

Redefining Truths: Manuela Rosas as a subject of Imaginative Reconstruction in the Argentine Literary Realm

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ABSTRACT: Manuela Rosas, the daughter of Federalist dictator Juan Manuel de Rosas, is an important nineteenth century political figure who was a consistent subject of imaginative reconstruction during the Rosas era. Much like her fellow women revolutionaries, namely her mother, Encarnación Ezcurra de Rosas, and Eva Perón, Manuela assumed an active role in the Argentine political arena and was instrumental in maintaining her father's unparalleled political supremacy, acting as chief mediator between the government and the marginalised Argentine masses. This article argues how, in a series of nineteenth-century fictional works, namely those of renowned Unitarian scholars José Mármol (*Amalia; El retrato de Manuela Rosas*, 1851) and Juana Manuela Gorriti (*El guante negro; La hiza del mashorquero*, 1865), Manuela has been inaccurately depicted as 'la primera víctima de la tiranía de su padre', who desperately needed rescuing. Both writers maintain that Rosas curtailed his daughter's social freedom, and that she would have reached her true potential had she been raised by civilised Unitarians and not in a Federalist environment. However, María Rosa Lojo's *La princesa federal* (2010) contests the claim that Manuela suffered, instead postulating that she was a resilient and empowered individual who was passionate about promoting the *causa federalista*, remaining loyal to her father out of choice. I offer an original critical analysis of the unacknowledged and divergent literary and historical representations of Manuela, examining how writers use the lack of historical evidence to manipulate and imaginatively reconstruct her life story and in doing so, blur the line between fact and fiction.

KEYWORDS: Manuela, Rosas, women, femininity, imaginative reconstruction, myth, power, political reconciliation, national reconciliation, Unitarians, Federalists.

Throughout the regime of dictator Juan Manuel de Rosas, Federalist women—particularly among the marginalized masses—were encouraged to assume an active role in the Argentine political arena. Rosas rejected the idea of a formal education for women, but was an advocate for their participation in national politics, using them predominantly to rally support for his leadership and to help him sustain his political supremacy (Bonner 36). Although Rosas may have used women for political gain, he was arguably responsible for promoting gender equality by eliminating the traditional society-imposed gender roles allocated to each sex.¹ Federal women were viewed as being equally capable of carrying out stereotypical male duties, as was demonstrated by Rosas' own wife Encarnación Ezcurra who was evidently at least as politically intelligent as her husband. After Encarnación's premature death, Rosas depended heavily on his adolescent daughter Manuela to support him in government. The relationship between Rosas and Manuela was widely scrutinised in the Unitarian literary realm by exiled writers such as José Mármol and Juana Manuela Gorriti, who have inaccurately depicted Manuela as 'la primera víctima de la tiranía de su padre' (Mármol 475). However, the historian and novelist María Rosa Lojo, has partly mythologised Manuela in her

own way by arguing that she was an independent, politically astute woman who enjoyed her political agency. This article analyses the divergent nineteenth-century and present-day myths concerning Manuela and reveals how the lack of distinction between the literal and the metaphorical has rendered the uncrowned princess a fitting subject of imaginative reconstruction.

It is a well-known, but widely contested Unitarian claim that Manuela was oppressed by her father, both in the household and in the political arena. From a Unitarian historical perspective, Manuela's benevolence was a form of resistance to her father's tyrannical regime. Francine Masiello claims that this power dynamic between men and women is concordant with several nineteenth century Latin American texts which reiterate the notion that the family of an illogical man always suffers and is 'headed toward irreversible destruction when managed by an irrational father, a metaphor for state authority' (34). In these texts, the depiction of the women is always favourable as she is portrayed as the saviour of the family and thus 'becomes a figure of opposition to the state' (34). Manuela's compassionate nature, juxtaposed with her father's unprecedented brutality, has elevated her to a heroic status in the *década infame* and thus shed a more positive light on the Rosas

regime. It is plausible that Manuela single-handedly facilitated the success of her father's government, especially during times of war; she was generously praised for assuming the legendary role as mediator between Rosas and *el pueblo* as Fern McCann reaffirms: 'For all who appealed to General Rosas in an extra-judicial character, his daughter Doña Manuelita was the universal intercessor' (23). The irony lies in the paradox that Rosas perpetrated the senseless violence yet ordered his daughter to offer sympathy and condolences on his behalf: 'Questions of moment to individuals, involving confiscation, banishment and even death were thus placed in her hands, as the last hope of the unfortunate' (23). As the more subtle figure out of the father-daughter duo, Rosas utilised his daughter's gentle and charming nature as a political tool in order to maintain a diplomatic relationship with the public. It is Manuela's role as a political mediator that has expedited her transformation from a historical idol to a mythical heroine. Given that Manuela can be seen as a source of calm in the turbulent and often violent streets of *Rosista* Buenos Aires, she can be classified as a representation of the Argentine nation, as Mary Pratt affirms: 'women were at the centre of a symbolic economy in which female icons symbolized the nation—that is, what was at stake between opposing groups of men' (53). Manuela aroused the imaginations of both Federalists and Unitarians; to the former, she was the resilient and gracious *heroína de la federación* and to the latter, she was an oppressed individual who desperately needed rescuing.

Juana Manuela Gorriti's literary representations of the dictator's manipulation of women in her fictional works are wholly relevant to his relationship with Manuela as she focuses on themes such as the oppression of women under Rosas, remembrance, political crisis and of course exile. Gorriti's fiction not only elevated her status as the first woman pioneer of the literary resistance to the authoritarian Rosas regime but also enhanced her reputation as exemplifying 'the republican mother as the main model of female participation in the public sphere (Masiello 40). The exiled writer explores the theme of the doomed love of characters who belong to conflicting social classes, races and political parties. Gorriti's second short story, wholly relevant to the Rosas regime, is *El guante negro* (1865), which tells the tale of two women, one good and one evil, who vie with one another for the control of a weak man. Gorriti's title, specifically the colour of the glove, strongly implies something bad will happen and the tale will only end in tragedy. It is the first in a series of civil war stories in which families, friends and lovers are starkly divided by their Unitarian and Federalist sympathies, reflecting real-life tragedy that took place under Rosas. The two resilient women, one of whom is a Unitarian (Isabel), and the other a Federalist (Rosas's daughter, Manuela), struggle to contain their feelings for a man who is not only incapable of deciding which of them he loves but is also indecisive in pledging his political allegiance. The predicament in which they all find themselves worsens when the male protagonist writes a letter stating that he will support the Unitarians, a letter which falls subsequently into Federalist hands.

To avoid tarnishing the reputation of the family, his Federalist father feels obliged to kill him, but the mother intervenes, killing the father to save her son. The plight of the families and individuals in the tale metaphorically represent the suffering of the whole of Argentina under the Rosas tyranny: 'Here, the violence of authoritarian rule is explored through the devastation of individual families, where their suffering stands for that of the nation' (Armillas-Tiseyra 24). This short fiction is a melodrama of violence and death, enriched by the theme of madness, supernatural omens and symbols that intensify the horrors of war. Although Gorriti wrote *El guante negro* at a time when political support for Rosas was declining with the approach of his fall from power in 1852, it is still relevant given that the nationalist cause serves as the framework for the story. The national cause and national reconstruction are of paramount importance in Gorriti's work; she highlights the devastating effects of differing political opinions which led to banishment from Argentina, imprisonment and mass murder. Male exiled writers such as Domingo Sarmiento and José Mármol were notable opponents of Rosas, but Gorriti is significant given that she is the first female writer to contribute to the *anti-rosista* literary resistance; she intervened in the male-dominated, anti-dictator discourse of her contemporaries by basing her fictions on the figure of the dictator's daughter, so helping to establish the representation of Manuela as a prominent subject of twentieth-century dictator writing. Similar to the liberal male writers in this literary cohort, Gorriti reiterates that Manuela was indeed oppressed under her father's authoritarianism and depicts her as an innocent and remorseful figure in her short stories. In Unitarian literature, Manuela is represented as a gentle and kind character who even supported her father's political opponents, all of whom were either killed by the *mazorca* or exiled. *El guante negro* starts by introducing the stereotypical chivalrous hero Wenceslao, who, 'valiente como su padre, hermoso e inteligente, acababa de recibir una herida en un tremendo combate de cuerpo a cuerpo' (Gorriti XI). Although he seemingly adores Manuela his heart lies with her adversary Isabel, 'pero el amor por esta bella y encantadora virgen, era el real y verdadero' (XI). Manuela meets Wenceslao when she is visiting his house while working for her father, and becomes consumed by her passion for him: 'La hija del dictador iba allí conducida por tres motivos poderosos: Wencelao seguía las banderas de su padre, Wenceslao había expuesto su vida por defender la honra de la joven, Wenceslao era el sueño de su corazón' (XI).

After the death of his wife and accomplice, Encarnación Ezcurra, Rosas relied heavily on a young Manuela to conduct political meetings with his army generals which, in this case, worked to her advantage; she longed for Wenceslao, and meeting him at his house was a form of escaping the confinement and isolation that her father had inflicted on her from an early age. Although Wenceslao is said to be enamoured of Manuela, Gorriti highlights that there is every possibility that his display of affection for her could be disingenuous: '[Wenceslao] amaba á Manuela Rosas por ambición y vanidad pero

amaba á Isabel, hija de un cumplido patrio, una de las víctimas de la mas-horca' (XI). Given his apparent underlying ambition to further his authority and wealth, it is perhaps no coincidence that Wenceslao has fallen for two ladies who are the daughters of powerful and prosperous men. The divergent depiction of Manuela and Isabel first emerges when Gorriti describes their contrasting personalities; Manuela is painted as a dominant, ruthless, and resilient force, whereas Isabel is a much more innocent and tender figure: 'la otra jóven que es pura, inteligente y fiel; era Isabel que venía para curar las heridas del enfermo' (XII). The contrasting images of these women being good or evil act as a metaphor for *civilización y barbarie* or *la guerra unitaria federalista* in the sense that all Unitarians are portrayed as angelic and heroic whereas all federalists are depicted as uncivilized, vicious savages, driven only by power. Although in *Amalia* (1851), Mármol challenges the negative and biased perceptions of federalists as his main hero is Daniel, Gorriti always draws the reader's attention to federalist violence. The most graphic manifestation of federalist violence comes when Wenceslao's letter, pledging his allegiance to the Unitarians, falls into the hands of Manuela who orders her father's men to hunt him down. Wenceslao's parents discover his disloyalty but naturally, the mother is more forgiving than the father, who wants to kill him in order to protect family honour. This predicament highlights the plight of federalist mothers; Wenceslao's mother defends her son's reprehensible behaviour and murders her husband to prevent him from murdering their son: 'Pues muere tú, muere! Porque yo quiero que mi hijo viva [...] Ese traidor era mi hijo y yo he matado á mi esposo por salvar á mi hijo' (XIII). In the Federalist world, it seems as if fathers in particular, are willing to dedicate themselves unconditionally to Rosas; they make cruel sacrifices to protect their families' reputation and social status, even if it means killing their own children. Drawing upon Wenceslao's death, Masiello notes: 'the returning trope of bloodshed reminds us of the drained national body, devastated by civil war, despoiled on the landscapes of an emerging nation in which individuals can no longer heal' (Masiello XIV). Wenceslao's wound is a disturbing reminder of the federalist penchant for crimson as a symbol of loyalty to Rosas.

Manuela is at the forefront of Gorriti's *El guante negro* which sees the issue of social deformation being transformed into a romantic disaster. Just as in Mármol's 1850 essay, *Manuela Rosas: Rasgos Biográficos*, the Manuela of Gorriti's tale is also profoundly isolated and oppressed: 'el destino de Manuela Rosas, la ha condenado a la soledad y aislamiento del corazón, alejando de ella uno a uno a todos sus amigos' (Gorriti 56). The lack of evidence renders it impossible for us to know whether Gorriti is accurate in her representation of Manuela as being excluded and alienated from society in the sense that her social life was severely curtailed by her autocratic father. Manuela finds herself trapped in a love triangle with Isabel and Wenceslao but she is last in line; the fact that Wenceslao declares his love for the Unitarian Isabel over Manuela when she was better placed to enhance his ambitions of wealth and

power, is a further disappointment to a woman without a love life, thus confirming her status as a sexual outcast. Gorriti teases us with the possibility of a national reunion when Wenceslao overlooks a profitable relationship with Manuela and falls deeply in love with Isabel who is a member of the opposing political party. However, their union is threatened by Wenceslao's colonel father who determines to kill his son on learning that he is going to leave the army to elope with Isabel. Up until the end of the short story, Gorriti garners sympathy for Manuela as she is presented as a forgotten love interest; however, it is when Gorriti articulates the devastating effects of authoritarianism on private and national families that we are tempted to think twice about showing compassion for *la hija del dictador*. Gorriti expresses the consequences of Rosas' totalitarianism in two dimensions. First, we grasp that men who are of the same age as Rosas are extensions of the dictator himself and unconditionally abide by every rule and law he creates. This concept is exercised when Wenceslao's father is willing to murder his own flesh and blood in order to protect his family's integrity as Magali Armillas-Tiseyra emphasises: 'Wenceslao's father's excessive investment in the regime leads to the unnatural destruction of his own family, without which the nation cannot stand' (33). In addition to this, we learn how a potential national reconciliation emerges through the circulation of Manuela's black glove and it is in this context that Manuela's innocence and vulnerability are inevitably overshadowed by her association with the Rosas regime. Manuela's status as a social and sexual outcast, (Armillas-Tiseyra 39) leads not only to the separation of Wenceslao and Isabel but to the death of Wenceslao on the battlefield at Quebracho Herrado. In this case, Manuela's significance is expressed in two ways: on the one hand, her social isolation accords with Mármol's compassionate paradigm and, on the other, the destruction triggered by her glove renders her an agent of her father, as Isabel laments: 'Hela aquí se acerca para disputármelo todavía, para arrojar otra vez entre él y yo como un desafío á nuestro amor, este guante negro nos separó' (Gorriti 67). By making Manuela the centre of the love triangle, Gorriti demonstrates that, irrespective of the conviction in Mármol's sympathetic treatment of her, it is impossible for us to separate her from the instrumental role she played in her father's government which is responsible for countless deaths. From analysing Mármol and Gorriti's portraits of Manuela, we can deduce that she is an emblematic figure of Rosas's rule, preventing her from having a life of her own as she lives to serve her father. The essential difference between Mármol's Manuela and Gorriti's is that the latter's remains an active force of evil; her strong desire for Wenceslao compromises his union with Isabel, and thus the political reconciliation of the nation. Doris Sommer establishes a connection between the family and the nation. Her theory of 'national romance' is at the heart of the domestic sphere in that it focuses on the coupling of lovers from opposing political parties. Based on Doris Sommer's theory, the destruction of a romance between a Unitarian and a Federalist can damage national reconciliation (111). This is precisely what happens

in the case of Wenceslao and Isabel, the inadvertent catalyst being Manuela, as she prevents their union albeit unintentionally. By instating Manuela as the obstacle to this relationship, Gorriti dispels the myth that she is somehow the passive victim of Mármol's essay, despite the fact that she is hindered by her adverse circumstances.

Another of Gorriti's stories which encapsulates the national struggle during the Rosas tyranny is *La hija del mazorquero: leyenda histórica* (1865), telling the tale of the notoriously malicious *mazorquero*, aptly named Roque Alma-Negra, who tragically cuts the throat of his heroine daughter, Clemencia, whilst mistaking her for Emilia—the Unitarian woman he intended to assassinate. Ultimately, this story serves as a parable which stresses the collective anguish of Unitarians and Federalists alike under the catastrophic Rosas dictatorship. The murder of Clemencia is the culmination of yet another tragic plot which further emphasises that even those who obeyed Rosas were doomed. In this tale, the angelic Clemencia—who suffers greatly under the rule of her father—replaces Manuela. As the daughter of one of Rosas's prominent assassins, Clemencia's social isolation can be paralleled to that of the dictator's daughter: Clemencia's mother, like Manuela's, passed away from a suspicious and unspecified illness and thus her despotic father, who takes the place of Rosas, is heavily dependent on her. Fully conscious of her father's relentless cruelty, Clemencia seeks refuge in religion, and in order to compensate for her father's sins, she provides aid to the families of Roque's victims as a form of atonement for his reprehensible actions. By offering her support to innocent civilians, Clemencia betrays and dishonours the Federalist cause; she tries to repair the families that her father has so ruthlessly destroyed, and as he continues to massacre innocent people, she attempts to save them. Gorriti depicts Clemencia in a respectful light when she states that she makes reparations to her father's victims; her actions are morally honourable and to some extent heroic as she sacrifices her safety to safeguard others. It can be argued here that despite Gorriti's refusal to replicate Mármol's positive depiction of Manuela, she *does* credit the dictator's daughter by depicting Clemencia as a manifestation of compassion and charity. We develop a growing sympathy for Clemencia and admire her bravery as she suffers in a toxic federalist atmosphere and yet still risks her own life in her efforts to secure the freedom of others. Even though initially, Clemencia's suffering is considered as a representation of Argentina under Rosas, Gorriti does not restrict her to the position of national icon but rather magnifies her other function as an angelic force and an embodiment of her name.² Clemencia's death is depicted as a sacrifice; she dies so that Emilia can be saved and be reunited with her lover, but like all anti-Rosas romances, this one ends in tragedy as Manuel is stabbed by Clemencia's father. Gorriti's fiction is presented as a straight-forward political allegory: 'the actions of the father, Roque, stand for the dictator Rosas's violent oppression of Argentina as a whole, figured by Clemencia, who becomes the sacrificial victim of the regime' (Armillas-Tiseyra 26).

Clemencia actively engages in her self-established status

as a 'víctima expiatoria' and vows that she will compensate for her father's lamentable crimes; she willingly suffers in order to free others from Roque's terror. This contrasts with the Manuela of *Rasgos Biográficos* where Mármol postulates that Manuela's miserable fate is a product of her father's unhealthy and disturbing obsession with his daughter. By contrast, Gorriti implies that Manuela's plight is self-inflicted; she courageously stands in for the one who deserves the punishment, or if her suffering is magnified, one could argue that she bears the collective grief of the nation under the Rosas dictatorship. Clemencia is representative of Manuela in this sense as she risks her life to save two Unitarian lovers. While Mármol figuratively sacrifices Manuela as *la primera víctima* of her father's totalitarianism, Gorriti literalises the argument as she presents a version of Rosas's daughter who is fully conscious of her status as a symbolic victim. Clemencia exercises her self-imposed responsibility to atone for her father's sins when she uses her status to gain access to the prison, where she takes the place of Emilia, making it possible for Manuel and Emilia to flee Argentina. Roque unpitifully targets the woman he believes to be Emilia, first for being a traitorous daughter as she comes from a family of Rosas supporters, and secondly, to take vengeance on Manuel for evading death. Given Roque's insatiable thirst for bloodshed, the death is violent; he slits Clemencia's throat, and she slowly bleeds to death (Armillas-Tiseyra 40).

Drawing upon the barbarous way in which Clemencia is murdered by her father, who stands in for Rosas, we see the culmination of Clemencia's status as she becomes 'the sacrificial body made to bear the weight of the transgressions of others from Roque's perspective, those of Manuela and Emilia and, more broadly, as a figure for the nation under dictatorship' (Armillas-Tiseyra 39). Despite Clemencia's valiant sacrifice which has spared the lives Manuel and Emilia, Gorriti reiterates that Roque, who substitutes for Rosas, still lives on. The redemptive nature of Clemencia's death in the last lines of the story is not attributed to Manuel and Emilia but rather to Roque, who is 'regenerated' ('lo regeneró'). Gorriti implies that because of Roque's failure to kill Manuel and Emilia and his devastation over slitting the throat of his own daughter, he will retaliate by becoming even more brutal now that his anger is reignited. Throughout *La hija del mazorquero*, we notice that Clemencia is characterized by her capacity to serve in the place of others, as a kind of surrogate: in her father's house, she assumes the domesticated role of her dead mother, providing support and companionship to Roque; secondly, she compensates for the absence of the murdered father of the widows and children of Roque's victims and finally, Manuel mistakes Clemencia for Emilia at their first encounter on the plaza. We see the culmination of the parallels between Clemencia and Emilia; they both fall in love with Manuel and like Emilia, Clemencia reveals her father's secrets to Manuel and becomes an accomplice of the Unitarians. It is during his killing of his own daughter that the metaphor of Clemencia as the 'sacrificial' victim is deconstructed and presented

in a literal sense; Roque kills his own daughter thinking that she is Emilia, but one could argue that Clemencia is killed because she has in fact committed the same crimes. It is only when we consider Gorriti's argument that Clemencia is a victim of her self-sacrifice that we understand how her death does not fall under the category of sacrifice, in which she becomes the scapegoat for the crimes of others, but is rather a punishment for her treachery.

Clemencia is a self-proclaimed expiatory victim, and it is through her fulfilment of this role that the figurative is catapulted into the realm of the literal and therefore, she undermines the rhetorical infrastructure of nationalist discourse (Armillas-Tiseyra 40). Given that Clemencia herself realised her *renunciamento*, which in this case is self-sacrifice, she cannot serve as a definite allegory for the nation: 'as she already conceives of her death as standing in the place of something else' (40). Like Manuela, Clemencia is presented as a virtuous and merciful lady who is an angel of the house, angel of the poor, even an avenging angel, as well as a sacrificial lamb (39). Even though the expression 'sacrificial lamb' is a metaphorical reference to the fact that Clemencia dies for the common good of others, we can attribute the phrase to Argentina's factual heroine, Eva Perón, who championed the poor. María Cecilia Saenz-Roby describes Clemencia 'como un verdadero ángel que salvó a la mujer unitaria perseguida y remedió a su facineroso padre' (32). Gorriti's depiction of Clemencia is reminiscent of Manuela's saint-like reputation and also of Eva Perón. Gorriti's emphasis on Clemencia as a benevolent but treacherous heroine, who is a saint in the eyes of her father's victims, proves to be more realistic than equating her to the nation. Ultimately, by challenging the logic of the substitute-ability concept, which is applied to Clemencia, Gorriti renders the use of women as icons for the nation as unreasonable: 'she points to the impossibility of national regeneration when the discourse of the nation depends so heavily on the instrumentalization of women as iconic representations thereof, rather than as active participants in its development' (Armillas-Tiseyra 39-40). Gorriti's observation on how women are overlooked as agents of national reconciliation is what distinguishes her work from that of her fellow liberals; as well as scrutinising and denouncing the Rosas regime, her work provides a critical analysis of anti-*rosismo* and draws our attention to how anti-*rosista* authors use female characters to symbolize the nation and exclude women as active subjects from national discourse which, as Tiseyra reiterates, is itself a form of authoritarianism that needs to be eradicated (40). The obsolete and unreconstructed notion that women are allegories for the nation is heavily criticised by Dorit Naaman, who theorises that 'before achieving independence, a nation is often compared to a woman who is not quite an independent subject; the bearer, the maker of her own meaning' (333). She then proceeds to explain that after a nation gains independence, it does not retain its stereotypical feminine qualities but rather goes through a metaphorical 'sex change' in which it: 'literally engages in asserting its newly acquired patriarchal power to suppress those who were oppressed all along, women'

(333). Naaman's theory is undoubtedly most pertinent to the plight of women under the Rosas dictatorship, particularly because it was not long after Argentina became independent that Rosas rose to power. Furthermore, it is important to note that even though male liberal critics such as Mármol condemn Rosas's mistreatment of women, they do not allow women to be vigorous agents of national reparation; instead, they incorporate into their work the restrictive anti-*rosista* literary convention which reduces women to substitutes for the nation, overlooking their real-life contributions to national reconciliation. Gorriti pushes the women-nation logic to its literal ends and in doing so, refrains from using women as metaphors just to comply with the disparaging liberal narrative.

Even though Mármol's and Gorriti's portrayals of Manuela are rather divergent, both liberals are instrumental in elevating Manuela to her mythical status; Mármol, a fervent opponent of Rosas, not only fictionalised Manuela in *Amalia* but also discussed her importance in his essay a year earlier. Mármol's essay arguably promotes female domesticity and republican motherhood, emphasising the stereotypical gender role to which women adhered. It is important to acknowledge that Mármol romanticised Manuela with his descriptions of her appearance and character: 'Su frente no tiene nada de notable, pero la raíz de su cabello castaño oscuro, borda perfectamente en ella, esa curva fina, constante, y bien marcada, que comúnmente distingue a las personas de buena raza y de espíritu' (Mármol, 2001, 105). Given that Mármol never met Manuela in person, it is highly likely that his detailed descriptions of her are based largely on the 1850 official portrait of Manuela by the artist Prilidiano Paz Pueyrredón, whose painting was used as a depiction of Rosas's brand of Federalism. Pueyrredón's painting of Manuela is the embodiment of her father's ideal federalist woman; she is wearing a traditional red dress and her complexion is considerably lighter than it was in real life. In reality, Manuela is said to have had a deep olive skin tone and resembled the appearance of a *mulatto* woman such as her mother, thus rendering her porcelain skin in Pueyrredón's portrait factually inaccurate.³ In his biography of Pueyrredón, José León Pagano reaffirms that Manuela had dark skin by describing her prominent features: 'presenta cabello castaño oscuro, ornado por una diadema de brillantes y la divisa federal; cutis *trigueño* y ojos negros' (67). Never having met Manuela, Mármol perceived Pueyrredón's painting to be accurate, and, in his account of her appearance, he describes her as being of 'la buena raza' when this claim could not have been further from the truth. Whilst such an uninformed assertion would seem uncharacteristic of Mármol, it can be argued that he intentionally took Pueyrredón's portrayal to be an exact image in order to compare Manuela with Camila O'Gorman⁴ as Lauren Rea notes: 'The tone of Mármol's piece is reminiscent of Saldías' descriptions of Camila, suggesting that romantic embellishments within historical works and essays are acceptable during the nineteenth century, especially when the subject is female' (48). A further explanation as to why Pueyrredón chose to purify Manuela's complexion is because he was not only

'fond of reflecting European tradition in his work, but he had to obey the strict guidelines issued by a committee of influential men' (Hanway 53). The fact that her face presents a look of adoration as she gazes into the distance is significant, not only because it suggests she is looking at someone she loves, but because the person on whom she is focusing her attention is in fact, her father.⁵

The positioning of Manuela in the painting is an accurate reflection of Mármol's sympathy for her. In Mármol's view, Rosas was the only man with whom she was allowed to pursue an intimate relationship, rendering her a victim of her father. Although she had an older brother, Juan Bautista, Manuela was considered as her father's political successor in 1839; her popularity and influence among the masses was unparalleled, thus deeming her a fitting replacement (Lynch 169). In the year of Mármol's essay and Pueyrredón's official portrait, Manuela was 33 and still unmarried, undoubtedly because of her father's unrelenting control of her life, as Mármol indicates: 'vistas futuras en su política...hacen que Rosas vele, como un amante celoso, los latidos del corazón de su hija' (Mármol, Fernández 107). Mármol sympathises greatly with Manuela's alleged plight and reinforces what he sees as her unenviable future characterized by isolation and spinsterhood. However, he also draws attention to the possibility that, even if Rosas was willing to part with his most prized political ally, there might still be a dearth of potential suitors for her. During *los años de tiranía*, the natural order was reversed which ultimately resulted in Manuela becoming more powerful than any of her prospective suitors, and tempted, therefore, to reject a romantic relationship with an 'inferior' man. It is arguable that Rosas's uncivilised traditions which had been ingrained in the mind-set of his fellow federalists had emasculated their personality traits: 'Gira sus ojos y esa mujer desgraciada en medio de su teatral felicidad no descubre sino hombres, débiles, sometidos, prosternados, que se hacen un deber y un honor en humillarse delante de la mujer misma a quien pretenden lisonjear' (Mármol, Fernández 109). Mármol postulates that Manuela simply would not be attracted to men who belonged to her father's social circle and therefore, she would never find love unless she met her ideal man who would most likely be a Unitarian. Interestingly, whereas both Unitarian and Federalist perceptions of Manuela compliment her skin tone, César Aira implies that, just like her mother, Manuela was unattractive by referring to her as 'fea y pálida' (11). Given that Mármol's depiction of Manuela is inaccurate as it is based on Pueyrredón's painting, New Historicism deserves a mention. Mármol's treatment of Manuela can be likened to a New Historicist's approach in the sense that he imaginatively recreates Manuela to align with his beliefs (that she resembled a porcelain-skinned Unitarian woman), when there is no existing evidence to support this portrayal.⁶

Liberal intellectuals use women to affirm the notion of nation building and it is no different in the case of pro-*rosista* writers. Manuel Gálvez, elevates Manuela to a mythical status symbolizing the nation, the irony lying in the paradox that if he adopts

Naaman's woman-nation theory, then, unbeknownst to him, he is also confessing that Manuela is a victim of Rosas's patriarchal authority. By stating that Manuela is a national icon, Gálvez enlists her as the carrier of tradition and nationalism, which are shaped by women. Gálvez's Manuela encapsulates the most honourable qualities, which are bastions of the social conduct for the women of her time; she is loyal, charitable, self-sacrificing and most importantly, obedient. This description of Manuela echoes that of Mármol who identifies her as a saint-like figure; however, the fact that Manuela sacrifices herself to become a servant of her father's autocracy means that she cannot be considered a heroine. Mármol implies that given Manuela's exposure to the dictatorship's terror, she would never be able to experience the same emotions as other women:

Supongamos que la naturaleza hubiese dado a Manuela Rosas, cuanto es imaginable de delicado, de sensible, de mujeril, en una palabra ¿pero es natural, imaginable siquiera que tales propensiones se conservasen puras entre la atmósfera en la que vivían? no: mil veces imposible' (Mármol 125).

Whereas some Unitarians do not use Rosas's authoritarianism to excuse Manuela, Mármol concludes that had Manuela been blessed with a different father and re-educated by Unitarians, she could have reached her potential. The liberal opposition appreciate the plight of oppressed federalist women; Mármol and Gorriti attribute to their characters the desired qualities that are identified in Unitarian women. The personalities of Manuela and her representative, Clemencia, are manipulated to accommodate the Unitarian standards for females as Mármol emphasises Manuela's munificence: 'Manuela oye a todos; recibe a todos con afabilidad, y dulzura. El plebeyo encuentra en ella bondad en las palabras y en el rostro. El hombre de clase halla cortesía, educación y talento' (129). Both the pro and anti-Rosas writers glorify Manuela and attribute to her the qualities of romanticised femininity; her willingness to receive ordinary citizens and sympathy for their struggles renders her an attractive literary figure for both schools of thought. However, neo-*rosistas* use Manuela to honour the Rosas dictatorship whereas anti-*rosistas* use her to demonise it. José Rivera Indarte highlights Manuela's incestuous relationship with Rosas by stating: 'Rosas es culpable de torpe y escandaloso incesto con su hija Manuela, a quien ha corrompido' (338). His claim that Rosas pursued Manuela is refuted by Saldías, who became a leading contributor to the nationalist Revisionist movement⁷, scornfully remarking that: 'la dedica torpes calumnias, en lenguaje cínico y brutal que transpire algo como el furioso despecho de una pasión jamás correspondida, si es que Indarte pudo amar realmente a una mujer, él, que trató mal a su pobre madre' (347). Despite his polemical portrayal of Manuela's relationship with her father, Indarte corroborates the general opinion that Manuela had the potential to become an honourable

woman. Alluding to the theme of Indarte's novel, he encourages everyone to attempt to kill the dictator, especially urging women to take action: '¿De tantas mujeres que insulta y deshonra, que penetran hasta él, no habrá una que asesinandolo quiera hacerse la mujer de *la patria*?' (159-160). Indarte acknowledges the plight of women under the Rosas government, implying that if a woman murders the tyrant then she will be upheld by the nation as a model of female nobility and honour. He even demands that Manuela kill her own father: 'La misma *infame* Manuela se lavarí de su mancha profunda con la sangre de su espantoso seductor' (358). It is the only way in which she can redeem herself and, in doing so, aspire to the status of true national heroine. Although Indarte's pronouncement is somewhat controversial, it is a revolutionary interpretation of Manuela; he does not conform to the conventional liberal tradition of focusing on her submissiveness but rather on her resilience which is required for the commission of a crime aimed at freeing other people. This is precisely why Revisionists refrain from addressing Indarte's depiction of Manuela and instead turn to Mármol and Saldías for an historical antecedent upon which to mould their own interpretations of Manuela (Rea 358).

Revisionists ironically refer to the work of their political enemy, Mármol, rather than that of their very own Saldías in order to construct their own portraits of Manuela. Saldías, who is Rosas's defender, does not state in his account that Manuela urgently pleaded with her father to save the life of Camila O'Gorman; he indicates that she only intervened on the eve of the execution, but her help was anything but voluntary and was in fact, solicited by Antonio Reyes. Saldías's less extravagant role for Manuela in the attempted prevention of Camila's death does not accord with the sympathetic Manuela that the Revisionists want to project. It is when addressing Camila's death that we see the heightened impact of Mármol's work; they use his work to further preserve the parable of her compassionate intervention. Rea emphasises that Mármol's influence over the Revisionists is visible in the tone adopted in their indulgent descriptions of Manuela (358). Carlos Ibarguren's *Manuelita Rosas* (1933), praises her vulnerability and acknowledges Manuela's role as a political mediator,⁸ but he stresses that whether or not she was able to defuse tension between Rosas and his followers was dependent on his temperament. He explains that Manuela's kindness was expressed but not necessarily practised: 'Su bondad tuvo que ser, durante la tiranía, más pasiva que activa...Tal era "La Niña"' (Ibarguren, 30). Manuela's alleged entrapment is an aspect of the Rosas regime that liberal intellectuals draw on in their work in order to arouse sympathy for her whereas the Revisionists refrain from writing about her relationship with Rosas. It is telling that in order to portray the Rosas regime in a positive light, Revisionists do not focus on Rosas's 'achievements' but rather on Manuela's beauty and sensibility; they have emulated and built upon Mármol's work which, out of principle, they should be challenging. It is unsurprising that the myth of Manuela Rosas was conjured up so promptly after the execution of Camila O'Gorman; the liberals allegorised

Manuela as the nation to bring to light the regime's destruction of womanhood and the neo-*rosistas* used the dictator's daughter to divert attention from Rosas's unforgivable crimes. Mármol and Gálvez presented their romanticised versions of Manuela when she was in her prime in 1850, but previously, from the untimely death of her mother to the demise of her father's government, she had been invisible in the literary realm. Both enemies and supporters of Rosas revived the myth of Manuela when she is in her prime to propagate their own agendas; however, the liberals continue writing about her even when she 'leaves' her father. When in exile, she defied Mármol's expectations by marrying Máximo Terrero and having two children. Although her correspondence shows that she still cared for her father, Revisionists stay clear of probing her later life as the Manuela of 1850 makes for a much less complicated heroine.

A notable account which dismantles the image of the woeful Manuela consolidated in Unitarian literature is María Rosa Lojo's *La princesa federal* (2010). Prior to writing her novel, Lojo sought out a more plausible explanation for Manuela's life given her frustration with the misrepresentation of the dictator's daughter, of whom she said: 'Este poderoso y persistente cliché: una hija inerte e inerme, víctima de un padre autoritario, resultó el disparador de *La princesa federal*, que trabaja, en buena parte, para desarticular y desconstruir esta imagen' (Lojo 194). When interviewing Lojo, Kathryn Lehman reiterates that the Unitarians used Manuela as an allegory of the captive nation, proceeding to ask if there are works in which she is represented in a more ambiguous fashion. Lojo reiterates that Mármol is mostly responsible for the portrayal of the virtuous Manuela, arguably because of his own prejudices concerning feminine nature, which were shared by many men of his time. Although Mármol evoked sympathy for Manuela, his unacknowledged discrimination towards women in power, is finally addressed: 'Mármol believed that Rosas had "perverted" Manuela's femininity, by bringing her directly into contact with power because obviously, he believed that matters of power were not for women, that this association with power corrupts their feminine nature' (Lehman 83). If Mármol perceives Manuela to be a victim solely because she fulfilled 'masculine' duties then his portrayal of her is reactionary. According to Lojo, he believed that women were fragile and delicate beings, prone to a frivolous and light-hearted imagination, who become masculinised and insensitive once they encounter the harsh realities of political violence (Lehman 83). Alluding to Mármol's reservations about Manuela finding love, her marriage to Terrero would have delighted her liberal admirers, as she would have finally broken free from her 'imprisonment', but Lojo contests that she ever wanted to escape: "Mármol's work motivated me to construct my character from another interpretation of Manuela Rosas who I consider to be much more of a protagonist of her destiny than that image desired by the imagination of poets or liberal writers" (Lehman 83). Lojo suggests that Manuela loved her father dearly, which lies in the help that she offered Rosas's biographer, Adolfo Saldías. When she was an elderly

woman living in England, she granted Saldías access to her father's archives; this was arguably an act of historical vindication which she herself had facilitated, making her tremendously proud. She was so proud of Saldías' biography of her father that, when Máximo fell ill after suffering a stroke, she would read to him Saldías' work chapter by chapter so he wouldn't tire' (Manuela Rosas 89). Lojo's arguments culminate when she states that in her view, Manuela believed that she and her father were providing the nation with a necessary service (Lehman 84).

Lojo deconstructs the myth of the victimised Manuela in a telling passage from the diary of Pedro de Angelis who was Rosas's secretary, which emphasises the irony of any assumption that Manuela was trapped—the fact is that she did not want to be freed: 'Todos creen que Manuela desea ser liberada por la mano de héroe capaz de arrebatarla cuando el dragón está dormido. Todas ignoran que el dragón nunca duerme, y lo peor: que ella en verdad no desea liberarse' (Lojo 162). Angelis, Manuela's fictionalised lover, observes her relationship with Rosas and recognised that she did not want to leave her father, but if she did, it would be an impossibility for, 'tenía un pacto con la fiera y las llamas que parecen apresarla son apenas el reflejo del muro que sostiene el castillo' (Lojo 162). Lojo implies that Manuela is just as dependant on her father as she is on him; she is not a captive of her father's predator-like fixation on her because she has volunteered to remain with him, thus she does not want to slay the dragon which fiercely guards her, but tame it. Lojo's charismatic scientist, Gabriel Victorica, interviews Manuela at her home in London, where she recalls her upbringing. Lojo's Manuela understands general human desires and knows how to manipulate people through these needs, rendering her an outstanding candidate as political mediator, and eminently appropriate for Victorica's psychological treatment. However, Lojo's account *does* suggest that Manuela is subjected to patriarchal authority; she was controlled by Rosas, written about by Angelis and analysed by Victorica, which Lehman argues: 'places her in a submissive position with respect to men who once again use the power of language and of hegemonic discourse to represent women' (Lehman 87). However, we can say that given that Manuela infiltrates the male-dominated political arena, she neutralises masculine authority with her feminine power. Alluding to Manuela's attachment to Rosas, she volunteers herself as the subject of Carl Jung's 'Electra complex'. Victorica visits London to see Manuela in 1893 and also to interview Dr Sigmund Freud, whom Manuela mockingly calls 'Mr Alegre', doubting that there is any kind of scientific discourse which can resolve the mystery of the human soul (Lehman 87). According to Neo-Freudian psychology, the 'Electra complex', as proposed by Carl Jung, is defined as a girl's psychosexual competition with her mother for possession of her father and at its most basic level, refers to the phenomenon of the little girl's attraction to her father and hostility towards her mother, whom she now sees as her rival (Scott 8). Manuela Rosas is a prime manifestation of this theory as Lojo reiterates her 'fascination' for her father: 'He visto y tratado en mi vida a muchos hombres,

caballeros y patanes, doctores y sacerdotes. Muy pocos, o ninguno de ellos a la verdad, podrían compararse a mi padre en gallardía y en belleza varonil' (Lojo 132). The 'Electra complex' is visible in Manuela's femininity; Mármol made known his distaste for any notion of Manuela's 'defeminisation' as a result of her exposure to a masculinised environment. However, the argument that she was the embodiment of a different type of femininity can be supported: 'The girl directs her desire for sexual union upon her father and thus, progresses to heterosexual femininity' (Bullock and Trombley 259, 507). Manuela's femininity has not been destroyed but rather masculinised by her infatuation with Rosas and her surrounding environment.

La princesa federal demystifies the myth that Manuela was isolated in a deadly environment, as Lojo emphasises Manuela's appreciation for her father. Lojo's Manuela romanticises the image of Rosas by commenting on his impressive physiognomy: 'Brilla de la cabeza a los pies, pero lo más brillante no es el punzón del uniforme, sino los ojos azules' (119). Lojo's Manuela is one who is honest and wise, so much so that she has managed to charm Dr Victorica into avoiding conflict with her. However, despite her honesty, she is reluctant to answer questions or to be interrogated about the controversial relations between her father and his mistress, namely María Eugenia Castro. When asked if she received a catholic cross which was given to Rosas, Manuela responds: 'No, fue una persona allegada' and thus suggests that he gave it to another person close to his heart. After Victorica asks who the recipient is, Manuela 'se demoró en responder' and vaguely states: 'Una muchacha que sirvió a mi madre durante su enfermedad, y luego se ocupó de la atención de Tatita'. Her response prompts Victorica to ask: '¿No sería María Eugenia Castro?'—a suggestion which is not well received: 'Manuela me miró con tirante suspicacia' (119). Lojo claims that Manuela was jealous of her father's new love interest: '[Eugenia] era una de esas chinas calladas que parece que no rompen un plato, pero cuando uno se descuida ...' (120). Manuela does not condemn Rosas's pursuit of his vulnerable teenaged maid as she never did in real life, instead, she explains why Eugenia remained in the Rosas household: 'Antes de morir mi madre ya se encontraba en estado. Y por culpa del general Rosas, como se ha dado en creer' (120). She does not comment on the age gap between Rosas and his lover and justifies his abandonment of his illegitimate children: 'Si hubiese sido sólo Eugenia. Pero esos niños [...] Encantadores hasta los dos años. Después se volvían insoportables e insolentes. Alentados por mi padre, que es lo peor' (120). Manuela's vindication of Rosas's abandonment of his children indicates her desire for his undivided attention. She expresses her discontent for Rosas's relationship, as she still competes for the 'possession' or 'repossession' of her father: 'Nadie sabe qué pasa en el silencio de los cuerpos. Nadie sabe qué hay en el alma de los que callan. Nadie sabe quién es más valioso ante los ojos de nuestro padre' (136). In her innovative and more feminist depiction of Manuela as an empowered woman, Lojo counters the liberal and Revisionist myths, focusing on Manuela's indispensable

role in Rosas's government because of her intellectual talent rather than her beauty. Arguably, Lojo's liberated Manuela does not give rise to the construction of a new myth but refreshingly, reflects the credible reality that she controlled the strings of her world.

In conclusion, the myth of Manuela as a victim is dispelled when we apply logic and evidence to the process of uncovering her life. Lojo's *La princesa federal* is arguably the most historically accurate: although less artistic and imaginative than Gorriti, Lojo is a historian who refers to factual evidence, influencing her approach to writing fiction. While Gorriti incorporates a degree of suspense into her fictions, depicting her interpretation of reality through fantasy, Lojo is a contemporary and realist writer whose style is deadpan and predictable, hence the lack of creative reconstruction in telling Manuela's story. Nevertheless, her lack of imagination only makes her account more plausible. Lojo bases her Manuela on what can be deemed almost concrete reality by incorporating into her account compelling historical evidence in the form of written

correspondence between Manuela and Reyes. By supporting her claims, Lojo diversifies the narrow-minded debate regarding Manuela's life, in which reality has been eclipsed by Unitarian fantasy and its demonization of Rosas. Although Lojo's novel is to some extent imaginative, it is not a recreation of the dictator's daughter, but a semi-biographical account of her life. Ultimately, whilst it is possible that Manuela felt pressurised into complying with her father's demands and proving her worth in the political arena, to claim that she was oppressed is incorrect as it is not corroborated by available historical documentation. However, it is impossible to know the nature of Manuela's relationship with her father, which is precisely why she lends herself to imaginative recreation—an approach to history, which has redefined what it means to be a historian. Could Lojo's account just formulate an alternative narrative? The lack of distinction between the fictional and factual has made it impossible to establish the absolute truth.

NOTES

¹In correspondence between the dictator and his close compatriot, José María Roxas y Patrón, Rosas crystalizes his views on women in power: 'No creo en la monarquía pero tampoco en la república, como están al presente. Son formas extremas [...] partiendo de la idea de poner hereditaria de la república a una persona [...] mi opinión ha sido siempre que debía ser una mujer'. See letter from Rosas to Roxas-Patrón in Alfredo Burnet-Merlín, p.89.

²'El alma de aquella Hermosa niña se parecía a su nombre: era toda dulzura y misericordia', Gorriti, p.121.

³The Afro-Argentine community ardently glorified Manuela to the extent that she would be the subject of praise in their hymns: 'in the poem-song "Hymn to Da. Manuelita Rosas"—sung by African women on the occasion of Manuela's birthday—Conga women declare Manuela their "queen", "mother" and "loyal protector" and lament that their ancestors died in Congo without having seen Manuela's gracious beauty'. Manuela is also praised for having thrown into the abyss the "diabolical Union" as well as being described as 'a moon that radiates beauty, joy and light, guiding *felices morenas* throughout their journey. Pueyrredón's representation of Manuela is further discredited by the fact that the Buenos Aires elite disparaged her *trigueño* complexion whereas the Conga women celebrate her skin tonality, asking the sun not to 'eclipse the colour'. Salvatore, p.64.

⁴Camila O'Gorman was the Federalist aristocrat who controversially fell in love with the Jesuit priest Uladislao Gutiérrez. Rosas deemed their forbidden romance a betrayal in light of his conflict with the Jesuits over their lack of support, and ultimately sentenced them to death when they were found after fleeing Buenos Aires. They were both publicly executed when Camila was pregnant. This tragedy brought Argentina to a standstill and evoked anger in both Unitarians and Federalists alike, ultimately signalling Rosas's fall from power.

⁵Mármol published strict guidelines which had to be followed by Pueyrredón: 'Manuela debía aparecer parada, con una expresión risueña en su fisonomía, y en el acto de colocar sobre su mesa de gabinete una solicitud dirigida a su tatita. Representándose de este modo la bondad de la joven, en su sonrisa; y su ocupación de intermediaria entre el pueblo y de su Jefe Supremo en la solicitud que colocaba sobre la mesa'. Mármol/Fernández, pp.207-209.

⁶Seymour Menton argues: 'Llamamos "novelas históricas" a las que cuentan una acción ocurrida en una época'. Seymour Menton, p.16.

⁷Revisionism (*revisionismo*) is an authoritarian, racist and anti-Semitic political movement initiated in the 1930s, which has since tried to improve Rosas's reputation and more notably, establish another dictatorship, namely during the 1989 presidency of Carlos Saúl Menem Akil, modelled on Rosas's regime. Revisionists exalt Rosas in the literary realm, the key pioneer being Rosas's biographer, Antonio Saldías. However, when constructing their fictions, some revisionists, such as Manuel Gálvez chose to base their depictions of Rosas and Manuela on the work of their political archenemy, José Mármol rather than on that of Saldías or Jose Rivera Indarte.

⁸Ella fue, y se lo reconocieron hasta los más encamizados enemigos de su padre como José Mármol, la esperanza y el consuelo de los suplicantes y de las víctimas; por eso la niña pudo desempeñar, al lado del dictador, la dulce función de la clemencia y de la gracia'. Irazusta, pp.344-345.

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