



Romanticising the Nation: Allegory, Ambiguity and Unity in José Mármol's *Amalia*

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ABSTRACT

The Argentine journalist and writer José Mármol (1817–71), famously known as “el verdugo poético de Rosas”, offers one of the most effective literary exposures of the Rosas regime in his novel *Amalia* (1851). Written during Mármol’s exile in Montevideo (1846–52), it is set in 1840 during the French blockade and covers the months leading up to Lavalle’s anticipated but failed invasion and subsequent withdrawal in September of that year. *Amalia* is considered one of the most prominent anti-Rosas texts as it depicts the dictator as a force of evil and emphasises the plight of the people living under his rule: “with *Amalia*, Mármol consciously attempts to initiate a canon of representation of the Rosas era as ‘la tiranía’ as he directs his novels at a future public” (Rea 29). *Amalia* was considered “the novel of triumphant liberalism” (Sommer 111) and is celebrated to such an extent that it is considered to be the *first* Argentine novel to seek to unite a divided country. This article offers an original analysis of how *Amalia* is considered a more progressive novel in comparison with other works such as Esteban Echeverría’s divisive *El matadero* (1871), in that it seeks to encourage national reconciliation between the Unitarians and Federalists and end a tumultuous political conflict, which Mármol argues was exacerbated by Rosas. I explore the way in which *Amalia* aims to promote political unity, addressing Mármol’s positive and compassionate, but likely inaccurate representation of Manuela Rosas, while shedding light on his – and other Unitarians’ – problematic depictions of race and gender, which disempower and dehumanise Federalist women, thus proving detrimental to the pursuit of national harmony.

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José Mármol was a renowned Argentine politician, writer, journalist and poet of the nineteenth century who became a fierce opponent of Juan Manuel de Rosas. Born into an affluent family in Buenos Aires on 2 December 1818, Mármol enjoyed a privileged upbringing and a scholarly education that would shape his political views and literary works as a leading Argentine intellectual later in life. He enrolled in the Faculty of Law at the University of Buenos Aires in 1836 but failed to complete his studies, largely owing to the unfavourable political situation: the University of Buenos Aires was considered by *rosistas* to be a hotbed for conspiracy against the Federalist tyrant. In 1839 Mármol was found to have newspapers in his possession printed in Montevideo by the already-exiled Argentine intellectuals named the *proscriptos* (Dejborg 27). Subsequently, he was briefly incarcerated on 1 April of that year, and it is said that he began to write *Amalia* during his imprisonment. Upon his release, he joined his fellow liberals in Montevideo and established himself as a prominent anti-Rosas author who launched robust attacks on the dictator. Among Mármol's first works were two undistinguished plays, *El poeta* and *El cruzador*, that were presented in Montevideo and performed in 1847 and 1851. These plays were "interpreted as dramatizations of his own unhappiness in exile" (Knapp-Jones 92). However, in 1843, on the anniversary of Argentine independence, Mármol composed his celebrated poem *A Rosas*, and earned his status as a leading lyrical narrator of social Romanticism in the nineteenth century.

Mármol's *Amalia* (1851) was considered "the novel of triumphant liberalism" (Sommer 111) and is celebrated to such an extent that it is considered to be the *first* Argentine novel to seek to unite a divided country. Doris Sommer's critical analysis of *Amalia* in her acclaimed *Foundational Fictions* is arguably the most important in terms of advancing our readings and understanding of political and civil unrest in Argentina during the Rosas era. Sommer calls attention to important concepts such as national families and gender. However, an obvious and dominant theme of the novel that Sommer does not discuss in depth is Mármol's depictions of and problematic attitudes towards race, alongside his distorted perception of Manuela Rosas, both of which are addressed thoroughly in this article.

Mármol's fiction is set in 1840 against the backdrop of the French blockade, covering the months leading up to Lavalle's anticipated but failed invasion and subsequent withdrawal in September of the same year. *Amalia* is considered one of the most important anti-Rosas texts, depicting the dictator as a force of evil while emphasising the plight of the people living under his rule: "with *Amalia*, Mármol consciously attempts to initiate a canon of representation of the Rosas era as 'la tiranía' as he directs his novels at a future public" (Rea 29). *Amalia* elevated Mármol to literary and political prominence, and was a further blow to the already failing Rosas regime at the time. With Montevideo under siege by Rosas's forces, Mármol left for Rio de Janeiro with other exiled writers, but after an unsuccessful trip to Valparaíso, the writer returned to Montevideo in 1846 and continued his scathing denunciation of the Rosas regime. He continued to speak out against the Federalist press and published instalments of *Amalia* in 1851 before returning to Buenos Aires after Rosas's fall from power in 1852.

Mármol spent the rest of his life focusing his energies on politics; he abandoned his literary profession as though, with Rosas gone, there was nothing to write about: "The novel's project, so the reading goes, was to depose Rosas. Once that was done, so was Mármol's politics" (Knapp-Jones 92). Instead, he took various political and diplomatic roles in government before obtaining a post as director of the Public Library of Buenos Aires in 1858, which he held until his death on 9 August 1871 (Dunstan 4) – a post which "came largely from the success of patriotic verses he hurled against Rosas" (Knapp-Jones 92). Mármol's post in government was largely owing to the success of his intelligent fiction, in which he relied on "allegory and symbolism to convince readers of the need to oust Rosas and usher in a new era of highly-principled democracy" (Foster 5).

This article offers an original analysis of how *Amalia* can be deemed a more progressive novel than other more divisive works such as Esteban Echeverría's *El matadero* (1871), in that it seeks to encourage national reconciliation between the Unitarians and Federalists and thus end a tumultuous political conflict, which Mármol argues was exacerbated by Rosas. Existing Unitarian scholarship has demonised Rosas's treatment of women, but this analysis shows how women – irrespective of colour – were afforded more social freedom and political agency in his governments than they would have enjoyed under a Unitarian leader. This article advances

readings of *Amalia* by exploring in depth the way in which the novel aims to promote political unity, addressing Mármol's positive and compassionate, but likely inaccurate representation of Manuela Rosas, while also shedding light on Mármol's – and other Unitarians' – problematic attitudes towards and depictions of race and gender, which disempower and dehumanise Federalist women, thus proving detrimental to the pursuit of national harmony.

AMALIA

Mármol wrote *Amalia* after being banished from Argentina during the Rosas tyranny, which explains why the theme of exile is at the heart of the novel. Civantos notes that “the novel, in addition to having been written in exile in Montevideo in 1851, is riddled with exile as both a fear and a hope” (56). Mármol's sentimentalist novel encapsulates and enacts the political struggle between the Unitarians and Federalists and emphasises how women and romance played a crucial role in exposing the ideological conflict. Even though there are numerous anti-Rosas texts, it can be argued that *Amalia* is the most important given its constant repetition of the word “exile”, but in rather contradictory ways. The novel starts with a group of Unitarians, including Eduardo Belgrano, who are attempting to escape to Montevideo. Eduardo expresses contrasting views on exile.

es necesario dar el paso que damos [...] Sin embargo [...] hay alguien, en este mundo de Dios que cree lo contrario de nosotros [...] Es decir que piensa que nuestro deber de argentinos es permanecer en Buenos Aires [...] que menos número de hombres moriremos en las calles el día de una revolución, que en los campos de batalla, en cuatro o seis meses, sin la menor probabilidad de triunfo... (Mármol 5)

Mármol is referring here to the broader context of the Federalist attack on Eduardo: he is injured before being rescued by his loyal companion Daniel Bello. Daniel's moral valour lies at the heart of the novel as he switches between characters and masters the art of pretending to be a Federalist. He does this not only to ensure the freedom of his widowed cousin, Amalia, and Eduardo – soon to become her lover – but also “to further his own cause – ending the Rosas regime” (Civantos 56). Daniel is depicted as the ultimate hero in this novel, for it is he who leads the resistance against Rosas under his masqueraded identity: “Hardly an orthodox Unitarian and certainly not a sincere Federalist, Daniel is an unstable mix, a lamb in a wolf's clothing, the gentleman who does not hesitate to show Federalist bravado” (Sommer 90).

Daniel successfully plays the stereotypical *federalista*; he embodies all the qualities of *machismo* in the *gaucho* character. He is physically strong, skilled with the lasso and in throat cutting, and manipulative in his avoidance of persecution. Eduardo's battle with the *mazorqueros* exemplifies the brutal killings that took place on the streets of Buenos Aires under Rosas:

sin embargo, no había terminádose en su pensamiento, cuando los asesinos estaban ya sobre él, tres de ellos con sables de caballería y el otro armado de un cuchillo de matadero [...] Los tres de sable lo acometen con rabia, lo estrechan y dirigen todos los golpes a su cabeza. (Mármol 23)

Knifing was traditionally a *gauchesque* method of execution, inflicted upon Unitarians and Federalists by the ubiquitous and inescapable *mazorca*. Daniel's heroism is emphasised when he comes to his companion's aid and rescues him, fleeing with him to his house, where Amalia lives. He makes him feel welcome and introduces him to his future love: “Esta es mi casa, comandante; y esta señora es mi *prima*” (298). Daniel is already idolised following his impressive performance in the street battle, in which he displays his *machismo* and his skill with *gaucho* weapons. His selflessness is highlighted by the fact that he not only saves Eduardo, but is also willing to risk his own life, as well as Amalia's, by taking Eduardo to their safe haven while knowing that Eduardo will be hunted down as the only survivor of the attack. As a most-wanted enemy of the *mazorca*, Eduardo must now change his political affiliation and avoid roaming around the city if he wants to survive.

Later in the novel, Daniel reveals the weapon with which he expertly killed Eduardo's attackers. Daniel calls it a *casse-tête* (headache), but this has a more sinister connotation: “it translates in Spanish as *rompecabezas*, literally a head breaker but also a puzzle and perhaps a pun on its threat of permanent disaggregation” (Sommer 85). Sommer notes that “the detail is important

because this neologism evidently associates Daniel with the Francophile opposition to Rosas” (85). Before and during the Rosas era, Argentine freethinkers became remarkably proficient at applying revolutionary ideas sparked by the French Revolution of 1789, and incorporated newly coined French phrases into their own written and spoken language. Argentine intellectuals chose to model themselves on French Romantics and used them as a source for intellectual inspiration. But perhaps a more poignant event that gave rise to the use of the French language and encouraged liberalism among the Argentine aristocracy was the punitive French blockade of Buenos Aires and “her promises of support for the resistance” (85).

The most explicit manifestations of Daniel’s Francophilia emerge when he takes a trip to Montevideo – home to the exiled intellectuals and a subsequent hotbed for anti-Rosas literature. The *casse-tête* – an instrument with a wicker (*mimbre*) handle connecting two ropes tipped by iron balls and covered by a fine net of soft leather – turns out to be uncannily familiar (85). The visual image of the instrument produces humour, which is apparent when Amalia is curious about the tool and Daniel finally exposes what resembles artificial genitals (*miembro*). The instrument’s sexual connotations arouse Amalia’s curiosity and she presses him for clarification:

- ¿Qué arma es esa, Daniel, que usas tú y con la que has hecho a veces tanto daño?
- Y tanto bien, podrías agregar, prima mía.
- Cierto, cierto perdona; pero respóndeme; mira que he tenido esta curiosidad muchas veces.
- Espera, déjame terminar este dulce.
- No te dejes ir esta noche sin que me digas lo que quiero.
- Casi estoy por ocultártelo entonces.
- Cargoso! (Mármol 633)

The joke, “which is so characteristic of Mármol’s flair for dialogue but perhaps lost on generations of required readers” (Sommer 86),¹ is first introduced when Daniel tries to persuade Eduardo to replace his “civilised” Unitarian sword with a more “barbaric” but convenient weapon, one more likely to be seen in the savage hands of a *gaucho* Federalist. The *gauchos* used traditional weapons such as lassos, *bolas* or *boleadoras*, a capturing device invented by native South Americans and still used by *gauchos* for hunting animals – they treated the Unitarians as prey. The tool consisted of a “triple rope tipped by three metal balls, fastened to one extremity of the rope of hide, the other extremity of which is attached to a saddle-girth” (86). Sommer notes that the mechanical construction of the *bolas* is a metaphor for Daniel’s masculinity: “Structurally, Daniel’s weapon displaces power from the rigid centre” (86). Sommer also comments on the metaphorical meaning of the *bolas* and emphasises Daniel’s superior masculinity as opposed to Eduardo’s tenderness: “Daniel’s discreet masculinity, borne close to the heart in his breast pocket (and turning upside down Freud’s quip about the heart being at the genitals) is more potent than Eduardo’s sword, much as the ensnaring *bolas* are” (86). The weapon’s allegorical meanings are ambiguous to be sure, which “may even leave the reader incredulous at the transgression of a French signifier, *casse-tête*, pointing to a barbarous signified” (86).

Mármol’s novel exposes the plight of the Argentine liberals under Rosas’s dictatorship; freethinkers such as Mármol and Alberdi were prominent figures in the generation of 1837 who had all been exiled to Montevideo. The exiles were united by their collective disdain for Rosas and expressed their opposition by means of literary resistance. These staunch opponents of Rosas all shared the common goal of “ridding the Argentine provinces of Rosas and the *caudillo* system in general and worked more broadly to delineate which problems hindered the Argentine provinces” (Civantos 61), and in doing so, “they produced some of Argentina’s most durable guiding fictions” (Shumway 112). The works of the banished liberals were instrumental in exposing and challenging the Rosas dictatorship; they drew attention to Rosas’s unforgivable cruelty and the terror that beleaguered the country, and sought to mend their broken nation. The binary opposition between civilisation and barbarism was an obstacle that delayed Argentina’s political recovery and further divided Unitarians and Federalists.

¹ Mármol’s *Amalia* was required reading in Argentina’s schools until recently.

Mármol's text is one of the few progressive works that was produced amid the political chaos, and rather than reinforce the divisions between the discursive categories of civilisation and barbarism, he seeks to unite the two and thus demonstrate that it is possible to coexist in society. The revolutionaries – who came to be known as the Generation of '37 – were part of the literary salon at Marcos Sastre's bookshop, and coalesced around Estebán Echeverría, the author of the contentious *El matadero*, who had returned from Paris in 1830. It was at the bookshop that Echeverría presented his *Dogma socialista* – a selective compilation of French utopian socialism, which became the group's ideological platform. But this exclusive club came to an abrupt end when Rosas proscribed it in 1838: "Rosas's toleration of the opposition ended when he banned the publication of women's journals such as Juan Baustista Alberdi's *La Moda*" (Sommer 88). This was because the magazine was correctly suspected of "fronting for what Rosistas perceived to be unmanly Europeanised fops; it was a coy screen in both senses of hiding and showing, a womanly voice as the men's public organ" (88).

MÁRMOL AND NATIONAL RECONCILIATION

In contrast with Echeverría's *El matadero*, Mármol's work encourages civil reunification between the opposing sides in the interests of political reconstruction. Echeverría understandably demonises the Federalists, but in doing so he deems the political crisis irreconcilable. His text reflects the atrocities of the time as he describes the sadomasochistic torture of a pompous Unitarian, much like Eduardo Belgrano; the story is about a gang of "savage" butchers who – with the traditional *mazorca* torture instrument – "rape" a passer-by who happens to be a Unitarian.² The text is somewhat one-dimensional and negative since it offers no prospect of reconciliation between the warring parties. Echeverría wrote *El matadero* with the cynical outlook of the then catastrophic political climate after he "had lost hope of getting beyond traditional dichotomies", and also because "during the terror it seemed natural to displace the barbarian from the Indian frontier right into the centre of the Argentine body politic" (Sommer 106). By yielding to the hostility that already existed between Unitarians and Federalists, Echeverría intensifies the hatred between both parties and plunges the knife further into Argentina's political wound, thus rendering it impossible to heal.

While Echeverría's *El matadero* further undermines the prospects of national cohesion between political foes, Mármol's revolutionary *Amalia* encourages a reconciliation, which is precisely why the latter text is more progressive and is considered to be compulsory reading in many higher education institutions in Latin America. Rosas sought to emphasise the irreconcilable differences between the barbarous Federalist *gauchos* and the civilised, enlightened Unitarians; his dictatorship would not have survived had he not convinced his followers that political oppositions could not be bridged. However, Mármol incorporates the nomadic inhabitants of the plains into his reformist novel and elevates the *gaucho* to the status of Argentina's national emblem, thus countering the works of his fellow liberals, who dismissed the *gaucho* as a figure of negative connotations belonging to the country's outdated, barbaric past. While most exiled writers were still "looking to Europe for cultural orientation" (Civantos 62), Mármol depicts the *gaucho* as the quintessential Argentine who is unique to Argentina and cannot be found anywhere else. Even though Mármol's modern version of the *gaucho* has been somewhat "improved" due to their interaction with "civilisation", the important point is that Mármol uses his status to promote and glorify the *gaucho*, previously seen as an inferior cultural emblem. Enlightened intellectuals were incongruously looking elsewhere for cultural identity when the leading symbol of Argentine identity lay right in front of their eyes.

Even though Eduardo and Daniel are the characters with whom we sympathise, Mármol also depicts the *gauchos* as victims, and Fermín is a prime example. Daniel's mistreatment of Fermín evokes sympathy in the reader because Fermín is portrayed as a loyal, obedient and peaceful man; he is described as waiting for Daniel: "tranquilo, como buen hijo de la pampa, el gauchito civilizado en quien [Daniel] dispoitaba toda su confianza, porque realmente la merecía" (Mármol 92). Mármol also likens Daniel to a *gaucho*, particularly when he emphasises his choice of weapons, a contraption of leather cords and balls, highly reminiscent of the *boleadoras* – the *gaucho* hunting instrument.

2 The *mazorca* death squad earned its name from the corncob-shaped instrument (*mazorca* means corncob in Spanish), which was used to torture its victims.

By proposing the *gaucho* as a national emblem under which political adversaries could unite, Mármol mocks Rosas's authority over the residents of the *pampas*. The *gauchos* were categorically associated with Rosas, given that his power base was permeated by the *caudillos* and their *gaucho* troops. However, Mármol cleanses the *gauchos* of their political affiliation with Rosas and of their barbaric savagery. Even though the marginalised *gauchos* – without steady work or fixed property – were reintegrated into Argentine society by Rosas, they were forced to fight for the independence army and so they continued to be deprived of their freedom. Subject to military conscription and to the control of the *caudillos*, as well as being poorly paid, they risked their lives to further Rosas's cause. They were deemed outlaws and vagabonds of the *pampas* by the Argentine aristocracy, but Mármol – in his willingness to repair the political damage – does something revolutionary. He facilitates the cultural appropriation of the *gaucho* by integrating them into liberal law; the body and voice of the *gaucho* are institutionally disciplined to become part of civilisation. Both the Federalists and the Unitarians used the *gaucho* to achieve their own objectives, but it can be argued that Mármol's appreciation of these unique outcasts was candid.

Amalia promotes national cohesion, which is essential in terms of ensuring the peaceful coexistence of political opposites, a concept that Felix Frías reiterated in his 1857 speech before the Argentine House of Representatives. He paid particular attention to the Rosas dictatorship and used his tyrannical rule to exemplify “the consequence of general national disorder” (Armillas-Tiseyra 29). In presenting this case as a prime example of the problems that could arise from the country's political conflicts, “Frías argues that national order and cohesion are necessary to prevent the rise of another dictator” (29), as he urges the audience: “Pongamos en orden la familia, señores” (Frías 146). Magalí Armillas-Tiseyra argues that broken families proliferate in anti-Rosas literature, observing that they

not only lose members to violence but are pulled apart and *distorted* such that the (national) family line cannot continue or perhaps even begin – Mármol's *Amalia* (1844) is a canonical example of the latter. (29)

Any glimmer of hope in anti-Rosas literature is suppressed when the *mazorca* are involved, and this reflects the tragic events that took place under Rosas's administration. *Amalia* emphasises the contribution of the *mazorca* to *la tiranía*: “in *Amalia*, the menacing presence of the *mazorca* in the daily lives of the *porteños* emerges as the most enduring and persuasive of the cultural markers of ‘la tiranía’” (29). Mármol describes the situation in 1840, when the activities of the *mazorca* were still “limited to searching for suspected dissidents encountered on the streets of Buenos Aires, taking those with weapons to the President of the *Sociedad Popular Restauradora* and insulting those who were not displaying the insignia” (Rea 35). The terror that plagued Buenos Aires spiralled out of control after 1840 when Rosas continued to accumulate unprecedented power. Mármol echoes the spine-chilling terror of the *mazorca* to which Rosas's victims were subjected: “Este famoso club de asesinos corría las calles día y noche, aterrando, asesinando y robando, a la vez que en Santos Lugares, en la cárcel y en los cuarteles de Mariño y Cuitiño, se le hacía corro con la agonía de las víctimas” (Mármol 767). The terror that plagued the daily lives of Rosas's enemies and followers alike was instrumental in his dictatorship; he came to power after awakening hatred between Unitarians and Federalists, but maintained his hold over Buenos Aires with his rule of terror, which went unchallenged:

Pero todo caía vencido por el terrorismo. Rosas, poseedor del secreto de su triunfo real, ya no pensaba sino en vengarse de sus enemigos, y en acabar de enfermar y prostrar el espíritu público a golpes de terror. El dique había sido roto por su mano, y la Mashorca se desbordaba como un río de sangre. (766)

Rosas's victims were subjected to permanent surveillance by his paramilitary death squad, who were ready to quench their thirst for Unitarian blood. Mármol not only sheds light on the horrifyingly routine terror raids but also shows that the inhabitants of Buenos Aires had now become enslaved: “Hombre, mujeres, niños, todo el mundo estaba con el pincel en la mano pintando las puertas, las ventanas, las rejas, los frisos exteriores, de día y muchas veces hasta en alta noche” (767). The *mazorca* ordered people to swear an oath of loyalty to Rosas by not only displaying the Federalist insignia on their clothing but also painting and decorating their houses red – any other colours, particularly those of the enemy, were forbidden: “Y mientras

parte de un familia se ocupaba de aquello, la otra envolvía, ocultaba, borraba o rompía cuanto en el interior de la casa tenía una lista azul o verde” (767). It was through the *mazorca* that Rosas robbed civilians of their freedom and instigated the murder of thousands. The terror had no limits; the *mazorca* tore apart Unitarian families and showed no mercy when it came to women and children: “Otros corrían de cuarto en cuarto, a las indefensas mujeres, dándoles y cortándoles con sus cuchillos el cabello [...] todo esto en medio de un ruido y una grito infernal, confundida con el llanto de los niños, los ayes de la mujer y la agonía de la víctima” (767).

Mármol also encompasses the plight of Unitarian families: while the *mazorca* were terrorising Rosas’s enemies on the outside, Mármol argues that the dictator himself was tyrannising his daughter Manuela within the confines of his own home. *Amalia* partly depicts Rosas’s tyrannical character through the noble Federalist Daniel Bello, whose relationship with Amalia – at least from Mármol’s perspective – is redolent of the dictator’s own relationship with Manuela. However, Mármol does elevate Daniel to heroic status and, in doing so, demonstrates that even political opponents can show respect for one another.

DANIEL BELLO: PARTIAL REPRESENTATION OF ROSAS

Daniel is portrayed as the hero of the novel, but Sommer draws attention to his personal dispositions, which are analogous to those of Rosas. Daniel demonstrates his heroic calibre as he continually risks his life to protect his friends and to build resistance among masqueraded Federalists in the same predicament as himself, but “he is never so foolish as to risk it for some feudal and inflexible notion of honour and masculinity” (Sommer 92). Daniel takes great care in what he says, does and whom he trusts; Amalia, on the other hand, is not as cautious or smart in her actions, disclosing to the *mazorca* that she is a Unitarian and proud of it. Even though Daniel exemplifies the difficulties faced by enlightened intellectuals as they were forced to flee their home countries, he paradoxically bears striking resemblances to the dictator himself. Although Daniel is dominant because he is arguably the most resourceful when it comes to resolving the problems that he, Eduardo and Amalia have to face, he seems to incorporate aspects of Rosas’s character: “This strategically promiscuous double-crosser is as wilful as Rosas” (Sommer 92), in the sense that he is calculating in his approach to getting what he wants.

We see from the beginning that Daniel desires power over his companions “¿Me permites que dé al tuyo todas las instrucciones que yo considere necesarias?” (Mármol 100). Frustrated by Eduardo’s objections to him taking control, Daniel explains in a patronising and belittling manner: “Tú tienes más talento que yo, Eduardo, pero hay ciertas cosas en que yo valgo cien veces más que tu” (100), referring to his tactful nature and *gauchesque* fighting skills. Daniel’s arrogance and disparaging remarks are not the only personal traits that tarnish his reputation in the novel. We learn that Daniel will resort to blackmailing his servants in order to further his own cause, which emphasises that even a hero’s tactics can be morally dubious. Daniel cruelly threatens his ever-loyal servant Fermín by promising that any carelessness on his part will guarantee him a place in the army, which of course, for a servant *gaucho*, means death. Instead of thinking badly of his master, Fermín reiterates his willingness to die to protect him; he blurts out in a paroxysm of fidelity to Daniel: “Yo no sirvo. Primero me hago matar que dejar a usted” (110). Fermín’s self-sacrificing attitude is reminiscent of the loyalty of the *gauchos* to Rosas.

Daniel does not stop his scheming after this scene with Fermín. He proceeds to blackmail a Unitarian black woman, Doña Marcelina – who is the madame of a local whorehouse – into letting him use her brothel to host clandestine meetings: “No exijo de usted sino discreción y silencio; la menor imprudencia, sin costarme a mí un cabello, le costaría a usted la cabeza” (201). Yet she echoes Fermín’s response, demonstrating her fearless devotion to Daniel and the Unitarian cause: “Mi vida está en manos de usted hace mucho tiempo, señor don Daniel; pero aunque así no fuera yo me haría matar por el último de los unitarios” (201). Daniel’s immoral treatment of his black inferiors recalls the degrading servitude of the black population under Rosas on the frontier. In *Amalia*, Rosas’s black henchmen all pledge allegiance to him and are willing to sacrifice their lives for him: “Me he de hacer matar por Su Excelencia” (299). The dictator reinstated the law that made it legal for Africans – who had been transported into the labour-scarce Rio de la Plata – to be sold as slaves. However, “despite the legal shackles,

the twenty years of the Rosas administration transformed the Afro-Argentines into a potent instrument for federalism and populism” (Kelly 221). Rosas managed to sustain the loyalty of his black servants by praising their efforts and underlining the importance of their contributions to the Federalist cause: “Rosas himself procured black support through flattery, propaganda and genuine concessions. Naming his suburban mansion after the black Saint Benito de Palermo, for instance, proved of considerable symbolic value” (223). Even though Rosas was manipulative in his relations with the black populace of Buenos Aires, he managed to maintain their loyalty by rewarding and honouring their efforts in battle. Manuela was perhaps also misleading in her close relationships with members of the black community as she

provided another – and, in the view of the Unitarians, scandalous and offensive – link with the Afro-Argentines. Particularly unpalatable in the eyes of the libertarians was her habit of attending the dances of the African nations whilst swinging in the arms of black men. (222)

Domingo Faustino Sarmiento’s *Facundo* implies strongly that black maids informed Rosas of Unitarian allegiances among the families for whom they worked: “los negros ganados así para el Gobierno ponían en manos de Rosas un celoso espionaje en el seno de cada familia por los sirvientes y esclavos” (Sarmiento 277). Although this suggests that black slaves were employed in domestic service regardless of sex, Sarmiento makes reference to how black women allegedly influenced the government, particularly through Manuela, who was said to be entrusted with enhancing relations with the black community (Dunstan 2). But the efforts of Rosas’s wife also must not be ignored; Encarnación Ezcurra was a fierce devotee of her husband’s cause, and given her leadership skills and her role as the agent and purveyor of *rosismo*, she earned the title *Heroína de la Federación*. She played an instrumental role in garnering support among black women: “calling in black women to receive her favour and sending them out as clients, she transformed her patio into a club for the populace” (Lynch 111-12).

Daniel Bello imitates the way in which Rosas compelled the loyalty of black people (slave or free) by demonstrating his manipulative, authoritative and tactical traits in his approach to protecting himself. However, there is one key difference, as Sommer remarks: “cunning Daniel is the very image of Rosas, described by many as monstrously sly, but an image inverted” (Sommer 93). Whereas Daniel adopts multiple personae to cover all fronts at home and in the world (in order to save people’s lives and maintain his Federalist identity), Rosas cleverly stayed undercover in his most public appearances. The same can be said of Juan Perón in this respect, as it was mostly Eva who was present at public engagements, solidifying ties with the masses. At the political battle front, Mármol underlines Rosas’s careful maintenance of a permanent disguise:

- ¿Dónde dormía Rosas? En el cuartel general tenía su cama, pero allí no dormía.
- En la alta noche se le veía llegar al campamento, y el héroe popular hacía tender su recado cerca de sus leales defensores. Allí se lo veía echarse; pero media hora después ya no estaba allí. ¿Dónde estaba? Con el poncho y la gorra de su asistente, tenido en cualquier otra parte, donde nadie lo hallase ni lo conociese. (Mármol 669)

By conflating Rosas’s and Daniel’s personae, or the hero’s portrait and its negative, Mármol “confuses allies as much as enemies, as if they were figures for a Lacanian phallus that continually plays hide and seek with our desire to know it” (Sommer 93). To elaborate on Sommer’s observations and address a previously unacknowledged concept in relation to this novel, it is important to state how Freudian and Lacanian theory can be applied to Daniel and Rosas. The main phallic function in this sense serves as a supreme symbol of masculine power and is used to measure political prominence and social worth. The incessant thirst for power which is omnipresent in both Rosas and Daniel captures the essence of Lacan’s reconstruction of Freud’s Ideal Ego and Ego Ideal. The Ideal Ego represents the “image of perfection which the Imaginary ego of the consciousness derives from its mirror relation to a reflected other” (Gambaudo 158). However, it is the weaker of the two concepts; the Ego Ideal, which is “motivated by the cultural and social pressure and personal critical judgement [...] is always triumphant over the Ideal Ego of imaginary narcissism” (Samuels 71-2). Rosas represents the Ideal Ego, which corresponds to the definition of “what he himself was”, while Daniel – given that he is constantly seeking power – embodies the Ego Ideal, which is defined as “what he

himself would like to be” (Žižek 14). By comparing the novel’s hero to Rosas, Mármol is exploring actual power by contemplating its hypothetical mirror; Daniel is not only the fictional reflection of the dictator, but he projects the level of power that Rosas has in reality: “The Ideal Ego is understood as a narcissistic ideal of omnipotence”, and this encompasses Rosas’s ultimate aim of gaining absolute power (Laplanche and Pontalis 202). Daniel is portrayed as the Ego Ideal given that his immeasurable power in this fiction symbolises Rosas’s unparalleled political supremacy, which he loses after his fall. The fact that the Ego Ideal is always victorious over the Ideal Ego is an allegory for the fact that the Unitarians – with whom Daniel sympathises as he saves Eduardo – seize power after the collapse of the Rosas government.

A prime example of Daniel’s authoritarianism is when his teacher, Don Cándido, seeks protection from his former pupil – because even apolitical subjects were not protected from the *mazorca*. It is at this point that Daniel identifies an opportunity. Rather than console Don Cándido and grant him his wish, he chooses to use the effect of the official terror to scare the elderly man into spying for the conspirators. This emphasises Daniel’s corrupt misuse of his power; intimidated at the thought of facing fatal repercussions, Don Cándido reluctantly yields to Daniel’s coercion. Daniel thinks that tormenting his now vulnerable companion is mildly entertaining: “Daniel se reía, y empezó a doblar y multiplicar los dobles en el papel que le dio don Cándido” (Mármol 267). Puzzled by Daniel’s underlying motives, Don Cándido “estaba mirando y devanándose los sesos por comprender la ocupación de su discípulo” (267).

Daniel’s manipulation of Don Cándido calls to mind Rosas’s interview with the British ambassador Enrique Mandeville, during which the minister is unable to comprehend Rosas’s objectives:

soltando palabra por palabra, en una verdadera perplejidad de ánimo, no pudiendo explicarse el objeto que se proponía Rosas con descubrir él mismo los peligros que le amenazaban, cosa que en la astucia del dictador no podía menos que tener alguna segunda intención muy importante. (162)

Rosas is as calculating as ever when conducting his interview with Mandeville; he deploys the manipulative technique of reiterating Mandeville’s political responsibilities and allegiance to him to ensure that he gets what he wants: “Yo creo que la obligación de usted es informar fielmente y con datos verdaderos al gobierno de Su Majestad, sobre la situación en que quedan los negocios del Rio de la Plata a la salida del paquete para Europa. ¿No es así?”, to which a trembling Mandeville responds: “Exactamente Excelentísimo Señor” (159). Despite the fact that Rosas confuses his guest, Mandeville does not become frustrated by his inability to penetrate the dictator’s underlying intentions. In fact, he is rather excited when he finally understands what Rosas wants, namely support against the resistance: “el ministro se felicita con una sonrisa la más insinuativa y cortesana, pero al mismo tiempo con una expresión de una verdad sentida” (169). Rosas succeeds in his quest to obtain Mandeville’s support with the aid of his political intelligence and powers of persuasion. He convinces the minister that the negotiation would serve the best interests of the British and Argentine governments. So confident is Rosas in his ability to reach an agreement that he gives the minister a chance to make a decision for himself, while knowing all too well that his previous comments have had their desired effect: “Haga usted lo que quiera. Lo único que yo deseo es que se escriba la verdad” (166). Similar to Daniel, Rosas always ensures that he is in control of a situation and refrains from begging Mandeville to grant him his wish. Instead, he gives the impression that he does not care and subtly persuades Mandeville to negotiate “con cierto aire de indiferencia, a través del cual el Señor Mandeville, si hubiese estado con menos entusiasmo en ese momento, habría descubierto que la escena del disimulo comenzaba” (166). Sommer remarks: “here is an Argentine out-scheming and outtalking the Englishman, whose people exercised a virtual commercial monopoly in Argentine politics and who probably taught Rosas something about the relationship between shrewdness and power” (Sommer 94). Daniel and Rosas both achieve results to further their divergent causes and this is precisely why Daniel is the real hero of the novel. It is paradoxical that Daniel deploys Rosas’s own methods to defeat him: “[Daniel] manages to occupy the distance between the antagonistic signs, the distance that Rosas’s terror needed in order to construct itself as a campaign against the Other” (Sommer 94). Unlike the conciliatory youths of 1837, Mármol’s fictional hero fulfils the role as leader of the opposition and succeeds in cancelling the polar opposition.

Daniel's relationship with his beloved Florencia – who is not just his lover but his double – is redolent of the relationship between Rosas and Encarnación; their marriage was more like a political partnership, and at times it was Encarnación who was the dominant force in the marriage. Daniel's shrewdness, which might characteristically be ascribed to women, is a quality that Sarmiento “disparagingly attributed to Rosas” (Sommer 95). But unlike Rosas, Mármol feminises Daniel's character: “our puzzle of a hero shifts more than party lines; everything about him seems doubled or contradictory; including his gender” (95), and his body: “la blancura de sus lindas manos [...] porque eran en efecto manos que podrían dar enviada a una coqueta” (Mármol 127). Mármol's feminine descriptions of Daniel's intellect and physical appearance make him seem a gentler and wiser political adversary, a stark contrast to Echeverría's violent and barbaric Federalists.

Although Daniel partly reflects Rosas, it should be noted that his more feminine qualities make him think and behave more like a Unitarian, which is why he is fit to be the novel's hero. Moreover, by attributing characteristically feminine traits to a Federalist such as Daniel, Mármol is equating men with women, emphasising that both genders are equally important. *Amalia* is the first novel – in the Unitarian literary realm – to pay heed to women's efforts in the political arena, reiterating their importance in ending a turbulent national conflict and uniting Argentina.

MÁRMOL'S WOMEN

The contrast between how women are portrayed in *Amalia* and *El matadero* has received limited critical analysis, and it is therefore necessary to explore Mármol's slightly more favourable depiction of his female counterparts, while still drawing out his problematic attitudes towards women of colour. Women in Mármol's novel are admirable heroes, and by likening Daniel's hands to the tenderness of a woman's, his character is further exalted in the reader's eyes. The empowerment of women is an important theme in Mármol's work. He gives women a heroic status in his novel and thus protests the moral corruption of Argentine womanhood for which, he argues, Rosas can be held accountable. Lacan's concept of the phallic function as power can be related to *Amalia* in the sense that she has no phallus, meaning no power, and therefore constantly desires it. In Lacanian terms, Rosas was responsible for the “castration” of women in that he obliterated their political and social power. As Unitarians would argue, Rosas's profound ignorance and hatred of women meant that they were treated as sub-humans, and if they were fortunate enough to be admired by the dictator, it was due to the fact that they pledged allegiance to him and spied on his political enemies. Rosas favoured the proletarian, “bestial” black maids who adapted so efficiently to male-oriented environments that they were considered male. We can use Lacan's controversial statement “*la femme n'existe pas*” as a foundational theory to symbolise the suppression of women during the Rosas dictatorship (Lacan 285).

Male chauvinism was rife in Argentine society – in both Unitarian and Federalist environments – amid the political crisis. If Federalist women were to be favoured and respected by Rosas, they had to yield to masculine influence and lose their feminine identity, because defeminisation meant obtaining more power. However, they *did* obtain power under Rosas. Although Rosas can be viewed as only using women for political gain, the misogynistic and counter-progressive attitudes towards women in Unitarian society cannot go unheeded. Although during his time in office Sarmiento created numerous academic institutions and was thus successful in facilitating the intellectual development of women, it has to be reiterated that his establishment values were obsolete and only accommodated women of a certain social standing, namely the liberal elite. The schools' instruction was still limited and detrimental to women's advancement and expansion beyond traditional female domestic roles such as childbearing and maintaining the household. Furthermore, only women pertaining to the upper echelons of Argentine society “became beneficiaries of Sarmiento's educational reforms”, while others, namely women of an inferior social standing, remained excluded from the educational sphere (Meachem iii).

Amalia emphasises the fact that due to women's alleged lack of authority throughout the Rosas tyranny, the women in the novel strive to emulate the actions of the men, and in doing so, prove that they are equally noble and brave. For example, Florencia and Amalia follow suit when they witness Daniel and Eduardo risking their lives for the Unitarian cause, and thus emphasise their desire for the power that they are illegitimately denied. The women's

unwavering resilience in fiction and actuality demonstrates that they are just as heroic as men: “if women are admirable in this novel, and they are, it is because they are independent and courageous as men should be” (Sommer 95). Amalia is free to protect Eduardo from the *mazorca* as she proclaims that she is independent and leads a solitary life. She even goes so far as to insult the police chief, General Mariño, by confronting them with a generalised role reversal: “En Buenos Aires sólo los hombres temen; pero las señoras sabemos defender una dignidad que ellos han olvidado” (Mármol 493). Mariño knows that she is masquerading as a Federalist after María Josefa exposes her association with Eduardo. Still infuriated by Eduardo’s escape and Amalia’s arrogance, Mariño shouts “¡Ah, yo me vengaré, perra unitaria!” (383). Amalia’s refusal to cooperate with the *mazorquero* highlights both her contribution to the resistance against Rosas and her dignity: she is willing to risk her life for the Unitarian cause, thus supporting Mármol’s claim that, in some cases, women at the time were morally superior to men:

Sin disputa, sin duda histórica, la mujer porteña había desplegado durante esos fatales tiempos del terror, un valor moral, una firmeza y dignidad de carácter, y, puede decirse, una altanería y una audacia tal, que los hombres estaban muy lejos de ostentar. (534)

Sommer goes so far as to say that femininity is so conspicuous in both sexes that its sole connection with women may no longer be valid: “by the time the young men are disdained for acquiring ‘effeminate habits’, the adjective may no longer point to women but precisely away from them” (Sommer 95).

By portraying women as heroines in *Amalia*, Mármol emphasises the importance of women’s role in the resistance to Rosas, which is contrary to the work of his counterpart, Estebán Echeverría: “En cuanto a Amalia, la presencia de numerosas mujeres en la novela la permite evaluar al tenor de los juicios de Mármol sobre la función de la mujer en sociedad y su rol en la política” (Coromina 15). In *El matadero*, which is widely anthologised, Echeverría portrays the barbaric nature of the Federalists by describing the rape of their emasculated Unitarian victims. However, the absence of a female character cannot go unnoticed: by excluding female protagonists from his work, Echeverría “fails to integrate women into the making of a new nation” (Cajiao Salas and Vargas 4). The only women mentioned in *El matadero* are the “negras achuradoras” (Echeverría 310), who are depicted as barbaric due to the fact that they actively participate in the dismemberment of cattle. Echeverría deploys animalistic imagery to emphasise their uncivilised savagery; he describes them as “caranchos de presa y harpías”, who compete with seagulls and dogs in their search for *achuras* (310–11). The female protagonists in *El matadero* contribute to the violent atmosphere and are portrayed as being aesthetically displeasing according to the racially prejudiced Echeverría (*negra, africana, mulata*) – characteristics reminiscent of Encarnación Ezcurra. Echeverría blurs gender distinctions in his novel, and emphasises that the slaughterhouse is not a domestic space: “por lo tanto no hay lugar por la femineidad idealizada allí” (Coromina 15). The women are equally as bestial as their Federalist male counterparts, as the patronising and sarcastic narrator associates them with low life, animals and “other sub human forms of existence to the extent that the narrator purposefully elides the differences between the women’s (deformed) bodies and the body parts (innards) of the dismembered animals they are handling” (Davies, Brewster and Owen 92). Echeverría also homogenises the women and does not specify their familial or societal roles: “No hay esposas, no hay madres en este texto [...] Hay sólo una masa informe e ignorante (hombres y mujeres) que mantiene en el poder a Rosas” (Coromina 15). As well as reminding us that this type of ignorance was instrumental in Rosas’s long governance, Coromina also underlines Echeverría’s racist undertones, which emerge in his work in his use of degrading terms to describe the race and traits of the black populace: “Las negras se sitúan claramente al margen del ideal” (15).

Echeverría pays lip service to the resistance as his work exposes the dictator’s devastating influence over illiterate elements in society, but he paradoxically betrays his anti-women and anti-black sentiments, which were also evident among other Unitarians. Echeverría’s animalisation of his barbaric political arch-enemies is evident when he describes how they behave like the wild beasts they kill due to a shortage of meat: “la fuerza y la violencia bestial. Esas son vuestras armas, infames. El lobo, el tigre, la pantera, también son fuertes como vosotros. Deberíais andar como ellas, en cuatro patas” (Echeverría 323). The uncontrollable

violence among the rumbustious crowds at the slaughterhouse is demonstrated when, after one of their cattle escapes the enclosure, they chase the animal through the city and kill it. Then they realise that they have in fact killed an un-gelded bull, which is of no use to them as the meat is tough. This episode is overseen by “el Juez”, who represents Rosas: “el Juez del matadero, personaje importante, caudillo de los carniceros, que ejerce la suma del poder en aquella pequeña república por la delegación del Restaurador” (Echeverría 322). The torment of the bull and of a young Unitarian who is attacked by Federalists in the novel is significant, given that both of their bodies are subjected to the savage nature of the proletariat.

The degrading behaviour of the masses is enabled by the language with which the opposition is described. Echeverría closes *El matadero* “with a reflection on the regime’s political abuse of language, in which any person who is not explicitly aligned with the regime is designated a *salvaje unitario* and subject to violence” (Davies, Brewster and Owen 92). For example, Echeverría writes that Rosas’s supporters called every enemy a savage Unitarian, and in doing so, “conforme a la jerga inventada por el Restaurador, patrón de la cofradía, a todo él que no era degollador, carnicero, ni salvaje, ni ladrón; a todo hombre bien puesto, a todo patriota amigo de las luces y de la libertad” (324). Echeverría draws polarising distinctions between the Unitarians and the Federalists: the young Unitarian (who is mounting his horse, denoting status and hierarchy) is described as being clean, elegantly dressed, courageous and of “gallarda y buen apuesta persona” (321), whereas the Matasiete, who is a “degollador de unitarios” (318) and the epitome of Federalist masculinity, is depicted as being typically blood-spattered and dirty. Echeverría labels the *unitario* “la víctima” as he is tied up like the bull and taken away to be tortured (321). The Federalists describe him as effeminate and mock the way he sits on his horse like a gringo, with the aid of a saddle, rather than bareback like the *gauchos*. He is dehumanised as he is compared to an ox set upon by tigers, strongly implying castration.

Drawing on the absence of political heroines in liberal literature, *Amalia* is much more explicit when highlighting the link between women and the socio-political conflict among *rosistas* and *antirosistas*. Mármol gives women a voice, which Batticuore argues was silenced in the Rosas regime: “una gran parte de la actividad femenina en Amalia se concentra en las vistas que las mujeres se hacen unas a otras, así como en las cartas que escriben y deduce que las vistas y las cartas – hablar y escribir – tienen una función política” (43). The women in the novel protect the men by transforming their homes into safe havens: “Cuando Amalia protege a Eduardo escondiéndolo en su casa, está determinando el rumbo de ciertos acontecimientos políticos futuros lo mismo sucede con doña Marcelina, la dueña del prostíbulo donde se reúnen los conspiradores enemigos de Rosas” (Coromina 18). What is significant is that the spaces which they provide as hiding places for *antirosistas* become the locations for the planning of future political events. Amalia’s home is the refuge that the conspirators plan to use in order to escape the regime: “Las mujeres abren su espacio privado para que los hombres hagan un uso político de ese espacio” (18). In the novel, the men flee the *mazorca* and seek refuge in the houses of women – which is symbolic of the fact that Rosas reversed the societal power structure: it was women who owned properties that acted as safe havens for men fleeing the *mazorca*.

Daniel Bello claims that the “ideología burguesa”, which promoted white immigration, has now left the city of Buenos Aires “en poder de las mujeres de los cobardes y de los mazorqueros” (Mármol 320). We learn of the decline of the male population in the city, most of which has been defeated or exiled by Rosas. A little girl says to her mother: “no mamá, los hombres están en la guardia de Luján, donde está mi hermano. Aquí no hemos quedado sino las mujeres y los tigres” (666). These expressions – which appear to be exaggerated – nevertheless have a real basis. The Swedish traveller Carl Skogman reiterated the notion that Rosas was responsible for the absence of men in Buenos Aires:

Prolongadas guerras, las numerosas ejecuciones y los asesinatos cometidos por orden de Rosas, han hecho mermar notablemente la población masculina, de la cual otra proporción no menos importante, y sobre todo de hombres jóvenes ha buscado su seguridad huyendo o emigrando al extranjero [...] En la ciudad, la gran cantidad de mujeres jóvenes en relación en la de hombres de edad equivalente se evidenciaba inmediato. (Skogman 67)

The scene of the conversation between Señora N. and Amalia calls to mind the exceptional role played by women in the absence of men in the political sphere. The elderly woman explains to

Amalia that “[s]i nos presentamos a sus fiestas [de los federales] es por nuestros hijos, o por nuestros maridos” (Mármol 312). The women uphold important morals and values; they are symbols of resilience and humility in an unsettling environment: “La mujer mantiene viva la presencia unitaria en medio de un clima hostil; es así como la actividad puramente social de la mujer reviste una nueva importancia política” (Coromina 18). There is an obvious reversal of stereotypical gender roles in the novel; the women become the heroes who rescue the helpless men and shield them from harm. However, despite the fact that women occupy masculine roles, Mármol does not forget to emphasise their desire to fulfil their traditional feminine instincts: to marry and reproduce: “Amalia y su amiga Florencia, cuando no están ocupadas en defender a los hombres que aman, se dedican a soñar con su futuro de mujer casada” (18). Mármol’s empowerment of white women in the novel is visible in that he not only emphasises their courage and determination to resist Rosas, but draws our attention to their ability to fulfil both feminine and masculine roles: “En definitiva, Mármol admite la participación limitada de la mujer en la actividad política, aunque no en detrimento del matrimonio y la maternidad” (18). Mármol effectively demonstrates his admiration for women’s efforts and resilience during the political turmoil, but only if they are white and Unitarian. However, there is one exception: Manuela Rosas.

MÁRMOL’S MANUELA

An original and crucial aspect of Mármol’s novel is his compassion for Manuela Rosas, and his seemingly distorted comparison of her to Amalia. Mármol contributed to the mythologisation of Manuela and manipulated her story to further his political agenda. Mármol never met Manuela in real life, but he projects a warped version of her appearance, character and feelings towards her father and the *causa federalista*. Amalia indirectly demonstrates how Manuela was allegedly the main victim of her father’s authoritarianism. As Encarnación’s health began to deteriorate, Manuela took over her mother’s arduous role – one which she could not escape until her father’s fall from power. Despite Manuela’s opposing political stance, Mármol wrote about “la princesa federal” in a positive light that evokes sympathy for her. In *Amalia*, he exposes Manuela’s alleged suffering under her father’s rule, labelling her “la primera víctima de su padre y el mayor instrumento, sin quererlo ser y saberlo, de sus diabólicos planes” (Mármol 585). He depicts her as being a rather cheerful and pleasant character who was easy to talk to, with a personality that contrasted with those of her parents: “Su carácter era alegre, fácil y comunicativo. Pero de vez en cuando se notaba en ella, después de algún tiempo, algo de pesadumbre, de melancolía, de disgustos [...] lloraba, pero lloraba en secreto como las personas que verdaderamente sufren” (585).

Mármol emphasises that Manuela suffers just as much as Rosas’s other victims, but her so-called suffering is psychological torment. In Mármol’s view, Manuela is trapped within the walls of her father’s household; she is stripped of her freedom to interact with other Federalist ladies. He thinks that Rosas exerts an unhealthy and disturbing possessiveness over his vulnerable daughter and thus curtails her social life. Mármol depicts Manuela as a well-educated and graceful lady, to such an extent that he almost equates her with a Unitarian woman: “Su educación de cultura era descuidada, pero su talento natural suplía de ella” (586). He also emphasises the stark contrast between Manuela and her mother: “Su madre, mujer de talento y de intriga, pero vulgar, no había hecho nada por la perfecta educación de su hija” (586). According to Mármol, Manuela was forced into this role which she did not enjoy; it impeded her personal happiness as she was not free to socialise or to marry and start a family of her own. Rosas’s alleged control over his daughter prevented her from courting any Federalist men and imprisoned her in a type of solitary confinement. Mármol notes how her father stopped her from experiencing love twice: “pero las dos veces, la mano de su padre vino a echar los cerrojos de ellas, la pobre jóven tuvo que ver los más bellos encantos de la vida de una mujer a través del cristal de su imaginación” (586). Rosas did not want to lose her as an essential political instrument or as a companion. Mármol sympathises with what he perceives to be Manuela’s suffering, and claims that she would never find the love of her life if she remained in her father’s Federalist social circle, even going as far as to suggest that had Manuela been “blessed with a different father and re-educated, she would have reached her full potential” (Morgan 68). Rosas immediately allocated his wife’s role to his daughter when Encarnación’s fragile condition was declining; he knew that she was and would continue to be just as popular with the working

classes as Encarnación. Manuela was the catalyst for her father's success after Encarnación's death; the masses worshipped her: "Ella, además, un instrumento de popularidad. Con ella lisonjeaba el amor propio del plebeyo alzado de repente, al condición distinguida en la amistad del jefe federal" (Mármol 586). Manuela frequented dances where she always showed her charismatic persona – a key ingredient that facilitates the phenomenon of populism, as we saw in both the Rosas and Perón administrations.

As Daniel is somewhat likened to Rosas, Mármol intended Amalia to be accepted as an accurate representation of Manuela; she lives under Daniel's authoritative rule, follows his every command and is restricted to the confines of her home. Both Amalia and Manuela are kind and gentle, and even though the latter is not a Unitarian, she tries to help her father's victims, namely Camila O'Gorman. As well as the obvious comparisons between the two women in Mármol's novel, there is a bridge connecting the houses of Amalia and Manuela, "a bridge which is constructed out of the two women's bodies, representing opposite sides of the Argentine nation" (Hanway 31). Even though they are enemies, they are united by Mármol under a common circumstance; for him, they both suffer under the Rosas regime and are stripped of their freedom. Both women await the call to serve their nations, although the nation's call in Manuela's case is that of her father. Amalia serves her country through her bravery; she risks her life to save that of Eduardo and thus demonstrates her moral valour. However, Manuela does not serve Argentina in the same way; she only answers the call of her father by facilitating his success.

After *Amalia* was released, Unitarians became fascinated by Manuela as they adopted the collective view that she had suffered. Francine Masiello reports that Manuela's history was subject to wild and passionate investigations by the *unitarios* as she remarks:

In an age when sexuality was increasingly confused with politics, liberal writers emphasized an image of Manuela as a maiden enslaved to her father. Some described her as a victim of incest; others painted her as a benevolent figure devoted to helping victims of the regime. (29)

The favourable and allegedly accurate depictions of Manuela as a generous and self-sacrificing figure call to mind the descriptions of Eva Perón – an iconic figure in Latin American history who was well known for her charitable work among the less fortunate. Rosas's attachment to his daughter and to the adolescent Maria Eugenia Castro is confirmed by his own nephew, Lucio Mansilla. María was a maid who was presented to Rosas as a gift by her father, Juan Gregorio Castro; they went on to have five illegitimate children, who Rosas later abandoned. Mansilla, who despised his uncle's double standards of morality, struggled under the paradoxical legacy of his uncle and consequently denounced him. Hanway observes that Manuela was "a doubly transgressive figure for the time: both a public woman and a black-identified one" (Hanway 31). This is due to the fact that she attended African dances alongside her mother: "Doña Manuelita de Rosas showed no reluctance to dance on certain occasions with the honest and hard-working *mulatos*, *pardos* and *morenos*" (Andrews 97). In *Amalia*, Mármol casts Manuela as the helpless victim of her father's heartless attacks on her feminine modesty. Rosas is depicted as the embodiment of barbarism: "después de acariciar con sus manos sus pies desnudos [...] se entretuvo en rascarse esa parte del pecho; sintiendo con ello un verdadero placer, esa organización en quien predominan admirablemente todos los instintos animales" (Mármol 129). Mármol does not hesitate to emphasise Rosas's barbaric nature and suspected cruelty towards his daughter; he presents Rosas as encouraging members of his beastly entourage to humiliate his daughter as he forces her to shake hands with the bloodied hands of killers. Her suffering is visible when she is startled by the blood-spattered hands and arms of Comandante Cuitiño: "estaba pálida como un cadáver" (136).

For Mármol, Rosas was the very manifestation of savagery, from which Manuela herself was not immune. He postulates that Rosas was responsible for the moral corruption of Argentine womanhood; women in the Rosas regime were used as political objects as they were forced to wear the *divisa punzó*, and thus "in cultural discourse, they [women] existed only to point up the politically coded message being 'transmitted' by their clothing" (Hanway 34). The clothing that women were forced to wear is an allegory for the fact that their bodies symbolised the nation in national discourse, as they are the figures who "produce nations biologically, culturally and symbolically" (James Alexander 380). That being said, Unitarians' attitudes towards women's role in society were no more progressive.

Given the dearth of analysis, another important point to raise – which adds another dimension to Mármol’s fascination with Manuela – is that he romanticised her as a Unitarian woman because he could not admire or think of her in a positive light as a strong, independent Federalist. He cannot accept the likelihood that she was a “resilient and empowered individual who was passionate about promoting the *causa federalista*, remaining loyal to her father out of choice” (Morgan 63). There is historical evidence that implies that Manuela loved her father dearly and was not forced to stay by his side. Contrary to Mármol’s argument that Manuela was a helpless victim, María Rosa Lojo’s *La princesa federal* claims that Manuela adored her father, “which lies in the extraordinary help that she offered Rosas’s biographer, Adolfo Saldías” (Lehman 84). When Manuela was an elderly woman living in England, she gave Saldías permission to access her father’s archives – an act of “historical vindication which she herself had facilitated” (Morgan 70). Manuela was so pleased with Saldías’ depiction of her father that when her husband Máximo Terrero fell ill after a stroke, “she would read the biography to him chapter by chapter so he would not tire” (Lehman 91).³ Lojo’s historically corroborated arguments culminate when she states that, in her opinion, “Manuela believed that she and her father were providing the nation with a necessary service” (Lehman 84).

Although Mármol is compassionate towards Manuela’s alleged plight under her father, this becomes irrelevant when we consider the evidence – specifically her correspondence with Reyes – incorporated into Lojo’s account, which implies that she was not a victim of his oppression. It is possible that Mármol held Manuela in high regard not just because he was convinced that she was trapped and immobile, but because he believed she was white. Mármol never met Manuela in person and accepted Prilidiano Paz Pueyrredón’s official 1850 portrait of her – in which she has porcelain white skin – as being historically accurate. White skin was part of a desirable physiognomy for aristocratic Unitarian women, and Mármol chose to mythologise Manuela’s appearance to fit the criteria for his version of her story. The painting depicts Manuela’s complexion as being much fairer than it was in reality. In fact, it is said that Manuela had a deep olive or *trigueño* skin tone which resembled that of a *mulatto* woman, as reaffirmed by Pueyrredón’s biographer, José León Pagano: “presenta cabello castaño oscuro, ornado por una diadema de brillantes y la divisa federal; cutis trigueño y ojos negros” (Pagano 67). Based on Pueyrredón’s painting, Mármol describes Manuela as being of “la buena raza” (Morgan 67), again highlighting his racist views.

MÁRMOL AND RACE

By contrast to the theme of gender equality and the recognition of the political efforts of white women in *Amalia* – where they enjoy the same power as men – racial distinctions seem ineradicable: “The Generation of ’37 was the first post-independence Argentinean intellectual cohort; its members had an interest in constructing Argentina as a white nation of European culture, and they used their fictions to write this nation into being” (Dunstan 1). One of the fundamental policy disagreements between Rosas and his rivals regarded the issue of mass white immigration from Europe. Rosas categorically objected to white immigration to Argentina because, of course, in his view, immigration would see the demise of indigenous *gaucho* culture. His opponents, on the contrary, were convinced that immigration was Argentina’s most urgent need given that they wanted to make progress towards establishing a civilised country. The liberals’ model for a civilised Argentina would see the capital “inhabited by white upper-class European émigrés but paradoxically, when they assumed power after Rosas’s demise, they were bemused upon witnessing a wave of illiterate immigrants populate the capital” (Sommer 96). Much to Rosas’s dismay, the wave of new settlers would instigate the unjust treatment of native Argentines: “the country’s racially inferior stock of Spaniards and Indians needed to be improved by white Anglo-Saxon immigration” (96). Racial discrimination was rife within the anti-Rosas community; the tribal prejudices were perpetuated by the upper classes and so-called enlightened liberals such as Alberdi, Gutiérrez and Sarmiento, “whose biological determinism was somewhat accentuated by his faith in mass education and modern institutions in general” (96).

3 “Really, Reyes, that work of Dr. Saldías is fantastic! We are reading the first volume just now, I read aloud so that my poor Máximo does not lose track, so he understands it well and it does not tire his mind.” Letter from Manuel Rosas to Antonio Reyes, in *Manuelita Rosas y Antonio Reyes. El Olvidado Epistolario (1889–1897)*, Buenos Aires: Archivo General de la Nación, 1998, p. 89. Original Spanish not available. Cited in Lehman 90.

The morally culpable attitude of the Generation of '37 was not unusual considering their intellectual calibre; it is a fact that renowned and respected philosophers such as Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel condoned and encouraged racial discrimination in the nineteenth century. Hegel postulated that the indigenous peoples in Argentina hindered its national progression, as he referred to the natives in Mexico and South America as “unenlightened children who are known for their mildness and passivity, their humility and obsequious submissiveness [...] but they are obviously unintelligent individuals with little capacity for education. Their inferiority in all respects, even in stature, can be seen in every particular” (164). It is evident that Argentine intellectuals were inspired by the renowned but intolerant theories of Hegel and other philosophers such as Immanuel Kant, as their work is prejudiced against both women and ethnic minorities. For example, Kant’s misogynistic notions held that “women and all non-white peoples were limited to a sphere of sensory experience and therefore they share a propensity for immorality” (Lapolla-Swier 28).

The racist and misogynistic theories of European philosophers were instrumental in helping to shape the principles of the Generation of the '37, known as the *Asociación de Mayo*. Argentine Unitarians looked for the most fertile and racially belligerent⁴ ideas among the theories of their allegedly liberal European idols, and used them in their literary rebellion as a means of explaining the reasons for Argentina’s turbulent political climate at the time. In terms of reforming the education system, Unitarians wanted to discard the influence of contemporary Spanish literature by “substituting texts of French and Italian thinkers” (Mercado 55). Members of the liberal cohort such as Juan María Gutiérrez and Domingo Faustino Sarmiento shared the view that Spanish culture was non-reformist; Gutiérrez proclaimed “pues, la ciencia y la literatura española, *debemos nosotros divorciarnos completamente con [sic] ellas, y emanciparnos a este respecto de las tradiciones*” (145). Sarmiento shared his concerns over the inferiority of Spanish culture in the sense that it produced the *gaucho* – an emblem of barbarism – and insisted that “la Argentina estaría mejor si hubiera sido colonizada por los ingleses, puesto que en donde estos se habían instalado hubo el progreso” (22). Sarmiento’s disparaging attitudes towards the nomadic inhabitants of the *pampas* had improved slightly when, in 1855, he claimed to understand the need for social cohesion, as Pigna reveals that “[Sarmiento] comprende la necesidad del cooperativismo y pasa un revolucionario proyecto de colonización que favorecería tanto al inmigrante como al gaucho” (280).

Even though *Amalia* encourages the equal treatment of men and women, Mármol fails to embrace the opportunity to dismiss racial prejudice, as “his fiction is exclusionary of black people on the whole but is particularly hostile to black women” (Dunstan 2). The Unitarians’ contempt for black women is juxtaposed with Rosas’s admiration for them, given that “he hired the first black female chief of spies named Tía Joaquina who first appeared in the late nineteenth century novel *La Mazorca*” (Dunstan 14). Mármol uses Florencia Dupasquier to promulgate the ideal of a “civilised” Argentine citizen, who is in this case white and half-French. He portrays the white populace as being the superior race, which is even evident in Daniel’s characterisation: “among even reformed Unitarians, such as Daniel represented, the half-Spanish, half-Indian *gaucho* produced a practically visceral revulsion that extended by association to Federalists in general” (Sommer 96). Daniel’s slave, Fermín, is a *gaucho* but he is also clearly identified as a white man. There is no mention of Indians in the novel, which is set entirely in the capital: Argentines had eradicated the “inferior” Indians from Buenos Aires in the same way as the Americans did the Native Americans, “that is, largely by extermination campaigns for territorial expansion, like the one Rosas led in 1833 to prop up his waning popularity” (96). It is therefore ironic that the Unitarian liberals vehemently decried the scaremongering tactics that Rosas used to establish control, yet proceeded to do exactly the same when it came to initiating the ethnic purification of Buenos Aires. The Unitarian efforts to wipe out the black population were largely undone when they reclaimed their social status under the Rosas government. In an attempt to gain respect from the upper classes, Afro-Argentines rebranded themselves as *trigueño*.⁵ By adopting a new racial classification, they sought to eradicate racial discrimination in society and achieve equality.

⁴ Unitarian politicians developed racially aggressive and hostile policies to “whiten” or “Europeanise” Argentina and significantly reduce the Afro-Argentine population.

⁵ The phrase *trigueño* – which literally means wheat-coloured – derives from the Spanish word *trigo* meaning wheat and came into being shortly after Argentine independence in 1810.

It can be argued that the generation of '37 kindled the racial chauvinism of the future generation of 1880; members of the liberal *oligarquía* waged war against non-white citizens: "These men oversaw the murder and subjugation of Indian tribes in the so-called Desert Campaigns of 1878–1885, led by Julio Argentino Roca" (Dunstan 4). Despite the generation of '37 approving the partial abolition of slavery, this intellectual cohort was in no sense egalitarian as "they did not consider black people their equals and felt discomfort at the practical changes that resulted from the gradual liberation of slaves" (Dunstan 1). In 1881 Quesada emphasised that "los esclavos no odiaban a sus amos y la esclavitud en esta parte de la América española no fue cruel para los pobres negros" (24), writing with disgust about the mass meeting organised by the black communities and scheduled to take place at the Plaza de Mayo: "cantares verdaderamente bárbaros, parecían aullidos de animales que a él le producía una impresión repugnante" (24). But the slaves filled him with pride when they proudly marched with the Independence troops and "morían vivando la libertad de esta tierra" (24). Black citizens were useful when they were fighting for white ideals and interests, but when they attempted to build their own identity, they became barbarians. Quesada ends with the statement that local black people were accepted by whites because "no es posible averiguar la ley en virtud de la cual los negros esclavos en Buenos Aires eran superiores fisiológicamente hablando a aquellos salvajes del Africa que andan casi desnudos" (24). Quesada describes the physical repulsiveness of his black counterparts; according to him, "se les modificaba el cráneo, la forma del rostro y la complexión del cuerpo y cuando vestían bien con las ropas de sus amo eran casi humanos" (24). Argentine society whitened the "inferior" race, as Andrews notes: "The Afro-Argentines had advanced so far, that many of them were now fit to acquire the culture and refinements hitherto monopolised by the white race" (102). It is accurate to state that at the hands of the liberals, the Afro-Argentines, especially the enslaved, underwent a cultural cleansing in which everything they knew was beaten out of them, paving the way for white supremacy.

Whereas the now not-so-liberal scholars of 1837 and 1880 sought to maintain black slavery, Rosas wanted to free black people from their shackles as "he gained the respect of the black community and abolished the slave traffic in 1839, which he himself had reinstated in 1831" (Andrews 102). Regardless of whether Rosas's actions were motivated more by political self-interest than by genuine concern for black welfare, the fact remains that the Afro-Argentine community perceived him as its liberator (Salvatore 65). Rosas also made occasional donations to African mutual aid societies to help alleviate poverty among the black community, and more importantly, before campaigning for the abolition of slavery, in 1836 he repealed the law that demanded the "automatic requirement of free black men fifteen years and older to the army, where they were destined to die as they were placed on the front line" (Edwards 52). Furthermore, the ban on the traditional African *candombe* dances, which was imposed in the 1820s, was lifted by Rosas, and in 1838 the nations were even invited to hold an all-day dance in the central plaza to celebrate Independence Day (Andrews 98).

Although Rosas was greatly aided by his wife and daughter, he did most of the wooing of the Afro-Argentines himself. As previously mentioned, he tactically named his countryside mansion after the black Saint Benito of Palermo, who was the patron of one of the city's black brotherhoods. Furthermore, *rosista* propagandists were instructed by the dictator to produce poems and literature in Afro-Argentine dialect, which was to be distributed among the black populace. An occasionally published newspaper called *La Negrita* was a prime example of Rosas's manipulation of his supporters. The persona of the title was Juana Peña, who declared in the first issue:

Yo, me llamo Juana Peña
Y tengo por vanidad
–Que todos sepan que soy–
Negrita muy Federal.
Negrita que manda fuerza
Y no negrita pintora
Porque no soy de las que andan
Con pluma voladora.
Negrita que en los Tambores

Ocupar el primer lugar.
Y que todos me abren cancha
Cuando salgo a bailar.
Pero ya que me han chiflado
Por meterme a gacetera
He de hacer ver que, aunque negra,
Soy patriota verdadera.⁶

Although Rosas was seen as the liberator of the marginalised races, it can be argued that he was no more a promoter of the Afro-Argentine population than previous governments. For example, he reinstated the slave trade in 1831, allowing the inhumane treatment of black people. It is apparent that he abandoned his black supporters when they were of no benefit to him. In 1833 the lands of the Cãbunda nation were confiscated and sold in order to pay debts contracted by the whole of society. Rosas did not compensate the nation with any financial aid. Moreover, with regard to educational opportunities for black people, Rosas did not improve their level of schooling; rather, he was responsible for a decrease in the population: his unrelenting recruitment of black men to his army and the *mazorca* meant that the mortality rate in the black community was as high as it had always been. Taking into account Rosas's opportunistic nature, his support for the black masses seems mendacious. Given the death toll, tensions arose between Rosas and his not-so keen supporters; some Afro-Argentines, particularly those located in the city, sided with Rosas's political adversaries, though this could have been due to political manipulation by the Unitarians. A prime example of the black opposition to Rosas was Colonel José María Morales, the country's highest-ranking black officer, who began his military career fighting for the Unitarian cause at the siege of Montevideo.

Doña Encarnación Ezcurra played an essential role in organising the black workers in Rosas's favour: "He llamado a los *paisanos* les he hablado, lo mismo a los presidentes de todas las naciones negras" (Kordon 97). According to Andrews, Encarnación warned her husband that certain black military generals were planning to assassinate him. The suspected instigator of one of the attempted assassinations was a mulatto named Carranza who was a fervent Unitarian. Although Rosas did face political opposition from certain black communities and notable individuals, it was solely because they were Unitarian.

When Mármol highlights racial discrimination among the liberals in *Amalia*, the humility of the Unitarians that was once visible to us suddenly disappears. In reality, Unitarians rejected the traditionalism of their Spanish colonial past for the modernity of Europe. Unitarian Argentina was oriented towards the progressive European countries such as France and Great Britain, a point which Andrews reinforces: "The Unitarians professed a strong and unwavering faith in the innate superiority of the European republics as manifested in their industrialization, economic expansion, a historical development in which enlightened monarchies were succeeded by republicanism" (102). The general opinion of the Unitarians was that white Anglo-Saxons dominated Western civilisation not only because their skin colour was more aesthetically pleasing but also because they had superior intellect: "Alberdi observed that as descendants of Spaniards, Argentines' capacity for diligence and rationality was limited, whereas Anglo-Saxons were naturally hard working and efficient. It was therefore the liberals' goal to attract as many Anglo-Saxon immigrants as possible" (Edwards 103). It was this attitude that served as the catalyst for the ethnic cleansing of the black Argentinian population when Sarmiento came to power.

The fate of the black population was very different from that of the Indians. When Argentina came to the aid of Chile and Peru in the wars of independence, African slaves were conscripted and sent to fight at the frontier. The most telling result of the elite's reclamation of power after Rosas's fall in 1852 (and after it had adopted Alberdi's proposal for enlightened federalism through European immigration rather than mass education) was that blacks seemed to disappear entirely (Andrews 105). During this genocide of the black population "el gobierno aparentemente decidió cerrar los ojos ante las diferencias raciales y eliminar la categoría que

6 *La Negrita*, 21 July 1833, quoted in Lanuza 23–4.

correspondía a los negros en el censo nacional”.⁷ This recalls Florencia’s deliberate blindness in *Amalia*, when she chooses not to acknowledge the black women in María Josefa’s house. The black servants in Federalist and Unitarian households alike were indispensable to Rosas; he was constantly alert to the enthusiastic support and seamless spy network of the black workers and servants of the city. The first thing that Daniel requires of Amalia when she agrees to help protect Eduardo is that she dismiss her black servants, for they cannot be trusted, as a black working woman spies upon and denounces Amalia and Eduardo (Sommer 97). Daniel’s pervasive knowledge makes him aware of who can and who cannot be trusted, and his “colour-fast social text leaves some room for attractive shades when the colours bleed and cross over; that is, when black is whitened” (97). Sommer also emphasises the fact that “in the lower classes, only the mulattoes were to be trusted, because of the tendency that every mixed race has to elevate and ennoble itself” (97).

Daniel’s character is rather unpredictable, though he is consistent in his teachings on treachery, which puzzles Eduardo. His erratic disposition is representative of an era in which there was a resurgence of the Romantic appreciation of nature. This notion “denied the classical grid of knowledge on which so many misfired Rividavian schemes had hung” (Sommer 97), and Daniel’s statement deserves a mention:

No hay nada, mi querido Eduardo, que se explique con más facilidad que mi carácter, porque él no es otra cosa que una expresión cándida de las leyes eternas de la Naturaleza. Todo, en el orden físico como en el orden moral, es inconstante, transitorio y fugitivo; los contrastes forman lo bello y armónico en todo cuanto ha salido de la mano de Dios... (Mármol 330)

A UNITED ARGENTINA

Although there is tension between Daniel and Eduardo in *Amalia*, Mármol highlights that mutual respect between political opponents is possible. Eduardo objects to the anarchic personalism that keeps the exiles in Montevideo absurdly vying for supremacy in the cafés: Sommer argues that “arrogant Unitarians could learn something about association and coalition from virtuous Federalists” (98). There is no dearth of honourable Federalists in Mármol’s novel; in a footnote Mármol thanks a Federalist whom he befriended while he was imprisoned. He also depicts Manuela Rosas as a kind and generous Federalist, and in doing so, helps to promote her status as an almost mythical figure of “eternally feminine kindnesses”, reminiscent of the trajectory of Eva Perón, which culminated in her aura of sainthood a century later. Daniel dismisses gossip that Amalia hears at the Federalist ball that tarnishes the Federalists’ reputation: “No, no, Amalia; son invenciones de las unitarias, cuya imaginación está irritada. No tienen otras armas que el ridículo, y se valen de ello a las mil maravillas. La señora de Rolón es de lo mejor que hay en el círculo federal; su corazón siempre tiene sensibilidad para todos” (Mármol 371). Whereas Rosas – according to Mármol – seeks to tear national unity apart, Daniel represents the union of political contraries; it is certainly a marriage of convenience, but also a delicate bond of respect between Unitarian and Federalist as Daniel recalls the kind-hearted nature of an elderly Federalist woman and in doing so represents a model for national cohesion among all Argentineans.

Daniel is also the agent in the sense that he is responsible for the blossoming love between Amalia and Eduardo. Daniel’s matchmaking alludes to Sarmiento’s belief that marriage would provide social stability and a unified Argentina. It was not violence and segregation, but marriage – which Sarmiento defended – that was the answer to Argentina’s problems. This was what would help the Romantics succeed where their classical elders had not. Amalia’s love affair with Eduardo signifies “a national rapprochement between centre and periphery or at least between modern history and Arcadian pastoral” (Sommer 99). Tucumán is where Eduardo’s forbidden relationship with Amalia flourishes, which is significant given that Tucumán was the first city to renounce Rosas – following his institutionalisation of terror – as Mármol reminds us: “El 7 de abril de 1840, la provincia de Tucumán se pronunció públicamente contra Rosas; lo desconocía en su carácter de gobernador de Buenos Aires y le retiraba la delegación de las relaciones exteriores” (Mármol 44–5). It seems as though Mármol attempts to parallel the

⁷ See Meyer 225, quoted in Sommer 97.

gender-coded cities of Buenos Aires and Tucumán as he dedicates the second part of the book to Amalia's Tucumán, beginning with a description of "that tropical womblike interior paradise", just as he had begun the first part with Eduardo's Buenos Aires (Sommer 99). His attempts to relate the two cities could serve as a metaphor to represent the seductive hegemony of the loving capital over its ministering province, a stark contrast to the dictatorial isolation that weakened both sides of civilisation.

By contrast, Rosas did not use political seduction to enhance his cause. Those who could not be integrated into Federalist society were simply eradicated. As his empire rapidly expanded as he gained increasing support, "he became ever deaf to the pleadings and requests of his own followers, so deaf that he refused to hear his closest allies intercede for the ill-fated Camila O'Gorman" (Sommer 100). The 20-year-old Camila belonged to a devoutly Federalist family that lived in the capital, and was a good friend of Manuela. Her lover, Uladislao Gutiérrez, was the nephew of the governor of Tucumán. Camila was executed for betraying the *causa federalista* by falling in love and attempting to flee with Uladislao, who was a Jesuit priest and therefore a political enemy of Rosas; the Jesuits persistently denied political support to him. Rosas attempted to suppress the embarrassment of mercilessly murdering one of his own, but such a scandal could not be hidden. Montevideo's émigré newspaper, *Comercio del Plata*, mocked the morality of liberal Federalists. Rosas did not relent; the lovers were gunned down by a firing squad despite the fact that Camila was eight months pregnant. Camila's brutal execution, which brought the country to a standstill, was not denounced by Rosas's most intimate and loyal associates until his fall.

Mármol wrote *Amalia* three years after the atrocity, and having sensed his readers' yearning to embrace a forbidden love affair, he nourished their fantasies while opening sentimental wounds that still festered (Sommer 100). Mármol recreates Camila's story to an extent in the sense that he builds the novel around the doomed love of a young couple that ends in tragedy, but "if Mármol was rewriting Camila's story as a hegemonic allegory, his romance would reroute the lovers to make her hail from the voluptuous interior and him from the heady capital" (100). The love of Amalia and Eduardo occupies the plot's centre ground and "it is precisely at the centre, somewhat decentred thanks to Daniel (and perhaps Rosas, who was clever enough to be a provincial from the central province), that they could have hoped to make their love last" (100). Mármol brings home the tragedy that plagued both Unitarians and Federalists alike during Rosas's totalitarian regime; he incorporates the theme of life and death into the novel when – only an hour after his wedding – Eduardo is killed by the *mazorca*, which is – absurdly – in part the fault of his own spouse. Amalia lets slip that she is Unitarian and proud of her political affiliation, a fatal error that leads to her husband's death. Apart from Amalia, the character who exposes the illegitimate relationship and sends the *mazorca* to Amalia's house is Doña María Josefa Encarnación's corrupt sister, for it is she who ferrets out Amalia and Eduardo's romance. Even though the inescapable *mazorca* were actively hunting down Eduardo, the tragedy was not inevitable since Eduardo could have been saved by Daniel's Federalist father.

Readers would have been utterly devastated by Eduardo's murder, which ends his much-anticipated marriage to Amalia. Even more heartbreaking is the loss of Daniel, the model for future Argentines and a definitive hero, whose death also symbolises the end of the possible reconciliation between the Unitarians and the Federalists. The novel's conclusion does not dwell on Daniel's death but concentrates on the legitimacy of federalism and patriarchal authority: "¡Y al mismo tiempo el joven caía sin voz y sin fuerzas en los abrazos de su padre, que con una sola palabra (Restaurador) había suspendido el puñal, que esa misma palabra levantara para tanta desgracia y tanto crimen!" (Mármol 833). Don Antonio is a loyal servant of Rosas who has abandoned the city to wage war on the provinces: "Buenos Aires is an empty centre waiting for the real father to come home and restore order" (Sommer 101). In this tragic scene, Don Antonio fills a vacuum that needs to be occupied; he steps in for the dictator himself, given that he is the only true Federalist, and so Mármol refers to *him* as the Restorer. Even though this is a title associated mainly with Rosas, "it is legitimate even if the dictator does not merit it. The place of the name of the father is still intact; it's the last word" (101). Mármol's literary representation of the so-called "barbarians" makes us see the Federalists in a more progressive light as he equates the morality of young Federalists with that of enlightened Unitarians:

If Daniel's cunning had not already reproduced Rosas's manipulations for us, if good Federalists were not already portrayed as equal to good Unitarians, this word itself would establish the overlap between the apparent antagonists in *Amalia*. (102)

Amalia is the character who survives them all, which may be significant given that her name bears some resemblance to "Argentina". Despite the brutal ongoing war between the Unitarians and the Federalists, the country survives the chaos. Amalia is devastated at the loss of her one true love, but there is comfort in the fact that Eduardo's death will be countervailed with a new life. The outcome of the couple's consummated love is a child, "which is perhaps to reincarnate the one brutally murdered in Camila O'Gorman's womb" (102). These subtle allegories in Mármol's account serve to protest against Rosas's relentless annihilation of thousands; the possibility of a Unitarian baby coming from Amalia and Eduardo's relationship suggests the idea that despite the dictator's brutality, Rosas's victims transcended death, as the Unitarians would go on to rule after his fall. However, although both lovers serve the Unitarian cause, they come from opposing cities; Amalia is from Tucumán and Eduardo belongs to the upper echelons of Buenos Aires society. In their euphoric rapport, *la bella tucumana* and the *porteño* have produced a child with mixed blood, symbolising the harmonious unity of Argentina.

Even after the fall of Rosas in 1852, the procreation of children did not come without repercussions. A problem arose when Argentina tried to repopulate the capital with whites; Catholicism was the only state-recognised religion, and intermarriage between Catholics and Protestants had no legal sanction: "the Protestants (Unitarians) had no choice but to debase the Argentine women they could not resist and produce illegitimate children" (102). Another problem came to light when, after welcoming a wave of immigrants to the city, Argentines had to maintain political power and – at the same time – encourage newcomers to build their fortunes. Alberdi summarised how this double jeopardy could be easily controlled on the condition that Argentines were granted religious freedom. Alberdi – whom Sommer fittingly calls the "political matchmaker" – argued that if Argentinians broke free from Catholicism, the result would be that *romance* would conquer all, and in effect this would create parity between prosperous husbands and irresistible wives (103). This echoes the power dynamic in today's Argentine society; men are still considered the main breadwinners while women, for the most part, do not hesitate to conform to their traditional domesticated role. Alberdi wanted to assimilate the liberal men of the city with the desirable women of Andalusian origin from the South, and in doing so he would have instigated vast political change:

Por conquistadores más ilustrados que la España, por ventura? conquistando en vez de ser conquistados: La América del Sud posee un ejército a este fin, y es el encanto que su *hermosas y amables mujeres* recibieron de su origen andaluz, mejorado por el cielo espléndido del nuevo mundo. Removed los impedimentos inmorales, que hacen *esteril* el poder del bello sexo americano y tendréis realizado el cambio de nuestra raza sin la pérdida del idioma ni del tipo nacional primitivo. (Alberdi 406)

Amalia is one of these women who are pursued by enlightened men from the city. Sommer argues that her personal traits represent something more than her feelings: "her charm inscribes erotic desire as a 'natural' grounding for any dialectic of political conciliation and economic growth" (104). It is arguable that Mármol's fictional tale is the most progressive anti-Rosas material; not only does he use Amalia's relationship with Eduardo as a symbol of political reconciliation in Argentina, but he also depicts Federalists in a more positive light, alluding to the point that everyone can be morally equal: "Amalia's love story becomes a foundational fiction because it projects the kind of liberal social intercourse between regions and parties that could establish a legitimate public family" (104).

In conclusion, while *Amalia* can be deemed a more progressive account than previous Unitarian works such as *El matadero*, which aggravate rather than defuse political tensions, Mármol's polemical attitudes towards women and ethnic minorities' place in society – shared by other Unitarians such as Sarmiento and Echeverría – means that he still jeopardises the possibility of a united Argentina. His likening of Amalia to Manuela Rosas is problematic for different reasons; it is through this comparison that Mármol pays heed to what he perceives to be Manuela's entrapment, when in reality there is little historical evidence to suggest that her life was curtailed by Rosas. It is possible that her father's political ambitions dominated

Manuela's upbringing and early life, but the evidence suggests that she enjoyed the political agency that her official governmental role afforded her. Mármol cannot accept that, as a Federalist, she was empowered and the best version of herself; instead, he claims that in order to become a better woman, she needed to break free from her father and integrate into a Unitarian environment. However – given the Unitarians' archaic views on women – if she did have a Unitarian upbringing, she would have been disempowered, both socially and politically. Unitarians such as Sarmiento believed that women should be educated, but only to a certain extent, and that they should conform to their traditional domestic roles in society.

In terms of racial prejudice, Mármol relentlessly vilifies Rosas as being the source of all evil, killing both Unitarians and Federalists, but ironically Mármol himself is part of a literary cohort which advocated the ethnic cleansing of non-white citizens, and would rather have seen them placed in work camps and on reservations outside the city and, preferably, the country. Mármol overlooks how the Rosas administration empowered women and ethnic minorities (to a certain degree) by allowing them political agency. Although, as portrayed in *Amalia*, Rosas does not equate ethnic minorities – particularly black servants – to white Federalists, and may have used them more for political gain, it has to be noted that they enjoyed more social and political freedom under his government than they would have done under a Unitarian government, since the Unitarians despised their very being, and considered them detrimental to the formation of an enlightened, Europeanised Argentina. Mármol draws on *Amalia*'s bravery and resilience, but he does not hold his black female characters in such high regard, indicating his problematic views. By failing to acknowledge non-white Argentines as equals, both as a political figure and author, Mármol ironically stands in the way of his own goal of “national reconciliation”. Mármol encourages a political, but not *national* reconciliation: he wants an end to the ongoing political conflict between Unitarians and Federalists, but at the same time desires a country that is free of non-European and non-white citizens, thus preventing long-term *national* harmony.

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