

Facundo: An Introduction

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Sarmiento's *Facundo*, published in 1845, is the first Latin American classic and the most important book written by a Latin American in any discipline or genre. Fame has granted it the privilege of a one-word title, but the book was originally called, in Sarmiento's idiosyncratic spelling, *Civilización i barbarie: La vida de Juan Facundo Quiroga, i aspecto físico, costumbres, i ábitos de la República Arjentina* (Civilization and barbarism: The life of Juan Facundo Quiroga, and the physical aspect, customs, and practices of the Argentine Republic), and in its first English translation, *Life in the Argentine Republic in the Days of the Tyrants*.¹ For the same reason, tradition bypasses its author's unwieldy names—Domingo Faustino—in favor of his sufficient and resonant surname, Sarmiento. *Facundo* is a work that survives its critics; it seems immune to historical changes, intellectual fashions, and literary movements. It absorbs them into its own discourse and figures. To criticize Sarmiento is easy, even facile, but it is impossible to ignore him. *Facundo* thrives through its stylistic flaws, its cavalier deployment of sources, its errors, and its aura of improvisation. All these contribute to the work's vitality, to the reader's sense that the book is alive, making itself as he or she turns the pages.

1. Sarmiento aimed at simplifying Spanish spelling, eliminating the *y*, which represents the same sound as the *i* and has been kept in the language for historical reasons. He did not succeed, but his effort reveals his pedagogical vocation and his willingness to renovate language and tradition. Notice that Facundo Quiroga's whole name is Juan Facundo Quiroga. I will refer to him as Facundo Quiroga, which is how he was generally known, and to the book as *Facundo*.

Among other reasons, *Facundo* is still read because in it Sarmiento created a voice for the modern Latin American author, which is also why Latin American authors struggle with its legacy, rewriting *Facundo* in their works even as they try to untangle themselves from its discourse.

An inventory of *Facundo*'s contributions to Latin American thought and literature is impressive indeed.² In proposing the dialectic between civilization and barbarism as the central conflict in Latin American culture it gave shape to a polemic that began in the colonial period and continues to the present day in various guises (the latest being the vapid debate about globalization). In its account of the origins of Juan Manuel de Rosas's tyranny in Argentina, *Facundo* set the bases for the understanding of dictatorship in Latin America and created in the dictator himself one of the most enduring literary figures to emerge from the area. A whole series of "dictator novels," from Miguel Angel Asturias's *El señor presidente* (1946) to Mario Vargas Llosa's *Feast of the Goat* (2000), attests to its continuing vitality. By establishing a determining link between the Argentine landscape and its culture and political development, *Facundo* set the bases for the study of the uniqueness of Latin American culture in terms of its own specific geographical setting. In this regard, *Doña Bárbara* (1929), the classic regionalist novel by the Venezuelan Rómulo Gallegos, can be read as an allegory of *Facundo*. By expressing the grandeur of its landscape and the struggle to represent it, Sarmiento created the voice of the modern Latin American author as a response to an exceptional American reality. The Venezuelan Andrés Bello, the Cuban José María Heredia, and a few others had already provided hints of this, but they were corseted by neoclassical poetics, while Sarmiento, a romantic, wrote, untrammelled by the demands of form, a majestic work that belongs to many genres and to none at the same time—it is essay, biography, autobiography, novel, epic, memoir, confession, political pamphlet, diatribe, scientific treatise, travelogue. But it is mostly Sarmiento's powerful voice, infused by the sublimity of the boundless Pampas, that rings through and true in *Facundo*, a

2. By far the best criticism of Sarmiento is contained in the collective volume *Sarmiento: Author of a Nation*, ed. Tulio Halperín Donghi, Iván Jaksic, Gwen Kirkpatrick, and Francine Masiello (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994). The book covers the entire spectrum of Sarmiento's writings, preceded by an incisive historical précis by Halperín Donghi. More recently, Diana Sorensen Goodrich has provided an intelligent rereading of *Facundo* in the light of current theories on literature and nation-building in her *Facundo and the Construction of Argentine Culture* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996).

voice that will be echoed by the major poetic and fictional works by Latin Americans, from Pablo Neruda's *Canto general* (1950) to Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967). Sarmiento is to Latin American literature what Walt Whitman is to American literature: a voice that in singing about itself sings America's song.

Though a reader of *Facundo* might leave the book thinking that the Pampas comprise all of Argentina, the reality is quite another. Stretching north to south, roughly twenty-three hundred miles and east to west about eight hundred miles at its widest, Argentina covers more than a million square miles.³ This is an area equivalent to that of the United States east of the Mississippi, with California and one or more mid-western states added—only Brazil is larger in South America. In the south, Cape Horn reaches down to the frigid waters of the Antarctic, and in the north there are subtropical areas at the foot of the Bolivian Andes—the south is cold and the north warm, in what to the reader from the Northern Hemisphere must seem like a world upside down. In between its northern and southern extremes Argentina displays a broad range of climate and terrain: the dry wastelands of Patagonia in the south, the desertlike regions to the west, all the way to the imposing Andes, which separate Argentina from Chile. In the northwest are forests and sugarcane fields that stretch into Bolivia and Paraguay. But the Pampas, 250,000 square miles encircling the capital of Buenos Aires, are indeed the core of the country both materially and in the myths that make up the Argentine nation—*Facundo* contributed to this in no small measure. These immense, fertile plains, rich in pastures that give sustenance to the country's huge cattle population, also produce most of the corn, wheat, and flax.

Its optimistic first explorers named the estuary of the River Plate "Río de la Plata"—river of silver—and the area around it "Argentina," land of silver (from the Latin *argentum*), yet they found neither that metal nor gold in the area. Quick riches, like those yielded by Mexico and Peru, were not available in what became Argentina, so it languished, for most of the colonial period, as a dependency of faraway, tramontane Lima. In fact, the original settlers moved east into the region from Peru and Chile to found the first Argentine cities: Santiago del Estero (1553),

3. This elementary sketch of Argentina, intended for the nonspecialized reader, should be supplemented with the work of historians like Halperin Donghi. Facts and statistics—approximations in most cases—are drawn from conventional reference works.

Mendoza (1561), San Juan (1562), Tucumán (1564), and Córdoba (1573). An expedition from inland Asunción founded Buenos Aires in 1580 (the first settlement, in 1536, did not last long). This geopolitical configuration favored the cities in the interior rather than Buenos Aires, which was neglected by the Spanish and left to conduct illegal trade with smugglers. To reach Lima, and from it the rest of the Spanish empire, Buenos Aires goods had to travel west, through the cities of the interior, which levied heavy taxes upon them. It was a long, expensive trek. *Porteños*, or citizens of the port of Buenos Aires, grew to mistrust those in the provinces, and, disconnected from Spain, sought economic progress and cultural inspiration from elsewhere in Europe, mostly England and France. The divide between the interior and the capital, fundamental to Sarmiento's interpretation of Argentine culture, widened as a result.

Because of this fragmentation, Argentina achieved independence in a state of political turbulence, divided against itself. While it was the *porteños* who founded the Republic on May 25, 1810, it was not until July 9, 1816, at the Congress of Tucumán, that the formal break from Spain was declared and the "United Provinces of South America" proclaimed. This was the second misnomer applied to Argentina, for united these provinces certainly were not. Various groups from the interior refused to accept the leadership of Buenos Aires, and *porteños* looked down on the provinces, which seemed backward and out of touch with modern ideas, customs, and fashions. The decades that followed saw the split acquire political shape in the conflict between two parties: the Unitarists, who favored a centralized national government with its seat in Buenos Aires, and the Federalists, who championed the independence of the various provinces or regions. The Unitarists were cultured, European-oriented, and had a vision of the nation as a cohesive political unit derived from the Enlightenment and the founders of U.S. independence. The Federalists, by the very nature of their convictions, were factional even among themselves. They were led by the caudillos, or local bosses, who had emerged during the Wars of Independence from Spain.⁴ Originally they were gauchos, whose power and appeal lay in their attachment to the land and to their intimate familiarity with the regions and people they commanded.

4. *Caudillo*, from the Latin *capitellum*, the diminutive of *caput*, or "head," means a commander or chief, according to Joan Corominas, *Diccionario crítico etimológico castellano e hispánico* (Madrid: Gredos, 1980), vol. 1, p. 928. *Caudillismo*, or the dictatorship of military leaders like Batista, Somoza, and Castro, is one of the characteristics of Latin American politics and has been extensively studied.

The reader will find in *Facundo* the most compelling description of the gaucho ever written.⁵ Suffice it to say here that gauchos were nomadic inhabitants of the Pampas whose culture centered on horsemanship, self-reliance, stoicism, and contentment. The gauchos did not want to be anything else, feeling in fact a mixture of pity and scorn for city folk and their ways. Nature provided plentifully for the gauchos' needs, which were few, and they knew how to defend themselves from its threats—like jaguars and isolation—and from those who would “civilize” them (by conscripting them into the army, for instance). They revelled in their defiant solitude. The limitless plains and fabulously abundant cattle gave them meat and hides to barter or sell, and to make ropes, saddles, and other tools of their trade. Very much like the American cowboy, the gaucho wanted to be left alone. When the Wars of Independence came he fought against the Spanish because he was always spoiling for a fight against any authority, and mostly because he was forcibly conscripted into the army as a vagrant.⁶ After independence he followed his regional leaders in the civil wars that followed, against other caudillos and against centralized government. By 1819 the caudillos, with their bands of gauchos, were in control of much of the countryside. Estanislao López ruled in Santa Fe, José Santos Ramírez in Entre Ríos, Martín Güemes in Salta, Bernabé Aráoz in Tucumán, Facundo Quiroga in San Juan and La Rioja, and Rosas in Buenos Aires province. These caudillos were united in their disdain for the city of Buenos Aires and its Unitarists, but were hardly each others' friends. In February 1820, gaucho armies from the provinces of Santa Fe and Entre Ríos overpowered the *porteño* forces, led by José Rondeau, in the Battle of Cepeda. By 1829 the caudillos had installed one of their own in power: Juan Manuel de Rosas, boss of the province of Buenos Aires, became ruler of the whole country. Ironically, he gained power as a Federalist defender of provincial autonomy but was toppled in 1852 because he had forced upon the provinces a centralist rule more unbending than the Unitarists had hoped for. His tyranny, based on a personality cult, absolute fealty displayed in a panoply of icons and symbols to be publicly worshiped,

5. The most compelling and original study of the gaucho in Argentine literature is Josefina Ludmer's *El género gauchesco*, now available in English: *The Gaucho Genre: A Treatise on the Motherland*, trans. Molly Weigel (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2002). A summary of the book's arguments can be found in “The Gaucho Genre,” in *The Cambridge History of Latin American Literature*, ed. Roberto González Echevarría and Enrique Pupo-Walker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), vol. 1, pp. 608–31.

6. Ludmer (in *El género gauchesco*) has brilliantly linked the gaucho's conscription with the appropriation of his “voice” by literature to create a national discourse.

and the merciless persecution of real and perceived dissidents, became the blueprint for Latin American dictatorships, including the whole sorry string of caudillos up to, in the present, Fidel Castro. One of the theories about the murder of Facundo Quiroga in Barranca-Yaco, where he was ambushed and shot, is that Rosas had him killed to eliminate a potential rival. Rosas was a caudillo of caudillos and Sarmiento's foe and foil. In the process, another irony, Sarmiento immortalized him in *Facundo*.

But caudillos and gauchos were by no means the only forces in Argentina. The country's economy, particularly that of Buenos Aires, improved with the ability to export the products of the cattle industry, mostly beef and hides, made possible by developments in preservation and shipping. As Buenos Aires grew it became one of the most important cultural centers in the New World and the most European of Latin American cities. A new generation of writers and intellectuals came to the fore in the 1830s, just as Rosas was assuming power. They rebelled by creating the *Salón Literario* in 1835 and, two years later, the "Association of May" (a reference to the May 1810 founding of the Republic), both institutions dedicated to overthrowing the dictator. European-educated and sophisticated to a fault, this group included Esteban Echeverría, a romantic poet and fiction writer, who wrote (but did not publish) in his short story "The Slaughterhouse" one of the most stinging indictments of Rosas's regime.⁷ José Mármol, another prose writer and poet, published *Amalia* (1851), a widely read novel and a Latin American classic, which was also against Rosas. Other prominent members of the group were Bartolomé Mitre, a historian and a translator of Dante's *Divine Comedy*, who founded *La Nación*, one of the best newspapers in Latin America, which is still being published. Mitre eventually became president of the Republic. A political analyst and jurist, Juan Bautista Alberdi, wrote a pamphlet, *Bases para la organización política de la confederación argentina* (Bases for the political organization of the Argentine Federation), which influenced greatly the Constitution that was drafted in 1853 after the fall of Rosas. An admirer of the United States and England, Alberdi's social program was to foster European immigration to Argentina to people the vast expanses of rich, uninhabited lands. His motto was "gobernar es poblar," to govern is to populate.

Although a provincial from western San Juan province, hence not a

7. I included a translation of the story in my *Oxford Book of Latin American Short Stories* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 59–72.

member of this *porteño* elite, Sarmiento belongs to the group because of the affinity of his ideas with theirs as well as his untiring campaigns against Rosas. He too rose to the presidency, succeeding Mitre in 1868. Sarmiento was the best writer of them all and the one who left the most enduring literary works, particularly *Facundo*. Born on February 15, 1811, he was the fifth child and only son of a formerly comfortable family, now in economic decline, that encouraged him to read and educate himself.⁸ This he did with unflinching devotion, first as an unruly but brilliant pupil in the Escuela de la Patria, in his native San Juan. This school, started by a Unitarist governor of Buenos Aires, was directed by two brothers, Ignacio Fermín and José Jenaro Rodríguez. Young Domingo Faustino was in the school from its inception in 1816 until its closing, because of political upheavals, in 1825. He was then tutored by his uncle, the priest José de Oro, with whom he learned Latin, Spanish grammar, and read the Bible. In his rich 1850 memoir, *Recuerdos de provincia* (Remembrances of provincial life), Sarmiento recalls fondly this teacher, to whom he owed many things, he said, most relevantly for his authorship of *Facundo* an enduring interest in the country's customs and traditions. Probably because of his haphazard instruction, the education of the young became Sarmiento's most abiding vocation, and for all his accomplishments in literature and politics, he is mostly revered today in Argentina as a model teacher.

His initiation into politics was early and painful. At sixteen, a member of the provincial militia by force, he was jailed for insubordination. He later joined the Unitarist bands fighting against regional boss Facundo Quiroga and was captured and sentenced to house arrest in San Juan. After four months he managed to escape to Chile, his first of several forced sojourns in that country, where even though he was a foreigner he was to have enormous influence. Sarmiento returned to San Juan after two months, when fighting against Facundo Quiroga resumed, but the caudillo again prevailed and Sarmiento returned to Chile with his father and a substantial group of Unitarists. For the next five years he taught reading at an elementary school, was a clerk at a store in Valparaíso, studied English so he could read Sir Walter Scott, was foreman at a mine, and fathered an illegitimate child, Emilia Faustina, in 1832. (His daughter, raised by Sarmiento's mother, provided much solace to him in his declining years.) Upon learning of Facundo Quiroga's

8. I follow, in the main, Allison Williams Bunkley's plodding but useful biography, *The Life of Sarmiento* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1952).

murder in 1836, Sarmiento returned to his native San Juan, where he founded a school for young ladies, the Colegio de Santa Rosa de América. He also founded a newspaper, *El Zonda*, whose editorials reflected the democratic ideals of the Association of May. The new Federalist governor of the province, not taking kindly to these activities, closed the newspaper and imprisoned Sarmiento in 1840 under the charge of conspiracy. By November 18 of that year, barely surviving a Federalist lynch mob, Sarmiento crossed the Andes back to Chile.

Sarmiento's second exile in Chile was the most productive, and marks the period in which he came into his own as a writer, intellectual, and political figure. He was named editor of *El Mercurio*, in Valparaíso, and in Santiago founded *El Nacional*—both of which were important newspapers. Sarmiento continued his blistering and unrelenting attacks on Rosas, who tried unsuccessfully to get him extradited to Argentina, and wrote *Facundo*, first serialized in local newspapers and then published as a book in 1845. He also published *Travels through Europe, Africa, and America* and wrote *Remembrances of Provincial Life*. *Travels* was the result of his trips through Spain, France, England, Algiers, and the United States, a journey he undertook to study developments in education. It was also a pretext by his Chilean friends to get Sarmiento out of their hair for a while, since his presence attracted protests from the Argentine government for his persistent tirades against the regime. Full of himself, immoderate in his habits, exuding energy, Sarmiento had not endeared himself to many Chileans, who called him Don Yo ("Mr. Me," or "Mr. Ego"). Having a large head and the neck of a bull and being increasingly corpulent, Sarmiento was a presence to reckon with, so his hosts encouraged his going away. But the journey was indeed an education in itself, which had a lasting impact on Sarmiento. The United States fascinated him because he saw many parallels between it and Argentina (as is evident in *Facundo*)—vast territorial expanses to be populated and turned productive. Sarmiento found a model in Benjamin Franklin, whose autobiography he loved, and wrote incisively about Lincoln.⁹ He admired the American school system, particularly as conceived by Horace Mann, the Massachusetts lawyer, poli-

9. In 1866 a *Vida de Abrahán Lincoln, décimo sexto presidente de los Estados Unidos* was published by Appleton in New York. It consisted of a series of journalistic pieces about Lincoln stitched together and translated into Spanish, with a long introduction by Sarmiento. I am using the second edition, published the same year. Sarmiento transposes the conflicts that brought about the Civil War in the United States to Argentina and its own, to him, similar circumstances and problems.

tician, and educator whom he befriended. Mrs. Mann (née Mary Peabody) was to publish in 1868 the first, and until the present one the only, English translation of *Facundo*. Many of the ideas he learned in the United States during this trip, and later during his three-year stint as Argentine minister plenipotentiary to Washington, he tried to adapt to his native country.

In 1848, Sarmiento returned to Chile for his third exile there, which was to last until 1851, when he heard of Justo José de Urquiza's rebellion against Rosas and hurried to Uruguay to join the insurgents. In the three years of exile he continued his campaign against the tyrant and wrote extensively about what he had seen in his travels and about European immigration to South America, which he saw as the solution to the ills of the new countries. Following Alberdi, Sarmiento did not fail to put this plan, which became his hobbyhorse, into practice during his presidency. But that would have to wait, because once the dictator was toppled and Urquiza assumed power, he slighted Sarmiento, who returned to Chile to lick his wounds. But he came back in 1855 to edit a newspaper, to serve as senator in the provincial legislature, and to run the school system in the provinces with great success. Once Urquiza was disposed of in 1862 and Mitre assumed the presidency, Sarmiento's star rose again. He became governor of his native province of San Juan, where he improved the schools and fought effective campaigns against the new caudillo, Angel Vicente Peñaloza, "El Chacho." Wary of his rival's triumphs, Mitre sent Sarmiento to Washington in 1865 as minister to the United States. When he returned to Buenos Aires in 1868, Sarmiento discovered that he had been elected president of Argentina.

Sarmiento's six-year term (1868–74) was marked by reform and progress, albeit some of it controversial. He completed Mitre's campaign to eliminate the caudillos and won the Paraguayan war. In 1869 he organized and carried out the first census, which yielded the following results: the total population was 1,800,000, with 500,000 in the province of Buenos Aires and 178,000 in the capital city. Of the total population, 212,000 were born abroad, mostly in Spain and Italy. Sarmiento accepted the racialist "science" of his time, with its theories about Caucasian superiority and its corollary programs of social engineering. True to these now discredited but long-held ideas, Sarmiento believed that European immigration was the key to eradicate what he called barbarism; he was impressed by the effect of such immigration on the United States and therefore he systematically promoted it during his presidency. During his term, 280,000 Europeans came to settle in Argentina.

Sarmiento's years in office coincided with developments in science and industry that he enthusiastically, undeniably successfully, imported to Argentina. He had a decisive impact on communications, increasing telegraph lines, linking Buenos Aires to Europe via a transatlantic cable, and extending railroad construction, thereby making uninhabited regions available for settlement. Agriculture was modernized, an academy of sciences was founded, exploration of the national territory was fostered to discover new resources, and a national observatory was established. Training schools were set up for the army and navy, and a national library commission made books available to public libraries, nearly one hundred of which were founded during Sarmiento's term. Because education continued to be Sarmiento's passion, school-building and teacher-training programs were high on his list of priorities. Educational facilities and school enrollment nearly doubled during his term, reaching figures far ahead of any Latin American country at the time. Sarmiento even brought sixty-three women teachers from the United States, chosen by Mrs. Horace Mann, to set up teachers schools in Argentina.

Nicolás Avellaneda, Sarmiento's youthful, frail, but effective minister of education, followed him in the presidency, having defeated Mitre in contested and divisive elections. Mitre revolted, and then was jailed and nearly executed. The transfer of power was a harbinger of evils that would beset Argentine politics in the future. Sarmiento served as senator during Avellaneda's presidency, was in charge of schools in the province of Buenos Aires, and became editor of *La Nación*. Under Julio Argentino Roca, the next president, he ran the country's schools and continued writing tirelessly. The state published his complete works, fifty-three volumes in all, during the last years of his life. Sarmiento died, at seventy-seven years of age, in 1888.

Few men have had a greater impact on their country's founding, both materially and intellectually. With *Facundo* in particular, Sarmiento had given Argentina a national discourse, a set of ideas and figures through which the country could think itself—a phenomenology of its spirit, as it were. The book is, among many other things, a modern national epic, cast in elevated romantic prose. Sarmiento's invocation of Facundo Quiroga's ghost, whom he asks to help him explain the internal convulsions and secret life of the motherland, is Homeric in its grandeur.

If *Facundo* began as a series of articles against Rosas published in a Chilean newspaper, hence as a political pamphlet, the book's intended form

was probably that of a scientific treatise, or at least something like the report of a scientific traveler.¹⁰ This is what determines its outer form: the beginning is a description of the land, which leads up to a description of the people within it, their customs and social organizations, and finally to the main specimen to be analyzed, Facundo Quiroga. From general to specific, from the broader determining factors to the particular result: the tyrant, the analysis of whose life will illuminate Rosas's life and will facilitate his elimination. Science is at the service of politics to change the course of history.

This scientific approach is not just the outer shell of *Facundo*: it is its very core. The scientific travelers to whom Sarmiento pays homage and whose works inform his were more literary in their approach than we are allowed to think from the perspective of contemporary science. Their quest for knowledge took the form of a journey, which in the best examples is reflected in their texts as the mind's movement from concrete observation of phenomena to the formulation of general principles and truth. Scientific method and literary form converge in this material and spiritual pilgrimage, a fusion often expressed in the rhetoric of the sublime. These travelers, Humboldt above all, were romantics, and shared with the poets of their age, especially with Goethe, a love of nature, because of its beauty and because it conceals the secrets of the universe. In *Facundo*—because Sarmiento is observing his native land, not a foreign country as in the case of the European travelers, and is attempting to discover its essence—the process is even more dramatic. Sarmiento is looking for and at himself as he gazes upon Argentina, Rosas, and ultimately upon Facundo Quiroga. As Enrique Anderson Imbert has written eloquently: “Sarmiento's originality lies in that the romantic philosophy of history came to be intimately fused with his feeling that his own life was an historical life. He felt that his self and the motherland were one and the same being, engaged in an historical mission within the unfolding of civilization.”¹¹ This is the book's deep drama, the source of its somber beauty and shocking honesty—it is not a paean to the fatherland, but a probe of its innermost essence, including its most disturbing components.

10. I have expounded upon the relation of travel writing to *Facundo* in my *Myth and Archive: A Theory of Latin American Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), now available in paperback from Duke University Press (1998). The chapter on Sarmiento has also been reproduced in *Sarmiento: Author of a Nation*.

11. Enrique Anderson Imbert, *Historia de la literatura hispanoamericana* (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1954), vol. 1, p. 228; trans. mine.

Sarmiento's diagnosis is that Argentina is beset by the struggle between civilization and barbarism and that Rosas and his regime incarnate the latter. In other words, barbarism is prevailing. Hence the book's sense of urgency. Civilization for Sarmiento means modern European ideas and practices, and it is based in the cities, particularly Buenos Aires; barbarism, meanwhile, represents the backwardness of the countryside, especially the Pampas. This backwardness is the product of genetic, geographic, and historical factors, not the least of which is the Spanish legacy itself. *Facundo* both gains and loses by applying this dichotomy. Clarity is the first benefit, followed closely by the dramatic effect of the clash of opposing forces, which gives the whole struggle and its heroes an epic cast. It is like a biblical story about the fight between good and evil, with larger-than-life characters such as Facundo Quiroga and Rosas. The dichotomy's main drawback is oversimplification, a positive element as political propaganda but a weakness as intellectual construct. Rosas was not as primitive as Facundo Quiroga, and Facundo Quiroga himself was not an illiterate. In later years Sarmiento came to realize his error, and in *Facundo* there are contradictions that reveal his hesitations and inner doubts.

Fortunately for the book's energy but not for the logic of its principal argument, Sarmiento is more fascinated by barbarism than by civilization; he has a Miltonian passion for evil and its minions. The loving descriptions of the Pampas and its gauchos are among the most enduring pages in *Facundo*. It is a science of the concrete, of the minute, whose emblem perhaps could be two of its protagonists: the *rastreador* or "track finder," and the *baqueano* or "scout." The *rastreador* is capable of following a fugitive's trail no matter how faint and in spite of all the precautions the fugitive takes to erase it. The *baqueano* can tell where he is—even in the dark, when all else fails, by the flavor of the grass. This is savage knowledge at its highest, on a par with civilized man's most sophisticated capabilities. Sarmiento cannot hide his admiration for these rustic types, with their profound wisdom, self-assurance, and stoic curtness. Against the general laws that make up his science, these individuals are original and unique, as is their knowledge of that which is characteristic of their environment. In their description and analysis Sarmiento is displaying an analogous kind of learning, with its own intuitive method. This contradiction is at the heart of *Facundo*, energizing its most compelling literary qualities.

Sarmiento pursues what is original in the Pampas and in Facundo Quiroga, but slips over and over into comparisons with types and even

archetypes drawn from the literary tradition, particularly the classics and the Bible. If the gauchos are an origin, mankind reduced to the beginning of time, they are so only because they repeat previous origins. The Pampas are like a blank page, an infinite, unfathomable void at the beginning of time and recorded history; but to be identified as such there has to be, as in a palimpsest, a series of previous beginnings that have been inscribed on it before: Thebes, Mesopotamia, Babylon, and biblical or Homeric stories. Sarmiento struggles with this contradiction in his quest to prove the originality of his subject, but the whole story is cast in an ancient genre, tragedy, where science and literature meet to shape the telling of Facundo's life.

"Life" is precisely the concept that informs Sarmiento's vision of Facundo Quiroga. It is a typically nineteenth-century scientific concept that subtends science and philosophy and is at the core of some of the century's most influential intellectual enterprises. Darwin's *Origin of Species* is based on the "struggle for life," as are, in different terms, philosophical systems like Schopenhauer's and Nietzsche's. Life is the instinct or volition to be, which often depends on the annihilation of others. Sarmiento studies Facundo Quiroga's life, he writes his biography, to search for his "life" in this sense—the spark of his will-to-be in his will-to-power. "Biography" here has the emphasis on *bio*, on the biological, material aspect. Hence the detailed description of Facundo Quiroga's facial and other physical features, which are expressions of his fierceness. What is unique about this life is its excess, which is Facundo Quiroga's tragic flaw. He is endowed with a surfeit of life that leads him inexorably to death—life leads to death, or death itself is lodged in the life instinct, as Freud was to theorize but a few decades later. This contrary force is stronger than Facundo Quiroga's conscious will; it drives him inexorably to meet his death at Barranca-Yaco in spite of the warnings and omens. Barbarism has the grandeur of tragedy, sharing its inevitability, which preempts Sarmiento's program to eradicate it with the aid of civilization. If, as he asserts, there is a gaucho hiding beneath the frock coat of every Argentine, where does that leave Sarmiento himself, if not on the side of the tragic? The life of Facundo Quiroga, both its unrestrained vital thrust and its originality, is also the life of Domingo Faustino Sarmiento. The book is both biography and autobiography, collective and individual analysis.

Life is also the deep design of history in *Facundo*. Like his European models, Sarmiento's conception of the unfolding of history follows a pattern of birth, infancy, maturity, decay, and death, with each period

being characterized by the features of an individual's life at that stage. Hence nations have an "infancy." The pattern is repeated everywhere, as biological shapes are repeated from species to species, but at different moments in time: one region is in its infancy (Latin America) while another has reached maturity (Europe). While this analogy seems crude now, it was used and systematized by thinkers as diverse as Hegel, Spengler, and Toynbee, and has not been abandoned totally in political discourse—we still talk about "young" nations. In Latin America it was to have a long history, often with positive connotations, to propose optimistically that Europe was in decay while the New World, by virtue of its newness, was not and therefore could avoid the errors of the Old. This trend, called *mundonovismo*, flourished between the two world wars of the twentieth century. While Sarmiento did not view Argentina's "infancy" in such a hopeful way, it was he who most forcefully and lastingly articulated the metaphor of history as life. In *Facundo* life is tragic, like that of its protagonist, a pattern deeply embedded in the very biological makeup of the human race.

Facundo's literary character is what makes it such an enduring work and the beginning of a trend in Latin American social sciences, particularly in anthropology. Since then, influential figures have straddled literature and their disciplines and produced books that have found a place in the literary canon. In Brazil, for instance, Euclides da Cunha's *Rebellion in the Backlands* (1900), a book that owes much to *Facundo*, began as a sociological study of a religious rebellion in Canudos. The *sertões* in the Portuguese title (*Os Sertões*) is the Brazilian equivalent to the Argentine Pampa. Then there is the work of Gilberto Freyre about the slave-plantation world in the sugar-producing northeast of Brazil, *Casa grande e senzala* (1933), translated as *The Masters and the Slaves*, a literary masterpiece in its own right. In Cuba, Fernando Ortiz, a pioneer in the study of Afro-Cuban culture, essentially an anthropologist, wrote books like *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar* that are a part of the Latin American literary tradition, as did his disciples Lydia Cabrera and Miguel Barnet. Historian and economist Manuel Moreno Fraginals's *The Sugarmill* is a classic of Cuban literature. In Peru, tragic José María Arguedas alternated between writing literature and writing anthropology. From the literature side, writers like Octavio Paz, in his *Labyrinth of Solitude* (1950), have practiced a kind of poetic anthropology that has its origin in *Facundo*, as did much of the work of Alfonso Reyes and other essayists interested in the topic of national and cultural identities in Mexico and the rest of Latin America.

Literature and the quest for self and collective knowledge have gone hand in hand in Latin America since Sarmiento: books like *Facundo* represent Latin America's form of thought, its poetic philosophy. In Latin America, truth—social, political, metaphysical—is sought through the aesthetic, in novels, essays, and poems—an approach that is evident in novels like Alejo Carpentier's *The Lost Steps* (1953) and in poems such as Pablo Neruda's *Canto general*. The enduring romantic legacy in Latin American culture fosters this approach, as does the relative weakness of academic disciplines as a result of economic underdevelopment. The best example of this blend of literature and social, political, and historical thought is Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. All those Buendías founding Macondo in the midst of the jungle, becoming caudillos in interminable civil wars, receiving with astonishment the developments of modern science and attempting to apply them to their lives, are heirs to Sarmiento's formulations about civilization and barbarism.

The reading of such works alongside *Facundo* enhances and deepens the reader's comprehension of them. Sarmiento's classic is in all of them as in a filigree, with its cast of characters and figures and its defining landscape, the sublime and overwhelming beauty of the land that is both friend and foe, and with the tragic nature of life itself in all of its manifestations, from the most elementary to the cosmic. Sometimes authors pay direct homage to *Facundo*. For instance, in Carpentier's dictator novel, *El recurso del método* (1976), translated as *Reasons of State*, the counterpoint between the provincial city, called Nueva Córdoba, and the capital is a direct allusion to Sarmiento, as is the whole characterization of the tyrant—a barbarian who aspires pathetically to become civilized. And in Carlos Fuentes's novel *The Campaign*, Argentina's struggles for independence are portrayed in terms that could not be more indebted to *Facundo*. Carpentier was a Cuban and Fuentes is a Mexican. Sarmiento's legacy in Argentine literature is immense, both in the essay genre and in fiction. In trying to eradicate the gaucho, Sarmiento turned him into a national symbol. By the time José Hernández wrote his epic poem *Martín Fierro* (1872), the gaucho had become an object of nostalgia, a lost origin around which to build a national mythology. Facundo Quiroga endures, as all mythical figures do, because his contradictions represent our unresolved struggle between good and evil and our lives' inexorable drive toward death.