relation to the debts of the Peruvian state. It is important to highlight that debt was not an incidental side effect of the guano economy, but a structural element upon which the guano trade was founded. Guano was the property of the Peruvian government, which contracted out the rights to extract and export the substance. From 1849-1862, the British House of Gibbs held nearly exclusive rights to export guano, and in 1862 these rights passed to a group of Peruvian businessmen who managed the guano trade until 1869. In order to acquire these contracts, however, the consignees needed to extend cash advances to the Peruvian government, which they could recoup with interest from part of the guano revenues. Moreover, the consignees agreed to manage the service on Peru’s external debts to European lenders, by making payments deducted from guano revenues.¹¹⁷ When the House of Gibbs controlled guano exports to Britain, they handled such debt payments directly, and when Peruvian businessmen took

¹¹⁷ See Vizcarra, Quiroz 334.

over as consignees, the management of debt payments was transferred to British commercial house Thomson, Bonar, and Co. As Hunt describes, both domestic and foreign loans to the Peruvian government functioned essentially as “devices for spending guano income before it was earned” (273), particularly on infrastructure projects, bureaucracy, and the military.¹¹⁸ Nevertheless, Peruvian bonds were some of the highest valued Latin American securities on the British bond market. As economist Catalina Vizcarra persuasively argues, the exceptionally high value of Peruvian bonds was a result of investor faith in both the British companies who managed Peru’s debt as well as the prospects of the Peruvian guano industry. For, as long as bondholders believed that Peru’s guano deposits would continue to provide spectacular export revenues, thus permitting Peru to cover its ever-increasing debt payments, the bonds were considered a solid investment. With only brief exceptions, Vizcarra explains this was the case from 1842-1871, reflecting, essentially European faith in guano.

As we saw in chapter one, however, from as early as Mariano Rivero’s scientific report of 1855, there were warnings that perhaps guano would not provide an infinite source of prosperity for Peru. In 1866, Luis Benjamin Cisneros (the author of *Julia*) published *Ensayo sobre varias cuestiones económicas del Perú*, in which he lays out his concerns about the state of the Peruvian economy. Cisneros highlights the dangers of Peru’s dependence on guano revenues to cover debt payments and maintain its standard of living:

si el Perú puede pagar seis millones de su deuda externa y comprar treinta i cinco millones de importaciones extranjeras al año, lo hace solo merced á la riqueza accidental del abono de Chincha. [...] Si las huaneras del Perú se

¹¹⁸ See Cushman 54-58.

agotasen ó degeneran, ó si la ciencia europea descubriera nuevos medios de abonar los campos, cuyo dia no está tal vez muy lejos, ¿qué sucedería? (30).

Cisneros proceeds by offering a series of proposals to invest guano revenues towards the diversification of the Peruvian economy as a means to end its dependence on the extraction of an exhaustible natural resource. He explains his goal as follows: “CONSOLIDAR LA RIQUEZA EXCEPCIONAL DEL HUANO á fin de hacerla indefinidamente productiva” (38). Bringing together Cisneros essay with the novel *Julia*, two key problems with the guano economy come to the forefront. First of all, there is the concern that the economy was based on the extraction of a single, non-renewable natural resource. Secondly, the Peruvian government was accruing skyrocketing, and ultimately unpayable debts to domestic and foreign lenders.¹¹⁹

Published in 1861, *Julia* therefore offers a vision of what Carmen McEvoy has called “la crisis anunciada” of the 1860s, as it prophecies the collapse of the guano economy a little over a decade before the crisis occurs (*Utopía* 78). The negative consequences of Peru’s “fictitious prosperity” are dramatically manifested in *Julia* through a sequence of descriptions of the drawing room furniture in Julia’s father’s house. Andrés notices Julia’s ambitions to marry into Lima’s high society when Julia’s father purchases a piano and “El antiguo juego de té se había transformado, por ejemplo, en otro de hermosas, transparentes y matizadas tazas de china” (72). After Julia’s marriage to Alberto X..., however, Andrés returns to Julia’s fathers house to discover that the luxury items, purchased on credit, have disappeared: “distinguí en la sala, notablemente deteriorados, los

¹¹⁹ Notably, these two elements also appear in Juan Copello and Luis Petriconi’s essay *Estudios sobre la independencia económica*, in which they coin the term “prosperidad ficticia.” While I do not claim any direct influence, or even agreement, between these writers and Cisneros, I do wish to signal cultural patterns in the ways in which the guano economy was conceptualized.

muebles de la antigua. Habia en todo no sé qué cosa de desmantelado y descolorido” (124). Whereas the father had through that though his lavish expenditures, “iba muy pronto á realizar todas sus esperanzas,” he now faces a life in which his savings have been reduced by three-quarters, and he has nothing to show for it other than Julia’s unhappy marriage (129). These images of a transforming drawing room thus offer a condensation of the aspirations of Peruvian elites to achieve the utopia of a European-style modernity through the material manifestation of these dreams in the purchase of imported furniture. The subsequent “quebranto en la fortuna”(126) that Julia’s father experiences stands as a warning that a modern society cannot simply be dreamed into being through a performance of its external manifestations. This simulacrum of prosperity, the novel warns, will inevitably break down to reveal an impoverished society.

For Julia, the consequences of living a life of fictitious prosperity are even more severe. After taking major losses in gambling, Alberto is caught misappropriating company funds for personal use. Alberto flees to Chile, leaving Julia behind to face the fallout of his actions. To make matters worse, Alberto had borrowed vast sums from a lecherous old man, Coronel T*... who moved into their mansion in hopes of having sexual access to Julia as a form of interest payment. Although Julia resists the coronel’s advances, all of Lima knows that the man is living in her house with Alberto’s consent and paying her husband’s debts. This financial impropriety is sufficient evidence of sexual impropriety, and Julia’s reputation is ruined. Through debts, theft, and the tacit sale of his wife, Alberto has not only pawned his and Julia’s honor, he has irrecuperably sold it.

Fevers, Ghosts, and Doubles

The story of Julia's failed marriage with Alberto X... offers readers a straightforward, moralizing warning against the temptations of false luxury and prestige. Beyond this, the novel *Julia* registers the existential crisis wrought by fictitious prosperity by mediating the story of Julia through two nested narrations. The novel opens when the first-person narrator learns that his friend Andrés has fallen severely ill from a mysterious cause related to a woman named Julia. Deeply curious, the narrator pays a visit to his sick friend, who is notably weak and thin, with a yellowish pallor (24). To explain the cause of his prostration, Andrés narrates the story of his love for Julia, and her rejection of him for Alberto X..., which makes up the first three-quarters of the novel.

Andrés's physical debilitation, we learn, is linked to an extreme emotional instability that commenced the day in which Andrés met Julia, as he describes:

Mi amor por Julia creció cada día mas hasta que se convirtió en un delirio continuo. [...] Me hallaba en un estado de fiebre perpetua, fiebre de corazón que alimentaba ó devoraba mi vida segun el número de miradas que Julia me habia dirigido ó el tono en que me habia hablado la noche anterior (50-51).

In this way, Andrés characterizes his mental states as entirely dependent on the capricious whims of the woman he adores. As I will discuss later, in *Casa grande*, Angel also experiences the passion of falling in love as a "fiebre turbadora y sensual" (2.119). These novels' literalizations of the cliché of romantic infatuation as a form of fever resonate with their use of the concept of fever to describe excessive *economic* desire in terms of an unhealthy emotional state. *Julia's* narrator describes the desire for luxury consumption in such terms: "El lujo deslumbra y atrae; da vértigos y produce fiebre" (239). The narrator of *Casa grande*, in turn, describes the passions of stock market investing as "la fiebre de especulación y de la aventura sacudiendo a la población entera, como sobrecojida de un

vértigo” (2.17). As Richard Rosa and Ericka Beckman have discussed, Latin American novels such as Jorge Isaac’s *María* and José Asunción Silva’s *De sobremesa* (1896) have inscribed the fluctuations of the global economy into the afflicted bodies and psyches of their characters as a way of making legible the abstractions of financial instability. As we can see with the use of the term “fever,” such novelistic strategies are available to writers precisely because the genre of economic analysis also relies on the language of bodies and emotions. Additionally, as Audrey Jaffe describes, the associations between economic and emotional fluctuations that appear in both literary and non-literary texts express an uneasy notion that there may be a dangerous causal link between the two, such that—in the most extreme case—the ups and downs of the economy might be little more than an expression of the collective emotional instability of a body politic (64-65).

I propose that in Andrés’s tormented body and mind, the novel offers an image of the degradation of the Peruvian male subject as a consequence of guano’s fictitious prosperity. At the climax of the novel, Andrés’s chronic, feverish instability reaches its breaking point, throwing Andrés into a state of utter psychosis during which he attempts suicide, before falling into the ill state in which the novel’s narrator first finds him. As Andrés lies in bed, suffering from pneumonia and still pining over the beautiful Julia, his state recalls that of the romantic consumptive heroine, or a male version of Jorge Isaac’s epileptic María. In his extreme psychic instability, moreover, Andrés offers a literary precursor to the *modernist* decadent, and particularly the protagonist of José Asunción Silva’s *De sobremesa*.¹²⁰ This latter comparison is particularly compelling in the context of

¹²⁰ That the economic fragility of the guano economy should be registered in the body and psyche of a male creole is notable because, as Ericka Beckman argues, in nineteenth century Latin American literature economic instability is most commonly projected onto

Beckman's reading of *De sobremesa*, which posits "decadence as a guiding concept for understanding bankruptcy and failure in late nineteenth-century Spanish America" (129). The appearance of a physically and emotionally volatile creole male protagonist in *Julia*, a mid-century romantic novel that is intensely preoccupied with Peru's guano-backed debts and impending bankruptcy lends support to Beckman's argument, while at the same time disrupting the chronology she proposes. Here, it is useful to draw again on the model of Shapiro's concept of "gothic periodicity" to consider how the figure of what Beckman calls "a male sign of crisis" (139) in both fin de siglo *decadentismo* and the romantic novel *Julia* coincide with (or foretell) the periodic recurrence of Latin American sovereign debt crises.

Andrés explains to the narrator that the direct cause of his nervous breakdown is a conversation that he has with Julia after her husband went bankrupt and fled to Chile, leaving her alone with the lecherous Coronel T*.... In this meeting, Julia tells Andrés that she loves him and that she was wrong to have married Alberto X.... She begs Andrés to move with her to a peripheral neighborhood of Lima, to live a quiet life, "humildes, escondidos é ignorados, pero tranquilos y felices" (217). Andrés almost consents. Then Julia breaks the news to Andrés that she is pregnant, and while she claims that Alberto is the father, Andrés suspects that the father could just as easily be the Coronel. Horrified, he begins to question the truth of Julia's entire story, particularly her confession of love to him. Could it all be an elaborate ruse so that her child would have a father? Andrés describes:

the bodies of women and racialized others, such as Jews. Although *Julia* falls into this dominant pattern to the extent that Julia is identified as the cause of the novel's crisis, the crisis itself manifests in Andrés's mental breakdown.

Pensé que Julia me engañaba y que en el fondo de todo lo que acababa de referirme había una farsa de secreto é irresistible amor hácia mi por la más hábil perfidia de mujer. [...] Yo me sentía enloquecer por momentos. En vano traté de moderar mis ímpetus para disimular la espantosa agitación de todo mi ser. La idea de su engaño me venía á cada instante y llegó á sobreponerse á toda reflexión (218-220).

Here, Andrés describes his emotional disturbance as provoked by the inability to distinguish whether Julia's professed love for him was genuine or false. The fact that he had initially lent credit to her words, trusting that she truly loved him, made this incursion of doubt all the more disruptive. After the initial shock of realization that Julia could be seeking to pass off false love as genuine, Andrés becomes even more distraught when he considers her future child. For, even if Julia's love for him were real, the child they would raise together would never truly belong to him. Andrés recounts to the narrator his harsh words for Julia, in which he says:

“Yo comenzaría por hacerle caricias [al hijo], seguiría por quererle, terminaría por adorarle. Ese niño llegaría á hacerse una afección para mi alma y una alegría para nuestra casa. Al verlo,” añadí con un acento de amargura é ironía que hizo estremecer á Julia, “el mundo, el mundo lo llamaría *mi hijo!*” [...] “Y sin embargo,” agregué, “yo no sería su padre! Él me daría este nombre, él me amaría también y todos los días vendría corriendo hácia mi para abrazar mis rodillas. Cuando suspendido en mis brazos, tomando de sus labios el beso de la inocencia, me viniera el pensamiento, Julia, de que su padre, otro hombre que no soy yo, había recogido un beso igual de los labios de Vd., ¿qué pasaría por mi? Además, ¿qué nombre llevaría este niño? Llevaría el mío?” (222-224)

Notably, the fear that Andrés expresses here is not that he could never love another man's son, but rather, the fear that he could. As he raised Julia's boy, Andrés would come to love the child as if he were his own. Their father-son relationship would seem and even feel genuine. Reinforcing these sentiments, the boy would circulate in the world as if he were

truly Andrés's son.¹²¹ And yet, Andrés insists, the boy would forever be a false child and their family a fictitious family, built on a lie. Although the unborn child may actually be the technically legitimate son of Julia and her husband Alberto, Andrés cannot know who the father is beyond the certainty that the boy is not his own. Here, we might ask, as Jean-Joseph Goux does in his analysis of *The Counterfeiters*, "Why is *surrogation* irremediably expressed here as usurpation, lie, falsehood?" (38). To answer this question it is useful to consider the symbolic importance of the bourgeois nuclear family as the imagined foundation of the nation in nineteenth century Latin America. Read allegorically, Julia's proposal to construct a fictitious nuclear family based is akin to falsifying the nation.

In an image that will reappear in a different form in *Casa grande*, Andrés foresees a future in which he could almost be happy with this surrogate family. However, the truth of this falseness would reassert itself in a kiss from the young boy to his stepfather. For, this intangible moment of intimacy would carry within it the echoes of the kisses associated with the child's conception. In this way, he realizes that he would forever be haunted by the illegitimacy at the foundation of his nearly happy, fictitious family.

As Andrés leaves Julia's house in a daze, and wanders through the misty streets of Lima, the haunting suggested in the passage above takes on a literal form as Andrés becomes seized by the panic that he is being followed by some unknown being: "Volví á creer que me perseguian y marché á largos pasos, corriendo por momentos. Mas de una vez retrocedí ante los árboles de la alameda, creyéndolos inmensos fantasmas que se avanzaban hácia mí" (230). At one point, he finds himself near the ruins of a chapel on Cerro San Critóbal, which overlooks the city, as he describes: "Instintivamente me acerqué

¹²¹ Goux writes: "The son is like circulating money whose guarantee of value and whose original form issue from the father who stamped him in his own image" (41).

á él. Ese arco, último fragmento de una antigua y humilde capilla, se levanta allí como el símbolo histórico de la primera oración que el sacerdote cristiano elevó bajo el cielo de Lima ante Pizarro y su corte de guerreros” (228). In this way, Andrés’s troubled wandering “instinctively” connects the shock of Julia’s proposal of false paternity with the material ruins of the Spanish Conquest. Looking out over the city, Andrés is haunted by the violence of the nation’s forefathers: “me sentí poseído de recuerdos históricos, y sobrecogido de un extraño terror, me pregunté qué sería Lima, hace doscientos años, en una noche igual, cuando la Inquisición, según las tradiciones del vulgo, hacía deslizar en las calles oscuras y aisladas su carroza sombría!” (229). His panic grows as these images mingle with the memory of Julia “pálida, llorosa, desolada, tal como acababa de verla” (229). Like we saw in Juana Manuela Gorriti’s precious metal melodramas, therefore, *Julia* evokes the violent past of the Spanish conquest and colonization, in the moment it seeks to express the guano era as a moment of crisis. The illegitimacy of a society founded in the Spanish conquest thus finds its repetition in the illegitimate social order of the guano era, founded on moral and economic insolvency. Finally, “en el último límite de la enajenación mental,” Andrés throws himself in front of a carriage, in an attempt to commit suicide (231).

However, this is not the end of the story, for the worker driving the carriage recognizes Andrés and brings him home to recover. Having endured a complete psychic breakdown, and “amparado de un profundo valor moral,” Andrés determines to forget Julia and start a new life (270). He proposes marriage to Julia’s sister, Pepa, who is more a modest, intelligent and economical than her capricious sister. However, Andrés confesses that such traits are not what attracts him to Pepa. Instead, it’s the familial resemblance that she shares with Julia, as Andrés explains, “á quien yo adivinaba, contemplaba y amaba al

través de Pepa era á su prima. Mi imaginacion comenzó por ver en la una la sombra purificadora de la otra; mi corazon fue a poco á poco identificándolas, y terminé por adorar en aquella la trasfiguracion de Julia!" (274). In this way, we see how Andrés's plan for a fresh start is based on shifting his object of desire from one woman to her doppelgänger. As such, it can hardly be seen to represent a true recovery from his crisis, but rather a bizarre duplicative prolongation of his same feverish infatuation.

This transference of emotion from one woman to her double, however, is cut short when Julia shows up on their doorstep. Andrés realizes that he does not love the copy, only the original, and breaks off his engagement with Julia's sister. Julia begs Andrés for forgiveness, explaining that her husband has died, and providing a letter from Coronel T*... as evidence that she never had sex with him. With false rumors dispelled and all debts exposed, Andrés and Julia move to Buenos Aires and get married. In this way, the novel seeks to bring the illusions of the guano era to a close, or at least, to transfer them to Argentina.

Fictions of Nitrate Speculation

As we have seen in Peru, the notion of guano-era prosperity as "fictitious" centered on a system in which the government contracted ever-increasing debts backed by the promise of extraction of a rapidly depleting natural resource. This economic situation was most prominently symbolized, in turn, by the figure of an indebted consumer who spends excessive sums on luxury consumption to give an appearance of wealth not backed by reality. In Chilean cultural production, as I will demonstrate, concerns about the "fictitiousness" of nitrate-era prosperity were expressed through the figure of the financial speculator in addition to the indebted luxury consumer.

In *Casa grande*, the household crises that confront the unhappily married couple, Angel and Gabriela, are linked both to their mounting debts as well as Angel's risky stock market speculations. However, throughout the first volume of the novel, there is barely a word about the stock market. Then, suddenly, at the opening of the novel's second volume, we discover that Angel may have invested Gabriela's inheritance in a financial scam, namely in shares of a company that claimed to be mining nitrates in a region where none existed. After introducing a scene of financial panic, the narrator backtracks and seeks to construct an account of how this could have occurred.¹²² One explanation is offered by an astute speculator named Cristóbal Raigada, who describes the typical behavior of Chilean speculators:

Se meten á cuánto asunto se presenta, decia, sin saber por dónde ván tablas...organizan directorios con gran lujo y reparto de acciones liberadas. En seguida meten el tonto á los amigos, como haciéndoles gran favor, y los clavan con quinientas ó mil acciones á cada uno. A veces las acciones salen con prima. Entonces todos tienen las caras risueñas. Y suben, y suben sin límite. Allá ván la comida donde Gage, con champaña; salen al Parque las victorias con llantas de goma, arrastradas por caballos ingleses. Y la mujer se abre cuenta donde Prá ó Muzard por cinco mil pesos probablemente se pagarán en el dia del juicio...ejecutivo. Pero un buen dia, que fatalmente llega, cuando los directores sólo conservan el número de acciones reglamentarias, se produce la baja, pues viene á descubrirse que no hai estaño, ni cobre, ni salitre, ni ganados, en aquellos tan estupendos negocios...sólo quedan el hoyo pelado y los títulos impresos (2.10-11).

The fictitious prosperity of consumer debt—the account opened at Prá or Muzard—is here only an amplification of the even more troubling form of fictitious prosperity that is facilitated through stock market investments, and specifically the money that can be earned through investments in companies that do not even exist. Notably, by only

¹²² Likewise, the novel skips suddenly from the peak of Angel and Gabriela's courtship to the abyss of their life as an unhappy couple sleeping in separate bedrooms, before backtracking to narrate the decline of their relationship.

providing this narrative after the panic hits, the novel's storytelling strategy mimics patterns of discourse typical in periods of financial boom and bust. That is, when times are good, and there's money to be made, relatively little public attention is paid to the details of finance. But, as soon as crisis hits, narratives proliferate from a multitude of sources, as people seek to construct the previously un-narrated boom in order to make sense of the subsequent bust.¹²³ How was it that Angel and his fellow speculators ended up investing in companies that only existed on paper? And, even more troubling, how were they—in the short term at least—able to make money through such actions?

These are not things that we saw in Peruvian fiction of the guano era. The appearance of the stock market in nitrate era Chilean fiction speaks to elite anxieties about the new forms of economic relationships and phenomena made possible through joint stock companies. Although joint stock companies had existed in Chile since the 1850s, the nitrate era was marked by a boom in the formation of new companies and financial speculation. From the start, the nitrate industry distinguished itself from guano due to the fact that the nitrate mines were privately owned and operated by joint stock companies, with Chilean and British investments most prominent, even while they were located in Peruvian and Bolivian territory. Indeed, the War of the Pacific was prompted by efforts on the part of the Peruvian and Bolivian governments to share in the benefits of nitrate extraction, either through quasi-nationalization in the case of Peru, or taxation in the case of Bolivia. After annexing the nitrate-producing regions, however, Chile imposed its own taxes on the industry. It has been estimated that a third of nitrate profits went towards tax

¹²³ Even more, as Harvey and Jaffe discuss, it is only after the crisis that you can actually know which fictitious values are based in production and which are not.

payments, which in turn comprised more than half of total government revenues.¹²⁴ As a result, as Collier and Sater write, “for forty years *salitre* almost single-handedly propelled the economy and supported the Chilean government” (169). Thus, we can see how this second incarnation of the Fertilizer Age resembles the guano era in terms of the striking transformative power of the fertilizer export sector, while at the same time manifesting a different arrangement of economic relations.

Novels such as *Casa grande* grapple with troubling questions raised by the ability to profit from the purchase and sale of company shares whose prices may or may not reflect the actual productivity of the company.¹²⁵ Its fictitious accounts of blatantly fraudulent ventures seek through humor to clearly distinguish sound investments from those that are foolhardy. At the same time, they express a marked anxiety about a financial system in which such frauds can pass as real, in which people can profit from investing mining companies without tin, or copper, or nitrates. The very possibility of the existence of en “sociedades ganaderas sin ganados y sin tierras” and “salitreras sin salitre” signals a key structural aspect of stock market investing, namely the disjunction between the company itself and the representation of the company on the stock market (1.58). Here, it is useful to consider Marx’s discussion of what he calls “fictitious capital” in volume three of *Capital*.¹²⁶

¹²⁴ See Collier and Sater 162-169.

¹²⁵ Business fraud appears as a prevalent trope in Chilean cultural production of the nitrate era. The cultural periodicals *Zig-zag* and *Sucesos* published articles, short stories, and comics with such schemes as a factory that purportedly could synthesize eggs without hens (Pug. “La fabricacion de huevos.” *Zig-zag*. March 19, 1905.) and a company to craft floating summer resorts from Antarctic icebergs with costumed polar bears (“Sensación (Historia veridica de una gran especulacion)” *Zig-zag*. Feb 26, 1905.)

¹²⁶ Before Marx, Simonde de Simondi referred to credit as “fictitious capital” in an 1834 essay (217-218). Simondi also describes credit as “immaterial capital,” writing that it functions as a “capitalization of the future” and “an exchange of a reality against a hope” (cited in Perelman 181-182). Other classical economists, including Adam Smith and David

When investors purchase stock in a company, Marx explains, they are in providing that company with funds that can be used towards increased production.¹²⁷ The stock certificates, in turn, serve as “titles of ownership” to a designated portion of that company’s future revenues (549). The temporality of this arrangement is key, because it means that the holder has right to an imagined quantity of value that is expected (or hoped) to exist in the future, but that has not yet been created. Therefore, Marx writes, stocks are “paper duplicates” of capital that is (hopefully) being created through expanded production (560).¹²⁸

Complicating matters further, these “paper duplicates” can be bought and sold on the stock market at prices that can fluctuate due a variety of factors including interest rates and supply and demand for the stocks, which bear no reflection on actual changes in company productivity. Marx writes, “as duplicates serving themselves as commodities for sale and thus circulating as capital-values they are illusory, and their value may fall or rise independently of the value of the actual capital upon which they represent a claim” (560). The question facing stock market investors, therefore, is at what price should a company’s stock be traded? When determining which stocks to buy or sell, they are faced with the challenge of seeking to predict the future productivity of a company. This temporal

Ricardo, also expressed concerns about the potentially “fictitious” properties of credit. For a comparative analysis of the use of the term “fictitious capital” within European political economy, see Michael Perelman’s *Marx’s Crises Theory*. Paper money is one of the “fictitious” credit mechanisms that attracted particular concern among classical economists.

¹²⁷ For a cogent analysis of Marx’s theories of “fictitious capital,” see David Harvey’s *The Limits to Capital*.

¹²⁸ As a result of the creation of these paper duplicates of imagined future value, and other financial mechanisms, Marx writes that “capital seems to double, or even treble itself” so that “the same capital, or perhaps the same claim on a debt, appears in different forms in different hands...everything is duplicated and triplicated in this credit system and commuted into a mere fiction” (553-6).

challenge is compounded by a spatial one, for speculators are nearly always located at a significant geographic distance from the companies in which they invest. For this reason, they must rely on representations and narratives about companies' current and projected future productivity; as Jaffe writes, "they necessarily invest in something other than facts: they invest in narratives about companies and commodities, for instance, and in their hopes as wishes about those narratives" (65). So, investors turn to available information put out by the company, journalists, financial analysts as they seek to imagine how profitable the company will be in the future. Ultimately, therefore, the price of the stock expresses a collectively determined belief, or hope, maybe well informed, maybe not, about a company's economic prospects. It is a sort of fiction, whether or not the company is fraudulent.¹²⁹

Casa grande expresses anxiety about the structurally fictitious nature of stock market investing by focusing on financial scams. The narrator offers a carnivalesque portrayal of absurd and fraudulent companies that pass as real when floated on the stock exchange. The speculator, Raigada describes:

Nos hemos empapelado todos, engañándonos los unos á los otros con nombres sonoros, sociedades auríferas en donde apenas y hay agua y...piedras; ganaderas en bosques inaccesibles, á no ser para las águilas [...] De todo se forma sociedades: una de hielo en el Polo antártico, otra de *adoquines de aire comprimido*, y la de 'Pompas Fúnebres Consolidadas'...sin duda para enterrar á los demás (2.10-11).

¹²⁹ Marx writes, "The market value of these papers is in part fictitious, as it is not determined merely by actual income, but also by the expected income, which is calculated in advance" (550).

Through the magic of finance, it seems that anything, from the air we breathe to funerals, can be assigned a price and traded for profits.¹³⁰ This passage describes how investors in Santiago have become so wrapped up in the reality projected by the paper representations of companies traded on the stock market that they've lost the ability to distinguish between legitimate and fraudulent business ventures. They might suspect that some of the companies are not solid investments, that the representation of the companies' current and future productivity presented by share prices have soared far beyond any connection with economic activity on the ground. However, the investors are blinded by the possibility of profits in the short term, so they do not seriously entertain such doubts, as the narrator describes: "Angel, como los demás, se veía arrastrado por el vértigo del juego de la Bolsa, poseído del ánsia de dinero, para él de todo punto indispensable, condición esencial para el mantenimiento de su rango social" (2.19). We see again, the notion of mutual deception among members of the elite that the narrator of *Julia* identifies as a central factor in the accumulation of debts. Propelling this mutual deception further, friends convince friends to buy stock, "haciendo propaganda entre sus íntimos, á quienes aseguraba, con la mayor buena fé, que esa sociedad, cuyos minerales y ubicación él no conocía, era la más rica del mundo" (2.17). As a result, beliefs in the future prospects of the companies, and therefore the share prices, become increasingly inflated. For as long as the investors maintain their faith in the potential profits of the companies, the stock prices continue to rise, quite independently of whether or not these beliefs are being transformed into economic activity

¹³⁰ In effect, there was a corporation, Pompas Funebres "La Central," which advertised in *El Mercurio* (Santiago) in 1906. The very fact that companies selling icebergs and compressed air do not sound absurd to a twenty-first century reader speaks not only to technological advances but also the increased financialization of our world, in which even carbon emissions can be traded on global markets.

on behalf of the companies. Such price increases occur even if the companies do not deserve the confidence of investors. Even if the companies have no material existence.

This inflated confidence is shaken when a counter-narrative emerges that spreads doubts about one particular company in which Angel has invested. A report comes out saying that the nitrate mining company, named Malveo, does not exist, except for on paper. The region that the company claimed to be mining did not have even a trace of nitrates. With this news, the investors begin to panic:

El Informe era horrible: jamás habían existido rastros de sales potásicas en Malveo; aquello era una inmensa burla hecha al candor de los suscriptores de la Sociedad. La noticia del informe se extendía como una mancha de aceite, queriendo todos leerla y comentarla á un tiempo. No faltaban agentes del Directorio que afirmaran con certidumbre, cómo les constaba que el ingeniero se había vendido y que ni siquiera había estado en los campos de Malveo, haciendo su informe desde Santiago (2.35).

Angel is faced now, with two competing accounts of what the value of the nitrate mining company should be. On the one hand, the report says that the company is bogus. But, Angel's friends claim that the report is a scheme perpetuated by Jewish speculators to tank the stock so they can buy it on the cheap. They trumpet the mine's prospects with even greater vigor: "Malveo es una riqueza enorme, señor, es el primer yacimiento de potasa del mundo!" (2.30). Who is lying, Angel wonders, the supporters of the company or the report? Are the sinister intentions of the Jewish speculators disseminating the report sufficient evidence of its falsity? The problem is that Angel had never been to Malveo either. His only knowledge about the company is based on the different written and oral representations of the company's existence and potential, or lack thereof. Who, then, should he believe? In the end, neither Angel nor the readers find out which one was the fake: the mining company or the report. For, ultimately it does not matter; the report sows sufficient doubt to spur a

panic. Investors dump their stocks, selling them at any price, and the value of the stocks collapses.

However, by focusing on utterly fraudulent companies—nitrate mining without nitrates, livestock companies without any sheep or cows—the novel is offering a somewhat simplified version of the problem. For, the whole reason that fake companies can be traded as if they were real is because the value of all stocks—for both legitimate and illegitimate companies—are necessary, functional fictions, without an attenuated relationship to the material productivity of the company. The novel's portrayal of the stock market panic offers a dramatic, but ultimately simplified account of Chile's fictitious prosperity of the nitrate era. If we turn to the novel's portrayal of Angel's romantic desires and deceptions, I believe we find a more nuanced and compelling model for finance. Through the plot of Angel's falling in and out of love, the novel offers an allegorical narrative of financial crisis in more personalized terms.

Casa grande's characterization of the fictitiousness of stock market wealth builds on the analogy between the realms of romance and finance that I discussed earlier in this chapter. *Casa grande* highlights throughout how both the financial and romantic spheres are ruled by the realm of representations—outward appearances and rumors that obfuscate or even displace the inner truth of companies and people. Like a suitor who seeks to determine that true character, the inner value of a potential spouse, so does an investor struggle to discern the proper value of stocks in a society that is characterized by false appearances. Marriage, we learn, is a form of investment, and a particularly risky one. As a consequence of the false appearances and deceptive emotions that pervaded his courtship with Gabriela, Angel “Se exajeraba á sí mismo el valor de todo eso [Gabriela's attributes],

dándolo por único, por irremplazable” (1.96). Then, like overvalued stocks whose prices collapse, Angel’s love for Gabriela vanishes when they live together. The lover of Angel’s dreams, the woman that he had idealized while they were dating, disappears to reveal a mundane, undesirable wife and mother. It’s not that she was an outright fraud, but rather that a confluence of factors led to what his overvaluation of his future spouse.

Moreover, the crisis of Angel and Gabriela’s marriage, which occurs on the same day as this financial panic, is marked as well by the circulation of narratives. While attending an elegant party, Gabriela overhears her friends gossiping about a scene that Angel had caused recently at the opera. The rumor was that Angel had punched a local government official backstage, and apparently they were fighting over an Italian opera singer, Biondi Campanelli. Worse, Gabriela learns, the loads of money that he has been spending on jewels and hotel rooms for her have been the talk of the town, as Gabriela’s friend remarks: “si todo Santiago conoce las historias de Angel con la Biondi Campanelli” (1.204). That evening, Gabriela leaves her husband, taking their children with her. The issue was not that he was having an affair. Angel and Gabriela had not slept together in years and both knew that their marriage was only for show. Rather, Gabriela was furious because Angel had caused a scandal. He had publically shamed them, hurt their reputation, “arrastraba el nombre de sus hijos por el lodo,” by making their marriage a subject of gossip (2.46). Ultimately, we learn that the rumored fistfight at the opera was “una fábula ridícula” that had never occurred (2.48). Even so, the false story has done the same damage to their reputation as if it had been true. In this way, *Casa grande* emphasizes the power of narrative and belief in provoking crisis in Angel’s finances and marriage.

The Curse of Repetition

It is in the second half of the plot, however, when the novel becomes increasingly bizarre, drawing on the tropes of doubles and ghosts that we saw in *Julia*, but in even more extravagant ways. Despite the stock market panic, Angel is able to escape total ruin by defecting to the side of the *bajistas* and selling off his stock in Malveo just in time.¹³¹ This decision proves fateful to Angel's friend Justino Vanard, who had been relying on Angel's support to sustain the value of the stock. With Angel's betrayal, Justino is ruined. He commits suicide, shooting himself in the head with his revolver. Angel is saddened by his friend's death, but this emotion is only temporary. For, the sale of the stock that ruined Justino provides Angel with the opportunity for a new start. Faced with the ruin of his marriage, Angel resolves to set himself on a path of reform. He must leave behind the seductions of extramarital affairs and wild stock market speculations, and become a husband and investor in which people can have confidence. He pledges himself to the task of moral and financial recovery: "seguro de rehacer su vida y su hogar en una nueva primavera" (2.73). The reference to the cycle of seasons in this quote presages the non-linearity that will soon emerge in the novel's temporality. When Angel looks ahead to his future, he hopes to recapture the bliss of his past in a "new spring." A contradiction emerges between Angel's plan of discipline to rein in his excesses of passion, and his nostalgic dreams to recover the very period of his life that was most characterized by these

¹³¹ In *fin de siglo* novels about finance, it is conventional for the speculator to die a violent death as the culmination of his economic ruin: drowning in a shipping container of wheat in *The Octopus* (1901), smashed by a train in *The Prime Minister* (1876), or even consumed by a monstrous personification of the stock market in *La bolsa* (1891). By allowing Angel to survive and then doubling back onto itself, as I will describe, the plot of *Casa grande* elaborates on the conventional trajectory of *fin de siglo* financial novels, which offer linear accounts of rise and fall.

flights of fantasy. As he flees from the disillusion of the present, therefore, his ideal future betrays an inability to recognize the connection between the pleasures of springtime and the brutal disenchantment of fall. That is, while claiming to learn from his past mistakes, he longs to repeat them.

To jumpstart this process, Angel decides to travel to Europe. However, things do not go as planned...or perhaps they do. The incarnation of Angel's dream of a new spring comes in the form of Nelly, a beautiful young woman from the United States, who is the daughter of a robber baron. As soon as he sees her, Angel is overwhelmed by her startling resemblance to his wife:

Era Gabriela, con algunos años menos, surgiendo nuevamente en su vida [...] En la finura de las manos, delicadas, de los piés, del talle, del aire tan distinguido, del conjunto, como producto y flor de varias jeneraciones de aristocracia seleccionada, sintió ese *algo* que tanto le habia conmovido con súbitas palpitaciones de corazón hacía ya muchos años (2.74-75).

Notably, Angel does not perceive Nelly as looking similar to Gabriela; instead, to him, she is Gabriela. Nelly is the Gabriela that he courted six years prior, or rather she is the ideal of woman that Angel fell in love with. Familiar sensations begin to return to Angel, recalling the early days of his romance with Gabriela. As happened when Angel first met Gabriela, he falls madly in love with Nelly, giving himself over once again to the dangerous euphoria of romance: "El deseo y las aspiraciones del amor vivían en su alma en estado latente y surgían, por esa asociación de semejanza física entre la joven americana y Gabriela, en una forma tan violenta y súbita que lo entregaban desarmado, en brazos del azar" (2.77). In a desperate attempt at rationalization, Angel convinces himself that a flirtation with Nelly is the spark he needs to restore his shattered domestic life: "se decia á sí mismo que era aquello el principio de su rejeneración y esas emociones la reproducción fiel de las sentidas

en otro tiempo con Gabriela. ¿Y por qué no habrían de repetirse cuando la viera, en su hogar restaurado, al iniciar la nueva vida?" (2.84).

When Angel returns to Chile, and reunites with Gabriela, however, he realizes that he will never again desire his wife. While his romance with Nelly had revived old feelings, such emotions do not transfer to the woman he had married. The copy, Nelly, had completely replaced the original, Gabriela, as Angel's object of desire. Moreover, Angel discovers, the 1907 financial crisis has hit Chile. For, just as Angel failed to resist the seductions of romance in Europe, his friends and business associates who had promised to become wise, rational investors had once again got swept up in the passions of risky financial speculations. The crisis itself, however, receives minimal mention in the text; there is a sense of redundancy that surrounds it. Angel's friends make the same comments about their rash speculations in mines without mineral deposits, and crack the same joke about a joint-stock company formed to sell funerals (2.11, 2.127). Everything is the same as last time, only worse. So once again, Angel commits to a plan of reform, stating that *this time* he will become a serious, hard working family man. However, such promises are no longer convincing, even to himself. Angel's economic situation becomes increasingly desperate as he spirals into debt, and yet he remains unable to restrain his and Gabriela's spending habits: "Le parecía mala comedia, ya demasiado prolongada, que torturaba su existencia [...] A los dos meses de regreso á Chile, ya se encontraba en el antiguo círculo vicioso" (2.155-163). The novel, too, seems to have gone on for too long by this point. After transitioning abruptly from the euphoric pleasures of Europe, it becomes an eerie rehash of all the problems that Angel had faced before his vacation.

As a result, *Casa grande* stands out by presenting a model of Chilean nitrate era economy that is based on the repetition of vacillation between the poles of boom and bust. Just as Angel's mental states are characterized by extreme volatility, "el cual se alternaban las grandes depresiones morales con las exaltaciones incontenibles de los temperamentos impulsivos" (1.152), so do the events of the plot trace the repeated ups and downs of Angel's romantic and financial situation. By the time of *Casa grande's* publication in 1908, the lived experience of financial crisis was quite familiar to Chilean readers. For the prosperity that nitrate mining brought to Chile was a particularly unstable prosperity, tied to the global fluctuations in nitrate prices. Economic downturns hit Chile with unsettling frequency.¹³² When demand for nitrates was high, Chile's economy boomed. But drops in prices led to mass-layoffs from the mines, and unemployed workers would migrate to the capital city, in search of shelter and livelihood.¹³³ In particular, the events of *Casa grande* occur over the period 1900-1907, during which time Chile experienced two consecutive speculative bubbles and financial crises. First, a localized panic hit the Santiago stock market in 1905, followed by a total collapse in the wake of the Panic of 1907 on Wall Street, which precipitated a global financial crisis. Beyond this most immediate referent, the 1870s speculative bubble around Chilean investments in Bolivian silver mines in the Atacama Desert and the 1890s bubble around British investments in nitrates remained fresh in people's memories. I believe that *Casa grande* gives voice to a growing frustration with the susceptibility of the Chilean economy to economic instability.

¹³² Loveman cites "periodic depressions" in 1896-98, 1907, 1914-15, 1919-20, and 1926-27 (170).

¹³³ See Loveman 153-160.

Beyond that, I propose that the thematization of repetition within *Casa grande* is linked to an anxiety of the time about the potential that the economic crises witnessed in Peru could occur in Chile. The guano era in Peru loomed in the Chilean imaginary, presaging an impending disaster within Chile. Chilean historian Francisco Antonio Encina describes such fears in his essay *Nuestra inferioridad económica* (1912):

desde el momento mismo en que Chile adquirió la nueva riqueza [...] flotaba, pues, en la atmósfera la idea de que el salitre iba a causar en Chile los trastornos que el guano en el Perú. En las Cámaras, en la prensa y en el folleto, se hacían frecuentes alusiones a siniestros vaticinios que se ponía en boca de eminentes estadistas o de extranjeros distinguidos (128).

In particular, the preponderant role of nitrate taxes in sustaining the Chilean government seemed eerily similar to the Peruvian government's dependence on guano. Although Encina seeks to dismiss this notion that the curse of guano will find its repetition within Chile's nitrate era, he notes that such a belief has been "aceptada hasta hoy sin contradicción por la unanimidad de nuestros intelectuales" (127). Such concern about the troubling parallels between the guano and nitrate eras is evident in Chilean politician Francisco Valdés Vergara's *Problemas económicos de Chile* (1913). Valdés Vergara writes:

Desde la guerra del Pacífico vamos marchando por la misma pendiente que arrastró al Perú a su situación actual; la cuantiosa renta que el Estado recibe por la exportación del salitre produce aquí los mismos efectos que la renta fiscal del guano produjo en el Perú: adormece al Gobierno y a la sociedad en general con la apariencia engañosa de una riqueza inagotable y nos condena a caer de golpe, por cualquiera circunstancia adversa, como cayó el Perú, en verdadero estado de miseria (205).

Peru's guano era thus appears as an augur for the impending, inevitable dissolution of the nitrate era's fictitious prosperity. For, like guano, nitrates are an exhaustible resource, and will therefore eventually be exhausted, as Valdés Vergara writes, "Si estos fueron inagotables Chile habría encontrado lo que no existe sino en los cuentos de hadas, tendría

más tesoros que los encerrados en la famosa cueva de Alí Babá” (327). However, an even greater threat was approaching on the horizon, following the 1908 discovery of the Haber-Bosch process to synthesize ammonia from the air. In 1913, the first factory dedicated to production of artificial fertilizer opened in Germany. Indeed, Valdés Vergara’s concerns about competition from synthetic fertilizer proved to be well founded. Following the 1929 stock market crash, the Chilean industry collapsed in the 1930s, leaving behind ghost towns that dot the desert to this day.

Ghosts of Fictitious Prosperity

At the time of *Casa grande*’s publication, the sense that the nitrate industry was doomed to follow the fate of guano was largely overshadowed by the vigorous global demand for Chilean fertilizer. Even so, the novel’s emphasis on cyclical repetition and its repetition of tropes and plot points that appear in *Julia* opens up the possibility of a reading of the novel as broader allegory of the Fertilizer Age.

In the final section of *Casa grande*, Angel vacillates wildly between pledges of economic reform and uncontrollable debt and financial speculation as he alternates between dedicating himself to his wife and fantasizing about his beautiful American lover. Little by little, a “tentación infernal” begins to take hold of Angel—he will kill his wife, Gabriela, and move to the United States to live happily ever after with Nelly (2.96). So, one night, when Gabriela asks Angel to give her a morphine injection, he injects Gabriela with poison instead and kills her. However, when the deed is done, Angel does not sail off to the United States to live out his fantasized romance. Overwrought, he is beset by a hallucination, in which he imagines that he sees Nelly in his bedroom. Yet, as Angel reaches

out to embrace her, he discovers that the vision is really Gabriela's reanimated corpse. As days pass, Angel interprets the significance of this ghostly vision:

Comprendía que la imagen de la muerta, que esa alucinación maldita de aquella fantasma que no lograba separar de sí, volvería de nuevo á perseguirle cuando tuviera á Nelly en sus brazos. [...] Y sus besos tendrían perpétuamente un sabor á crimen, y sus abrazos frío de muerte, y en sus éxtasis amorosos un súbito hielo de cadáver (2.228).

The happiness of Angel's future would always carry within it the violence that had made it possible. Following this revelation, Angel cannot continue on the same path. To recreate his euphoric love with Nelly, Angel would have to find a way not just to kill Gabriela, but also to forget her, which after the hallucination has become be impossible. In an abrupt ending to the novel, Angel kneels before the crucifix in his bedroom and prays for forgiveness. It is as if the novel itself, which had been driven by the pleasures of Angel's unquenchable desire for women and riches, cannot continue in the face of the brutality of its own logic.

At the end, the novel invokes a quote from Kempis: "Vanidad es buscar riquezas percederas y esperar en ellas. También es vanidad desear honras y ensalzarse vanamente. Vanidad es seguir el apetito de la carne [...] Vanidad es amar lo que tñn presto pasa..." (2.230). With such heavy-handed moralizing, *Casa grande* seems to offer piety as a solution for the excesses of the era. And yet, for Angel, this turn to guilt and ascetic mysticism is also a repetition of his past. Notably, Angel first experienced his adoration of Gabriela as a rush of religious passion upon seeing her receive communion in a Catholic Church. Moreover, in the first part of the novel, the narrator describes Angel's tendency to experience

períodos súbitos de misticismo exaltado, en los cuales se creía covertido [sic] en criminal, exagerando sus deslices de juventud, transformados por su imaginación en montañas de sombra, y lloraba tambien las faltas de su padre y de los suyos. Poníase cilicios, se encerraba en un retiro de ejercicios espirituales, perdía el apetito y el sueño. (1.156)

Thus, Angel's periodic bouts of piety have already been characterized as one more unstable illusion among many. Rather than offer a vision of progress, therefore, Angel's mystic devotion brings the novel to circle back onto itself, with no pathway out from the violent fictions of fertilizer's prosperity.

Conclusion: The Value Within Humans

This dissertation has examined the Fertilizer Dreams that animate the cultural production of Peru and Chile in the guano and nitrate eras. By shedding light on the ways in which literature gives expression to the hopes and fears of urban elites concerning the fertilizer export economies, I have proposed a new critical lens through which to interpret canonical works of the period. Moreover, through careful attention to the repetition of tropes and narratives across literary, economic, and scientific texts, I identified four key genres of elite Fertilizer Dreams: the Precious Metal Melodrama, the Legend of the Chilean Miner, the Romance of Capital Investment, and the Account of Fictitious Prosperity.

Somewhat ironically, the absence of the material substance of fertilizer is a constant across the literary production examined in this dissertation. Instead, the texts engage with the fertilizer economy in two dominant ways: through depiction of precious metals, and through depictions of credit and its materialization into luxury consumption. Not coincidentally, these two categories are united as two poles of the money form. Indeed, elite concerns and aspirations related to the fertilizer economies are overwhelmingly about money: its power and desirability, as well as its troubling dematerialization and volatility. That fertilizer should find expression in literature as money is entirely consistent with elite experience of fertilizer as money. As export commodities, guano and nitrate infiltrated the lives of elites not so much as material agricultural fertilizers—that is, as use values—but as exchange values that serve as sources of currency and credit.

Born out of the economic volatility of the Fertilizer Age, each of the examined texts represents an attempt to identify or tentatively describe how economic value operates. In Chapter One, I showed how the Precious Metal Melodramas of Juana Manuela Gorriti begin

with a deep faith in the utopian potential of the intrinsic value of Peru's natural resource wealth to produce widespread prosperity. Yet, over the course of the guano era, this optimism turns to distrust, as the high intrinsic value of natural resources is seen as morally corrupting, finite, appropriable, or even illusory. Therefore, Gorriti's texts turn to labor as a source of lasting and renewable value, albeit one that is lacking the spectacular transformative power of the value contained within natural resources.

Benjamín Vicuña Mackenna's *Legends of the Chilean Miner*, analyzed in Chapter Two, join Gorriti in identifying the latent intrinsic value of natural resources. However, these texts additionally highlight the need for individuals to recognize a substance's value in order for it to be realized in exchange. As a secondary factor, Vicuña Mackenna cites the need for capital investment to facilitate this realization of natural resource value.

Chapter Three analyzed Clorinda Matto de Turner's *Romances of Capital Investment*: the novels *Índole*, *Aves sin nido*, and *Herencia*. It demonstrated how, through the trope of counterfeiting in *Índole*, Matto characterizes guano era wealth as consisting solely of external, deceptive appearances, lacking a basis in true value. The novel contrasts this illusory value with the real, intrinsic value of British gold. Then, in *Aves sin nido*, the trustworthy value of British gold holds for the precious metal silver, which in turn extends metonymically to Anglo and Peruvian capital investment in silver mining. In *Herencia*, this faith in the solid value of mining investments is stretched further such that paper representations of value, from stock certificates to paper money and even lottery tickets, are portrayed as trustworthy indicators of value.

Chapter Four examined two literary explorations of the idea of fictitious value in Benjamín Luis Cisneros and Luis Orrego Luco's *Accounts of Fictitious Prosperity*. Like

Índole, Cisneros's novel *Julia* portrays the wealth of the guano economy as based in ephemeral, fictitious representations sustained by credit. In Orrego Luco's novel, however, the investment in joint stock companies that Matto's novels presented as the ideal grounding of value become the epitome of fictitious wealth, based on potentially fraudulent paper representations and irrational passions unbacked by any productive activities.

The theorizations of value presented in all of the literary texts of this dissertation emphasize the central importance of human beings in the reproduction of value. The theory of value employed throughout is perhaps best described through reference to Matto's concept of *índole*. Specifically, the texts propose that the reliable and effective reproduction of value depends on the economic participation of what are imagined to be high-quality people, that is, people whose *índole*, or inner value, is strong. This inner value, moreover, is determined by a nexus of racial, moral, and educational factors, drawing on a logic that Estelle Tarica describes as the "moral economy of race," according to which "racial and cultural identities describe positions which define a subject's relative access to, or embodiment of social virtue and authority" (xxviii). Again and again, the texts in this dissertation propose that the economic activities of people with people with a strong moral and racial makeup will have positive outcomes and, conversely, that morally and racially degenerate people will yield problem-ridden economic scenarios. Of course, this literary linkage between race, morality, and economics should not be read as a reliable reflection of the realities of the Fertilizer Age economies, but instead a product of the interrelationships among the *ideologies* of race, morality, and economics that shaped elite imaginaries.¹³⁴

¹³⁴ As Beckman writes in her discussion of race and monetary anxieties in *fin de siglo* texts, "this grafting of monetary flows onto material bodies does not function as an accurate depiction of how exchange functions, but rather more often serves as a form of wish

It is also important to highlight that, with the exception of Gorriti's "El tesoro de los Incas," the texts in this dissertation do not explicitly employ the labor theory of value, according to which the energy of human activity creates value by acting on the material world. The people that the texts charged with producing durable value are not laborers, but rather creole elites, not unlike the authors and readership of the works. While this may not be particularly surprising, it is significant that the texts identify businessmen, investors, lawyers, wives, and mothers as the agents that bear the greatest responsibility for the economic fate of their societies.

What then, of the laborers who extracted the guano and nitrates from the earth? They have remained largely absent from the cultural production studied in this dissertation. In Peru, to my knowledge, there are no guano-era literary works that portray the conditions of labor on the guano islands. The closest approximation comes in the form of an unfinished novel titled *Nuredin-Kan* (1872), which was published as a *folletín* in the periodical *El Correo del Perú*. Although Eugenio Chang-Rodríguez attributes the text to Luis Benjamín Cisneros, the work was published unsigned and has never been reedited. This unfinished, sentimental novel has passed into obscurity and there is no existing literary criticism written on the text. Set in 1860, *Nuredin-Kan* opens with a depiction of the overseas passage endured by Chinese laborers en route to Peru. Although guano is never mentioned, because the novel's protagonist is sold to a sugar plantation, readers can assume that a portion of the Chinese indentured laborers from the ship could plausibly have been sent to work on the guano islands.

fulfillment regarding the nature of monetary value (i.e., that certain economic behaviors are coextensive with "race," or that biological "stock" is anterior to monetary value)" ("Fables" 113).

The incomplete sentimental novel presents the beginnings of an interracial love affair in the tradition of the “national romances” analyzed by Doris Sommer with a geographical diversity of characters rarely seen in nineteenth century novels. The protagonist, Nuredin, is an upper caste man from India who abandons his life of luxury and sells himself into indentured servitude after the tragic death of his lover, Ofelia. In this way, Nuredin serves as a conduit through which the reader can observe the hardships of Chinese laborers from the perspective of a non-Chinese, refined elite. Nuredin falls in love with Rosa, the beautiful creole daughter of the sugar plantation owner (who looks remarkably like his dead lover, Ofelia). However, Rosa is betrothed to the British owner of a neighboring plantation. Rounding out this cast of characters are afro-Peruvian bandits and an Italian ship captain.

The first section of *Nuredin-Kan* is dedicated to the overseas journey from Macao to Lima. Describing the space below deck in which the men were confined, the narrator evokes a horrific image:

¿Quién no ha visto esa especie de caja rectangular, que el agua, infiltrándose siempre, hace húmeda y pestilente? ¿Quién no sabe lo que es esa especie de atahúd que sirve de mansión á las ratas y de depósito á todos los despojos de una embarcación? –Pues figúrense nuestros lectores este mismo depósito estrecho, húmedo, pestilente y poblado de insectos; figúrense esa mansión oscura, en que el aire, casi nunca renovado, está caliente y corrompido por el aliento impregnado de opio de cuatrocientos ó mas individuos *apiñados como arenques*, según la espresion del capitán, y casi sin movimiento, y aún asi se habrán formado una idea pálida de la bodega del “Doria” (17 feb 1872).

Through the gothic images of this passage, we are faced with the brutal extreme of humans who have become literal cargo for sale. When an epidemic spreads through the ship, readers witness the ship-owner calculating his financial losses, “aunque para el capitán era cosa harto fácil echar al agua diariamente tres ó cuatro cadáveres” (24 feb 1872). Offering

a brief glimpse into the agency of the indentured workers, *Nuredin-Kan* features an uprising in which Nuredin and a group of Chinese men attempt to stage a mutiny and sail to freedom. Historian Cecilia Méndez has identified records of at least two uprisings by Chinese workers on the guano islands in 1866 and 1867. These events stand as important precursors, Méndez argues, for the series of collective protests and rebellions by Chinese workers on sugar plantations from 1869-1876 (63-77). In the novel, however, although the indentured workers are briefly able to take control, the uprising is suppressed before they reach Peru. Overall, the novel presents a denunciation of the system of indentured labor as slavery by another name, which threatens the stability and integrity of Peru.

In contrast, the nitrate towns in Chile were vibrant sites for the production and circulation of cultural expressions, including workers' periodicals, poetry, travelling theater troupes, as well as the novels *La vida en la pampa o historia de un esclavo* (1895) by Mariano Martínez and *Tarapacá* (1903), written by Osvaldo López and Nicanor Polo under the pseudonym Juanito Zola.¹³⁵ Then, over the course of twentieth century the Chilean nitrate industry becomes an important cultural symbol of imperialist greed as well as the strength and sacrifice of organized labor. Indeed, the nitrate era has been remembered as the birthplace of the labor movement in Chile, marked by the infamous massacre of striking nitrate workers at Santa María de Iquique in 1907. As writers look back on the nitrate era at midcentury, they describe it as a violent, exploitive economic activity in which men's lives and minds are consumed and the nation's wealth is stolen by foreign capitalists and their government allies. At the same time, however, writers also describe the nitrate camp as the space in which a revolutionary proletariat takes shape. Through the miners'

¹³⁵ See the edited collections *La sociedad del salitre* and *Historia y ficción literaria sobre el ciclo salitrero en Chile*.

experience of suffering and exploitation within the mine, they are transformed into the men who hold the promise of Chile's future.

For example, in *Hijo del salitre* (1952), Volodia Teitelboim portrays the 1907 Santa María de Iquique massacre.¹³⁶ Teitelboim's narrator characterizes the nitrate industry as benefitting lands and economies abroad, but deforming Chilean territory, making it unsuitable for future economic activities: "el desierto que, arrancándose las entrañas blancas, abona, abona muchas tierras lejanas, condenándose a la esterilidad" (105). However, the violence of this destructive industry has the effect of strengthening the inner value of the working class. The narrator describes how the protagonist becomes aware of the latent power of the proletariat by participating in the Santa María de Iquique strike: "Tuvo aquella tarde por primera vez la impresión de que el nitrato, que torna estéril y calva la cabeza del territorio chileno, florecía con la aparición de aquellas muchedumbres rodando desierto abajo" (150). Here, like in the writings of Vicuña Mackenna, we have an image of the arid desert becoming fertile. This time, however, capital investment and entrepreneurial vision are not the sources of life and fertility. Instead, labor becomes a force of new life and economic productivity. Thus, *Hijo de salitre* imagines the conscientization of the nitrate workers as a class with fertile, revolutionary power. Near the end of the novel, the protagonist observes young children playing in the schoolyard where the massacre took place, stating: "La simiente en el desierto. Germinaban, sí. Las semillas" (366).

¹³⁶ For a discussion of the symbolic weight of the Santa María de Iquique massacre over the twentieth century, see Frazier.

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