‘South America in general, and the Republic of Argentina above all, have lacked a Tocqueville … to penetrate the interior of our political life.’

Introducing his 1845 work, Facundo. Civilización y Barbarie, this is how Domingo Faustino Sarmiento (1811–88) cleared a space for his ultimately book-sized intervention. Sarmiento, an exiled Argentine liberal, was openly seeking a canonical status for his work and himself. History promptly obliged. Since shortly after its first publication in Chile (the author was exiled at the time), Facundo has been regarded by enough people as an early foundation of Argentine literature and political thought. But whereas canonical status was desired by Sarmiento, it has burdened historical interpretation of his book. Out of both methodological and normative commitment, as well as simple convention, the prestige attributed and continually reattributed to Facundo in Argentina has encouraged reading it for perennial significance and a related hostility to (certain) contextualist approaches. Ariel de la Fuente, for instance, recently tripped this wire by arguing (persuasively) that Sarmiento’s use of the civilisation/barbarism dichotomy was, contrary to decades of assumption, preceded by the 1840s in Argentina. In this instance, it was the originality of Facundo – an assumed
condition of its canon-hood – which was threatened and, thus, defended by scholars no less formidable than Elías Palti and Adriana Amante.

Moreover, the canon in which Facundo has been placed is, in particular, a national one. It is not just a classic but an Argentine classic. This categorisation has helped to build the additional interpretive convention of reading the text as an instance of nation-building. The basically enduring consensus among Argentine scholars, ‘sees national culture as containing and contained by the double voice of Facundo and Martín Fierro [a folk text, authored by José Hernández and published in 1872].’

Josefina Ludmer describes Facundo as, ‘the first cathedral of Argentine culture.’ Tulio Halperín Donghi entitled a wonderful collection of essays on Sarmiento, most of them focused on Facundo, ‘author of a nation.’ Moreover, this assignment of Facundo to the archives of national thought has been made even easier by the wider, regional periodisation of the nineteenth century as a time of ‘nation-building’ across Latin America.

The compounded designation of Sarmiento’s Facundo as both canonical and national is unfortunate. As mentioned, the former status promotes various modes of a- or under-historical reading, and the use of a national paradigm for interpreting the text is flawed in itself. Benedict Anderson’s claim that nationalism helped cause the Spanish American Wars of Independence has long since been identified as empirically false, with nationalist ideology in the region now post-dated after 1808. But even after that point, the image of the nineteenth century in Latin America as a period of nation-building and nationalism in any total sense is an illusion and Facundo, surprisingly, is prime evidence. Indeed, when the interpreter commits to regarding Sarmiento’s book as an actually historical thing – a situated intervention in a particular set of contexts, most of which are long since closed – without concern for any of its imputed sacrality, and at the same time refuses to assume the text was an item of nation-building, it appears utterly concerned with the ongoing Anglo-French blockade of Juan Manuel de Rosas’s Buenos Aires (1844–7), intended to promote the escalation of that blockade into an act of regime change, and, to this end, imagining a transnational community of ‘Europe,’ not a national one of ‘Argentina,’ suggesting Facundo might make more sense in the archive of the (global) history of the idea of Europe. This is my thesis.

Such recognition of Domingo Sarmiento as an intellectual and political figure entangled with European imperialism goes back to his contemporaries in the 1840s. It was revived in the twentieth century amid the populism of the Perón years and has been carried on by Latin American radicals, especially. While basically valid and important, however, this tradition of thought about Sarmiento has been generally polemical in nature, never giving close attention to his textual output. Moreover, a recent paper from the Anglophone academy – ‘When Montevideo was French’ (2015) by Edward Shawcross – comes the closest to my basic argument. He excavates the extent of French informal empire in the Plata basin during the 1830s and 1840s, before noting how, ‘Platine intellectuals such as Juan Bautista Alberdi, Domingo Faustino Sarmiento and Andrés Lamas adapted currents of French political thought, and attempted to secure the material aid of France, to further their own goals on the banks of the River Plate. Rather than meeting with uniform nationalist resistance to intervention, France had considerable support among certain elites, who looked to France to provide a state-backed liberal international.’ Revealingly, this interpretation comes out of political, not intellectual, history, where such a refreshingly frank characterisation of Facundo is easier to make,
without the encumbrance of intellectual prestige and its conventions. However, this disciplinary separation is also why Shawcross is of limited use to intellectual historians. His ‘reading’ of *Facundo*, such as it is, (necessarily) just skims the text for a few quotes in support of the thesis that several dissident Platine intellectuals were strategically using the French imperial language of *civilisation* to secure the support of the French state against the government of Juan Manuel de Rosas and its allies. While I wholeheartedly agree with this claim, it leaves undone a close and comprehensive reading of *Facundo: Civilización y Barbarie* in relation to European imperial power in the South Atlantic of 1844-5. *Facundo* is an immensely complex document whose relation(s) to its imperial context cannot be accounted for with a few sentences of evidenced commentary.

As to the second (and titular) part of my argument, that *Facundo* was an item of transnational thought, there is a recent spate of studies approaching Sarmiento and his oeuvre with transnational or cosmopolitan paradigms. Most of them, however, focus on texts or moments in his life other than the first edition of *Facundo* in 1845. Ben Bollig’s thinking about Sarmiento’s sense of racial European identity focuses on his travel writing in *Viajes*, for instance, written during his time in Europe, the Maghreb, and North America after finishing *Facundo*.¹³ Carolina Zumaglini looks at the ‘republic of letters’ about education which Sarmiento formed with the North American, Horace Mann (1776-1859), whom Sarmiento did not know of until 1846, and did not meet until 1847.¹⁴ And Juliet Hooker, in developing her account of Sarmiento as a hemispheric thinker on race in the Americas, focuses on his stay in the United States during the late-1860s.¹⁵ These instances of scholarship are welcome but my intervention here is relatively unconcerned with them. I am proposing to approach the first edition of *Facundo* as, to borrow a phrase from Samuel Moyn, ‘an artifact of an exceedingly specific time and place.’¹⁶ That is, the fleeting moment between September 1844 and June 1847 when France and Britain were jointly committed to blockading Rosas’s government in Buenos Aires and looked to be on the brink of a more decisive, land-based military intervention against him. Sarmiento, who wanted this escalation to occur, wrote and published *Facundo* in and for this window, and the book cannot be historically comprehended outside of this context. As such, because my focus is on the constitutive relationship between the intellectual content of the first edition of *Facundo* and this context of acute imperial pressure on the Rosas government, Sarmiento’s life and work after that context had ended is of minimal concern to me here. For this same reason, and without by any means denying their existence or historical importance, I am not attempting a study of themes of transnationalism and cosmopolitanism which run through *Facundo* both to Sarmiento’s earlier and later work. My focus is the complex historical and intellectual relations between a particular text by Domingo Sarmiento and the ephemeral, imperial context in which it was composed, a relation which produced a remarkably transnational piece of political imagining – my focus is not the ‘theme of transnationalism’ in Sarmiento’s oeuvre or a certain stretch of it.¹⁷

**Indices as Identities: ‘Civilization’ and ‘Barbarism’**

Evasively polyform, *Facundo* was a critical biography of the late Argentine strongman, Juan Facundo Quiroga (1788–1835), which was also a barely veiled attack on the current ruler of Argentina, Juan Manuel de Rosas (1793–1877). But within and
around this biographical narrative, *Facundo* delivered many other interventions, including but far from limited to a sociology of Atlantic South America, an history of Argentina since its revolt against Spain in 1810, and a forecast of its political and economic future. As is so often the case with this text, the key to my reading is Sarmiento’s titular dualism. A perception of history and politics in terms of ‘civilization’ against ‘barbarism’ was one of the few durable features of his weltanschauung. Moreover, both in *Facundo* and beyond, Sarmiento’s particular conception of these two qualities was an archetype of Saidian orientalism (Latin America was a regrettable blind-spot in Edward Said’s classic account, where he would have found a wealth of useful and particular evidence). Sarmiento presented barbarism as synonymous with ‘the Orient’ and civilisation, its mutually-constituted opposite, with ‘Europe.’ In one of its many attacks on Juan Manuel de Rosas – de facto ruler of Argentina from 1829 to 1852, and arch nemesis of Sarmiento and his co-believers in mid-century Argentine liberalism – *Facundo* describes a man, ‘barbarous like Asia, despotic and bloody like Turkey, persecuting and disdaining intelligence like Mohammedanism.’ This chain of similes is one of countless instances with which Sarmiento tied the concept of ‘barbarism’ to vocabulary about ‘the Orient.’ Conversely, Sarmiento would write on, ‘European civilization, its institutions, and the wealth and liberty that come from it,’ and, ‘the struggle between European civilization and indigenous barbarism, between intelligence and matter.’

His religious use of the couplet ‘European civilization’ was not meant to suggest that Europe’s was one civilisation among many but, in keeping with the hegemonic nineteenth century imperial discourse of ‘progress,’ that Europe was civilisation (as well as the agent of its expansion). Conceptually, Sarmiento presented ‘Europe’ as identical with ‘civilization,’ and ‘Asia’ or ‘the Orient’ as identical with ‘barbarism.’ (Following from this, I will henceforth use the following terminology – ‘Europe/Civilization’ and ‘the Orient/Barbarism’ – as much as possible, rather than separate the four terms in a way hopelessly incongruent with their use in *Facundo.*)

Sarmiento’s systematic deployment of orientalist discourse in *Facundo* has not gone unnoticed. But no interpretation has yet developed its communal aspect. In using the conceptual equation of ‘civilization’ with ‘Europe,’ Sarmiento was constructing an idea of what was ‘Europe’ and ‘European’ with *Facundo*. As Said wrote, ‘Orientalism is never far from … the idea of Europe, a collective notion identifying ‘us’ Europeans against all ‘those’ non-Europeans.’ Thus, the paradigmatic role which the orientalist dualism played for *Facundo* suggests Sarmiento was at work on a version of ‘Europe’ with the text. But this avenue has not been explored by previous interpretations. Carlos Altamirano focused on how Montesquieu’s trope of ‘oriental despotism’ was used in *Facundo* to help cast the Rosas government in Argentina; Ricardo Piglia interpreted the system of orientalist analogies in terms of how Sarmiento conceived knowledge i.e. to compare being to knowing; Julio Ramos explored the way in which Sarmiento used orientalist discourse to develop his own authorial legitimacy before European readers. The possibility that Sarmiento’s use of orientalist discourse was his means to imagine a transnational (and transatlantic) ‘Europe’ with *Facundo* has not yet been developed.

Identified with ‘Europe,’ Sarmiento was not only using the term ‘civilization’ as a societal quality or measure, such as GDP per capita. His Europe/Civilisation was an imagined and transnational *community*. The analogies he drew between Argentina and
Europe were not simply descriptive, but integrative. Towards the end of the text, describing the European volunteers helping to defend Montevideo from Rosas’s ally, Manuel Oribe, Sarmiento wrote of ‘heroic foreigners’ clinging to the city walls, ‘like the last entrenchment of European civilization left within the limits of the Plata’. This language of outworks – atrincheramiento – evoked a spatiality for what Sarmiento meant by civilización europea. It was not (only) an abstract quality, but a place with limits – and those limits extended to (parts of) the River Plate region. And Sarmiento did not leave this place as somewhere emotionless, such as, say, the area of a country which has access to canals, but instead infilled it with the affective substance of a community. Recollecting the support which young Argentine liberals, not least himself, had given to French military action against the Rosas government in 1838, Sarmiento wrote of how, ‘this youth, impregnated with the civilizing ideas of European literature, was going to look to Rosas’s European enemies for their ancestors, their fathers, their models, and support’. Sarmiento used languages of family, fraternity, and, indeed, love to cohere his ‘Europe’ in a way not dissimilar to how Benedict Anderson describes an imagined community. Moreover, where Anderson defined the national community as the object of a member’s primary loyalty – the one for which they are ready to die – Sarmiento moved this locus to the transnational level. The heroes of his final chapters were the Argentines – himself included – who risked their lives for ‘Europe’ against the nationalism mobilising Rosas’s troops. ‘I will say in defiance of whomever it may be, that the glory belonged entirely to us of having understood that there was an intimate alliance between the enemies of Rosas and the civilized powers of Europe.’ This European sentiment was contrasted to the Argentine alternative, with the latter actively disparaged. ‘Rosas and his satellites,’ Sarmiento declared, ‘were too prejudiced with the idea of nationality that is the patrimony of man since the savage tribes, which makes him look with horror at the foreigner.’ Confronting this ‘prejudice’ earlier in Facundo, he described how the dissidents were accused of being ‘traitors to the American cause’ by Rosas for allying with Europe, to which Sarmiento fired back, ‘true! We say; traitors to the American, Spanish, absolutist, barbarous cause!’ Thus, Sarmiento’s promotion of a transnational, European identity was not only placed higher than a national, Argentine one, but against it. Whether or not this example undermines Benedict Anderson’s proposition that the national community enjoys a hegemony over modern loyalty is beside the point here, what it does make clear is the communal and identarian way in which Sarmiento was imagining Europe/Civilisation with Facundo.

The same is true, moreover, of his concept of barbarie – if not in the same way. The communal character of Sarmiento’s Orient/Barbarism comes out in his writing of Americanismo. In Sarmiento’s description, the socio-political force of Americanism was the particular manifestation of the transnational – and here transatlantic – ‘Orient’ in South America. He tied it to the politics of anti-European nativism on the continent, ‘barbarous like Asia, despotic and bloody like Turkey, persecuting and disdaining intelligence like Mohammedanism.’ Castigated and orientalised in this way, Americanism nevertheless gave Sarmiento’s concept of the Orient/Barbarism in Argentina an affective aspect. In his final chapters, he readily conceded the success with which Rosas had been able to mobilise South American support with the discourse of Americanism in his struggles with France since the late-1830s.
Thus, Sarmiento developed the concepts of Europe/Civilisation and the Orient/Barbarism as communal entities, not just indices of development, with all the inward affection (and outward hate) which that communality could imply. To understand why he took this communal turn in *Facundo* requires a closer look at how exactly he applied the two terms throughout the text.

**A Disruptive Cartography: ‘Two Societies on the Same Soil’**

‘In the Argentine Republic we see at the same time two different societies on the same soil,’ Sarmiento wrote in the second chapter, ‘the nineteenth and the twelfth centuries live together: one inside the cities, the other in the country.’ Crucial to what Sarmiento was trying to do with the Europe/Civilisation-Orient/Barbarism dichotomy is how he territorialised the two concepts and, in particular, the way in which he mapped the border between them. In his opening chapter, on the ‘physical aspect of the Argentine Republic,’ he asserted,

The city is the centre of Argentine, Spanish, European civilization ... There, elegant manners, the conveniences of luxury, European clothing, the tailcoat, and the frock coat have their theatre and their appropriate place ... The capital city of the pastoral provinces sometimes exists by itself, without any smaller cities, and in more than one of them the uncivilised region reaches right up to its streets. The desert surrounds the cities at a greater or lesser distance, hems them in, oppresses them; savage nature reduces them to limited oases of civilization, buried deep into an uncivilised plain of hundreds of square miles, scarcely interrupted by some little town or other of any consequence.

Available to a mid-nineteenth century user such as Sarmiento, there was inscribed in the orientalist discourse a certain, bipartite way of mapping the world – a ‘conception of the global;’ its one border, imaginary but full of violence, separated the transnational place of Europe/Civilisation from that of the Orient/Barbarism. And in *Facundo*, Domingo Sarmiento used this border to splinter Argentina into its urban and rural parts. The former, an archipelago of cities, was the foothold of this supra-European ‘Europe’ in Argentina. This island chain was crowned by Buenos Aires, which, as the country’s only port, dominated the post-independence state thanks to its monopoly on the customs revenue from Atlantic commerce. Sarmiento placed this metropolis at the height of European Argentina from the outset, forecasting, ‘Buenos Aires is destined one day to be the most gigantic city of both Americas ... It alone, in the vast expanse of Argentina, is in contact with European nations; it alone exploits the advantages of foreign commerce; it alone has power and income.’ But, unlike some Porteño (native of Buenos Aires) extremists with whom he would collaborate over the decades, Sarmiento saw neither Buenos Aires nor the Atlantic coast as the full reach of Europe/Civilisation in Argentina. In *Facundo*, the base of European Argentina was presented as co-extensive with all urban space in the national territory, including cities of the provincial interior like Sarmiento’s native San Juan. This was done through depictions of a flourishing civilised life in the interior cities prior to their decimation by the forces of Juan Facundo Quiroga. In the eleventh chapter, for example, the city of Mendoza was pictured enjoying industrial progress in its production of silk and mining, before Quiroga took over and supposedly reduced it to barrenness. The same narration was then repeated for Tucumán, Salta, and Jujuy.
Surrounding this urban network of Europe/Civilisation in Argentina, Sarmiento drew a countryside infilled with pervasive, Asiatic barbarism. The demonstrative excerpts are countless, even tiresome. His description of rural La Rioja province (not coincidentally the home of Facundo Quiroga) offers a comprehensive example:

I have always had the idea that Palestine is similar in aspect to La Rioja, down to the reddish ochre of the earth, the dryness of some areas, and their cisterns; down to the orange and fig trees and grapevines with exquisite, massive fruit, grown where some muddy, narrow Jordan flows. There is a strange combination of mountains and plains, fertility and aridness, gloomy, bristling mountains and grey-green hills carpeted with vegetation as colossal as the cedars of Lebanon.47

Drenched in analogy to ‘the Orient’ – by this middle point in the book, well-established by Sarmiento as synonymous with ‘Barbarism’ – this is the type of characterisation which he tied to rural Argentina, and its medi-terranean pampas in particular. Needless to say, Sarmiento had never been to Palestine or Lebanon, nor would he ever go. 48 But the real Orient (such as it is)49 was hardly a priority of nineteenth century orientalist discourse, which was primarily concerned with the definition of what was European.

Moreover, as Sarmiento mapped Argentina’s rural and urban space as Asian and European, so too did he map their inhabitants. The rural Argentine, from the generic gaucho up to their caudillo leaders like Quiroga, was endlessly equated to Asiatic personalities. ‘The Argentine caudillo is a Mohammed,’ Sarmiento writes in the third chapter, ‘who could change at a whim the dominant religion and forge a new one.’50 And Facundo Quiroga is introduced as never looking, ‘straight ahead, and by habit, by design, because of a wish to make himself always fearsome, he ordinarily had his head down and looked up through his eyebrows, like the Ali Pasha of Monvoisin.’51 And, continuing from his afore-quoted description of La Rioja’s ‘Palestinian’ geography, Sarmiento went on, ‘what most brings this Oriental reminiscence to my mind is the truly patriarchal aspect of the peasants in La Rioja … a people of sad, taciturn, grave, and sly aspect, Arab-like, riding on donkeys and sometimes dressed in goatskins, like the hermit of Engedi. There exist places where the population eats only wild honey and carob beans, as John the Baptist ate locusts in the desert.’52 While orientalising Argentina’s rural populations thus, Sarmiento worked on Europeanising its city-dwellers. Describing his own group of dissident liberals – now-called the ‘Generation of 1837’ and, in Sarmiento’s narrative, the highest cadres of European urbanity in Argentina – Sarmiento wrote of their, ‘love for European peoples, associated with a love for the civilization, institutions, and letters that Europe had bequeathed to us.’53 Sarmiento often hammered home the reality of this societal schism by presenting the European civilisation of urban Argentines in immediate juxtaposition to the oriental barbarity of their rural compatriots. ‘The horse is an integral part of the rural Argentine,’ Sarmiento wrote in the third chapter on society in the pampas, ‘it is for him what the cravat is for those who live in the bosom of the cities.’54 Dress was a recurrent feature in Sarmiento’s enumeration of (un)civilised life, evidenced again by this lengthier contrast in the opening chapter,

The man of the city wears European dress, lives a civilised life as we know it everywhere: in the city, there are laws, ideas of progress, means of instruction, some municipal organisation, a regular government, etc. Leaving the city district, everything changes in aspect.
The man of the country wears other dress … They are like two distinct societies, two peoples strange to one another.55

With the excerpts quoted in this section thus far, and countless similar ones deployed throughout *Facundo*, Sarmiento bifurcated contemporary Argentina into a European archipelago of cities and their inhabitants on the one side, and an Oriental expanse of countryside with its Asiatic inhabitants on the other. Nor, unsurprisingly, was this correlation of space to people a coincidence in Sarmiento’s scheme. Argentine society was explained in *Facundo* through quite a severe application of geographical determinism. He attributed the type of people – civilised/European or barbaric/Oriental – to the type of space which produced them. As quoted, the urban space, in its compactness, facilitated, ‘laws, ideas of progress, means of instruction, some municipal organisation, a regular government.’ Anthony Pagden has noted the centuries-long history of linking European civilisation to urban space in this way (indeed, much of the vocabulary about ‘civilization’ is derived from the ancient association between culture and the city).56 By contrast, Sarmiento tied the barbarism of the pampas to the limits this rural space imposed on human organisation. In a lengthy passage of the first chapter, he presents human association – society itself – as dissolve in the pampas due to the sheer vastness of the terrain. ‘Imagine an expanse of two thousand square leagues,’ Sarmiento asks his reader,

totally populated but with homesteads set apart from each other by four leagues, sometimes eight … The development of property and furnishings is not impossible; articles of luxury are not totally incompatible with this isolation, and riches could construct a fine edifice in the desert. But the stimulus is lacking, the example has disappeared, the need to maintain a dignified appearance, which is felt in the cities, is not felt there, amid isolation and solitude. Unavoidable privations justify natural laziness, and a frugality of pleasures quickly brings with it all the exterior aspects of barbarity. Society has completely disappeared.57

He went on, diversifying the argument with commentary on how this expansive landscape prevents governance, and with negative comparisons even to bad examples such as the Slavonic Sloboda which was at least governable because agrarian, as opposed to the pastoralism of the pampas.58 The salvo ends with the fatal conclusion that, ‘moral progress, the culture of intelligence neglected in the Arab or Tartar tribe, is thus here not only neglected, but impossible. Where could a school be placed so that children disseminated over ten leagues in every direction could attend classes? Civilization, then, can never be attained, barbarism is the norm.’59 Hereby, Sarmiento explained the barbarism of the gauchos by the limits with which the geography of their plains impounded social organisation. ‘He lacks a city, a municipality, intimate association, and therefore lacks the basis for all social development; since the ranchers do not meet together, they have no public needs to satisfy; in a word, there is no res publica.’60

With a catalogue of utterances in *Facundo*, then, Sarmiento split the nation in two, leaving bastions of Europe/Civilisation located in and explained by Argentina’s cities, and an expanse of the Orient/Barbarism in its countryside. Moreover, it is no revelation that Sarmiento qualitatively bifurcated Argentina with the Civilisation-Barbarism divide, but the recognition of this move in terms of transnational communities radically recasts its meaning in a way which ruptures the existing historiography of *Facundo*. Because Sarmiento’s conception of ‘Civilization’ was, fundamentally, a global ‘Europe,’ his
cartography of Argentina as split between Civilisation and Barbarism was not simply a presentation of uneven social progress. Sarmiento was constructing a global European community (in tandem with its Oriental antagonist), carving up Argentina as he went. What is more, these transnational identities into which Facundo partitioned Argentina – ‘European’ and ‘Oriental’ – were not meant for a workable accommodation with the Argentine nationality which cut across them. Sarmiento narrated these two deep-set identities in a way which promised neither coalescence nor coexistence, as one may expect a ‘nation-builder’ would strive for. Instead, Europe-in-Argentina and the Orient-in-Argentina were staged antagonistically. The hatred of the Oriental gaucho for the European city-dweller, for instance, is a recurrent emotion throughout Facundo:

> The man of the country, far from aspiring to resemble the man of the city, rejects with scorn his luxuries and his polite manners; and the clothing of the city dweller, his tailcoat, his cape, his saddle – no such sign of Europe can appear in the countryside with impunity. All that is civilised in the city is blockaded, banished outside of it, and anyone who would dare show up in a frock coat, for example, and mounted on an English saddle, would draw upon himself the peasants’ jeers and their brutal aggression.61

And this inter-cultural toxicity in the relation between Europe-in-Argentina and the Orient-in-Argentina is writ large into the fissile political history of post-independence which Facundo nominally tells. Sarmiento casts the gaucho caudillos who rose to power in Argentina from the mid-1820s as the literal personification of rural and barbaric Argentina, and their urban rivals as the embodiment of Europeanness. ‘In Facundo Quiroga I do not see simply a caudillo,’ he wrote, ‘but rather a manifestation of Argentine life as it has been made by colonisation and the peculiarities of the land.’62 By contrast, General José María Paz, who fought against Facundo Quiroga and his provincial allies, is profiled as, ‘the legitimate son of the city, the most total representative of the power of civilized peoples.’63 With their protagonists thus cast as avatars of their respective half of Argentina, the seemingly endemic civil wars which Sarmiento narrates in the wake of the revolution against Spain become evidence of the irreconcilability of Europe and Asia as they were deployed in the borders of the Argentine republic. The wars are made to appear as a clash of cultural hemispheres, of which individual potentates were no more than epiphenomena. Thus, Sarmiento foretells Juan Manuel de Rosas’s 1828 conquest of Buenos Aires in the following terms: ‘backwardness and barbarism were going to penetrate into the streets of Buenos Aires, become established, and set up camp in the fort.’64 The two transnational communities into which Sarmiento divided Argentine space are the real protagonists of Facundo’s volatile political history, and the violence of their relationship was rendered interminable. Far from imagine an integrated or integrable national community, then, Sarmiento’s ‘nation-building’ magnus opus partitioned Argentina between two bitter, transnational opponents. Crowned by Buenos Aires but reaching out to the urbanised interior, its cities were given over to a trans-Atlanticised ‘Europe,’ and its countryside to a similarly extended ‘Orient’. Why?

**In the Grit**

To answer this, Facundo must be brought down to the gritty politicking amidst which it was written, and to which it directly contributed. This kind of contextualism is an approach which, as mentioned, Facundo’s canonical status has usually managed to inhibit. Burdened
with the identity of a great text in Latin American intellectual history, the notion that Facundo was written as a particular intervention in a particular (and ephemeral) political context has been shunned as a threat to the universality of its significance – to the ‘transcendence of concepts’ which it has been forced to symbolise as a member of the canon. However unsettling, though, Sarmiento’s Facundo was of this world.

It was first published as instalments in the feuilleton of the Chilean newspaper, El Progreso (of which Sarmiento was editor), from 2nd May to 21st June 1845, before being republished in book form a month later. Sarmiento was in a Chilean exile at this time due to his antagonism with Juan Manuel de Rosas’s government in Argentina. Sarmiento had opposed himself to Argentine federalism, the politics with which Rosas was affiliated. Since the revolutionary 1810s, Argentine politics had, like much of the rest of Spanish America, split between advocates of what Jeremy Adelman (and many contemporaries) termed the ‘unitarian’ model of sovereignty – constitutional centralism, fundamentally – and federalism. In Argentina as elsewhere, this fissure resulted from the uncertainty of what the ‘sovereignty of the people’ actually meant as a replacement for the imperial sovereignty of Spain. The unitarian approach claimed that sovereignty – as an irreducible unit – had devolved to the old regional capitals of the empire, like Buenos Aires and Caracas. Federalists, stopping short of secessionism, argued (and fought) for a more plural concept of sovereignty to underpin the devolution of far more power to provincial centres. The main force behind Argentine federalism during the nineteenth century were the caudillos – strongmen, like Rosas, with their power base in rural populations – who, as a recognised group, had come to prominence during the Wars of Independence commanding the irregular, gaucho montoneras which proved so crucial to the liberation of the old Viceroyalty of the Rio de la Plata from the Spanish Empire. As the post-imperial order began to be formed during the 1810s, these commanders saw in federalism the constitutional means to secure their power (among some nobler motives), and they used their military strength – with quite consistent success until the 1860s – to realise a federal Argentina against the Porteño ideal of Buenos Aires centralism. Juan Manuel de Rosas aligned himself with this tendency. The scion of a family of landowning creoles in Buenos Aires province, Rosas developed a considerable base of wealth and power in the countryside over the 1820s. In 1828, he emerged as the leader of the Federalist movement during a bout of civil war with their Unitarian rivals. A year later, in November 1829, Rosas led the victorious Federal forces into Buenos Aires and was soon elected as governor of the province with extraordinary powers by its House of Representatives. From this position, Rosas jostled his way to the de facto leadership of Argentina as a whole (a leadership he would maintain until 1852). Under his command, Argentina was organised on an extremely centrifugal basis, with inter-provincial relations governed by the 1831 ‘Federal Pact,’ giving Buenos Aires authority over Argentine foreign relations, but otherwise involving, ‘a relationship among provinces more akin to independent nations than federal subunits.’ That being said, Rosas was not a perfect fit with Argentine federalism (‘perfect fits’ being infrequent amid the mercurial biographies and politics of post-independence Spanish America). Where contemporary protagonists such as Juan Bautista Alberdi (1810–84) and Justo José de Urquiza (1801–70) did theorise and pursue a federal (re)arrangement of Argentina with perceptible conviction, Rosas’s federalism was in many ways superficial. Indeed, one of the enduring insights in Facundo exposes how Rosas forcibly
subordinated the provinces to Buenos Aires’s de facto authority far more than the unitarians had ever managed, all while wearing the garb of an impassioned Federalist.74

The young Domingo Sarmiento, meanwhile, embraced a centralising vision of Argentina which set him against Rosas. Again, utilising the mechanics of geographical determinism, Sarmiento argued quite consistently that Buenos Aires must be the core of a systematically centralised state, owing to its monopoly on Atlantic commerce at the mouth of the Plata river system. In *Facundo* as elsewhere, he asserted, ‘the Argentine Republic is geographically constituted in such a way that it must always be unitarist, although the label on the bottle may say the opposite. Its continuous plains, its rivers confluent to a single port, make it fatally ‘one and indivisible’.75 This centralism (in spite of his own origins in the interior) places Sarmiento in Argentina’s unitarian tradition which reached back to the republic’s first president, the *porteño*, Bernardino Rivadavia (1780-1845). Like Rosas with federalism, however, Sarmiento was not an easy fit into Argentine centralist thought. For one thing, his centralism was significantly less ‘sectional’ than the many *porteño unitarios* who simply desired *porteño* dominance for its (and their) own sake. The Sarmientine dream of Argentine unity had Buenos Aires’s dominance enrich the rest of the country, including the nationalisation of its bountiful customs house (a doomsday scenario for most *porteño* politicians).76 Moreover, Sarmiento often juxtaposed himself to the unitarian tradition – especially in its partisan aspect – with a politics which claimed to move beyond the traditional *unitarios*. This politics belonged to the now-called ‘Generation of 1837,’ a group of Argentine intellectuals which emerged from a Buenos Aires literary salon formed in that year. Ultimately dominated by Sarmiento (though he was not present at the founding), Alberdi, the older Esteban Echeverría (1805-51), and the younger Bartolomé Mitre (1821-1906), this nebulous and often fractious group marked itself – with some justification – as a new phase in Argentine liberalism (the Atlantic tradition, in all its vagary, to which the *unitarios* belonged). In addition to supposedly advancing beyond the party-political factionalism of the ‘*unitarios antiguos*’ (as Sarmiento labelled them), the Generation of ‘37 developed its liberalism in dialogue with *Doctrinaire* French liberal thought. Where Rivadavia and his cohort had looked to Enlightenment icons, not least Rousseau,77 Sarmiento et al turned to Tocqueville, Sismondi, and Guizot.78 In Sarmiento’s self-affirming terms, this represented an advance from the overly abstract, *a priori* political theory of the eighteenth century to the more realistic, social approach which had emerged in the 1830s.79 For all their discontinuities with the established liberal-centralist tradition in Argentina, however, Sarmiento and his ‘37er collaborators were committed participants in the anti-Rosista coalition from the late-1830s until its victory in 1852. And this political affiliation was what provoked, in November 1840, Sarmiento’s expulsion to Chile by the Federalist governor of San Juan.80

The French Question

It was in Chile where Sarmiento began to develop his public reputation as an anti-Rosista. Allied to the governing party of Manuel Montt, Sarmiento was able to play a leading role in the foundation of the Chilean press, especially as editor of the newspaper *El Progreso*. In this role, Sarmiento maintained a discursive war of position against the Rosas government. Another barrage was maintained from the exilic community across the River Plate
in Uruguay. It was as a salvo in this ideological fight that *Facundo* was published in a series of articles during the middle of 1845. But the move Sarmiento intended to make with it was more complex than a denunciation of Rosas through the excoriation of his *caudillo* ‘lineage’ in Argentine politics. This becomes clearer once we appreciate that, despite its subsequent ‘nationalisation,’ the audience which Sarmiento most wanted for *Facundo* was across the Atlantic in France. The textual evidence for this is rich, perhaps undeniable. As mentioned, the entire introduction to the first edition is devoted to Sarmiento’s transparent self-casting as a Tocqueville for South America, about to translate Argentina’s American reality to a European (and French, in particular) readership. ‘South America in general, and the Argentine Republic above all, has lacked a Tocqueville who, previously equipped with a knowledge of social theory … would have penetrated the interior of our political life as a vast field still unexplored and undefined by science, and revealed to Europe and France … this new way of being.’

This Tocquevillean absence, Sarmiento clearly implied, was now to be filled. Outside the textual, he also made strenuous and immediate efforts to get *Facundo* circulated in the French metropole. He urged his friend, Juan María Gutiérrez, to introduce it, ‘to your friends in France,’ and had a shipment of copies dispatched there. This bid for an audience in metropolitan France was no doubt in part a matter of personal reputation-building. Sarmiento confessed in his second chapter that the only route to European fame was to write a text like *Facundo*, straddling the border between European civilisation and American barbarism, as Fennimore Cooper had done with *Last of the Mohicans*. Making a global name for himself was clearly an interest of Sarmiento’s in the writing of *Facundo*. But what is absolutely essential to understanding his targeting of a French audience is the fact that, as of writing, Buenos Aires was under blockade by a Franco-British naval force.

Since the mid-1830s, Rosas’s government had been implementing a (mildly) protectionist economic policy, and since 1842, Rosas’s ally in Uruguayan politics, General Manuel Oribe, had been besieging Montevideo with the support of Argentine troops. Rosas was also steadfastly refusing to permit free, international navigation of the Plata river system – which had become a *cause célèbre* of western European merchant capital. So, in September 1844, helped by the midwifery of some hawkish consular politics, the disruption Rosas’s policies had caused to British and French commerce in the region became enough to trigger a naval blockade of Buenos Aires. The blockade lasted for almost three years and for much of it the empires seemed on the brink of invading Argentina. Ground troops were disembarked in Montevideo and the strategic island of Martín García, in the Plata estuary, was occupied. And it was into this context, when France and Britain seemed ever so close to full-scale war with Rosas, that Sarmiento deployed his *Facundo*. The text – and its conceptual bifurcation of the Argentine nation – cannot be understood outside of this crisis. Sarmiento intended for it to push France to war with Rosas, thereby clearing the road to power for Sarmiento and his anti-Rosista collaborators.

It might be asked of Sarmiento, or my interpretation of him, why focus on France rather than both France and Britain? The Royal Navy was also participating in the blockade, after all. The two were not mutually exclusive, and Sarmiento was certainly not averse to British involvement in the campaign against Rosas. However, *Facundo* was oriented to a specifically French audience more than a general, European one. In both
the introduction and the conclusion, for example, Sarmiento dialogued at length with the Argentine policy of the Guizot ministry in particular, rather than any other European government. This posturing towards France was attributable both to the particular state of French imperialism in the south Atlantic and the anti-Rosistas’ recent history of interaction with it. Since coming to power in 1830, the July Monarchy had been pursuing imperial expansion with vigour. Algeria was by far the main outlet here, but France also aspired to influence in the River Plate. Not for the first (or last) time, the French interest tailed the British and was disadvantaged as a result. Britain had been developing a major commercial influence in South America since long before the collapse of the Spanish Empire. By the 1820s, this influence had become hegemonic. In Argentina, it was manifest in an 1826 treaty which locked the nascent republic into Britain’s developing imperialism of free trade in exchange for diplomatic recognition. From then on, mostly under Rosas, the Argentine state formed a basically compliant part of Britain’s international order in the Atlantic. This symbiosis between the British Empire and Argentine elites proved a sturdy obstacle to French attempts to break into the area. Despite (and perhaps because of) Louis Philippe’s decision to recognise the Argentine Republic without conditions in 1830, France spent the decade fruitlessly attempting to negotiate the same commercial relationship with Buenos Aires as Britain had agreed. To the satisfaction of Whitehall, Rosas steadily refused to make these commercial concessions to the French, who were left to carve out some influence in neighbouring Uruguay. Annoyed by Rosas’s intransigence, France tried the resort to force. In early-1838, the French navy blockaded Buenos Aires for a first time, hoping to coerce freer trade from Rosas. At the same time, French agents supported the seizure of the Uruguayan government by Rosas’s enemies.

It was in this militarised context that the anti-Rosistas, Sarmiento among them, made their first, formative intersection with the French imperial project in the South Atlantic. In tandem with the French blockade of Buenos Aires, the dissidents mobilised a rebel army in Uruguay under the Unitarist general, Juan Lavalle. With the probability of French support against Rosas, the army would march south and take Buenos Aires as a series of coordinated insurrections exploded in the Argentine provinces. In the event, the anti-Rosistas were crushed. The insurrections were put down and Rosas defeated Lavalle’s army. Rather than ‘liberate’ Argentina from Montevideo, the campaign ended with Rosas invading Uruguay from Buenos Aires. This failure was in large part due to the sudden withdrawal, under British pressure, of French support for the rebels. Rather than alienate Sarmiento and (some of) his comrades from France, however, the tragedy of the Lavalle Campaign fixed in their politics the belief that Rosas could not be overthrown without French imperial support, and that support was plausible. By contrast, Britain’s healthier relationship with Rosas was (accurately, as it happened) recognised as closing the door to substantive British support. Thus, the necessity of French intervention to the overthrow of Rosas became a strategic axiom for most Argentine dissidents during the 1840s, and was clearly manifest in Sarmiento’s composition of Facundo. The text was made to court the French empire, imagined harbinger of a post-Rosas Argentina.

This thrust of Sarmiento’s project in Facundo was pursued most explicitly in the final chapter of the first edition, ‘Present and Future.’ Sketching a post-Rosas Argentina, this section was a closing and blatant appeal to France’s strategic interests in South America.
Overthrowing Rosas would see his litany of policy ‘errors’ corrected. These included the measures which most offended French imperialism in the region. Where Rosas had ‘persecuted European influence,’ the new government would encourage it via extensive immigration, and where Rosas had denied free navigation of the inland rivers – a major cause of the blockade – his replacement would open them up to commerce.94 Sarmiento’s list of improvements culminated in the pledge that, where Rosas had provoked the European empires, ‘the new government, friend of European powers, congenial to all American peoples, will untie at one blow this tangle of foreign relations, and will establish tranquillity at home and abroad, giving each his rights, and marching down the same routes of conciliation and order by which all other cultured peoples march.’95 Sarmiento was offering a utopia to the French imperialists he hoped would read Facundo, placing only Rosas in the way of its realisation. This supplication in favour of French-backed ‘regime change’ was thickened in other ways across these final pages. Sarmiento argued the extreme vulnerability of Rosas in 1845, claiming that there was growing discontent with his rule in Argentina and that the combination of European and regional powers which had combined against him (as well as Britain and France, Rosas had rivals in Uruguay and Brazil) was too formidable for him to withstand.96 Thus, overthrowing Rosas was presented to French elites as a simple task, so as to calm fears of a drawn-out struggle they would clearly have had, on the basis of both Britain’s well-known defeat by porteño militiamen in 1806-7 and France’s contemporary troubles on the other side of the Atlantic in Algeria. Moreover, Sarmiento also used this final chapter to stress the ease with which Argentina could transit from Rosas to a new, liberal regime. Rosas had enjoyed considerable diplomatic success with Britain by arguing that he represented the flood barrier between Argentina and anarchy.97 The European intervention against Rosas’s invasion of Uruguay was in part motivated by an interest in political stability between and within regional powers, and this same interest could be made to militate against regime change in Argentina. Working against this conclusion, Sarmiento argued in his final chapter that the country was entirely ready for a liberal revolution, and that Rosas was now the only blockage to be removed for its triumph. ‘Nor do I think it impossible,’ he wrote in the final lines of Facundo, ‘that upon Rosas’ fall order will immediately follow.’98 To justify this proposition, he made both a general claim about human nature – somewhat incongruent with the geographical determinism throughout the rest of the book – that a change in government could bring about a radical change in behaviour, i.e. that the barbarisation of Argentina by the caudillos did not condemn it to chaos in the event of revolution. ‘Everything depends on the prejudices that are dominant at certain moments, and the man who today sates himself on blood, because of fanaticism, was yesterday an innocent follower and tomorrow will be a good citizen.’99 Sarmiento then added a particularly Argentine argument for stable regime change, claiming (in an especially Tocquevillian fashion)100 that the Argentine people had before them a great public mission – the economic revolution of the country – which, when unleashed by the new regime, could unify them.101

These final pages, then, show Sarmiento dialoguing with French imperial power to promote its overthrow of Rosas. As French and British ships sailed menacingly off the coast of Buenos Aires, Facundo was being used to stress the imperial interest in ‘regime change’ and assuage imperial worries about the instability which might follow therefrom. And if any doubt remains that this was Sarmiento’s intention, he tellingly
removed this last chapter – where his promotion of intervention was made most explicit – from the second edition of *Facundo* in 1851. The passing of the Franco-British blockade had rendered it obsolescent, if not embarrassing. As soon as early-1845, the British commitment to the struggle against Rosas began to wane and Whitehall began trying to restore its historically strong relations with him. In June 1847, Britain abandoned the blockade; France, not unwillingly, followed suit. Thus, Sarmiento’s call for war in *Facundo* became outmoded. The closing pages, so hopeful of European-led regime change, were axed, along with the introduction, which had been the one other section clearly in direct dialogue with France (in this way, Sarmiento made his own contribution to the retrospective nationalisation of *Facundo*). Only bitterness remained, as Rosas’s hold on Argentina kept firm. In an 1851 letter accompanying a copy of the second edition to his friend, Valentín Alsina, Sarmiento castigated France and Britain for their betrayal. ‘I have omitted the introduction as useless, and the last two chapters as superfluous today,’ Sarmiento announced, before recommending a history of Rosas be written because, ‘there are other peoples and other men who should not remain without humiliation. Oh! France, so justly proud of its competence in the social, political, and historical sciences; England, so attentive to its commercial interests.’

**Civilisation, Barbarism, and Interventionism**

One might be tempted to use this editorial cut to help protect the ‘high’ and de-contextualised assessment of *Facundo* against my reading. Yes, Sarmiento pushed his ephemeral, interventionist project in the introduction and final chapters of the first edition which were later dropped, but the bulk of the book which he kept – its political sociology of Argentina and entwined narrative of Quiroga – is free of this politicking and its ‘taint.’ But to make this claim, one would have to contend unsuccessfully with the fact that Sarmiento’s ‘low’ appeals to empire which I have enumerated in the final chapter did not so much trickle, as seamlessly flow out of the main body of the text. His argument that Rosas could be easily defeated, for example, was implicitly and repeatedly reinforced throughout the main narrative of Facundo Quiroga’s military journey through the civil warfare of the 1820s. The edifying narrations of General Paz’s simple victories over Quiroga’s *montonera* forces, for example, were meant to make the impression on French readers that their European troops could make short work of Rosas. As mentioned, Sarmiento introduced Paz as the incarnation of European-style soldiery in Argentina – his past victories over Quiroga were in this way the victories which France could now win over the gaucho soldiery of Rosas in 1845. Sarmiento put this implication beyond doubt, concluding, ‘Paz was the first general of the city to triumph over the pastoral element, because he put all the resources of European military art into play against it, directed by a mathematical mind. Intelligence vanquishes matter; art, numbers.’ French readers were meant to
take from this narrative the conclusion that their marines could overthrow Rosas as easily as General Paz had outdone Facundo Quiroga – France would not fall into the quagmire of anti-imperial insurgency they were then facing in Algeria.

But this was not the only way in which Sarmiento tried to encourage French intervention with the main body of *Facundo*. In fact, the fundamental conceptual project in *Facundo* – its above-analysed bifurcation of Argentine physical and social reality into Europe/Civilisation and the Orient/Barbarism – was also, I believe, Sarmiento’s most important move towards procuring French intervention in the crisis of 1845. With this dualism, as we have seen, he divided Argentina’s cities from its countryside, and split the inhabitants of each spatial zone from the other. Sarmiento partitioned Argentina between ‘civilization’ and ‘barbarism,’ conceived – through orientalist discourse – in terms of transnational communities, ‘Europe’ and ‘the Orient’. But the final ‘layer’ of this divide was contemporary Argentine politics. As mentioned, Sarmiento represented leading political figures as personifications of the social realities on either side of his border through the country. General Paz was Europe-in-Argentina, urban and (so) civilised; Quiroga was the Orient-in-Argentina. This relation was enabled by Sarmiento’s rigorous use of geographical determinism, probably representing its most extreme expression in *Facundo*. It also served to embed the two political tendencies of post-independence into the two sides of his transnational border through Argentina. The gaucho-based, caudillo-led element – linked but not equivalent to Federalism – was the political face of the Orient-in-Argentina, and the urban-based, liberal-led element – with a similar relationship to Unitarian politics – was the face of Europe-in-Argentina. In this way, the rift which *Facundo* imagined into early-nineteenth century Argentina was seamlessly mapped onto the 1845 political split between Rosas’ government and its exiled opponents.

Less directly than the promise of undoing tariffs or the forecast of Rosas’ easy defeat, but in a far more affective way, this textual cartography was meant to promote the step-up from blockade to invasion which Sarmiento so wanted France to take. It brought Sarmiento and his comrades into a common, transnational community with Frenchmen. The two groups were presented as one in the membership of a transatlantic ‘Europe.’ This presentation was meant to inflect both the French understanding of Rosas’ government, and the French reaction to it. Rather than an unimportant clash between indiscriminate factions in faraway South America, the advance of rural *caudillos* which Sarmiento narrated throughout *Facundo* was to be understood by Frenchmen as the gradual conquest of their fellow Europeans by the identitarian nemesis now manifest in the New World i.e. a trans-global ‘Orient.’ The political fissure in Argentina was thus the same, hemispheric, frontline as French colonial troops were then fighting to defend and extend in Algeria, and France should therefore be no less interested in the former than it was in the latter. Rosas was an Oriental *occupier* of European ‘frontiersmen,’ who therefore both needed and deserved liberation from their fellows in the Old World (the likeness to late-twentieth century Zionism’s self-presentation of Israel to the West is quite striking). In this way, Sarmiento was trying to mobilise both the love and hate then available in the idea of Europe/Civilisation and channel it against the Rosas government. These emotions were the affective power of the orientalist discourses compelling Frenchmen to advocate and perform monstrous excesses of violence in Algeria and elsewhere when *Facundo* was published.107 Indeed, the particular analogies
with which Sarmiento chose to trace the Europe-Orient border through Argentina were clearly supposed to evoke France’s own particular ‘front’ of this trans-global schism in the 1840s. References to the Emir Abdelkader, leader of Algerian resistance to the French empire, were frequent. Mehmet Ali, hegemon of Egypt and France’s principal ally in Ottoman politics, was also given several appearances in Facundo. For example, the way in which Argentine caudillos were often introduced to politics by civilised politicians was analysed to how, ‘the sultan granted Mehmet Ali investiture as pasha of Egypt, only to have to recognise him later on as hereditary king.’ The fame Rosas had acquired through challenging European empires had, ‘gone further than he could have expected, and without a doubt neither Mehmet Ali nor Abdelkader today enjoys a fame on earth more talked about than his.’ And, ‘the Bedouin hordes that today harass the Algerian border with their shouts and depredations give an exact idea of the Argentine montonera … the same struggle between civilisation and barbarism, of the cities and the desert, exists today in Africa; the same personages, the same spirit, the same undisciplined strategy.’ Sarmiento was extending the imperialist division of the Old World between Europe/Civilisation and the Orient/Barbarism to South America with Facundo, and he was doing so in a way which would make particular sense to Frenchmen. Where he might have referred to India or Afghanistan if writing for the English, Sarmiento used Maghrebi analogies such as these to heave the particularly French idea of the line between European civilisation and barbarism across the Atlantic, and through Argentina. The border between urban and rural Argentina was the exact same one which then ran, with immense violence, between French troops in coastal Algeria and Abdelkader’s soldiers further south. By mapping Argentina with the same ideological geography that French imperialists were then using to imagine the Maghreb, Sarmiento hoped to use Facundo to channel the emotions and violence of it against Rosas. If realised, this violence would give Sarmiento and his liberal clique control of the Argentine state.

The Struggle for ‘Europe’

This aspect of the intervention Sarmiento was trying to make with his divided cartography of Argentina was persuasive, not (just) emphatic. Its success pivoted on French readers accepting his idea of ‘Europe’ in Facundo, which was not an agreed concept in the 1840s. The spatial limits of ‘Europe’ have always been, and will probably always remain, hazy. Is Russia within or without? What of Turkey? Can ‘Europe’ be trans-Atlantic? Such ambiguities were severe in the nineteenth century, including for areas which have since established themselves within the more dominant image of ‘Europe.’ Maurizio Isabella makes this plain in the case of Greek and Italian patriots during the 1820s and 1830s, who struggled – with techniques very similar to Sarmiento – to have their nations recognised as within ‘Europe’ by northern Europeans who remained sceptical. Likewise, Cemil Aydin gives a good account of the increasingly beleaguered effort of Ottoman leaders over the nineteenth century to stretch the accepted, imaginary limit of ‘European Civilization’ so that it could include their Empire (de-Christianising the concept as they went).

Sarmiento was cognisant of this blurring around the edges which afflicted the concept of ‘Europe’ – and of how it left the Europeanness of the Hispanic world precarious in the
1840s. In his introduction to the first edition of *Facundo*, he dwelled at length on the peripheral status of Spain – let alone Spanish America – in ‘Europe’ as it was then understood. He wrote of ‘the problem of Spain:’ ‘that straggler behind Europe, which lying between the Mediterranean and the ocean, between the Middle Ages and the nineteenth century, united to cultured Europe by a broad isthmus and separated from barbarous Africa by a narrow strait, sways in the balance between two opposing forces.’\(^{115}\) As he wrote *Facundo*, Sarmiento was thus aware of the spatial uncertainty about contemporary ‘Europe’ and how Hispanics like his criollo self were teetering on the edge of it. But this was also a discursive opportunity. The conceptual instability of ‘Europe’ during the early-1800s enabled disparate yet plausible claims to inclusion, such as Sarmiento’s for urban Argentina, which the ascent of discourses like scientific racism and Latin Americanism rendered far more difficult by the end of the century.

Moreover, as well as needing to argue for a particular geometry of the border between Europe/Civilisation and the Orient/Barbarism, Sarmiento had to attribute a particular quality to it. Namely, he constructed the border as at once moveable, but moveable in such a way that Rosas needed to be displaced for Europe-in-Argentina to be extended across the whole country (and continent). In this way, Sarmiento pushed a variant of the orientalist weltanschauung alternative to versions which could be – and were being – used to justify the maintenance of Rosas in power. In one fatalist scheme, the border between Civilisation and Barbarism was unmovable. Barbaric peoples like those supposedly in rural Argentina were uncivilisable – the border could not be extended to incorporate them. This discourse could be used to justify either ethnic cleansing by the forces of Civilisation (a common resort of settler colonialism) or the need for ‘strongman’ rule in the areas of Barbarism. This latter argument was being pursued by Rosas with Britain in the 1840s and enjoyed considerable success in retaining British support for his increasingly authoritarian regime.\(^{116}\) Against this, Sarmiento counterposed a fundamentally civilisable Argentina – a frontier which could be extended. As mentioned, he argued that Rosas was all that stood between Argentina and a biblical flood of civilisation. He also claimed that gaucho barbarism could be civilised through the transformation of the Pampas from pastoral to agrarian agriculture and the colonisation of the interior with new cities populated by European immigrants.\(^{117}\) In this way, Sarmiento kept faith with his aforementioned geographical determinism by asserting, with a hubris typical of contemporary colonialism, the transformability of geography itself. But this image left the question of why Rosas needed to be removed? If the Orient-in-Argentina, gauchos and all, could be annexed to Europe-in-Argentina, why could Rosas not be as well? Sarmiento himself allowed that, ‘Buenos Aires is so powerful with elements of European civilization, that in the end it will educate Rosas and contain his bloody and barbarous instincts.’\(^{118}\) But *Facundo* argued in the opposite direction, as well, spending many excerpts on the irremediable quality of Rosas’s Barbarism.\(^{119}\) Moreover, there was a considered urgency to the text in its warning that Argentina’s interior cities would, without a liberal revolution soon, be destroyed beyond repair, which clearly implied the need for immediate regime change regardless of whether Rosas could be ‘civilised’ in the long-term.\(^{120}\) Whether or not this side of Sarmiento’s argument was congruous with his claims that Argentina could be brought within Civilisation – and whether the two together were effective – was a matter of reading.
This, then, was the relationship between the transnational bifurcation of Argentina in *Facundo* and Sarmiento’s project to urge the French blockaders of Buenos Aires to disembark and overthrow Rosas in 1845. His partition of Argentina into an antagonised ‘Europe’ and ‘Orient’ was to animate French emotions, and the quality he gave to the partition line was to narrow their viable outlet down to regime change. I am not, however, arguing that this was the only intention at work behind *Facundo* – such unity is surely impossible in a piece of thought so plural and complex. Nor am I arguing that Sarmiento’s Europeanism and partial Europeanisation of Argentina were wholly, or even mostly, ‘instrumental.’ There was perceptible emotion, if not fanaticism, in Sarmiento’s support for a European modernity. The horrific violence with which he put down gaucho and indigenous resistance as governor of San Juan and later as President of Argentina could only have been justified by a mind taken up in the merciless dream of ‘Europe.’ As Carlos Alonso wrote, ‘Sarmiento’s resolute embracing of modernity explains many of the calamitous policies that he pursued when as president he was in a position to translate that commitment to the modern into action.’

Sincerity and strategy do not, however, exclude one another. It is plausible that Sarmiento was both emotive and tactful in his call for the protection and extension of European Argentina by European empire.

**Conclusions**

This intervention has had two main aspects, de-canonising and re-categorising. In the first instance, I have tried to interpret *Facundo. Civilización y Barbarie* in an acutely historical way, in spite of its canonical reputation. As such, I have disavowed concern with the perennial, and even the thematic, to engage with *Facundo* as something momentary and ephemeral. From this view, the text appears to have been comprehensively (not exhaustively) shaped by the intention to promote the escalation of Anglo-French military pressure on Rosas’s government to fuller-scale intervention. Such a gritty imperative is concealed from or by the will to read *Facundo* as something of perennial meaning. Its implication in networks of imperial ‘collaboration’ is a special threat to the status of *national* classic. But this is not to say that this sense of threat is justified in truth. I have little personal concern with the aesthetic or normative status of *Facundo*. I have now reread the book too many times to be able to fully enjoy it and, more seriously, such unconcern is needed to attempt a properly anti-canonical reading. However, for the many who are so concerned, this does not mean that identifying the situated meaning of *Facundo* ‘lowers’ it as an intellectual object. As Edward Said observed, ‘to believe that politics in the form of imperialism bears upon the production of literature, scholarship, social theory, and history writing is by no means equivalent to saying that culture is therefore a demeaned or denigrated thing.’

Enabled and impelled by this de-canonising approach to *Facundo* is my re-categorisation of the text from an artefact of national imagination to one of transnational imagination. Once appreciated as an intervention meant to promote European material support for his anti-Rosista coalition from outside the Argentine, national space, it more easily becomes apparent that the construction of a transnational community, grouping ‘civili- sied’ Argentine and French and British people as ‘European’ was Sarmiento’s chosen means for doing so. Moreover, at several, important moments of the text, this
transnational community was proposed at the expense of the coherence of any national, Argentine one. Domingo Sarmiento’s *Facundo*, then, might at least also be placed in the archive of the history of the transnational idea of ‘Europe.’ And this suggests the pressing need to better globalise the historiography of that idea. Despite its origins being partly located in the critical thought of postcolonialism, the intellectual history of ‘Europe’ continues to be circumscribed by a distinct parochialism. In particular, it regularly fails to account for the ‘non-European’ history of the concept. Whereas there is a long and useful recognition of thinkers from outside of regions like Latin America taking part in the imagination of those regions, there has been no equivalent reckoning with the non-Europeans – like Sarmiento – who have imagined ‘Europe.’ This is why the route by which *Facundo* could have entered the intellectual history of transnational thought earlier – the history of ‘Europe’ as an imagined place and community – has been closed to it. Eurocentric routines of study in the field have for too long insisted that ‘Europe,’ alone among the regions of the world, has only been invented from within.

Related to this new image of Sarmiento as (re)constructing ‘Europe’ from its margins while French and British gunboats blockaded Buenos Aires is a closing suggestion for the historiography of trans-, non-, and anti-national imaginaries. Namely, whereas the clash between imperial power and the formally postcolonial states of Latin America has typically been regarded as – and was in fact – a crucible for the development of their nationalism (the propaganda of the blockaded Rosas government being an excellent example), it could at the same time stimulate the imagination of certain, non-national communities among those, like Sarmiento, who sought to form coalitions with imperial power for their own, local priorities. With the Manichean nineteenth century discourse of Civilisation/Barbarism as an archetype, the modern ideologies of imperial powers historically involved in this sort of intervention have frequently had a transnational and/or universalist dimension (consider languages of ‘the West,’ and ‘the Free World,’ in use by the US-led bloc during the twentieth century Cold War). To a degree, this feature is almost structural for empires, given their need to legitimate rule over acknowledged plurality. So, anchoring many languages of empire has been some sort of a legitimised and legitimising, transnational place – ‘Europe,’ ‘the West,’ ‘Greater Britain,’ etc. In trying to secure the active support of such empires from outside their formal frontiers, then, the move by actors like Sarmiento to reimagine these places to include more people and space has often made obvious, strategic, as well as affective, sense. Perhaps, then, the historiography of such imperial languages stands to gain from studying how they have been used and reinvented from without the formal borders of their associated empires by those, like Domingo Sarmiento, who have seen imperial designs on their countries as more opportunity than danger.

**Notes**

1. Sarmiento, “Facundo: civilización y barbarie,” 528.
2. For an excellent account of the reception history of the text, see: Sorensen, Facundo and the construction of Argentine culture.
3. de la Fuente, “Los comentaristas del *Facundo* y sus prejuicios: Respuesta a Adriana Amante y a Elias Palti”. For the contributions of de la Fuente’s interlocutors to this controversy, see: Amante, “Sarmiento y sus precursores”; Palti, “*Facundo* y la ‘ansiedad de las influencias’.”
4. Hernández, *Martín Fierro*. 


5. Sorensen, Facundo and the Construction of Argentine Culture, 13.
6. Ludmer, El género gauchesco: un tratado sobre la patria, 22.
7. Donghi, ed., Author of a Nation.
8. For some instances of this tendency, consider Sabato, Republics of the New World, Dunkerley, ed., Studies in the Formation of the Nation-State in Latin America; Castro-Klarén and Chasteen, eds, Beyond Imagined Communities.
9. For an impressive collection of these revisionist scholars, see: Castron-Klarén and Chasteen, eds, Beyond Imagined Communities.
10. Sarmiento was conscious of this politically charged view of him being pushed by his rivals, not least the government of Juan Manuel de Rosas in Buenos Aires, when he wrote Facundo in 1845. About the attitude of other South American governments to the struggle of Sarmiento and his allies against Rosas, he wrote:

The other American peoples … exclaim, full of indignation: ‘Those Argentineans are very friendly with the Europeans!’ as they watch, indifferently and impassively, the struggle of an Argentine party and its alliance with any European element that offers assistance. And the tyrant of the Argentine Republic [Rosas] officiously takes it upon himself to complete their sentence, adding: ‘Traitors to the American cause!’ Sarmiento, Facundo, 531.

11. Eduardo Galeano described Sarmiento’s ideology as ‘antipatriotism clearly tinged with political economy.’ Galeano, Open Veins of Latin America, 187.
12. Shawcross, “When Montevideo was French.”
13. Bollig, “Africa Under Erasure.”
14. Zumaglini, “Cosmopolitan Imperialism.”
15. Hooker, Theorising Race in the Americas, 67–110.
16. He used this in reference to Henry Shue’s 1980 work, Basic Rights: Subsistence, affluence, and US foreign policy: Moyn, “The Doctor's Plot.”
17. As such, for example, I will not be dwelling on Viajes, which would be an essential stop if I was analysing the longue-durée rather than the momentary.
18. Consider, for an example, Simón Bolívar’s extensive use of the trope of ‘oriental despotism’ in Bolívar, “The Jamaica Letter,” 19.
19. The state of Argentina at this point was a Confederation (as of 1831), and remained so until being reconstituted as a federal republic by the Constitution of 1853, after the overthrow of Rosas. A more detailed account of Argentine politics during this period comes in the later section, ‘In the Grit.’
20. Sarmiento, “Facundo: civilización y barbarie,” 763.
21. Ibid., 560.
22. For a compelling account of this discourse, read: Mehta, Liberalism and Empire.
23. Examples here include Altamirano, “El orientalismo y la idea del despotismo en el Facundo”; Cicerchia, “Journey to the Centre of the Earth”; Barrenechea, “Función estética y significación histórica de las campañas pastoras en el Facundo”; Piglia, “Notas sobre Facundo”; Ramos, Divergent Modernities.
24. Said, Orientalism, 7.
25. Altamirano, “El orientalismo y la idea del despotismo en el Facundo,” 11.
26. Piglia, “Notas sobre Facundo,” 17.
27. Ramos, Divergent Modernities, 6.
28. Sarmiento, Facundo, 766.
29. Ibid., 763.
30. Anderson, Imagined Communities, 141.
31. Ibid., 7.
32. Sarmiento, Facundo, 763.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid., 531.
35. Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds do astutely observe how,
paradoxically, one outcome of Anderson’s argument has been to naturalise the nation as the imagined community of modern times, an effect that has obscured the ascendency of transnational and racial identifications and their potency in shaping both personal identity and global politics.

Quoted in: Mills, “Race and Global Justice.”

36. Ibid., 763.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid., 573.
39. Ibid., 552.
40. Moyn and Sartori, “Approaches to Global Intellectual History,” 16–17.
41. Kurtz, Latin American State Building in Comparative Perspective, 104.
42. Sarmiento, *Facundo*, 546.
43. For a solid account of Sarmiento’s political alliance with *Porteño* secessionists against the presidency of Justo José de Urquiza (1854–60) see Katra, *The Argentine Generation of 1837*, 189–201.
44. For a fuller exposition of Sarmiento’s admiration for the interior cities, see Salomon, “El *Facundo*: manifiesto de la preburguesía argentina en las ciudades del interior.”
45. Sarmiento, *Facundo*, 686–687.
46. Ibid., 707–709.
47. Ibid., 610–611.
48. The only foray Sarmiento ever made into the Arab world was a lightning visit to French-occupied Algeria in 1849, which he recorded in his well-known collection of travel writing. See Sarmiento, *Viajes*, in Obras Se\'lectas.
49. For Edward Said’s take on the reality of ‘the Orient’, see *Orientalism*, 4–5.
50. Sarmiento, *Facundo*, 580.
51. Ibid., 600.
52. Ibid., 611.
53. Ibid., 763.
54. Ibid., 576.
55. Ibid., 552.
56. Pagden, “Europe: Conceptualising a Continent,” 39–40.
57. Sarmiento, *Facundo*, 554.
58. Ibid.
59. Ibid., 555.
60. Ibid.
61. Ibid., 553.
62. Ibid., 535.
63. Ibid., 664.
64. Ibid. 657.
65. Moyn gives a nice overview of this defensive instinct towards non-linguistic contextualism – recurrent among intellectual historians and philosophers across a number of contexts – in the essay, Moyn, “Imaginary Intellectual History.”
66. Sorensen, *Facundo and the Construction of Argentine Culture*, 28–29.
67. Adelman, *Sovereignty and Revolution in the Iberian Atlantic*, 369.
68. Two of the best discussions of this tension over sovereignty in Spanish American republicanism are found in *Revolution and Sovereignty*, and Sabato’s introduction to *Republics of the New World*.
69. For an account of the *montoneras*’ importance to the victory over Spain, see McFarlane, *War and Independence in Spanish America*; and for an account of the *caudillo* phenomenon in early-nineteenth century Spanish America, see Lynch, *Caudillos in Spanish America, 1800–1850*.
70. José Artigas, a *caudillo* from the Banda Oriental (modern Uruguay), included the most far-reaching vision of social reform to come out of the South American wars of independence in
his 1814–20 federalist challenge to Buenos Aires. See Adelman, *Revolution and Sovereignty*, 281–283.

71. The political story of Argentina and its neighbours during the early-nineteenth century is, even at the steadiest times, difficult to keep track of. Tulio Halperín Donghi offers a useful guide through the labyrinth in Donghi, *Politics, Economy and Society in Argentina in the Revolutionary Period*.

72. Kurtz, *Latin American State Building in Comparative Perspective*, 110.

73. Katra, *Generation of 1837*, 158–179.

74. Sarmiento develops this point most comprehensively in *Facundo* with the penultimate chapter, 'Unitarian Government', 731–757.

75. Sarmiento, *Facundo*, 638.

76. Katra, *The Argentine Generation of 1837*, 731–757.

77. For an evergreen account of Rousseau’s influence in Spanish American around the turn of the nineteenth century, consider Miller, “Reading Rousseau in Spanish America during the Wars of Independence (1808–1826).”

78. This was not as clean a split as Sarmiento sometimes implied. He was, for instance, decisively influenced by the eighteenth century thought of Montesquieu.

79. Sarmiento, *Facundo*, 633–634.

80. Echevarría, “*Facundo*: An Introduction,” 8.

81. Katra, *Generation of 1837*, 70–76.

82. Sarmiento, *Facundo*, 528–529.

83. Sorensen, *Facundo and the construction of Argentine culture*, 36.

84. Sarmiento, *Facundo*, 560.

85. A useful narrative of this rising tension between Rosas and the empires can be found in Ferns, *Britain and Argentina in the Nineteenth Century*, 240–273.

86. Ibid.

87. Sarmiento, *Facundo*, 531–532 and 766–767.

88. For a brilliantly useful overview of Britain’s informal imperialism in nineteenth century Latin America, consult the classic, Gallagher and Robinson, “The Imperialism of Free Trade.”

89. Fern, *Britain and Argentina*, 240–245.

90. Katra, *Generation of 1837*, 77–84.

91. Ferns, *Britain and Argentina*, 279–280.

92. Katra, *Generation of 1837*, 109.

93. Sarmiento, *Facundo*, 757–783.

94. Ibid., 776.

95. Ibid., 778.

96. Ibid., 771.

97. Ferns, *Britain and Argentina*, 259.

98. Sarmiento, *Facundo*, 779.

99. Ibid., 779–780.

100. For an account of how Tocqueville saw major public endeavours – for him, the French conquest of Algeria – as a means to elusive unity and stability in modern societies, see: Pitts, *A Turn to Empire*, 204–239.

101. Ibid., 780.

102. Sarmiento, *Facundo*, 540.

103. Ibid., 541.

104. An account of the overthrow of Rosas by Justo José Urquiza’s rebellion can be found in Katra, *Generation of 1837*, 148–151.

105. Paz’s great victory in *Facundo* was at Oncativo (1830). Sarmiento, *Facundo*, 676–678.

106. Ibid., 680.

107. For instances of the barbarity which ‘civilized’ Frenchmen as lofty as Tocqueville were willing to excuse in mid-century Algeria, see de Tocqueville, “Essay on Algeria.”

108. Sarmiento, *Facundo*, 580.
109. Ibid., 755.
110. Ibid., 585.
111. In *Facundo*, and especially later in his life, Sarmiento also analogised the border between Civilisation and Barbarism in Argentina to that through the United States in his reading of Fennimore Cooper (Sarmiento already saw the US and Argentina as significantly analogical political communities, positioned on the border between the two, opposed halves of the world as it ran through the Americas, but the ‘colour’ of the border as he drew it in *Facundo* is overwhelmingly ‘French,’ for the reason I am outlining. For an instance of Sarmiento analogising habits in the Argentine Pampas to the indigenous people in *The Last of the Mohicans*, see: Sarmiento, *Facundo*, 560–1.

112. John Pocock is an excellent exponent of this point. See Pocock, “Some Europes in Their History,” 56–62.

113. Isabella, *Risorgimento in Exile*.

114. Aydin, “Globalising the Intellectual History of the Idea of the ‘Muslim World’.”

115. Sarmiento, *Facundo*, 529.

116. Ferns, *Britain and Argentina*, 259.

117. Sarmiento, *Facundo*, 782; A strong account of Sarmiento’s transformative vision for rural Argentina is to be found in Carvalho, “La utopía identitaria en Argirópolis de Domingo F. Sarmiento.”

118. Sarmiento, *Facundo*, 587–588.

119. Defending the anti-Rosistas’ continued struggle against Rosas, he asks in the introduction, ‘is it in our power to do anything other than what we are doing, no more nor less than Rosas cannot stop being what he is?’, Ibid., 532.

120. In his chapter on the Revolution of 1810, Sarmiento reported how, with the triumph of the caudillos, “every form of civil life – even the way the Spanish practiced it – had disappeared, totally from some areas, in a partial way from other, but visibly moving toward its destruction.” Only the survival of Buenos Aires could be guaranteed. Ibid., 587.

121. For an account of Sarmiento’s monstrous repression of the Federalist rebellion under Ángel Vicente Peñaloza, see Katra, *Generation of 1837*, 242–248.

122. Alonso, *The Burden of Modernity*, 62.

123. NB: This is not the only way to approach *Facundo*, or any text, anti-canonically. Besides the attribution of perennial meaning, there are several features of canonisation which can lead to ahistorical interpretations – see Ariel de la Fuente’s challenge to the supposed originality of *Facundo* in the introduction.

124. Said, *Orientalism*, 14.

125. Ibid.

126. See: Tenorio-Trillo, *Latin America*.

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