CHAPTER SIX

Passion and Patriarchy in Nineteenth-Century Argentina

María Luisa Bemberg's *Camila*

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Camila *(1984); produced by Lita Stantic; directed by María Luisa Bemberg; written by Maria Luisa Bemberg, Beda Docampo Feijoo, and Juan Batista Stagnaro; color; 105 minutes; GEA Cinematográfica. In nineteenth-century Argentina, Camila O'Gorman (Sitsu Pecoraro), the strongwilled and romantic daughter in a prominent and wealthy family, shocks her father (Hector Alterio), the Church, and the government by eloping with a priest (Imanol Arias).*

Maria Luisa Bemberg's feature film *Camila* is a vivid and provocative introduction to nineteenth-century Argentine history. Based on the true story of Camila O'Gorman, a young woman from a wealthy family who eloped with a Catholic priest named Ladislao Gutiérrez, the film is both a splendid evocation and a pointed criticism of Argentine culture during the Federalist dictatorship of Juan Manuel de Rosas (1829-1852). Intense internecine conflicts between Unitarians and Federalists provide the background for a brilliant illustration of the connections between patriarchal power in the family, the state, and the church. Bemberg's film is faithful to the style of the period in many of its details as it brings a feminist perspective to the struggle between patriarchy and passion.

Bemberg's denunciation of terrorism and patriarchal authority resonated strongly with an Argentine population just emerging from the brutal tyranny of a military dictatorship. *Camila* was a sensational success, attracting some of the largest audiences in the history of Argentine filmmaking.[1] It achieved international acclaim as well, including an Oscar nomination for best foreign film.

Unlike most newly acclaimed filmmakers, Bemberg was neither male nor relatively young; *Camila* was released when she was sixty-two. Born into a wealthy Argentine family descended from nineteenth-century German Catholic immigrants, young Maria Luisa was raised in material comfort but suffered the constraints of social propriety and intellectual stultification. Married at the age of twenty, she gave birth to four children before separating from her husband ten years later. Although divorce was not legal in Argentina at that time, Bemberg was able to reclaim her own name and raise her children with the cooperation of her husband. She

found an understanding of her situation in feminist literature, particularly the works of Betty Friedan and Simone de Beauvoir. Although her efforts to form feminist groups were stifled by a series of military governments, after years of resentment and bitterness her creativity gradually emerged.[2]

Bemberg waited until she had finished raising her children before she turned her attention to making films. Then, she began with a clear vision. She knew that she must tell women's stories from their own point of view, "a bit like a promise to my own gender," in her words. The year she turned fifty, Bemberg directed her first film, a documentary entitled *El Mundo de Mujeres,* and wrote her first feature-length script. Having burst the bounds of traditional family roles, she continued to face the constraints of censorship by the military governments of the 1970s as she developed her craft with a series of scripts and films.[3]

Bemberg's feminism and her focus on Camila as the protagonist provide a distinct perspective. "If a man had directed 'Camila,' I'm sure it would have been a story of a gentle innocent seduced by a libertine priest. My story is about a passionate woman's intellectual and sexual seduction of a man she found morally desirable," she said. In Bemberg's version of the story, Camila is an assertive woman who knows what she wants: passionate love for a man she can be proud of, even if that means defying her father and social conventions. As Bemberg explained, "Camila was a transgressor, she broke the received pattern of Argentine, not to mention feminine, decorum. Not only did she enjoy a love affair with her priest, but her actions fought the paternalistic order—another triangle— of family, church and state."[4]

As it happened, Bemberg's own family opposed her plans to film Camila's story, but they could not stop her. In fact, it was her inheritance that made it possible for her to make movies. Bemberg began filming *Camila* (based on a script that she had cowritten) on the day after Raul Alfonsfn took power as Argentina's first democratically elected president in eight years. Fortunately for Bemberg, one of Alfonsfn's first actions was to eliminate state censorship. Bemberg believed that the previous military regime would never have permitted her to make this film because of opposition from the Catholic Church. In 1912 a short film had been made about the affair of Camila and Ladislao, but every director since then had been forbidden to tell their story.[5]

In the absence of official censorship, the Church could create obstacles, such as preventing Bemberg from using a particular sanctuary she preferred, but ecclesiastical authority was no longer able to block the project. Bemberg's own internalized intellectual restraints had a larger effect on the film. Despite her feminism and the breakup of her marriage, Bemberg had not abandoned Roman

Catholicism. She believed it helped her with the Church that, in her version of the story, the priest was the pure one, seduced by the romantic Camila. Before she began filming, she voluntarily showed her script to her confessor, who found it acceptable.[6]

Bemberg filmed *Camila* in what she acknowledged to be "a highly romantic style," the better to affect audiences emotionally and viscerally. "Melodrama is a very tricky genre, because at any minute it can turn into something sentimental, which I detest. So it had all those little tricks, such as the handkerchief, the gold coin, the priest who's sick with love, and the thunder when God gets angry. They're all like winks at the audience."[7] When Camila first touches Ladislao during a game of blindman's buff, three dowagers shake their heads in disapproval, a foreshadowing of the social condemnation that will confront their more intimate relationship later. The next time they touch, when Ladislao has succumbed to one of those Bronte-esque fevers that used to result from forbidden passions in romantic novels, even Camila is shocked at first by his carnality.

Vincent Canby described the film as "austere and unsentimental" and recognized that it used "the gestures and mannerisms of romantic fiction for distinctly unromantic ends." Some reviewers, particularly those from conservative perspectives in the *Chicago Tribune,* the *Washington Post,* and the *National Review,* did not recognize her irony and took these allusions for cliches. John Simon, in his generally critical review, recognized that he was limited by his lack of historical perspective. How far did Bemberg's film go beyond what Simon called "mere factual reportage"?[8] What do we really know about the historical Camila?

During a game of blindman's buff. . .

The film begins with the arrival of Camila's lovesick and demented grandmother, who has been condemned to house arrest as the result of a scandalous, and treasonous, affair with the royalist interim viceroy, Santiago de Liniers. The grandmother, known as "La Perichona," is played by Mona Maris, an Argentine star of fiftyeight Latin American, European, and Hollywood films from the 1920s to the 1940s.[9] Ana Maria Perichon de Vandeuil married Camila's grandfather, Michael O'Gorman, who was a native of Ireland, born in county Clare. He was educated in France and arrived in Argentina as a physician in the entourage of Viceroy Juan Jose de Vertiz y Salcedo. A prominent figure in Enlightenment Argentina, Dr. O'Gorman introduced medical innovations such as smallpox vaccinations and opened insane asylums. He helped to found the Promedicato in 1780 and the Medical School in 1801. Dr. O'Gorman organized medical services for the military forces fighting for independence from Spain after May 25, 1810; he continued in that role until his death ten years later.

Adolfo O'Gorman y Perichon Vandeuil, Camila's father, was the second of their two sons. He married Joaquina Ximenes Pinto. Camila was the fifth of their six children, named (in order) Carlos, Carmen, Enrique, Clara, Camila, and Eduardo.[10] The older sons, Carlos and Enrique, do not appear and are never mentioned in

Bemberg's film. The brothers' absence may be sensed by historians who will wonder why an elite family would apparently send its only male heir, Eduardo, into the priesthood. Who would inherit the wealth that had been so diligently accumulated? Although the film portrays the patriarchal structure of society and the family, it ignores the role of this same power in planning the family's future by shaping the lives of sons as well as daughters. Choice of career was not an individual decision. Fathers and extended family, rather than children alone, made the crucial decisions about access to the family's accumulated capital and whether or not to pursue specialized training for a career in the military, medicine, law, or the Church. Surplus sons who might only weaken the family's patrimony were frequently sent into the Church, but rarely would the perpetual celibacy demanded of priests have been an acceptable option for a sole male heir. The patriarchal tradition required sons to carry on the family name.

The same structure of patriarchal power would have shaped the career path of Ladislao Gutierrez, a nephew of the governor of Tucuman, Celedonio Gutierrez. As the son of one of that province's wealthiest and most politically powerful families, Ladislao also would have had limited options for a career. Older brothers would inherit the family's land and wealth. Younger sons might make a career of the military or the Church. Because the Gutierrez family was well connected politically, we may assume that the decision was not Ladislao's alone. Might the preference for the Church over a career in the military indicate a passive and pensive rather than an active and aggressive nature, or even an ethical opposition to killing, as Bemberg suggests? That question is hard to answer; because the focus of dramatic and historical attention has always been on Camila, little has been published about Ladislao Gutierrez and his family.

Nevertheless, his uncle's political connections certainly led to a speedy advance once the decision had been made. Ladislao arrived in Buenos Aires at the age of twenty-three with letters of introduction from his uncle to Governor Juan Manuel de Rosas, the bishop, and to prominent families such as the O'Gormans. He was sheltered for a time in the home of the secretary general of the curate, Dr. Felipe Elortondo y Palacios (who later, after the scandal broke, wrote a long, obsequious apology to Rosas explaining the reasons for and exact extent of his aid to the young priest)."

Although Bemberg portrays Ladislao as a Jesuit, we know that he was certainly not a member of that order. Governor Rosas always had enjoyed great support from both the clerical hierarchy and the parish priests. Portraits of the governor adorned churches all over the province and were typically placed on the altar itself.

Priests were outspoken in support of the "Holy Federal Cause" and denounced Rosas's foes as liberal enemies of religion. When Rosas invited the Society of Jesus to return to Argentina in 1836, some seventy years after they were expelled by Spanish monarch Charles III, he expected their support as well.

The Society of Jesus, however, had a different point of view. After their expulsion from the Spanish empire, the Jesuits had avoided political entanglements, but Rosas demanded that they demonstrate their support of his regime. He was first disappointed, then furious, to find that they insisted on remaining neutral. Although there is no evidence to support his accusations that the Jesuits were subversive or organizing treason, Rosas accused them of being pro-Unitarian on the grounds that they would not submit to the use of their schools and churches for pro-Federal propaganda. He decreed their expulsion from the Province of Buenos Aires in 1843 (four years before Ladislao arrived in the city) and arranged with the governors of other provinces to expel them from all Argentine territory in the following years.[12] Although the cinematic Ladislao attracts the admiration of Bemberg's Camila with his courageous sermon attacking tyranny and asserting the love of God for all men, the situation is purely imaginary. Rosas would not have ignored an outspoken opponent of his regime. His hired assassins would have acted quickly on orders to silence such a person permanently.

The courtship of Camila and Ladislao probably took a more conventional course. Camila later described to Antonino Reyes, her jailer, how Ladislao had taken his priestly vows against his own will and that, in their view, these vows were invalid as a result. Given that society would not allow them to marry, Ladislao told her, he would take Camila for his partner before God. He visited her every day, gave her gifts, and accompanied her on horseback rides through the forest of Palermo, near Rosas's palace. Camila began spending all her time in the parish church to be near him. "If something was whispered about what the public or the neighbors presumed about this association, no one dared to denounce their relationship as a fact nor was an accusation of dishonor made."[13]

Although many authors have speculated on the timing, we do not know why Camila and Ladislao chose to flee on December 12, 1847, at the beginning of the Argentine summer. All of the documentation makes it clear that they fled at night and on horseback. Bemberg makes one of her few minor missteps when she has the pair flee in the middle of the afternoon siesta in a coach. Although the choice of that mode of transportation makes it possible for Bemberg to film the lovers passionately embracing during their flight, a black coach with the shades drawn on a summer afternoon would undoubtedly have been unbearably hot.

More important, the young lovers could not have afforded to bribe into secrecy the driver, who would be a witness to their flight. Although the Unitarians accused Ladislao of stealing from the parish church and absconding with funds borrowed from the clergy, the lovers probably had little money to hire so luxurious a means of escape.

It is important to remember that Camila told this story to her jailer. Was she trying to reduce her responsibility and mitigate the circumstances? What do we know of her character? Bemberg portrays Camila as strong-willed and romantic, the instigator of the romance rather than Ladislao's pliable victim. Reyes tells us that when Camila and Ladislao were brought to the military prison at Santos Lugares, she appeared worn and disheveled but spoke with ease and simplicity. She announced immediately that she was ill and needed a doctor. Uncovering and distending her abdomen, she said, "Can't you see my condition?" She asked for food but not the meals that were prepared for prisoners. Reyes promised to give her the same food that was served to him. She asked what the governor would do and if he was very angry, and she mentioned her friendship with Rosas's daughter, Manuelita. Reyes advised her not to repeat to anyone else what she had told him about the course of the courtship. He recommended that, while maintaining this discreet silence, Camila rely on the reputation of her sex for weakness and beg Rosas for clemency. Clearly, Reyes believed during the course of his interview with Camila that she was not telling him a story or displaying the appropriate sort of feminine subordination that was likely to save her life.[14]

Camila's character showed in another way as well. Reyes was reluctant to carry out his orders to keep Camila and Ladislao shackled. He looked for the lightest leg irons in the prison and lined them with cloth before complying. Camila accepted her chains, indicating with assurance and affection tinged with a certain defiance that she would endure that punishment with pleasure, the more so since Ladislao was shackled, too.[15]

Camila does appear to have been willful and a true romantic in love with Ladislao. Does this mean that her father was vindictive? Bemberg portrays him as what one reviewer called the original "Pampas ass."[16] In one of the film's first scenes, Camila worries that her father will kill the litter of new kittens she has found, and he does. He keeps his own mother imprisoned in a tower and tries to prevent Camila from visiting her. When Camila and Ladislao flee, Eduardo finds him in the countryside in gaucho costume supervising the decapitation and evisceration of cattle. He reacts violently to the news, striking his son. On returning to Buenos Aires, he immediately writes to the governor, denouncing their

flight as "the most atrocious act ever heard of in this country." This phrase is a direct quotation from a letter that Camila's father actually wrote to Rosas in the days after the lovers had fled from Buenos Aires.[17] (See text at end of chapter.)

Camila's father, dressed in traditional clothing, supervises the slaughter and evisceration of cattle.

When read carefully, though, a different Adolfo O'Gorman emerges from between the lines, a more appropriate paterfamilias who was less menacing and more sympathetic to Camila. His letter shows him to be a father attempting to salvage his daughter's and, if possible, his own reputation. He would not have regarded these objectives as separable. He could not uphold his family's honor without rescuing his daughter.

The letter is dated December 21, 1847, nine days after Camila and Ladislao disappeared. Even if he was not told that Camila was missing for the first four days (until December 16, as he says in the second paragraph) because he was away on his estancia, Adolfo still waited another five days before informing the authorities. No doubt, he hoped that his daughter would return or could be found, that the matter could be hushed up. In the absence of public scandal, his family's reputation would remain intact. Apparently it was not possible to maintain secrecy. Julio Llanos, who was among the first to publish many of the letters that the film quotes, suggests that Adolfo only wrote his letter after the governor had already learned of the scandal from his own daughter, Manuelita.[18] It is also possible that the news spread from the family's servants. Bemberg portrays the household staff as stereotypically ignorant but affectionate and loyal flunkies. In contrast, the historian John Lynch reports that Rosas was popular among the large population of former slaves and that the governor encouraged them to spy on their masters for him.[19]

In his letter, Adolfo clearly denounced Ladislao as the

perpetrator of a crime against his daughter and his family. He describes the priest's infraction as the seduction of his daughter "under the guise of religion." Ladislao "stole her away." All of his sentences accuse Ladislao alone, referring to "the preparations he has made," "he is heading inland," "he will cross into Bolivia," "he will not feel secure in the Argentine Republic." Adolfo portrays his daughter as a passive victim and fears that she will grow to accept her captivity. He asks Rosas to send out descriptions of the pair "in every direction to prevent that this poor wretch finds herself reduced to despair, and, understanding that she is lost, she may rush headlong into infamy."

Adolfo keeps Ladislao at a distance, referring to him as "the male individual." He describes his daughter as "the girl" and refers to her as "my youngest daughter," but it is significant that he never divulges her name. In writing about the fugitive lovers in this way, Adolfo was suggesting that his daughter's and his family's name could be kept from the public, that Camila could return home without public humiliation. He wrote, as one father to another, with the expectation that Rosas would be able to remedy the situation. Still hoping that the case might be kept from public knowledge, he describes his family as submerged in desolation and joined in begging Rosas to protect them. Adolfo O'Gorman was fulfilling his role as a familial patriarch. As the head of his family, O'Gorman has tried to protect his daughter from Ladislao. When he fails, O'Gorman appeals to the more powerful father figure, Governor Rosas, to protect both his daughter and his family. Camila's father describes her as a passive victim; he does not denounce and condemn her.

Bemberg also incorporates into her script phrases from a letter written a few days later by the bishop of Buenos Aires, although through juxtaposition and sequencing she implies that it was written prior to or simultaneously with Adolfo's letter. Unlike Adolfo O'Gorman, the bishop did condemn both Ladislao and Camila as "miserables, desgraciados, y infelices." The bishop also specifically named Ladislao Gutierrez. Like Camila's father, he did not divulge her identity, referring to her only as "a young woman from a distinguished family."[20]

The bishop dictates his letter denouncing the fugitive lovers. Note one of the film's many portraits of Rosas in the central background.

If Adolfo had hoped to avoid a public scandal, he was severely disappointed. The descriptions that Rosas sent to all corners of the Argentine Republic contained not only physical descriptions of the fugitives but their real names as well. By deliberately publicizing their true identities, Rosas advertised the disgrace of the O'Gorman family. Adolfo must have felt the rejection of his private plea as the public repudiation that Rosas intended it to be. It was Rosas who ensured the dishonor of his family, not Camila and Ladislao's actions or Adolfo's letter alone.

It was not until after Rosas publicly divulged the scandal that his enemies used it to attack him. Valentin Alsina, an Argentine exiled in Montevideo, Uruguay, for his opposition to the Rosas dictatorship, published reports in his newspaper, *El Comercio de la Plata,* which brought the scandal international attention. His paper claimed that the Church was only distressed because Canonigo Palacios had loaned an ounce of gold to Ladislao, which he had used to finance their escape. *El Comercio* denounced Rosas for making light of the situation. At Rosas's home at Palermo, "they speak of all this as *something amusing,* since there they use *a free federal* language." Meanwhile, *El Comercio* reported that a nephew of Rosas had attempted to follow Ladislao's lead by kidnapping a young woman from another family, but was prevented in time. The lessons learned at Palermo could not be otherwise, *El Comercio* claimed, because "the examples seen there and the conversations heard there can bear no other fruits."[21] These examples demonstrate how the flight of Camila and Ladislao was interpreted as a scandal within the traditional patriarchal framework—that is, Alsina and the others did not assert the rights of children to pursue relationships based on their emotions. Rather, they castigated Rosas for his failure to control his

subordinates, both in his own family and in the larger society.

As early as January 4, 1848, *El Comercio* denounced the crime of Ladislao in these words: "Is there on earth a sufficiently severe punishment for a man who behaves this way with a woman whose dishonor he cannot repair by marrying her?"[22] Clearly, if Ladislao were not a priest and were able to marry Camila, her family would suffer no disgrace. Ann Twinam has examined hundreds of cases where illicit sexual relations and even pregnancy out of wedlock could be prevented from damaging a family's honor, as long as the circumstances were kept from public knowledge.[23] In the understanding of the time, Camila and her family were both victims of a crime perpetrated by the degenerate priest, Ladislao Gutierrez. Adolfo O'Gorman had failed to protect his daughter. The Church had failed to control its priest. Rosas had failed to prevent the breakdown of hierarchy and subordination. The patriarchal system was exposed as a failure. Within this system, Ladislao's crime is clear enough, but what about Camila? How did she come to be executed as well? Manuel Bilbao concludes, "For Rosas, the true crime of Gutierrez and Camila was to have mocked his authority, and to have appeared to defy him in the eyes of society."[24]

In the Province of Buenos Aires, Rosas's word was law. There was no other authority, no balance of power, no source of appeal. In 1835 the provincial House of Representatives had voted to give Rosas unlimited power to make and enforce order for a term of five years. He preferred to maintain a pretense of constitutionalism and periodically offered his resignation, but it was only a charade. Woe to anyone who might consider accepting his offer to resign! His minions in the legislature repeatedly begged him to extend his term of unlimited power. Rosas was seriously challenged only during a brief period in 1839-40 when he used his control of the military and organized bands of assassins to murder anyone who appeared to question his authority. During the rest of his tenure as governor of the Province of Buenos Aires, Rosas used terror more sparingly. He manipulated the House of Representatives, controlled the bureaucracy, and dominated the judiciary. He took a personal interest in a variety of cases, personally examining the evidence and making judgments himself. Lynch describes Rosas as sitting alone at his desk "writing on the files 'shoot him', 'fine him', 'imprison him', 'to the army.' "[25]

The political justification for Rosas's power was classically Hobbesian. Anarchy was the only alternative; only a savage would oppose "The Restorer of Laws." Rosas used symbols and language to terrorize and control the population. It was not enough to accept his rule. Everyone had to be an enthusiastic supporter.

Rosas demanded obvious and increasing displays of subordination. At first, he revived the use of the heading "Viva la federacion" at the top of all official documents. In 1842 he ordered it to be changed to "j Viva la Confederacion Argentina!" and added the more bloodthirsty "Death to the Savage Unitarians!" The slogan was repeated constantly. Night watchmen called out "Death to the savage Unitarians!" before announcing the time each half hour. Supporters tried to outdo one another in their ferocious denunciations of their enemies. Lynch cites this example from a joint decree of a justice of the peace and a priest: "Stupid fools,. .. the angry people will hunt you through the streets, in your houses and in the fields; they will cut you down by the necks and [make] a deep pool of your blood for patriots to bathe in and cool their rage."[26]

Rosas restored the red emblem as "a sign of fidelity to the cause of order, tranquillity and well-being among the people of this land under the Federal system, as a proof and public acknowledgment of the triumph of this sacred cause in the whole republic and a mark of confraternity between Argentines." The governor initially demanded that persons in certain specific occupations and positions wear a red emblem bearing the words "Federation or Death" on the left side of their chests. Included among them were militia and army officers, everyone who received a salary from public funds whether government officials, laymen, or priests, professors and students as well as practitioners of law and medicine, and finally "all those who even though they do not receive a salary from the state are regarded as public servants." Eventually everyone was expected to conform, and the Federalist style was extended to other aspects of their appearance. Women as well began to pin the red emblem on their dresses and used only red ribbons in their hair. Men wore red hatbands, waistcoats and jackets, long sideburns, and mustaches. The wrong sort of facial hair was sufficient evidence of political unreliability. One wonders whether Adolfo O'Gorman's description of Ladislao Gutierrez as having a full beard might bear this sort of symbolic weight. Houses, doors, and furnishings were red. Pale blue and green virtually disappeared from Buenos Aires. This chromatic conformity was not voluntary. It was enforced by gangs of thugs who broke into private homes to destroy property in the offending colors.[27]

Rosas permitted nothing less than complete deference and obedience. As Lynch put it, " 'Subordination' was his favorite word, authority his ideal, order his achievement."[28] Exemplary punishment could be meted out to those who defied him. When, in the film, the severed head of Mariano the bookseller appears on the fence outside the parish church, the fiance of Camila's sister

Clara repeats a saying attributed to Rosas that twenty drops of blood shed at the proper moment may prevent the need to spill twenty thousand more. These were Rosas's sentiments.[29] The executions of Camila and Ladislao were meant to warn others not to keep secrets from him, not to doubt patriarchal authority, and not to accept passion as an acceptable guide to choosing a mate. It was a struggle to control children that even in Rosas's own time was being lost, as Mark Szuchman has so ably demonstrated.[30]

Bemberg's film insinuates that all patriarchs were, like Rosas, monstrous. The governor remains in the shadows in the film, behind the omnipresent portraits, the universal red ribbons, and the pervasive atmosphere of menace and terror. His flesh may be absent, but his spirit inhabits the body of Camila's father. Later in the film, Adolfo is confronted by his wife and son, who beg him to intercede with Rosas to save his daughter's life. He refuses. He replies bitterly that a daughter who betrays her father does not deserve forgiveness. He is certain that she is not repentant. We have no way of knowing whether this conversation or another like it ever took place.[31] Many people were horrified by what they perceived as a grave injustice, and the execution of Camila played a role in undermining support for the Rosas dictatorship. Even loyal followers such as Antonino Reyes, the jailer who continued to support Rosas even after he was overthrown, regarded the executions as a terrible mistake.

The fact that Camila was a friend of Rosas's own daughter does not enter into Bemberg's film. Manuelita did in fact enjoy a reputation as the "last hope or the unfortunate," and documentation suggests that she did intercede with her father on Camila's behalf but to no avail. Rosas later claimed, "No one advised me to execute the priest Gutierrez and Camila O'Gorman, nor did anyone speak to me on their behalf." This assertion was clearly not the case. Rosas contradicted himself in the next sentence, with the admission, "On the contrary, all the leading members of the clergy spoke or wrote to me about this insolent crime and the urgent necessity to make an exemplary punishment to prevent similar scandals in the future."[32] Reyes did write a last-minute letter to Manuelita trying to save Camila's life, but Rosas replied that the execution should be carried out the following morning. In addition, he demanded that the prison be surrounded by armed guards and that no one be allowed to enter or leave until the sentence had been carried out. These extraordinary orders indicate that Rosas expected some difficulty in ensuring that the executions would take place in a timely manner."

The Unitarians and other enemies of the dictatorship had taken advantage of the scandal early in 1848, publicly attempting to

humiliate Rosas while demanding exemplary punishment for Ladislao Gutierrez. When later in that year the news came that both Camila and Ladislao had been executed, they continued to propagandize against Rosas, claiming that Camila was eight months pregnant and had nearly drowned after being forced to drink large amounts of water in a sadistic ritual that they called a "federalist baptism."[34] Accounts differ on whether the firing squad took one volley or more to kill Camila and Ladislao. Reyes, who could not bring himself to supervise their executions in person, recorded that he had the pair buried in a single coffin, with the enigmatic explanation that their relatives one day might wish to claim their bodies.[35]

The ending is not a happy one for modern audiences: traditional family values of patriarchal authority and dependent submission triumph over the romantic, Utopian family based on mutual affection and individual choice. Bemberg's Camila is a courageous, romantic woman whose defiance of social conventions provokes the vicious retribution of patriarchal authorities, but the film is only one of many interpretations. The existing documentation and literary works based on their stories provide various and often disparate solutions to the multitude of endlessly fascinating questions provoked by the lives of Ladislao Gutierrez and Camila O'Gorman.

LETTER FROM ADOLFO O'GORMAN TO JUAN MANUEL DE ROSAS[36]
¡VIVA LA CONFEDERACION ARGENTINA!
¡MUERAN LOS SALVAJES UNITARIOS!

Buenos Aires on 21 December 1847
Most Excellent Senor:

I take the liberty of addressing Your Excellency by means of this letter, to raise to your Superior understanding the most atrocious act ever heard of in this country; and convinced of Your Excellency's rectitude, I find a consolation in sharing with you the desolation in which all the family is submerged.

Most Excellent Senor, Monday the sixteenth of the current month I was advised at La Matanza (where I reside) that my youngest daughter had disappeared; I instantly returned and have learned that a clergyman from Tucuman named Ladislao Gutierrez had seduced her under the guise of religion, and stole her away abandoning the parish on the twelfth of this month, letting it be understood that in the evening he needed to go to Quilmes.

Most Excellent Senor, the preparations he has made indicate that he is heading inland, and I have no doubt he will cross into Bolivia, if possible, since the wound that this act has caused is mortal for my unfortunate family, and the clergy in general;

consequently he will not feel secure in the Argentine Republic. Thus, Senor, I beg Your Excellency to send orders in every direction to prevent that this poor wretch finds herself reduced to despair, and, understanding that she is lost, she may rush headlong into infamy.

Most Excellent Senor, that my presumptious letter may find you at Lujan, and the state of affliction in which I find myself, both compel me to bring to the attention of Your Excellency these descriptions of the fugitives. The male individual is of average height, thin of body, *moreno* in color, large brown eyes that bulge somewhat, curly black hair, a full but short beard of twelve to fifteen days; he has two woven ponchos, one black and the other dark with red stripes, he has used them to cover pistols in his saddlebags. The girl is very tall, black eyes, white skin, chestnut hair, thin of body, and has a front tooth that sticks out a bit.

Most Excellent Senor, deign to overlook the style of this letter. Your Excellency is a father and the only one capable of remediating a case of transcendental importance for all of my family, if this becomes public knowledge. All of them add their pleas to mine, to implore the protection of Your Excellency whose humble servant is Adolfo O'Gorman.

Suggested Readings

On Argentine Politics and Society

Lynch, John. *Argentine Dictator: Juan Manuel de Rosas, 1829-1852*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981. The essential biography of Rosas by a distinguished historian.

Masiello, Francine. *Between Civilization and Barbarism: Women, Nation, and Literary Culture in Modern Argentina*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992. A contemporary scholar's gendered perspective.

Sarmiento, Domingo Faustino. *Life in the Argentine Republic in the Days of the Tyrants, or, Civilization and Barbarism*. New York: Gordon Press, 1976. English translation of the classic indictment of gaucho culture and Federalist caudillo Juan Facundo Quiroga and, by implication, of Rosas himself. Originally published in Spanish in 1845 as *Facundo*.

Shumway, Nicolas. *The Invention of Argentina*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991. Examines the intellectual development of the "guiding fictions" of Argentine nationalism with particular attention to the opposition to Rosas.

Szuchman, Mark D. "A Challenge to the Patriarchs: Love among the Youth in Nineteenth-Century Argentina." In *The Middle Period in Latin America: Values and Attitudes in the 18th-19th Centuries,* ed. Mark D. Szuchman, 141-65. Boulder, CO: LynneRienner Publishers, 1989. Lawsuits over choice of

consequently he will not feel secure in the Argentine Republic. Thus, Senor, I beg Your Excellency to send orders in every direction to prevent that this poor wretch finds herself reduced to despair, and, understanding that she is lost, she may rush headlong into infamy.

Most Excellent Senor, that my presumptious letter may find you at Lujan, and the state of affliction in which I find myself, both compel me to bring to the attention of Your Excellency these descriptions of the fugitives. The male individual is of average height, thin of body, *moreno* in color, large brown eyes that bulge somewhat, curly black hair, a full but short beard of twelve to fifteen days; he has two woven ponchos, one black and the other dark with red stripes, he has used them to cover pistols in his saddlebags. The girl is very tall, black eyes, white skin, chestnut hair, thin of body, and has a front tooth that sticks out a bit.

Most Excellent Senor, deign to overlook the style of this letter. Your Excellency is a father and the only one capable of remediating a case of transcendental importance for all of my family, if this becomes public knowledge. All of them add their pleas to mine, to implore the protection of Your Excellency whose humble servant is Adolfo O'Gorman.

Suggested Readings

On Argentine Politics and Society

Lynch, John. *Argentine Dictator: Juan Manuel de Rosas, 1829-1852*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981. The essential biography of Rosas by a distinguished historian.

Masiello, Francine. *Between Civilization and Barbarism: Women, Nation, and Literary Culture in Modern Argentina*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992. A contemporary scholar's gendered perspective.

Sarmiento, Domingo Faustino. *Life in the Argentine Republic in the Days of the Tyrants, or, Civilization and Barbarism*. New York: Gordon Press, 1976. English translation of the classic indictment of gaucho culture and Federalist caudillo Juan Facundo Quiroga and, by implication, of Rosas himself. Originally published in Spanish in 1845 as *Facundo*.

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Szuchman, Mark D. "A Challenge to the Patriarchs: Love among the Youth in Nineteenth-Century Argentina." In *The Middle Period in Latin America: Values and Attitudes in the 18th-19th Centuries,* ed. Mark D. Szuchman, 141-65. Boulder, CO: LynneRienner Publishers, 1989. Lawsuits over choice of

marriage partners demonstrate that parents were losing control over their children.

Historical, Literary, and Polemical Works on Camila O'Gorman

Ascasubi, Hilario. *Trobas y lamentos de Donato Jurao, soldado argentine, a la muerte de la infeliz Da. Camila Ogorman [sic] que en compania del desgraciado Cura Gutierrez fueronferozmente asesinados en Buenos Aires per orden del famoso y cobarde carnicero Juan Manuel Rosas titulado Gefe Supremo*. Uruguay: Imprenta del Colejio, 1851(7).

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Espejo, Miguel. *Senderos en el viento*. Puebla, Pue., Mexico: Universidad Autonoma de Puebla, ICUAP, 1985.

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Llanos, Julio. *Camila O'Gorman*. Buenos Aires: La Patria Argentina, 1883.

Mazzucchelli, Victor Hugo. *Se llamaba Camila y estaba encinta*. Buenos Aires: Ediciones "Mirtgradan," 1972.

Mendoza Ortiz, L. *Camila O 'Gorman: Drama historico, arreglado de la novela de Gutierrez, del mismo titulo: En 5 actos y en verso*. Barracas al Sud (Avellaneda, Argentina): Imprenta El Censor, n.d.

Molina, Enrique. *Una sombra donde suena Camila O'Gorman*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Losada, 1973.

Olivera, Miguel Alfredo. *Camila O'Gorman, Una tragedia argentina*. Buenos Aires: Emece, 1959.

Pelissot, Felisberto. *Camila O'Gorman*. Buenos Aires: Las Artes, 1857.

Siri, Eros Nicola. *Rosas y elproceso de Camila O 'Gorman (su responsibilidad de gobernante)*. Buenos Aires: n.p., 1939.

Vizoso Gorostiaga, Manuel de. *Camila O'Gorman y su epoca. La tragedia mas dolorosa ocurrida durante el gobierno del "Restaurador de las Leyes " estudiada a base de documentacion y con opiniones de sus contemporaneos*. Santa Fe, Argentina: Talleres Graficos Castellvi, 1943.

White, Anibal. *Camila O'Gorman: Drama historico mas para ser leido, en tres actos y en verso, de la epoca de Juan Manuel de Rosas*. Buenos Aires: n.p., 1969.