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Chivalry, Materialism, and the Grotesque in *Don Quijote* and Alberto Blest Gana's *El ideal de un calavera*

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Abstract: This study analyses chivalry, materialism, and the grotesque in Alberto Blest Gana's *El ideal de un calavera* [The Ideal of a Rogue] (1863) under the light of Miguel de Cervantes's *Don Quijote*'s part II (1615). It underscores the legacy of Cervantes on the Chilean author especially in his reflections on nation building. Unlike its author, *Don Quijote* eluded restriction and successfully reached the colonies; once there, author and text became a massive influence on intellectuals in the burgeoning Americas. Blest Gana, for example, created protagonists who were multi-dimensional and imbued with quixotic overtones. Praised by his counterparts, he created work that was finely detailed, with a goal of portraying the nation's cultural practices at specific points in history. Deploying techniques inspired by Honoré de Balzac (also a reader of *Don Quijote*), Blest Gana illustrated the colourful aspects of his society. His sharp eye depicted and interpreted nationhood and society through the course of dramatic historical events in *El ideal de un calavera* by shining a bright light on the political and social enemies who emerged in the historical unravelling of the nation in the 1830s. The resulting kaleidoscope of astute, idealistic and cowardly individuals conveyed subtle yet definite Cervantesque tones.

Keywords: Blest Gana, Cervantes, Chile, nineteenth-Century, nationhood.

Beware that you will compromise your situation with quixotic statements!
Remember that don Quijote was so ridiculous because his courage
was so exaggerated! (*El ideal de un calavera* II; 240).¹

Introduction

This is a transatlantic study of the legacy of Miguel de Cervantes y Saavedra (1547-1616) in Latin America, specifically in the work of Chilean author Alberto Blest Gana (1830-1920). The West Indies were a constant lure for the Spanish author, so much so that he unsuccessfully petitioned to immigrate to the New World to better his station in life, as Diana de Armas Wilson has noted (207). There has been intense speculation about this frustrated undertaking, and some few maintain that Cervantes pursued positions that were too high for his reach, such as governor or Corregidor, which only increased his chances of being rejected. No matter: for whatever reason, the future author of *Don Quijote* was not permitted to embark on any of the ships bound for the colonies. *Don Quijote*, however, was conveyed to the New World with a facility denied

¹ Translations from Spanish to English are my own, unless otherwise indicated.

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to its author, despite contemporary restrictions on books of imagination. Once there, it exerted a massive influence on the intellectuals of the nascent Americas.

The novel's accomplishment notably demonstrated the power of book circulation in the new territories and the necessity of print culture for *Don Quijote* to exist and to thrive (Cascardi 171). Early in the nineteenth century, following the rapid spread of the Castilian language to the new Spanish territories, Cervantes and his creation were embraced by the emerging nations, regardless of the attitudes of the Latin American cultural elite towards Spain. In the words of Luis Correa-Díaz, from the day of its publication, *Don Quijote* struck a chord with its Latin American audience, who were very familiar with the legacy of the reason that has no reason (128). The links between Cervantes and America can be found not only in long catalogues of printed essays and works of fiction by Latin American intellectuals but also in more attenuated, historical and cultural aspects, such as in the fascination America had in the city of Seville of Cervantes's time. Following James D. Fernández's eloquent description, the new continent existed for Cervantes in "the air he breathed . . . during the several years he lived in Seville" (970). In the twentieth century, Che Guevara laid claim to a quixotic nature at strategic points in *Motorcycle Diaries* as he travelled through Latin America, and he even named his motorcycle *La Poderosa* [The Powerful One], in the tradition of don Quijote's *Rocinante*. Along these same lines, Blest Gana created protagonists who were multi-dimensional and imbued with quixotic overtones, as can be seen in his most famous work *Martín Rivas: Novela de costumbres político-sociales* [Martín Rivas: A Novel of Socio-Political Manners] (1862) and in *El ideal de un calavera* [The Ideal of a Rogue/Libertine] (1863).

In *Don Quijote*, Cervantes interrogated the mores of seventeenth-century Spanish society and depicted a nation in conflict with itself. Cervantes's oeuvre was not restricted to the real or the ideal but included a complex, multifaceted political discourse that, in spite of its intentional subtleties, questioned the state of the Spanish realm.² In Latin America, Spaniards had taken pains to maintain their dominance through the establishment of separate communities and the isolation of one geographic unit from another, as Benedict Anderson has analysed. As a result, the colonies' attachment to Spain became a point of contention. Assuredly, the elite inhabitants of the American continent always maintained a complicated relationship with the Mother Land, being at once friend and foe with the dominant peninsula (52-3). Latin American authors found Cervantes's questioning and critique of Spanish society invigorating and extended his satirical political philosophies to their local context and raised issues about what they considered amiss. With *Don Quijote* as a model, then, authors used literature as a platform to examine the circumstances of their own emerging nations and societies.

Among the thinkers influenced by Cervantes was Mexican journalist, poet and novelist José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi (1776-1827). Lizardi's *Don Catrín de la fachenda* narrated the life of a character who refused to live his stark reality and so turned himself into don Catrín, a grotesque version of don Quijote. Thinking about the term "grotesque," Philip Thomson conceives of it "as a fundamentally ambivalent thing, as a violent clash of opposites" that produces a disjointed discourse (11).³ From early on, Lizardi's fiction and political journalism were filled with picturesque and grotesque, vignettes of "the figures which flitted across the Plaza Mayor of Mexico City" (Spell 73). Angel Rama alludes to a Cervantesque feature of Lizardi, as the Mexican author combatted the powerful lettered city of his time. Unlike the firmly established *letrados*, Lizardi sought "the attention of a new literate, bourgeois public" (43). In Chile, José Victorino Lastarria (1817-1888) played a role similar to Lizardi's in Mexico. The Chilean intellectual commented on all aspects of nation building. His perspectives included politics, philosophy, and fiction; he was intent on denouncing the political ills in his society. As a literary critic, Lastarria praised the skills of Blest Gana, describing the Chilean author's writing as highly detailed, focused on the matter, and intent on portraying the colourful aspects of his society (218). With a sharp eye, Blest Gana depicted and interpreted nationhood and society at key historical points, such as during Chilean independence and the re-conquering by Spain in *Durante*

² For further study, see Barbara Fuchs, *Passing for Spain: Cervantes and the Fictions of Identity* (University of Illinois Press, 2003).

³ "Grotesque" derives from exuberant and disproportionate painted murals discovered in Roman "grotte" (caves), in the sixteenth century which gave us the terms "grotesco" and "la grottesca" (Thomson 12-13).

La Reconquista [During the Re-Conquering] (1897), which presented brave and idealistic individuals who struck a subtle yet definite Cervantesque tone. As well, in *El ideal de un calavera* (IC) the Chilean author commented on political and social enemies as he outlined the historical unravelling of the nation. This study specifically analyses chivalry, materialism, and the grotesque in *El ideal de un calavera* under the light of Cervantes's *Don Quijote*'s part II (1615), especially as it depicted the violation of seventeenth-century social codes—for instance, in the pairing of don Quijote and Sancho Panza with the duke and the duchess. This type of analysis enriches the legacy of Cervantes in the Americas and opens a wider door to the manifold connections between the Spanish author and the New Continent. *El ideal de un calavera* explicitly gestured to Cervantes's text as it illustrated characters' responses to historical events, and thus placed the Spanish author's work at the centre of Latin American cultural history. Blest Gana's novel, therefore, shows the effects, manipulations, and influences of a European literary inheritance on the social and cultural development of Latin America.

***Don Quijote* in Chile**

From a transatlantic perspective, we can see that Edmund Burke's political, religious, and philosophical reflections contained quixotic overtones (De Bruyn 696). Likewise, *Don Quijote*'s universality enabled European Romantic authors to shape their cultural milieu (Egginton 1050). In Latin America, *Don Quijote* allowed the powerful and well-connected intellectuals to engage politically by offering a kind of cultural, historical, and linguistic map for unifying the new nations as they were coming into form on the continent. Brought rapidly into the New World and first celebrated by the vicerealties of Mexico and Peru, *Don Quijote* was slow to reach the rather neglected Chilean kingdom. Chile, however, was already present in the infamous book burning of *Don Quijote*, Part I, where the priest, claiming to be a great friend of Cervantes, saved Cervantes's *La Galatea*. Among other texts, he also spared from the fire Alonso de Ercilla's *La Araucana* (1569, 1578, 1589), the account of the dramatic war between the Spaniards and the Mapuche people, thus positioning the epic poem as an equal to the best of Italian verses (I, 6; 52 [p. 75]).

Cervantes's novel appeared in registries only towards the end of the eighteenth century in Chile, as José Toribio Medina has shown. However, by the mid-nineteenth century, many copies of the text were in circulation. For instance, there were at least eight different editions of *Don Quijote* in the hands of Santos Tornero, a contemporary book seller. Steadily, either through fiction, historical accounts, speeches, and other means, the text and its author became part of Chilean authors' discussions about the nation's political processes (Sullivan 290-1). *Don Quijote*'s themes thus became enmeshed in the narrative of Chile's emergence as a nation. In his long life, half in Chile and half in Paris—where he died and is buried—Blest Gana had a prolific career as a writer and diplomat. Notwithstanding their Chilean context, his texts followed Honoré de Balzac (1799-1850), a connection that further linked Blest Gana with Cervantes and his *Don Quijote*. Balzac contended that don Quijote's poetic power to elevate himself to knighthood made him an incarnation of the sublime and the grotesque. Indeed, no matter the obstacles, don Quijote always maintained an illusion that propelled him forward (Labouret 41). The caballero's numerous ups and downs, paired with his illogical resilience to adversity, offered Balzac a wealth of possibilities for portraying people's responses to life's circumstances. Within this context, Blest Gana's characters—distinguished as they were by defiance, the embracing of long odds, and being prone to ridicule—alluded to Cervantes's modes of fiction. Decidedly, fighting for a better world, accepting and concurrently rationalising the mishaps that pervaded his enterprises, don Quijote separated himself from the likes of Amadís and Orlando and acquired a "heroic stature" (De Armas, "Cervantes and the Italian Renaissance" 43).

The High Aspirations of Blest Gana and his Creation of a Grotesque Quijote

For Blest Gana, because Chileans were loath to read, that is, to purchase writers' work, the goals of materialism itself presented obstacles for potential authors which in turn discouraged them from producing literature. He viewed people's poor acquaintance with a humanistic education as a barrier to literary creation and proposed a *novela de costumbres* [novel of manners] to attract the favour not only of intellectuals but of the great majority, as well. Rallying the troops to assemble a nation of informed citizens, he urged them to awaken from a dormant state and build a national literature that would strengthen fellow Chileans and direct them toward worthy achievements ("La literatura chilena" 81-2). In this spirit, Blest Gana dedicated *El ideal de un calavera* to those restless individuals who pursued a chimaera, ignoring the comfort derived from having modest goals and equally modest levels of happiness (I; 1). In this manner, Abelardo's political ideas became quixotic quests that exposed social practices in nineteenth-century Chilean cultural history. This also underscored how materialistic concerns inspired pragmatic characters to take action. Aware that a nation's conception of itself would be expressed through printed material, Blest Gana offered a reading of a political personality that to this day is one of the most polarising figures in Chilean history, Diego Portales (1793-1837). One of the most powerful political figures of the nineteenth century, Portales equated power with strict adherence to social order (Jocelyn-Holt 97). Set in the 1830s, when Chile's strong businessman Portales was assassinated, the novel deployed history to highlight the feud between idealistic and materialistic concerns and revealed Portales as a politician who was either highly admired or passionately detested (IC II; 319). Abelardo Manríquez, the protagonist, became increasingly critical of Portales's government, and in conspiring to rid Chile of the minister, he sought truly to redeem himself. In this manner, the assassination of the *Ministro* [Minister]—as Portales is known in Chile—opened an optimal narrative space for the nation's political and social conflict, integrating specific philosophical aspects of *Don Quijote*.

The life of Abelardo, we are told from the beginning, was punctuated by a death sentence and a profound, everlasting, but unrequited love (IC I; 13). Unlike Martín Rivas, the character of the eponymous novel, who was admired for his values and code of honour, Abelardo was described as having many flaws. In fact, his shortcomings were such that Blest Gana was compelled to defend him to the likes of Lastarria, who had expressed his own distaste for Abelardo Manríquez. For Blest Gana, his fallen hero kept intact an "irresistible instinct" to act upon matters that most men had learnt to disguise and suppress with a hypocritical comportment (*Epistolario* 16; 41). Unable to find peace of mind or delight in any of his endeavours, Abelardo lived in precarious social conditions and everyday he felt the anguish of being kept from the good things in life. Alonso Quijano, as we know, led an austere life himself, with "eggs and abstinence on Saturdays" (I, 1; 19; [duelos y quebrantos los sábados (p. 35)]). For his part, Abelardo was constantly reminded of his ill-fated place when a person or a circumstance made him feel socially inferior (IC, I; 21). Through Abelardo's vivid imagination, *El ideal de un calavera* revealed simultaneously what he was and what he yearned for, which was essentially the journey of a dreamer.

Deploying the arts of don Quijote, the young man started anew. He changed himself into a splendid *húsar* [hussar] and forcefully discarded his existence as a man of no fortune or substance. Certainly, in Cervantes's text, Alonso Quijano initiated his metamorphosis early on by devouring books of chivalry and thereby neglecting his estate and eventually selling vast plots of land to acquire more stories of the valiant knights of antiquity (I, 1; 20 [p. 36]). Notwithstanding his ambitions, as Alonso became don Quijote, his impulsive expense made him even poorer and kept him further from his goals. For Abelardo, his wilful transformation took place after feeling disconsolate over the unexpected rejection of his beloved Inés, the daughter of don Calixto Arboleda, a capitalist who measured people exclusively by their monetary worth. However, early in the text there were indications that the young man already possessed the traits of Alonso Quijano. Taking to heart the tragic tale of Abelard and Héloïse, Abelardo Manríquez was described as knowing each and every letter that the passionate and sorrowful pair wrote to each other by heart (IC, I; 21). Just as don Quijote clung to his new vestments, Abelardo became attached to the splendid uniform of the Chilean *húsar* which gave him a sense that he belonged somewhere higher up. He proudly wore his uniform

while carrying out daredevil and heroic acts, laughing while attempting to forget that his impetuous actions could and would hurt others. He was grotesque, expressing an ambivalent meshing of beauty, monstrosity and the comical (Thomson 5).

The young *húsar* aspired to be part of the Santiago elite, but, without means, he could not enter a society that was overcome by materialism. He retained the pride of the last name that represented a family that had slowly become impoverished; in other words, he lacked the necessary affluence to back up his pretensions in society (*IC*, I; 16). Framed by a beautiful face, which was his unique and only source of power, he mesmerised those who surrounded him (*IC*, I; 97). In *Martín Rivas* (*MR*), Leonor Encina's beauty was a perfect complement to her family's economic affluence. Leonor was indeed fortunate to have been born rich. According to the narrator, it would have been a pity to see such beauty surrounded by poverty; she was the centre of attention of Santiago's fashionable sectors, always dressed to the nines, with her outfits matching perfectly with the luxurious spaces she inhabited (*MR* 66-7). Like Leonor, Abelardo knew he possessed the allure of beauty; however, his graceful and delicate features were an exaggeration of nature, or perhaps a fluke. Without the essential element of wealth, his handsomeness appeared out-of-place, ridiculous, grotesque. To make matters worse, he refused to respect the power of wealth in a nascent capitalist society. It was simple – a lack of wealth meant that, no matter how handsome, a young man would not necessarily gain the love and respect of the elite. With exemplary looks and a statuesque physique, he would have had a better life had he been born ugly.

In *El ideal de un calavera*, Blest Gana's characters exhibited various weaknesses, and their faults were revealed with irony and in a comic tone. He recreated grotesque individuals whom he could imbue with all types of incongruities, such as whimsicalness, ridicule, and ugliness. Whereas beauty confined itself to one type, the grotesque gave the Chilean author ample room for commenting on life's mishaps, in the mode of Victor Hugo (Gotschlich 119-21). Not content with living a moderate life and striking a Quijote-like pose, Abelardo took delight in complicating matters for himself and others, disrupting the rigid social circle that surrounded him (Hosiasson 263). Ironically, the same man who broke strict societal rules was eager to take up arms to protect his nation from what he considered to be imminent usurpers. He held on to an archaic conception of militarism and believed in chivalry. Impressionable, solitary and prone to contemplation in a bucolic landscape (*IC* I; 22-3), Abelardo took a quixotic stand and led the fight against the windmills of a stagnant Chilean society.

Abelardo channelled *Don Quijote*'s fusion of materialistic and idealistic concerns. The young man lived through fiction, but no matter how hard he fought to live up to titanic standards, he narrowly avoided the status of an outcast. Described as an individual neither complacent nor in touch with his present, he waxed lyrical about the future and led a solitary life, unlike his more down-to-earth compatriots (*IC*, I; 22). His lot in life was to deal with the avatars of a man endowed with intelligence but chained by an unruly spirit. Certainly, he was considered *tocado* [crazy] (*IC*, I; 14) by Chilean society because he dedicated himself fully to matters of the heart instead of watching his income along with market fluctuations. Oblivious to the fact that he was destitute, he convinced himself that he could conquer Inés, naively believing that the young woman would both fall for him and leave her regal life behind to be with him. Before dying, the fallen *húsar* called his beloved the "Héloïse of my dreams" [*Heloísa de mis ensueños* (*IC*, II; 54)], and made her into a literary figure. In the long run, in spite of his cool demeanour, Abelardo could not endure society's rejection of his illusions. Accordingly, the Chilean author indicated that his novel belonged to those who resisted shedding tears and who resorted to laughter when confronted with the bitter sadness of life's tragi-comic moments.

Blest Gana stated that his society was driven by materialistic pursuits ("Literatura chilena" 81). For that reason, he created Abelardo as an aberration, someone perceived as *tocado* because he did not respect the social limits that confined him to his given sector of society; he was also *tocado* because he engaged in rash, thoughtless, conduct that carried with it a grotesque image of a nation's hero. He wanted to do well, but, because of his impetuous heart and reckless behaviour, he lost his honour and, ultimately, his life. As a dreamer, he created his own Dulcinea del Toboso in Inés Arboleda. She was breathtakingly beautiful, but people's appreciation of her beauty, bolstered by their coveting of her family's wealth, only made her conceited and spoiled, the prototype of a rich, young, and idle Chilean woman. To make matters worse,

Inés's lack of education contributed to her narrow-minded view of the world. As a consequence, the young woman kept her feet firmly on the ground and expected to make a marriage of convenience. She was a grotesque Héloïse, only in love with material possessions and filled with a narcissistic delight that was itself derived from the power her beauty exerted over others. Once the wealthy debutante told him that she would never marry him, Abelardo did not keep don Quijote's virtuosity, desperately seeking other women to soothe his lady's rejection. Notwithstanding his womanising, he maintained a profound love for Inés and was willing to risk his reputation, his career, and purpose in life to regain her love. He told Felipe Solama, his only true friend, that others considered him a mad man because he struggled with a capricious appetite for physical contact while carrying a torch for only one woman (IC, II; 51-2).

Materialistic Concerns in *Don Quijote* and *El ideal de un calavera*

Don Quijote preferred to read books of chivalry, refusing to live the sombre existence of an impoverished hidalgo and turning himself instead into an illustrious knight errant who adhered to bygone tenets of chivalry (I, 1; 21 [p. 38]). According to Carroll B. Johnson, don Quijote's idealistic transformation had been kindled by commercial transactions that led to an investment in himself as a literary figure (6). Hence, the knight errant also fancied the benefits of the chivalric profession, such as empires, worldly recognition, and possessions. In his lengthy conversations with Sancho, especially toward the beginning of their meandering journey, the knight-errant fuelled the squire's interest with the anticipation of material rewards. Don Quijote thus had faith that he could turn a profit even as he remedied the ills of his counterparts. By virtue of being himself, he convinced others and, more important, himself that people could live once more in an age of harmony (Di Salvo 50). In the constant journeying of his own private life, either as a purveyor of the Spanish Armada or as a government tax collector, Cervantes had ample opportunity to observe and validate the good and the bad in people's behaviours. As the Spanish monarchy had been aggressive in collecting taxes to prevent its own financial distress, Cervantes found himself functioning in a society where bribes and fraud were regularly used as a means to avoid the Crown's demands. The monarchy was equally oblivious to the exploitation of peasants. This prompted one of Cervantes' biographers to proclaim that, through the act of writing, the Spanish author could alleviate the disappointment of the world in which he lived (McCrory ch. 6).

Anthony Cascardi has observed that, through the variety of voices in his texts, Cervantes cleverly examined differing and opposing socio-political views (21). These social commentaries were expressed in sundry episodes in *Don Quijote*, including those in which the excess of food signalled the incontestable power of wealth (Palma 60). Using comical overtones, these voices allowed Cervantes to make acute observations about the social divisions that frustrated his characters and, predictably, the inhabitants of the Spanish realm. Likewise, the dominance of wealth and privilege provided a case study for Cervantes at the duke's court, where servants were actors and the aristocrats, for the most part, spectators. Here, don Quijote's chivalric codes were confronted by rigid social divisions and decadence, triggering the grotesque, that is, a combination of the preposterous, the tragic and the pathetic (Thomson 15). In this manner, the caballero attempted to change societal rules by entering the realm of the aristocracy via the resurrection of an old, imagined, order. His stance was thus political.

Cervantes perceived Spanish society as a theatre where people's loyalties and perfidies could be studied. The ethereal Dulcinea, don Quijote's inspiration for confronting adversity, became a central focus of derision for the duke and the duchess. The pathetic knight took the grotesque representation of his lady with stoicism, managing to remain faithful to his own, perfected idea of Dulcinea (II, 48). Altisidora, instructed by the duke and the duchess to play the role of a temptress, attempted but failed to break the old man's will, going as far as writing risky verses that placed her in bed with don Quijote (II, 44). The caballero remained unmoved, which humiliated beautiful Altisidora to the point that she broke out of character and firmly confronted the knight errant: "Do you think by any chance, Don Defeated, Don Battered, that I died for you? (II, 70; 916) [¿Pensáis por ventura, don vencido y don molido a palos, que yo me he muerto por vos?" (p. 1044)]. After her abrupt delivery, Sancho and don Quijote discussed the young woman's fatal

obsession with the ageing knight, prompting the squire to express how unbefitting it was to die for love; one thing was to say, and another was to do. Albeit in love with an ideal of himself, his surroundings, and his beloved, don Quijote was mainly commenting on his society when he gave his opinion of Altisidora's unladylike comportment: "all the problems afflicting this maiden are born of idleness, and the remedy lies in honest and constant labor" (II, 70; 917) [todo el mal desta doncella nace de ociosidad, cuyo remedio es la educación honesta y continua (p. 1045)].

Blest Gana created characters who would reveal the good and the bad of the young Chilean nation. In a controversial essay on *Martín Rivas*—for the times—Cedomil Goic observed that many readers of Blest Gana's novel did not grasp the satirical overtones of the novel. For the critic, the narration delighted in exposing a grotesque Chilean society that was limited by materialistic concerns (192). He commented that critics disregarded Martín's depiction as a rather ugly young man and turned him into a handsome one. He also affirmed that Blest Gana afflicted young characters with travails of the heart while the old ones were portrayed as ridiculous and pathetic (193). To be sure, don Dámaso Encina—Leonor's father—barely avoided the farcical portrayal of his friends and *compadres* [chums], the materialistic don Fidel Elías and don Simón Arenal. As for *El ideal de un calavera*, in it, older men were either to be pitied or scorned. The narration happily presented don Lino Alcunza as an old, grotesque Chilean citizen, a person who went through life asserting self-respect among the less fortunate. In this light, don Lino appeared as a dark nineteenth-century Lysidamus, chained to marriage but thinking that he was still virile and that he could enchant the hearts of penniless young ladies. A repellent man, don Lino wore a wig and did anything and everything to feign youth to attract the attention of young women. He especially sought out a physical relationship with Candelaria, the incautious daughter of poverty-stricken don Raimundo Basquiñuelas, a former soldier of the wars of Independence (IC, I; 160). Notably, in spite of his grotesqueness, the decadent aristocrat was described as having access to high levels of government, boasting a close friendship with none other than Diego Portales.

In Martín and Abelardo, Blest Gana crafted two young suitors who fell for striking young women who were accustomed to being the focus of Santiago's high society. Blinded by love, the young protagonists took missteps in pursuit of their unreachable ladies. In this respect, not even Martín was free from ridicule and grotesque adventures, as he became embroiled in an infamous fight with a boot seller in Plaza de Armas, an episode that embarrassed and humiliated the poor but proud student. The episode also denoted the young man's impulse to dress in the manner of the wealthy family in whose house he had been allowed to live. However, Blest Gana created these two characters with striking differences (Hosiasson 363). Whereas Martín humbly waited for a miracle and did exemplary work for don Dámaso Encina and his family, Abelardo, accustomed to conquering ladies, did not make any effort to improve himself. The rebellious *húsar* pressed on with his usual tactics seeking the love of Inés and found enjoyment in describing the rebelliousness of his spirit. Despite his inventiveness or persuasiveness, Abelardo did not stand a chance; the social exigencies of influential families did not condone the marriage of a rich girl to a young suitor of no means. Despondent at the rejection of his beloved, he impetuously courted the young and vivacious Candelaria, characterised as being part of the class of *medio pelo* (IC, I; 229). Members of her class fought to stay out of poverty while at the same time aspiring to a better life. They were vulnerable to the ups and downs of life and, in the case of young ladies, to the false claims of the love of reckless young men. Without reflecting upon his action, Abelardo made a fateful decision to elope with Candelaria Basquiñuelas, delivering a grave blow against the honour of her father and her family. Related to this, don Quijote contemplated the constant risks a poor man faced to his reputation and the difficulties inherent in his cleaving faithfully to an enduring sense of honour (II, 22). In Blest Gana's text, Candelaria fell hard for Abelardo, but she also considered him a good match, hoping not only to have the young man as a spouse but desiring to advance socially (IC, I; 229). Unfortunately for her, after defying society and ruining the reputation of her family, the capricious young man abandoned Candelaria, making her easy prey for the lascivious don Lino.

Don Raimundo symbolised a grotesque, antiquated notion of patria. He was a military man who adhered to the tenets of Bernardo O'Higgins, Chile's first *Director Supremo* [Supreme Director]. A pathetic character, don Raimundo embodied a forgotten past; he had fought in the glorious wars of Independence, but nobody seemed to care, intimating an erosion between don Raimundo's idea of Chile and that of his

contemporaries. His concept of chivalry was akin to that of don Quijote, speaking of past battles and heroic deeds that remained unfamiliar to his audience. On the contrary, people like don Lino admired the *Ministro* and considered him instrumental in defining the socio-political direction of the new nation. The *Ministro*'s government privileged the powerful, preferring to keep a strong yoke on the lower strata of society. He famously declared that social order and tranquillity in Chile was maintained through *El peso de la noche* [the weight of night], that is, people's tendency to remain passive (Portales et al. 287). As an elderly and former soldier, don Raimundo was forsaken by Chilean society, without a good pension to support him in his old age. Don Lino generously and frequently supported don Raimundo, providing for the soldier and his family's most pressing needs, but attaching a high price to his services. In this light, don Lino typified the wishes of a new, capitalist society, where money reigned. His chivalric gesture toward the impoverished family was driven by selfish impulses that did not build patria.

Through *Don Quijote*'s Camacho the Rich and Quiteria the Beautiful, Blest Gana explored the vicissitudes of virile men like Basilio, with no money to recommend themselves to their beloved. Felipe Solama, like his friend Abelardo, lacked capital, and was identified as a young idealist who mimicked *Don Quijote*'s Basilio. He was witty, with lots of love to offer but, like his counterpart in *Don Quijote*, he lacked the essential quality of Camacho's wealth (IC, II; 294). Camacho, whose wealth helped him to procure great quantities of food to feed not only the town but an entire army (II, 20; 584-85 [p. 680-81]), empowered Cervantes to dramatise "the flaws of the privileged" (Palma 59). In Blest Gana's novel, Felipe epitomised the meaning of a humanist, in fervent pursuit of knowledge from books. In *Don Quijote*, Sancho initially supported the rich Camacho, stating that "I think a poor man should be content with whatever he finds and not go asking for the moon" (II, 20; 583) [soy de parecer que el pobre debe de contentarse con lo que hallare, y no pedir cotufas en el golfo (p. 679)]. In essence, Sancho's viewing of the vast amounts of food to Celebrate Camacho and Quiteria's wedding ratified for him the notion that knowledge took second place to material possessions and power in society. Likewise, Felipe understood that his knowledge from books was subordinate to the wealth of the many Camachos who inhabited and controlled the urban areas of Santiago.

Money played a critical role in the approval of marriage in Blest Gana's novels. For the young characters, monetary means either reinforced or broke a relationship. No matter the level of intellectual abilities, the more money possessed by a young suitor, the more interest that the parents of marriageable young ladies would show in him. In *Martín Rivas*, the young man's virtuosity, Leonor's determination, and her absolute power over her father provided the necessary conditions for the couple to reach a happy ending (Araya 44). Jaime Concha, analysing the emergence of Martín as a bourgeois, has remarked on don Dámaso's need for Martín's acumen and honesty to expand the Encina family fortune (30). On the other hand, the protagonist of *El ideal de un calavera* did not concern himself in the least with accumulating wealth. In fact, he rejected the obsessiveness with which young men pursued money: "he felt no temptation toward the type of material possessions that, in our days, young people are taught to worship feverishly" [Muy poco le tentaban los bienes materiales, a los que, en nuestros días se enseña a la juventud a rendir un culto fervoroso (IC, I; 22)]. Inspired by a hunger derived from reading, he wanted to be like the audacious heroes he found in literature, but he had only his dreams and hopes to offer Inés. Accustomed to living her life in idleness, the young lady had too much at stake to choose a dreamer, being on an equal footing with the members of the court of the duke and the duchess in Cervantes's text. These courtiers understood all too well the exigencies of the court. They amused themselves forcibly with the antics of don Quijote and Sancho even as they resented the role they were forced to play (particularly in the case of Altisidora).

Martín the Cerebral Quijote and Abelardo the Reckless One

Blest Gana conceptualised Martín as a true caballero with a demeanour that mimicked the intentions and the actions of the Caballero de la Triste Figura [The Knight of the Woeful Face]. Martín was a role model for the Chilean nation and was early on compared to don Quijote: "It occurred to don Dámaso that Rivas possessed some attributes that positive men call quixotic" [Se (le) ocurrió a don Dámaso la idea de que Rivas tenía sus puntillas de lo que los hombres positivos llaman quijotismo] (MR 98). Once he became

a “don,” Alonso Quijano felt obliged to change his vestments so that they would match with his new perception of self. In the same way, Blest Gana's *Martín Rivas* explored the motivations and ambitions of the young Martín within the parameters of a nineteenth-century caballero (Vilches, “La vestimenta y el lujo”). Through his phenomenal determination, intellectual prowess, and a thirst to complete an education at the prestigious *Instituto Nacional* [National Institute], Martín succeeded in the city of Santiago and managed to vanquish Leonor's heart. To be sure, Leonor became intensely jealous when Martín, in a quixotic move, rescued Edelmira Molina from an unwanted marriage. Leonor refused to believe Martín's version of events; for her, the times of don Quijote were over, and thus Martín's gesture towards Edelmira could not have been disinterested (MR 365).

As a self-proclaimed literary figure, don Quijote met famous chivalric characters in the Cueva de Montesinos. At court, he and Sancho continued their contact with fiction, including wizards and nymphs, which provided a stupendous, *sui generis* commedia dell' arte for the court's amusement. In this theatre, acute social crisis and laughter intertwined with don Quijote oscillating between fiction and reality in intense moments of ridicule. Meeting the duchess, the glorious knight became socially vulnerable, afraid that he might be “found out” by virtue of being associated with his squire, prompting him to admonish Sancho to control his desire to talk with too many proverbs and asking him to behave: “For the love of God, Sancho, restrain yourself, and do not reveal your true colors lest they realize that the cloth you are made of is coarse and rustic” (II, 31; 660) [Por quien Dios es, Sancho, que te reportes, y que no descubras la hilaza de manera que caigan en la cuenta de que eres de villana y grosera tela tejido (p. 764)]. Sancho's implausible encounter with the duchess in her private chambers has been characterised by Elías Rivers as the capricious act of a lady of leisure who manipulated a member of the oppressed class, briefly providing him with a fictional space for social mobility (38-41). This utopian space, constructed by the duke and the duchess's desire to persuade Sancho that the fiction was not a fiction, not only set the stage for an improbable dialogue among the social classes but it demonstrated how much learning Sancho had acquired from his conversations with don Quijote. Proud of being allowed to converse with a member of Spain's highest social echelons, the squire held his own and seized the opportunity to perform a theatrical rendition of himself. One of the lady's main purposes for meeting with the squire was to obtain information so that she and her husband might play further tricks on the pair. Wanting to convince Sancho that he was truly being offered the position as governor of the Insula, the duke and the duchess inverted the social pyramid and presented a viable prospect to one of the underprivileged. Satisfied that he was a bona fide governor, he dictated a euphoric letter to his wife Teresa Panza, indicating that he was driven by a desire to earn lots of money (II, 36).

Confronted on his first day at court by a fastidious ecclesiastic (II, 31), don Quijote felt vulnerable, needing to assert himself and reaffirm the validity of his profession. The preacher was a bitter and fussy man whose sole purpose in life was to make others miserable, the narration proclaimed. An anti-Quijote, the ecclesiastic was perplexed when he realised the honourable guest was none other than the caballero from the fiction. Later on, enraged by the knight and squire's tales and the duke's receptiveness to the pair, the preacher abruptly left the court. Bothered by the ecclesiastic's insensitivity, don Quijote felt invigorated when his chivalric services were sought by doña Rodríguez, the duchess's lady-in-waiting. The old woman believed in don Quijote's chivalric claims and begged him to restore her daughter's honour, which had been lost at the hand of a rich young lad, protected by the duke (II, 48; 770-71 [p. 884]). Situating himself as an exemplum of a heroic quest, don Quijote gave his word to provide protection and restitution to two women who had been not only abandoned by society but scorned by the aristocracy. In doing this, the knight errant sketched the historical framework for a society in crisis, one that placed material and other concerns above chivalry (Johnson 15). In fact, the conversation between the caballero, the priest and the barber in chapter one of Part II of *Don Quijote* can be said to serve as a basis for characterising what mattered at the duke's court. Reflecting on matters of *razón de estado* [reason of state], the trio worried about a possible foreign invasion by sea, lamenting the state of a court where incompetence and opportunism reigned over and above true valour and loyalty. For that reason, don Quijote condemned the lazy courtiers, decadent and corrupt individuals without any incentive to fight for patria (Di Salvo 51-2). His recipe for recovery was to bring the knights errant into court to offer their service and devotion to the monarch. In this regard, don Quijote's chivalric *modus operandi* illustrated a Spain that was once dominant in Europe, but that was now,

as Italy was for Machiavelli, “plagued by every sort of disaster” (70). The knight errant resurrected a heroic past in a present distinguished by aristocrats who had become accustomed to living on “unearned income,” with disastrous economic results for the nation (Johnson 18-19).

Referring to part II of *Don Quijote*, Jorge Luis Borges stated that “Don Quijote is the only solitude that exists in world literature” [Don Quijote es la única soledad que ocurre en la literatura del mundo] (26). In truth, even Sancho relinquished his position as a squire, departing to govern the Insula Barataria, a hoax whose sole purpose was to make the diminutive squire look like a ridiculous and laughable social puppet (Palma 67). Nonetheless, through humble Sancho, Cervantes took authority away from the aristocracy and in a revolutionary act gave it to a new man, one who ruled a secular state without the input of church or monarchy (Hernández 21). We can only imagine Cervantes travelling through Spain’s fields thinking of bettering the ills of the Spanish government via a governor like Sancho, a naturally clever person unspoiled by the courts. In the text, the diminutive squire performed his duty above all expectations, underscoring how deeply don Quijote’s advice had been absorbed by Sancho. The duke and the duchess, of course, took delight when Sancho’s political term was over, laughing about the coup d’état orchestrated by the court’s servants (II, 56).

Fatigued and obsolete, don Quijote felt lonesome and out of sorts without Sancho. The private caballero, as he retired to his bed, craved solitude and refused the entrance of anybody to his chamber, keeping himself honest for his beloved Dulcinea. Once in his room, as he was taking off his stockings, twelve stitches came undone, bringing to light the humbleness of the caballero’s wardrobe, an occurrence which made Cide Hamete reflect upon people’s struggles and their feigned, picaresque, attitudes toward hiding penury from others:

O poverty, poverty! ... How wretched is the wellborn man who nurtures his honor by eating badly, behind a closed door, playing the hypocrite with the toothpick he wields when he goes out after not eating anything that would oblige him to clean his teeth! How wretched is he, I say, who is apprehensive about his honor and thinks that the patch of his shoe, the perspiration of his hat, the darn of his cape, and the hunger in his stomach can be seen from a league away! (II, 44; 741-42)

[¡Oh pobreza, pobreza! ... ¡Miserable del bien nacido que va dando pistos a su honra, comiendo mal y a puerta cerrada, haciendo hipócrita al palillo de dientes con que sale a la calle después de no haber comido cosa que le obligue a limpiárselos! Miserable de aquel, digo, que tiene la honra espantadiza, y piensa que desde una legua se le descubre el remiendo del zapato, el trasudor del sombrero, la hilaza del herreruelo y la hambre de su estómago! (p. 852-53)].

The imposing depiction of don Quijote’s poverty presented the conditions for the grotesque, what Philip Thomson has called “the co-presence of the laughable and something which is incompatible with the laughable” (3). Without Sancho, don Quijote had to confront the fact that no matter how many books of chivalry he might read, nothing prepared him for the humiliating defeat that poverty visited on him. After coming to terms with the sorrowful state of his stockings, the knight errant determined that he would fix them even with a thread of a different colour, an egregious and visible sign for others that the stockings’ owner lacked means (II, 44; 742 [p. 853]). At this junction, his massive effort to rise in society through the archaic profession of a knight errant seemed to have failed him. Having considered himself part of a selective group of men of antiquity, don Quijote became abused by the aristocracy, representing to them a broken and grotesque figure of bygone times. The great and valiant knight, powerful enemy of enchanters and rescuer of damsels in distress, could not afford a wardrobe worthy of the caballero he perceived himself to be.

Sansón Carrasco could not understand chivalry, which for don Quijote entailed empathy. The Bachiller [Bachelor], the most grotesque villain of part II of *Don Quijote*, was instrumental in causing don Quijote’s ruin. To aid the priest and the barber in their obsession with rescuing don Quijote from himself, the Bachiller turned himself into El Caballero de los Espejos [The Knight of the Mirrors], a persona that Frederick De Armas has seen as being inspired by the Italian painter Arcimboldo, with an “insalata” / “celata” of a cook/soldier (“Nero’s Golden House” 157). Typifying the triumph of state bureaucrats over the Mediaeval lords (Lloréns 162), the Bachiller was a boorish man without the intellectual capabilities of don Quijote; he could

not understand chivalric codes. In the staged duel, El Caballero de los Espejos showed himself to be a cruel sort of man, a grotesque interpretation and a blurry mirror image of what the knight errant thought himself to be. Don Quijote not only won the orchestrated battle in earnest, but he managed to injure the body and wound the pride of Sansón Carrasco. Giving up all pretence to being a literary figure, the Bachiller no longer cared about the well-being of the old man, promising to revenge himself on the unsuspecting caballero (II, 15; 549-50 [p. 642]). Considering that the narration described Sansón as a man of the cloth, Avallé-Arce has reviewed the pretentious character's vindictive, unorthodox purposes as running counter to his religious vocation. Certainly, the Bachiller was a traitor, breaking his promise and his vows as a clergyman to keep don Quijote's sally a secret (206-07).

Concha has noted that Blest Gana set his novels before the crucial year 1857, in which liberals and conservatives made an unexpected alliance, one based on common interests and clearly non-altruistic political concerns (15-16). By situating *El Ideal de un calavera* in the 1830s, thus, the Chilean author did not have to come to terms with his nation's frightful political union, which saw the unusual amalgamation of the *pelucones* [conservatives], with the *pipiolos* [liberals]. In Chile, Portales personified the *pelucones*, the ones who held the nation's reins, which corresponded to the likes of the duke in *Don Quijote*. The period after independence from Spain constituted an interregnum in political ideology when the nation oscillated between different approaches to governance. Portales was a key figure, traditionally perceived as the first effective political official, often defined as a pragmatic businessman-ruler (Kinsbruner 10). As a model for a conservative ruling, he was imitated in the twentieth century by dictator Augusto Pinochet, the Sansón Carrasco to Salvador Allende's don Quijote, who sought the economic advice of the so-called "Chicago boys." The mythical heroes of the Chilean independence had been eliminated: Miguel Carrera was executed in 1821, and Bernardo O'Higgins was ousted in 1823. Portales symbolised the new man, the opposite of O'Higgins and Carrera. He became the fresh face of the Chilean nation, a nineteenth-century Cosimo de' Medici who applied his strong political measures through weak presidents.

Feeling dejected by his unrequited love, Abelardo decided to follow colonel José Antonio Vidaurre, a *pipiolo*, in what he considered to be a worthy cause, a conspiracy to liberate the nation from the tyrannical *Ministro*. In the narration, Portales established his power with the aid of the military, the same group that would later betray him in the persona of Vidaurre. Because "of many conspiracies attempted, few turn out successfully" (Machiavelli 50), colonel Vidaurre vastly overestimated the quantity of Chilean citizens who had been enraged by the *Ministro*'s tyrannical ways—or failed to comprehend that people would complain with gusto but that, when it came to the nitty-gritty, they would not follow through. The troops in the port of Valparaíso, for instance, remained loyal to Portales and, guided by Manuel Blanco Encalada—a relative of Blest Gana—vanquished the rebellious forces. When things went south for Vidaurre, his conspiring troops quickly reversed their alliance, leaving the mutiny and finding a fast way out of their predicament. In the high spheres of government, political affiliations changed overnight throughout the entire nation. In *El ideal de un calavera*, Abelardo was one of the few brave men who remained true to his word and was therefore captured. Having once been considered a detriment to the Chilean nation, Portales changed in the eyes of people; they became sympathetic of his legacy and bestowed upon him the status of a hero. Under these circumstances, the masterminds of the *Ministro*'s kidnapping and subsequent assassination would have no other option than to pay with their lives. Felipe, a lawyer by trade, knew that his friend's life was in peril and wrote to him in the hope that, since he had been following orders from Vidaurre, he could be spared death. In his letter, Felipe made sure to caution Abelardo against any futile, heroic act:

Beware that you will compromise your situation with quixotic statements! Remember that don Quijote was so ridiculous because his courage was so exaggerated!

[¡Cuidado con que vayas a comprometer tu situación con declaraciones quijotescas! "¡Acuérdate que don Quijote fue tan ridículo porque fue tan exagerado en su valor! (IC, II; 240)].

No Times for Knights Errant

Don Quijote himself mourned the lack of brave men in his own time: “it grieves my very soul that I have taken up the profession of knight errant in an age as despicable as the one we live in now” (I, 38; 333) [en el alma me pesa de haber tomado este ejercicio de caballero andante en edad tan detestable como es esta en que ahora vivimos (pp. 393-94)]. Reminiscent of don Quijote’s frustration, the protagonist of *El ideal de un calavera* ruined his life by acting the part of a hero; he was executed with others for bravely following an implausible plan. Vidaurre’s men and their patriotic actions were grotesque and served “as a kind of negative example, the other side of the coin to the beautiful and sublime” (Thomson 15). Underscoring don Quijote’s statement that love and war are equal (II, 21; 595 [p. 692]), Abelardo attempted to eliminate the ache of his broken heart the only way he knew how by participating in Vidaurre’s dystopian dream. Once the conspirators were captured and punished accordingly, society could go on again, undisturbed. Signalling the senselessness of their act, Abelardo and his group became a grotesque theatrical spectacle for Chilean society:

Everyone wanted to see how the paladins of that brief epic faced death. In the name of liberty, they had sacrificed their burgeoning youth, the people they love, and the tranquillity of their families. Their historic legacy would be the bloody imprint of their atonement.

[Cada cual quería ver cómo arrostraban la muerte los paladines de aquella rápida epopeya, que habían ofrecido a la libertad, su juventud henchida de esperanzas, sus amores y el reposo de sus familias, y que iban a dejar en la historia la sangrienta huella de su expiación (IC, II; 346)].

Don Quijote’s conversion to the knighthood, made in the context of a grotesque clash between an aging feudalism and a burgeoning capitalism, allowed him to live with one eye on the world of his books of chivalry while from the other he perceived and judged his society. In part II, don Quijote felt alone and his hope faltered, and he found himself clinging most of the time to the strength of his squire. Towards the end, understanding that life was leaving him, the knight errant felt an urgency to make amends. Within this context, Sancho’s early naming of don Quijote as El Caballero de la Triste Figura encapsulated the ambivalence of the grotesque in the caballero; his discourse on the purposes of the knights errant inspired laughter and sadness, all at once (Urbina 675). This was a political position. For instance, at the wedding of Camacho and Quiteria, don Quijote stood for an ideal ending where true love would prevail over materialistic aims. Yet, because of what he had been through, don Quijote was nonetheless cautious, proclaiming at penniless Basilio’s home that a beautiful but destitute woman was bound to be attacked by “crows, kites, and other birds of prey” (II, 22; 598) [los cuervos, los milanos y las otras aves de rapiña (p. 695)].

During his stay at court, don Quijote’s social vulnerabilities became accentuated. Losing agency, he evolved into an amusing, grotesque puppet for the aristocracy, being ridiculed and injured, such as in the alarming cats and bells adventure, which left don Quijote badly scratched. The members of the court, rescued from their boredom, clawed apart the caballero’s archaic values while at the same time they shredded his vision of the social fabric. They eagerly staged elaborate theatrical spectacles with the sole purpose of being cheered by don Quijote’s reaction. In a sense, they asserted the caballero’s place in his fictionalised world so they could themselves feel alive. Cide Hamete believed, with reason, that “the deceivers are as mad as the deceived” (II, 70; 914) [ser tan locos los burladores como los burlados (p. 1041)]. In their carelessness and impropriety, the duke and the duchess presaged the foolhardy behaviour of Marie Antoinette at the Versailles court. In Cervantes’s text, the two nobles ridiculed themselves and appeared as a grotesque spectacle of the aristocracy.

As don Quijote himself said of his alter ego, El Caballero del Lago [Knight of the Lake], the audacious knight was rewarded with a chivalric paradise because he did not hesitate to jump into a lake filled with serpents and other menacing beasts (I, 50; 429 [p. 500]). The villain Sansón Carrasco, in spite of his final defeat of the mythical don Quijote, never truly understood the heroic dimensions of don Quijote, discovering to his dismay that the knight-errant took risks that others were not willing to take. He conceptualised an

idealistic chivalry that the priest, the barber, and especially Sansón, could not fathom. He was up for anything without shying away from physical pain, especially if the honour of his lady was at stake. For the caballero, no quest was impossible, and no matter how much pain he encountered, he never let go of the image he held of himself (Ubelaker 89). The caballero stood as a role model for nineteenth-century authors who studied the ups and downs of life in their characters, seeking the irremediable optimism in the defeat of the knight errant. Indeed, don Quijote took the bull by the horns and charged ahead because he regarded it as essential to his conception of self.

Abelardo and the Chilean Nation

In *El ideal de un calavera*, Blest Gana provided Chile with a flawed protagonist who, for better or for worse, did not hesitate to take action. In this manner, the novel portrayed the grotesque and the tragic in Chilean society (Gotschlich 119). Abelardo was a particularly complex individual, part angel and part devil, who displayed unexpected mercilessness. Characterised as possessing an impetuous personality (IC, II; 210), Abelardo seemed to court impropriety and unconventionality; he erred in his methods and never achieved the love of his idealised version of Inés. His reaction was to turn to his nation and to become political, which entailed becoming irremediably quixotic when he and others attempted to change the course of Chile's socio-political trajectory. Toward the end of his life, the young man finally understood himself and his circumstances, referring to the frustrated ideals of his grandfather, who in turn, made the life of his father, not a truly good one (IC, II; 238). The narrator had a fickle soft spot for Abelardo, however, proclaiming that the young fellow inspired "a sentiment of profound sympathy" [un sentimiento de profunda simpatía (IC, I; 11)]. He endowed his character with a great capacity to reason about his bad ways, providing a perfect combination of a grotesque, ambivalently idealistic characterization of the young protagonist.

With a rebellious attitude towards society's laws, Abelardo stirred disharmony wherever he went. Manríquez's beautiful and elegant uniform permitted him access to the high echelons of society without difficulty but he was his own worst enemy, and his persona was a detriment to his advancement. In all of his actions, he could not escape from the gravest of all dangers, himself. Like the knight errant, the taciturn *húsar* moved between reality and fiction, believing himself to be the Abelardo of fiction. He could not stop the impulses that pushed him to be a libertine, destroying his life and the reputation of thoughtless Candelaria, which caused the illness and premature death of her infirm father. His major weakness, therefore, was that he allowed melancholy to take over once he had been defeated by love and society, the same ailment that afflicted don Quijote (II, 74). He attempted to remedy what, in his mind, ailed the Chilean nation but he lacked self-discipline or a true calling and became involved in a failed conspiracy. Without any profound faith in Abelardo's spirit, Blest Gana depicted a fallen hero in a Chilean literary landscape, one imbued with a critical spirit of Cervantes, and preoccupied with the social and political concerns of an emerging independent culture and society.

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