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Afro-Porteñas in Héctor Pedro Blomberg's Historical Romances[*]

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In Argentine cultural memory, the regime of General Juan Manual de Rosas (Governor of the Province of Buenos Aires 1829–1832 and 1835–1852) is colour coded. Red is the colour of Rosas's Holy Federation, worn by the brutal law enforcers, the mazorqueros, as they root out the regime's opponents, slitting their throats whilst singing the 'Refalosa'. The more prominent the citizens' red Federalist insignias (divisas), the more protected they are from the Mazorca's terror. Sky blue (celeste) is the colour of the Unitarian opposition. Mostly in exile in Montevideo, the prudent amongst those left behind adopt red to masquerade as Federalists as the wearing of sky blue or displaying objects of this colour in the home can lead to persecution. In literary representations of the era, the population of Buenos Aires is also coded along racial lines with the assumption that Afro-Argentine characters are loyal Federalists.

Although Federalism represented the interests of the caudillos - rural landowners who ruled their interior provinces through systems of clientelism - whilst the Unitarians sought to consolidate the port city of Buenos Aires as the site of power of the Republic, Rosas blurred this division by furthering the interests of the Province of Buenos Aires during his governance. Ideologically, Federalism identified more closely with Argentina's American identity and the territory's existing population. The Unitarians looked towards Europe as a model for progress and deemed the racial character of the Argentine people detrimental to the

[*] I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their helpful critique and suggestions.

nation's future prospects and thus in need of improvement.[1] The enduring cultural memory of the Rosas era was constructed from the work of his Unitarian opponents writing from exile. Known as the Generation of 1837, this group of intellectuals included Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, Esteban Echeverría, José Mármol and Juan Bautista Alberdi.[2] Produced in the 1930s, Héctor Pedro Blomberg's historical romances build on the literary trajectory of negative representations of the Rosas era which begins with the Generation of 1837 and passes into the 'official' liberal history of the nation following the fall of Rosas (in 1852 at the battle Battle of Caseros) and the defeat of Federalism (in 1861 at the Battle of Pavón). In 'official' history, Rosas is a brutal tyrant who held the nation in the grip of barbarism, delaying the road to civilisation.[3]

Blomberg's Rosas-era romances are clustered around the infamous decade (1930–1943), a period of conservative restoration, electoral corruption and the repression of political opposition during which political and economic instability invited a revisiting of the nation-building project. The coup – or 'Revolución' – of 6 September 1930 signalled a break from the liberal project which had continuously dominated since 1861.[4] Blomberg's representations of the Rosas era follow the liberal tradition, however, and are in conflict with the contemporaneous work of the historical revisionist intellectuals who sought to challenge the condemnation of Rosas in liberal history. The endeavour of revisionist intellectuals including Carlos Ibarguren, Julio Irazusta and Manuel Gálvez led to the establishment in 1938 of the Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas Juan Manuel de Rosas.[5] The década infame ended with the coup of 1943 which set in motion the chain of events which would

[1] See Nicolas Shumway 1992 for a discussion of the development of the competing visions of Argentine national identity, or Argentina's 'guiding fictions'.
[2] For a comprehensive study of the key works of these intellectuals see Katra 1996. On Sarmiento see Sorenson Goodrich 1996 and Criscenti 1993.
[3] Argentine's liberal 'official' history was spearheaded by Bartolomé Mitre's Galería de celebridades argentinas (1857) and Historia de Belgrano y de la independencia argentina (1859). On 'mitrista' history see Miller 1999 and Operé 1987.
[4] On the década infame see Rock 1993.
[5] For a discussion of the impetus behind the revisionist movement see Halperín Donghi 1970.

culminate in the election of Juan Domingo Perón in June 1946. Although privately an admirer of Rosas,[6] Perón was wary of being directly compared to the dictator and did not publicly support revisionist history (Plotkin 2003: 27-29). Despite the continuing efforts of revisionist intellectuals, the enduring cultural memory of Rosas as a tyrant was pervasive enough to be exploited by the government of the self-titled Revolución Libertadora which ousted Perón. An official government publication of 1958 entitled Libro negro de la segunda tiranía identifies Perón as Rosas's barbarous successor (Winston 1983: 314). During the military dictatorship from 1976 to 1983, even as the regime turned its back on revisionism, the cultural memory of the Rosas regime was invoked once again as writers evaded censorship through a strategy of displacement.[7] In Griselda Gambaro's La malasangre (1982) and Ricardo Piglia's Respiración artificial (1980), for example, the Rosas era as a tyrannical regime stands for a new period of tyranny in which all political opposition is once again eliminated. Under the presidency of Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, historical revisionism has been revived and Rosas and the Federalist caudillos vindicated. Here Rosas is again part of a larger picture, hailed as a unifying force in the face of imperialist threat in the lead-up to the thirtieth anniversary of the Falklands/Malvinas War and supported by a government which has approached Argentina's claim to the islands with a renewed vigour. The anniversary of La vuelta del obligado (1845), a minor naval battle against an Anglo-French fleet, was declared a national holiday in 2010.[8] The revitalised campaign for the national holiday was led by revisionist historians affiliated to the Instituto Nacional Iberoamericano de Revisionismo Histórico Manuel Dorrego created by the Secretaría de Cultura in 2011.[9] The

[6] See Perón's letters to Manuel de Anchorena quoted in Jeffrey M. Shumway 2004: 114-15.
[7] It is beyond the scope of this article to offer more than the briefest account of the political trajectory of historical revisionism. For a full discussion of revisionism from the nineteenth century to the beginning of Fernández's presidency see Goebel 2011.
[8] Revisionist historian José María Rosa had campaigned for the date of 20 November to be recognised as Día de Soberanía Nacional. This date was a national holiday from 1974 to 1976 when it was abolished by the military dictatorship (Goebel 2011: 190).
[9] The Federalist Manuel Dorrego was the elected Governor of the Province of Buenos Aires. He was executed in 1828 following a coup led by the Unitarian Juan Lavalle and Rosas was elected Governor in the ensuing chaos.

Museo del Bicentenario, inaugurated in 2011 and which stands behind the Casa Rosada, presents a revisionist version of Argentine history in which a political line of succession can be drawn from Rosas to Perón to Néstor Kirchner, president from 2003 to 2007 and late husband of Cristina Fernández. Rosas is once more at the forefront of discussions about Argentine national identity and Blomberg is one of the writers whose work contributed to on-going debate on Rosas's legacy.

For Blomberg's historical romances, the most significant antecedent is José Mármol's novel Amalia (1851), one of the Latin American nineteenth-century romantic and patriotic novels identified by Doris Sommer (1991) as 'foundational fictions'. One of the premises established in Amalia is that the women of the Afro-Argentine population are the regime's natural allies. Nevertheless, Amalia as a whole is perhaps more preoccupied with class than race, brimming with scornful incredulity that the vulgar, uncouth Federalists can occupy a place in high society. The association of this class with the black population serves to cement the barbarity of both following the cultural logic deployed in the work of the Generation of 1837 that the African race is degenerate.[10] Blomberg's historical romances revisit the Rosas era with more emphasis on race and with a host of Afro-porteña protagonists. Blomberg moves the representations of Afro-Argentine women on from those found in the works of the Generation of 1837 by harnessing the dramatic potential of the subversion of stereotypes but stays true to the liberal tradition by showing how redemption is found in serving the Unitarian cause. These condemning and redeeming representations of Afro-porteñas are offered against the backdrop of the 1930s eugenicist movement and to an audience and readership who can count few Afro-Argentines amongst their number.

The son of a Norwegian immigrant, Blomberg was a prolific writer who turned his hand to short stories, plays, radio serials and reading books for schools. He returned time and

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As a result of this episode, Rosas was known as 'El Restaurador de las leyes y del orden' and his regime referred to his opponents as 'los salvajes unitarios'.

[10] See in particular Sarmiento's Facundo (1845) and Echeverría's El matadero (1871).

again to the Rosas era, often working in conjunction with Carlos Max Viale Paz until the latter's death in February 1934. With Viale Paz he wrote one of the most successful early serialised radio dramas, Bajo la Santa Federación, reaching Argentina's first mass audiences in the new era of radio broadcasting (Claxton 2007, 95-96; Martín Barbero 1998, 184). The star of other Blomberg radio dramas was Eva Duarte who went on to make such effective use of broadcasting in her political career.[11] In the 1920s he wrote 'Libros de lectura' which were approved by the Consejo Nacional de Educación for use in schools and were published without revisions into the 1950s.[12] As a journalist and commentator Blomberg contributed to publications all the way from La Nación to Caras y Caretas. For such a prolific writer who both reflected on and contributed to Argentina's cultural memory his place in the Argentine literary canon is rather underestimated and he is best remembered as the author of the lyrics of the waltz La Pulpera de Santa Lucía. This article will consider representations of Afro-porteñas in La Pulpera de Santa Lucía (waltz 1929, short story 1930, play with Viale Paz 1931), La Mazorquera de Monserrat (tango 1929, short story 1930), La Guitarrera del Cerrito (short story 1930), La Mulata del Restaurador (play with Viale Paz 1932, short story 1938) and in Blomberg and Viale Paz's 1933 serialised radio drama Bajo la Santa Federación. [13]

Love across the racial and political divide: *La Pulpera de Santa Lucía* and *La Mazorquera de Monserrat*

Buenos Aires's African population is indelibly linked to the Rosas regime. George Reid Andrews estimates that Afro-Argentines comprised around a quarter of the population of Buenos Aires in 1838 but that this had fallen to just two per cent by the next census in

[11] One serial in which Duarte starred was Las Rosas de Caseros (1939) set in the Rosas era. The scripts of these serials are believed to have been destroyed following Duarte's marriage to Juan Perón.
[12] For example, Pensamiento (1925) was in print until 1948 and El sembrador (1925) was republished in 1956 (Ploktin 2003: 106).
[13] Carlos Schaefer Gallo's 1931 play version of La Mazorquera de Monserrat based on Blomberg's short story will not be considered here.

1887 (1980: 4). It was during the Rosas era that the Afro-Argentines gained most prominence as Rosas maintained an image of approachability, visibility and availability to this population. He not only lifted the ban on candombé dances but also attended the dances of the different African 'nations' - groups formed upon the basis of original African nationality – with his family (Chasteen 1996:19). The populism at the heart of the Rosas regime threatened the Generation of 1837's elitist and undemocratic concept of desirable leadership. That this populism entailed courting the black and mixed-race population whom they believed to be racially unfit and inherently dangerous was completely beyond the pale for the liberal elite. Such is the impact of 'official' liberal history on cultural memory that even when meaning is compacted into a song lyric from 1929, this is easily read by an Argentine public schooled in such representations of the Rosas era. From Blomberg's most famous song, La Pulpera de Santa Lucía, the opening lines 'Era rubia y sus ojos celestes/ reflejaban la gloria del día' immediately identify the tavern owner as white, allied to the Unitarian cause and therefore virtuous (2000: 50).[14]

In the waltz the pulpera leaves a 'payador mazorquero' broken-hearted when 'un payador de Lavalle' takes her away.[15] In the play and short story the pulpera is given the name Dionisia Miranda and is the daughter of a late Federalist sergeant. She runs her pulpería, El Restaurador, with her mother and the fame of her beauty attracts clients from far and wide. None are more devoted than Luna, an Afro-Argentine payador mazorquero.[16] Dionisia's juxtaposition with the neighbouring pulpera, Isidora Rosales, is drawn clearly along the lines of race and is not political as both are Federalists. Described in the story as a 'mulata arrogante', Isidora proudly displays her Federalists credentials: 'vestía siempre de lanilla roja' (Blomberg 1938: 92). Isidora is hatefully jealous of Dionisia because of the class

[14] The music for this waltz and for the tango La Mazorquera de Monserrat was written by Enrique Maciel and both were performed by Ignacio Corsini.
[15] Lavalle led a failed campaign against Rosas in 1840.
[16] This character is named Ciriaco Luna in the short story and Salvador Luna in the play which was written in conjunction with Viale Paz and which premiered on 27 September 1930.

of clients the blonde woman attracts and the admirers she inspires. Isidora laments that 'no la cortejaban más que los negros y pardos', whereas Dionisia 'tenía locos a los blancos, a los payadores, a los oficiales, hasta a los mismos poetas de la Santa Federación' (100). When Luna realises that Dionisia has no interest in him, he drinks away his sorrows in Isidora's pulpería and she takes the opportunity to seduce him: 'Parecía haberse olvidado repentinamente de la pulpera rubia. Aquella mujer morena, de manos ardientes y ojos que resplandecían, lo turbaba cada vez más' (94). The dangerous and unsettling sexuality of Afro-Argentine women is, as we shall see, a theme to which Blomberg often returns.

Blomberg's engagement with the work of the Generation of 1837 is made explicit in this story by mention of Mármol's Amalia and the inclusion of Mármol as a character. Amalia's cousin, Daniel Bello, hides his friend Eduardo Belgrano at her house after rescuing him from an ambush set to catch those trying to flee to Montevideo to join the Unitarian exiled community. Amalia and Eduardo's relationship blossoms and they are finally married two hours before the Mazorca raid the house and kill Eduardo and Daniel. In the play and short story versions of La Pulpera de Santa Lucía it is Mármol's friend, the fictional Fernando Larrazábel, who falls for Dionisia. Mármol's fictional heroine is also mentioned in the play version when Fernando tells Dionisia: 'van mis pasos sin rumbo, hasta la quinta de Amalia, la viuda de Olavarrieta' (Blomberg and Viale Paz 1930: n. pag.). In the story, Fernando's friendship with Mármol and his occupation as a poet clearly mark him out as Unitarian and he is contemptuously referred to as 'un decente' by the mazorqueros drinking in the pulperías (Blomberg 1938: 98). Mármol aligns Dionisia racially and culturally with the Unitarians when he calls her 'un jazmín en ese barrio de mazorqueros y de mulatos' (99). The presence of known Unitarians in Dionisia's pulpería provides Isidora with the opportunity to take her revenge by denouncing Fernando and harbouring the mazorqueros who come to capture him. Dionisia is increasingly identified with the Unitarian cause through the colour

coding of the regime. When Fernando evaluates the risk he is taking by visiting Dionisia we are told: 'Pensó en los ponchos rojos de la Mazorca ensangrentando las pulperías del barrio sur' and at the same time 'surgió ante él […] los ojos celestes de la pulperita' (102). When Fernando escapes, a furious Isidora wounds Dionisia with a silver dagger as Luna tries to contain her. In both versions, Luna demonstrates his love for Dionisia by helping her escape to Montevideo with Fernando. Dionisia's defection to the Unitarian side is complete and Isidora is left with the realisation that Luna will never love her.

In the play, Isidora is further punished for being a violent, vengeful seductress. Luna is fatally wounded as he enables the lovers' escape, fighting the mazorqueros whom Isidora dispatches to capture her rival. Isidora fits the mould of the Afro-Argentine vilified by the Generation of 1837 as she is presented as the result of a degenerate race aligned to a barbarous political cause. She is further condemned as she is female but fails to conform to expected feminine standards as she is violent and promiscuous. Although Blomberg is writing about nineteenth-century womanhood from the perspective of the 1930s, little had changed over this time period. Asunciación Lavrin outlines the predominant conception of ideal femininity between 1890 and 1940: 'Femininity was understood as the qualities that constituted the essence of being a woman. Those qualities were socially defined, though they were also connected with the biological functions of womanhood and motherhood: a feminine woman was charming, genteel, delicate, and selfless' (1995: 33). If anything, this attitude intensified during the 1930s as traditional gender roles came under threat from modernising influences. As Kathleen Newman states: 'from the end of the nineteenth century onward, the presence of women in factory and labour struggles, the entrance of women into the professions, and the incursion of feminism into the public sphere together foretold a modern but less obedient Argentine woman. Yet at the same time a new discursive nexus was created: a "position available" for a modern woman who still embodied "eternal" (i.e

nineteenth-century) femininity' (1990: 75–76). In the juxtaposition of Dionisia with Isidora, Blomberg contrasts the idealised and undesirable versions of womanhood and their contrasting races form the cultural logic upon which this distinction can be built. If issues of race are subordinated to issues of gender in Blomberg's treatment of these female characters, with Luna race is foregrounded as this character introduces one of the main narrative threads of Blomberg's historical romances. In Luna we are shown the potential of Afro-Argentines to move over to the Unitarian cause. By sacrificing himself he cannot pose a problem to the future nation which will seek to replace those of African descent with white European immigrants. The future of the Unitarian cause is represented by the white couple who wait out the end of the Rosas regime from the safely of Montevideo in a way that was denied to Mármol's Amalia and Eduardo.

La Mazorquera de Monserrat of the 1929 tango is an uncomplicated character reminiscent of Isidora. Her 'ojos negros, traidores' and lips which are 'rojos, sangrientos' identify her both as Afro-Argentine and Federalist. Jointly condemned by her dangerous sexuality and loyalty to the Federalist cause, this femme fatale is stabbed by a jealous Federalist sergeant. As she dies, she kisses a picture of Rosas and utters her final words: 'Sólo a ti amaba …' (Blomberg 1973: 173-74). In the short story of the same name, the protagonist meets the same tragic end but not before defecting emotionally to the Unitarian side.

Baltasara Pacheco, described as the 'pobre cigarrera de la plaza de los negros' has earned her name, 'La Mazorquera de Monserrat', out of fear and admiration ever since she stabbed a man who made unwanted advances towards her (Blomberg 1938: 127). The story opens with her repelling the advances of the powerful mazorquero Candelario Santos, undaunted by his physical strength and position of power within the regime. As she makes her rounds selling cigarettes we see her unmoved by flattery, unperturbed by threats and

disdainful to her customers who treat her with wary admiration. She is firmly in the Federalist camp with an African great-grandmother whom she accompanies on visits to the house of María Josefa, Rosas's sister-in-law, and we are told: 'La figura trágica y grandiosa del Restaurador de las Leyes le inspiraba una devoción casi religiosa' (136). This 'Federala adicta' (136) and proto-feminist is transformed as she falls in love with a Unitarian. The description of Ignacio Thorne leaves no doubt as to his Unitarian affiliation: 'rubio, muy alto, de ojos azules, vestido de levita, sin divisa federal' (130). Baltasara sees him detained on suspicion of conspiring with the Unitarians and 'un soplo de piedad pasó por su soberbio corazón' (130). By the time she resolves to help Thorne who is facing execution, the reason for her transformation is given: 'Porque la Mazorquera, la porteña bravía y desdeñosa de los mercados y los cuarteles, había encontrado su destino. Ella amaba a Ignacio Thorne' (139). Baltasara manipulates the mazorquero Santana's feelings for her by asking him to free Thorne as he is being transferred to the Retiro barracks. Santana supposes that Thorne is a rich, old man who has bought his freedom but he realises the true reason for Baltasara's request when he discovers him to be young and handsome. Baltasara dies as she stops the bullet which Santana fires at Thorne.

The story of La Mazorquera de Monserrat can be seen as a gender reversal of La Pulpera de Santa Lucía. In both an Afro-Argentine sacrifices themself for love and in doing so protects the Unitarian cause. The notion that Baltasara finds her destiny in loving Thorne reinforces the sense present in several of Blomberg's historical romances that the Unitarian cause is so righteous that even those who by race, class and culture are the staunchest Federalists have the potential to see the light. Baltasara cannot be brought into the Unitarian fold and has to die, winning praise for her martyrdom and her rediscovery of her femininity in her quest for love. Baltasara could never be the woman for Thorne as he is still grieving his white Unitarian wife, María del Carmen (131). The impossibility of Baltasara's love is

reinforced by the closing sentence: ‘El hombre que amó a María del Carmen, y que fue amado por la Mazorquera de Monserrat, se perdió en las tinieblas’ (142).

Dangerous women: La Federala and La Guitarrera

In 1880, La Broma, a publication concerned with the interests of the Afro-Argentine community, published an article expressing anger that black women were being banned from dance halls where whites were in attendance because of their perceived loose morals and corrupting influences (Castro 2001: 97). In the Argentine context of nation-building, black women traditionally have no place in the nation as white women are the ideal producers of future citizens. The Generation of 1837’s vision of the desired racial makeup of Argentina is one of this group’s most significant cultural legacies. It set in motion the period of mass immigration to Argentina which peaked between 1880 and 1914 and this in turn was the catalyst for the development of positivist, and later eugenicist, ideologies by subsequent generations of intellectuals. The Generation of 1837 saw immigration as the remedy for two of Argentina’s greatest impediments to progress: the small population and the undesirable racial characteristics of that population. In Alberdi’s Bases (1852), which formed the basis for the 1853 Constitution, the benefits of immigration were expressed by the now famous phrase ‘gobernar es poblar’. The aim was to attract an immigrant workforce of Northern Europeans, considered more advanced and racially desirable, to harness the potential of the land. Failure to do this held the following warning: ‘Pero poblar no es civilizar, sino embrutecer, cuando se puebla con chinos y con indios de Asia y con negros de África’ (Alberdi 1852: 18). Alberdi’s statement that ‘to govern is to populate’ also had implications for the role of Argentina’s women. As women were entrusted with the vital task of populating the nation, their role in the nation was inextricably linked to their reproductive capacities (Masiello 1992: 5). Of the ‘early liberal intelligentsia’ Masiello states:

> Since their goal was to populate the nation with racially uncontaminated subjects, the bodies of women of European ancestry made their way into nationalist texts, serving at once as buffers between racially minorized groups, who were the targets of repression, and as a continental model of citizenry that depended on its female population for its continuity in history. (1992: 5)

In this way, gender and race are indelibly linked in the nation-building project as women of African descent must make way for European women.

Two of Blomberg's Afro-Argentine female characters emphasise the danger inherent in a black woman's powerful sexuality. Florencia Monteagudo, 'La Federala', from the radio serial Bajo la Santa Federación is perhaps the most unredeemable of all Blomberg's Afro-porteñas. Written with Viale Paz and transmitted on Radio Nacional (later Radio Belgrano) from 1933 to 1934, Bajo la Santa Federación can be seen as a re-writing of Amalia as it narrates the threat posed by the Rosas regime to the union of the two central characters.[17] When the Federalist María del Carmen Miranda elopes to Montevideo with the Unitarian Daniel Castañeda, Rosas personally entrusts La Federala with the mission of hunting the couple down. Rosas chooses La Federala because of her feminine charms which will allow her to infiltrate the couple by seducing Daniel 'con su gracia de porteña, sus ojos y su guitarra' (Blomberg and Viale Paz 1934: Part 2, Romance II).[18] La Federala is dangerous because her femininity is only an effect deployed for seduction and she revealed her ruthless nature when she murdered her fiancé six years previously. Sent to prison in Bahía Blanca, it was the Mazorca who petitioned Rosas for her release so that this merciless asset could be put to use serving the Federalist cause. La Federala's enthusiasm for her task surpasses even that of the infamously brutal Rosas. When she assures him, 'Les traeré los corazones de esos salvajes traidores', Rosas replies, 'Me basta con sus cabezas' (Part 2: Romance II).

[17] For an analysis of Bajo la Santa Federación see Rea 2013.
[18] References are taken from the scripts published weekly by Blas Buccheri. Episodes are divided into 'Romances' and there are no page numbers.

In La Guitarrera del Cerrito Alvara Monteagudo is an alternative version of La Federala. She, like La Federala, is a guitar-player from the San Nicolás district but it was her mother who was sentenced to life in Bahía Blanca for the murder of her husband (Blomberg 1938: 111). La Guitarrera is sent to Montevideo by Rosas to seduce the nephew of Bernadino Rivadavia and bring him back to Buenos Aires where he will be captured. Her race and political affiliation is established from the outset as she is described as 'muy morena' with 'cabellos renegridos' and wearing a 'pollera de lanilla roja' (109). La Guitarrera's sexuality is so powerful it makes Rivadavia forget his loyalty to the Unitarian cause: 'Rosas, la tiranía, la Mazorca, los mártires, la gloria de las campañas, su mismo nombre ilustre, todo se desvaneció en presencia de aquella mujer turbadora' (119-20). La Guitarrera is a more ambiguous character than La Federala and there is the possibility that she has fallen for Rivadavia. When he agrees to come to Buenos Aires with her we are told: 'Sí era suyo, suyo. Experimentó en aquel instante febril la sensación de la victoria' (122). When her mission is uncovered, however, she claims that she accepted it out of fear of Rosas and laments having lost 'el único hombre que de veras amó' (123). As the Unitarians distinguish themselves from Rosas and his brutal methods, she is not shot for her crime but is kept as a prisoner of war (123).

As the characters La Federala and La Guitarrera demonstrate, the sexual availability of black women poses a threat to the nation as they have the potential to seduce white men and turn them away from their ideal partners, imagined as both racially desirable and chaste. Although La Guitarrera may be repentant, there are inherent political and racial impediments to her becoming a mother of future Argentine citizens and there can be no future for her and her Unitarian lover. Whilst the love stories of La Pulpera de Santa Lucía and La Mazorquera de Monserrat can be seen as re-writings of Mármol's doomed love story with an added racial element, there are no antecedents of La Federala and La Guitarrera. With these two characters

Blomberg satisfies his preoccupation with recognising the Afro-Argentines as protagonists of the Rosas era and creates new models of Afro-Argentine womanhood which he can then subvert.

Afro-*Porteñas* and The Spy Network

That the black population spied for Rosas and that his sister-in-law María Josefa controlled a network of Afro-Argentine and indigenous spies, mostly female and working as domestic servants, is one of the key tenets of the Generation of 1837's condemnatory stance on these sectors of society. In Facundo Sarmiento states: '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' (1990: 334). According to Amalia, black women made the more effective spies: 'Los negros, pero con especialidad las mujeres de ese color, fueron los principales órganos de delación que tuvo Rosas' (Mármol 1971: 365). In Amalia, María Josefa holds audiences at her house during which the spies report to her. Her spies are willing accomplices, such as the 'negrita' working at a pulpería which backs onto Amalia's gardens and who denounces her to María Josefa as a Unitarian on the basis that she has seen her wearing a 'vestido celeste' and playing a suspected 'canción de Lavalle' (195-96). Blomberg knowingly inserts his work into a trajectory of literary representations of the Rosas era and in his note to the 1938 edition of his collection of Rosas-era stories pays homage to 'la inmortal "Amalia", obra maestra en la que se inspiraron los escritores de novelas históricas durante tres cuartos de siglo' (1938: 6). Blomberg also lists some of the many novels of the 1850s

inspired by Amalia but dismisses them all as 'mediocres, cuando no muy malas' (6). A writer of whom Blomberg clearly does approve, however, is Eduardo Gutiérrez who published between 1881 and 1892 a series of five novelas por entregas set in the Rosas era and collectively entitled Los dramas del terror.[19]By the time that Gutiérrez was producing his serialised novels, attitudes to race had become influenced by positivist thought. The somewhat ambivalent stance on race taken by the Generation of 1837 was shifting towards biological determinism.[20] When Gutiérrez's Rosas-era novelas folletines were republished in 1932 and renamed as Los dramas de la tiranía, a eugenicist discourse was increasingly prevalentBlomberg's focus on race, as opposed to the class-based preoccupations of Amalia, reflects the increased attention such discourses were receiving by the 1930s.

In Blomberg's article for La Nación, published on the fiftieth anniversary of Gutiérrez's death, Blomberg writes about the enduring popularity of Gutiérrez's novelas por entregas (1939). In Blomberg's note to a different collection of short stories he cites Paul Groussac's play La divisa punzó as first inspiring him to look at the Rosas era (1937: vii). This 1923 play opens with an Afro-porteña servant passing on information about a meeting of Unitarian conspirators held at her master's house to an Afro-porteño pastry seller who reports to the police (1923: 3) The short story La Mulata del Restaurador (1932) draws on all of these influences when making reference to María Josefa's spy network.The barber Florencio was a loyal Federalist until his father and brother were killed by a mazorquero. The comments he makes regarding his conversion to the Unitarian cause reveals the demonstrations of loyalty expected of a Federalist Afro-Argentine: '¡Cómo la odio a la Santa Federación! Yo, que tantos servicios le he prestado, sangrando unitarios hasta hacerlos morir, descubriendo sus escondites a las pardas de doña María Josefa …' (Blomberg 1938:

[19] Gutiérrez's most well-known work is Juan Moreira as the Podestá brothers' version of this considered as having founded Argentine theatre. In 1880 Gutiérrez published Juan Cuello and Blomberg wrote a serialised radio drama based on this in 1941.

[20] Works which reflect and influenced this trend include Sarmiento's Conflicto y armonías de las razas en América (1883) and Carlos Octavio Bunge's Nuestra América (1903).

19). His Unitarian client Martín Pizarro reassures his friend Pancho Molina that they can speak freely in front of Florencio: 'Este pardito no es espia, como casi todos los de su clase' (30). Blomberg's spies differ from their prototypes in Amalia as they transfer their loyalty to their Unitarian masters. Another difference is the addition of the character Tía Federación, an intermediary between María Josefa and the spies and who does not feature in Amalia.

In La Mulata de Restaurador, Florencio's girlfriend Isabel is removed from her employer by 'la negra Joaquina, esa a quien llaman la tía Federación' (32) and placed with the Mantilla family. Isabel is of indigenous rather than African descent and is described as a 'china' with 'cara pampa, ojos grandes, labios gruesos' in the police report filed by her employer in an attempt to find her (19). Pizarro is betrothed to Angelita Mantilla (both white Unitarians) and he sends Florencio to Tía Federación to find out the extent of suspicion on the Mantilla family (46). As she counts the coins Florencio has given her for this information, ostensibly to buy shawls, we are told: 'Los ojos perversos se dulcificaron. Ya tenía para una semana de caña' (46). Isabel provokes Tía Federación's wrath by failing to deliver proof of the Mantilla's Unitarian associations: '¡Pampita de mandinga! Le voy a abrir los ojos con unos cuantos azotes … ' (46). María Josefa's role in the proceedings is confirmed by Pizarro who remarks of Tía Federación: 'Esa negra bruja del mercado, la que hace espiar a las familias sospechadas de unitarias por medio de las mulatillas, y se lo cuenta todo a la cuñada del Restaurador' (32). Isabel is allied to the Unitarian cause through her relationship with Florencio. At the behest of Pizarro, Florencio instructs her to report that the letters the household receives from the absent father and brother come from the South and not Montevideo (47). As Isabel proves to be of little use to the Federation, she is easily dispatched back to the Pampas as part of Rosas's treaty with the Indians. Her despair at such a fate underlines how she has been transformed by the Christian values inculcated in her by her former employer, Francisco Tagle: 'Yo ya no soy india, soy Cristiana … Yo quiero

quedarme aquí, con los cristianos buenos, y rezarle a Dios y a la Virgen María' (71). Tagle protests that it is a crime against society and religion 'que se le devuelva a la vida salvaje de estos bárbaros, sucios, crueles y traidores …' (71). As Blomberg places such emphasis on the black population and has so many Afro-Argentine protagonists, it is curious that he chooses to make Isabel indigenous. Even though historically Rosas led campaigns against the indigenous population, in this story his Federation is linked to yet another sector of the population which the Generation of 1837 consider barbarous.[21] In this story the Unitarian cause is shown to be on the side of civilisation and Christianity, fighting against barbarism and savagery of the Federalist regime.

In Bajo la Santa Federación, Tía Federación, the 'lechuza agorera de la causa federal', cuts a sinister figure and holds a position of significant power within the regime: 'Yo dentro hasta en casa de Rosas, y sin que nadie me ataje' (Blomberg and Viale Paz 1934: Part 1, Romance XXI). Tía Federación introduces her distant relative Gabriela to María Josefa who places her in the Miranda household as María del Carmen's love for the Unitarian Daniel has placed this Federalist family under suspicion. Gabriela is instructed to spy on the family and María Josefa warns her: 'Yo sabré recompensarte si sirves a nuestra causa … Y si no …' (III). Dolores, the mistress of the house, is aware of María Josefa's motives for bringing Gabriela to her and remarks: 'A estas mulatitas les gusta más enterarse de lo que pasa en la casa que barrerla' (XXI). Gabriela initially attempts to elicit information for María Josefa by befriending the Miranda family's other black servant, Domingo, and asking him questions about the family. When he unwittingly tells her that when Daniel comes to visit María del Carmen he is never wearing the Federalist insignia, Gabriela, in a clear reference to María Josefa, says to herself '¡Qué dato pa mi patrona en la calle Potosí!' (IV). Over time, however, Gabriela switches her loyalties to María del Carmen, even helping to hide Daniel

[21] See Rotker 1999 on the place of the indigenous population for both the Generation of 1837 and Rosas.

when he arrives wounded by the Mazorca (V). When she fails to divulge any information she pleads to María Josefa: 'No sé nada, su mercé … ¡Ay, no me pellizque tanto!' (XII).

With the inclusion of Tía Federación, Blomberg takes his inspiration from Eduardo Gutiérrez. The character Tía Joaquina or Tía Federación appears in Gutiérrez's Viva la Santa Federación. This old black woman is María Josefa's 'espía ambulante' and most valuable ally, gathering information from her daughters and nieces whom María Josefa has placed in domestic service. One of Tía Joaquina's nieces, Luisa, referred to as 'una negrilla', works for the Unitarian Manterola family. She has no intention of denouncing her masters but María Josefa tells Luisa that if she passes on information: 'yo sabré recompensártelo' and warns her of the consequences if she fails todo so: 'De otro modo ya sabes que en mi mano hay poderosos medios de castigo contra los que tratan de engañarme' (Gutiérrez 1932: 28). The young servants Isabel, Gabriela and Luisa are very different from the numerous, and mostly nameless people of African and indigenous descent who willingly spy for María Josefa in Amalia. Gutiérrez's and Blomberg's servants are violently coerced into spying but despite the threats they receive are motivated to serve the greater good of the Unitarian cause. That they can be swayed over to the side of the Unitarians despite their races' supposed natural affinity with the barbarous Rosas regime only serves to demonstrate the righteousness of Rosas's political opposition. The inclusion of the Tía Federación character offsets this positive representation, however, and she becomes the face of the regime's fiercely loyal black women. Whilst María Josefa receives harsh treatment in Amalia, this is exacerbated through her relationship with Tía Federación in Gutiérrez's and Blomberg's work.

Conclusion

The whitening policies advocated by the Generation of 1837 contributed to the reduction in Argentina's black population. The official end of the slave trade in 1813, the enlistment of black men to fight in the wars against the indigenous population and in

Paraguay, the low birth rates and high mortality rates of Afro-porteños due to their poor living conditions and the yellow fever epidemic of 1871 are all factors in the dramatic decline of the black population (Reid Andrews 1980: 4-5). During the 1880s, the decade of the 'aluvión inmigratorio', the already dwindling black population was swamped by the sheer numbers of immigrants arriving to the country. Inter-racial relationships were common as most of the immigrants were single men and there was a corresponding shortage of black men due to their army enlistment. Stepan states that by 1918, 'Argentina seemed to many Latin Americans to be the only country that had realized its elites' old dream of racial transformation by whitening and Europeanization' (1991: 139). The Argentine Eugenics Society had been founded in 1918 and in 1932 the Asociación Argentina de Biotipología, Eugenesia y Medicina Social was created (Stepan 1991: 58-59). The immigrants' failure to integrate was considered a threat to Argentine national identity and the eugenicists of the 1930s identified this additional danger to the 'biological unity' of the Argentine people (Stepan 1991: 140). In this way there is a link between the Generation of 1837 and the eugenicists of a hundred years later: whilst the Generation of 1837 advocated immigration in the presence of the black, indigenous and gaucho populations, the eugenicists of the década infame considered the consequences of immigration in the increasing absence of the black, indigenous and gaucho populations.

In the 1930s, Blomberg revisited the Rosas era and placed far more emphasis on the black population than had been seen in Amalia. In the play La Mulata del Restaurador, for example, race is foregrounded in the list of characters:

> AVELINA, 42 años, de color subido, madre de
> PAULINA, 21 años, mulata bonita, hermanastra de
> TRANSITO, 20 años, algo más blanca. (1932: 2)

This graduation of race is more detailed even than nineteenth-century census statistics which divided the black population into the categories 'moreno' and 'pardo' (Reid Andrews 1980:

69).[22] The 'mulata' of the title, Paulina, has no relationship with Rosas and the title serves only to reaffirm the link between Rosas and the black population. As with Blomberg's other historical romances, this detailing of racial heritage is included in order to immerse the 1930s audience in the spirit of the Rosas era at a time when the black population is increasingly less visible. Reid Andrews challenges the widely held belief that the black population of Buenos Aires disappeared altogether. Instead he argues that the Afro-Argentines disappeared from view as they became 'invisible in the city's ethnic mix' but that they 'continued to exist as an active and identifiable ethnic entity in the city' into the twentieth century (1980: 178). Indeed, Enrique Maciel (1897–1962), the composer who wrote the music for La Pulpera de Santa Lucía and La Mazorquera de Monserrat, was Afro-Argentine. That he was known as 'El Negro' fits into a tradition of giving Afro-Argentine musicians and composers such names and does not necessarily suggest that his African origin was unique or unusual amongst his peers in the music industry (Cirio 2010: n. pag). Matthew B. Karush argues that music was one sphere in which there was room for positive representations of Afro-Argentines as they were recognised 'as legitimate and often expert practitioners of tango' (2012: 223). Nevertheless, the Afro-Argentine did not receive the same redemptive treatment as the gaucho, also condemned by the Generation of 1837 for his association with Rosas. As the numbers of nomadic gauchos declined, this figure no longer posed a threat to the liberal concept of nationhood and was co-opted by the liberal state to combat the new threat from the influx of undesirable immigrants.[23] Thus the gaucho made the transition from undesirable vagabond to symbol of Argentine national identity even during the dominance of liberal 'official' history prior to 1930. As Amy Kaminsky argues, the gaucho as 'national hero' has the African component of his ethnic identity extirpated to be remembered as the son of a

[22] According to Reid Andrews, 'moreno' came to replace 'negro' in the late colonial period as the term used to describe those of full African descent and at the same time, 'pardo' replaced 'mulato' to distinguish Afro-Argentines of mixed racial ancestry (1980: 8-9).

[23] For an illuminating discussion of this process and in particular n the interactions between Martín Fierro, Juan Moreira and immigration see Prieto 1988.

Spanish father and Indian mother (2008: 116). The influence of the Generation of 1837's portrayal of the black population can be seen even in the work of the historical revisionists of the 1930s. For example Ibarguren talks of 'fétidos candombés' and makes reference to the black spy network even as he seeks to challenge the liberal portrayal of Rosas (1930: 361). Blomberg's historical romances build upon the cultural memory of Rosas as tyrant and for his Afro-Argentine protagonists who challenge the liberal condemnation of this population there is always a price to pay. Self-sacrifice is praised as Afro-porteñas are not deemed to be suitable producers of future Argentine citizens and must step aside for their white counterparts. Ultimately, the loves, losses, transgressions and virtues of the Afro-porteñas are subordinated to the need to prove the righteousness of the Unitarian cause. Despite the precedence given to Afro-Argentine characters, even the Mazorquera de Monserrat and the Mulata del Restaurador are not the real protagonists of their own dramas.

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