

**CULTURAL MODERNITY AND ATLANTIC PERSPECTIVES:
ESTANISLAO DEL CAMPO'S *FAUSTO* (1866)
AND ITS FRENCH CONTEMPORARIES**

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The theorisation of the origins of cultural modernity has tended to centre on France, and more particularly Paris, in the mid-nineteenth-century, the time of Manet, Flaubert, and Baudelaire.¹ Most theoretical accounts from Greenberg through Clarke, Bourdieu, Benjamin, Fried, and Brettell, whether seeking to overcome or to reinforce cultural modernism, have recognised among the key components of the latter a profound attempt at a renewal of vision. There are two dimensions to what this 'Fresh Seeing' in the phrase that Brettell adopts from the Canadian painter Emily Carr. The first, widely observed in Courbetian Realism is the attempt to undermine what Fried terms 'theatricality', that is to say to overcome the sensation that we are looking something that has been assembled, usually in a conventional manner, for the benefit of its audience. Instead, cultural modernism aspires to what Fried calls 'absorption' or what Brettell, following Laforgue, terms 'the flash of identity between subject and object' that is 'almost universally accepted as the duty of the modern artist'. But this breaking through the theatrical barriers of conventional representation, this intimate identification with what is seen, this 'fresh seeing', supposes simultaneously and from Courbet onwards a profound focus on

¹ See, for example, Richard R. Brettell, *Modern Art 1851-1929* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 3; Francis Frascina, Tamar Garb, & Nigel Blake, *Modernity and Modernism: French Painting in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Yale University Press, 1993), 58; Arden Reed, *Manet, Flaubert, and the Emergence of Modernism: Blurring Genre Boundaries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 1.

the medium in which the viewing is conducted. The fresh seeing is effected precisely by that focus on the medium in which things are viewed, leading to what Greenberg dubbed ‘the imitation of imitating’. The theorisation of cultural modernity habitually implies a consequent and profound fusion of these two tendencies, absorption and a turn to the medium in itself, of which the first great practitioner is the Manet of the 1860s, bringing together the otherwise improbably combination of disjointed art historical pastiche with Realism.² The theoretical and intellectual force of this fusion is evidenced throughout the canonical history of modernism from Manet to Picasso to Pollock in the visual arts, and from Baudelaire and Flaubert through Joyce, Elliot, and Proust in literature. It has consequently remained at the very heart of debates about cultural modernity.

Until recently, serious opposition to this narrative of the origins of cultural modernity has tended to come from cultural historians anxious to establish a polycentric, multi-national vision of modernism, in opposition to the Francocentric canon of the mid-century.³ However, tendencies towards transnational, and especially globalised histories, have more recently begun to undermine the assertion of distinct schools of national modernism, as well as the unqualified centrality of Paris. Thus Brettell writing in 1999 concludes that ‘the commonalities are more important than the national or regional differences’ and looks forward to the ‘painless death’ of national schools.⁴ Recent writings in political, social, and economic history can only serve to reinforce such trends,

² Brettell, 83, 87; Greenberg, *Art and Culture: Critical Essays* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), 8. For Michael Fried’s views on the mid-century, see his studies, *Courbet’s Realism* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1990), and *Manet’s Modernism; or, The Face of Painting in the 1860s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

³ Examples include Albert Boime, *The Art of the Macchia and the Risorgimento: Representing Culture and Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century Italy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993); Norma Boude, *The Macchiaioli: Italian Painters of the Nineteenth Century* (London: YUP, 1987); Robert Rosenblum, *Modern Painting and the Northern Romantic Tradition: Friedrich to Rothko* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1975).

⁴ Brettell, 217, 128.

as when Bayly in 2004 argues that ‘the interdependence of world events’ (p.3) leads him to discern a growth from the nineteenth century on of global uniformity and of complexity solely within these increasingly uniform terms.⁵

Hispanism, for all its interest in Postcolonialism and historical pluralism, has rather sat to one side as an observer in this debate about the defining originary narrative of cultural modernism, despite the high theoretical stakes that it entails. I do not mean by this that Hispanists have not discussed the origins of modern cultures in a broader sense, as clearly they have, nor that they have not considered in some depth the culture of the mid-nineteenth-century, as has certainly happened with studies of Latin America (more than Spain) such as Nancy Hanway’s *Embodying Argentina*.⁶ I mean rather that, as regards the crucial period of the mid-century (1850-1870), specific engagement with the core theoretical issue of fresh seeing and the medium of representation in relation to its ramifications for notions of polycentricity or Francocentricity has been somewhat limited. The silence is particularly noticeable given the large geographical, and indeed population area, that Hispanism’s field of enquiry covers across the Atlantic and out to the Pacific.⁷ This is all the more unfortunate given that, as I have argued elsewhere, Hispanism’s subjects of cultural study often present serious challenges to the theoretical model of cultural modernity that has been derived from the mid-century canon and constantly reapplied.⁸ In this article, I aim to take a significant case study, Estanislao del Campo’s poem *Fausto* of 1866, and show how, on the one hand, it presents a

⁵ C.A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World 1780-1914* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 3, 20-21.

⁶ *Embodying Argentina: Body, Space, and Nation in Nineteenth-Century Narrative* (Jefferson, N. Carolina: McFarland and Company, 2003).

⁷ On this latter point, see Benedict Anderson, *Under Three Flags: Anarchism and the Anti-Colonial Imagination* (London: Verso, 2005).

⁸ ‘The 1850s and 1860s: Towards a Comparison Between France and Spain’, in *Antes y Después del Quijote* (Valencia: Biblioteca Valenciana, 2005).

fundamental challenge to the fusion of self-consciousness and absorption characteristic of canonical modernity's fresh seeing. Yet, at the same time, I aim to explain how it does so in a conscious response to the interaction between the Parisian cultural and civic urban model and local conditions, and within intellectual debates shared across the Atlantic, especially as regards the grounding of political thought in historicist reflection, and the debate, stemming from Diderot and others, concerning absorption and theatricality in the arts, and outlined by Fried. In so doing and in that sense at least, I hope at once to show that, as Brettell says, 'exchangeability' of common ideas and cultural developments is at the heart of Atlantic and global cultural modernism. But at the same time, I aim to undermine Brettell's equation of such exchangeability with a high degree of generic commonality, and to show instead that a key theoretical tenet of canonical modernism is undermined by del Campo's poem and his response to the place of Argentina within the Atlantic world.⁹ Study of the Atlantic space thus opens up a transnational understanding of the origins of cultural modernity, but simultaneously challenges the common basis upon which cultural modernity has been habitually theorised.

Estanislao del Campo's poem has long been considered one of the masterpieces and defining works of modern Argentine literature, attracting the praise of such influential figures as Ricardo Piglia, who admires it for its contribution to what he sees as an Argentine tradition of pastiche.¹⁰ It was first published in late September 1866, in response to the first performances of Gounod's opera, *Faust*, in the Teatro de Colón, Buenos Aires beginning on 24 August 1866.¹¹ Both the choice of opera and the location

⁹ Brettell, 217.

¹⁰ See *Crítica y ficción* (Barcelona: Anagrama, 2001).

¹¹ B. P. del C., introduction to Estanislao del Campo, *Fausto* (Buenos Aires: Emecé Editores, 2000), 9-12 (9).

are significant. It has been said that, at the time, *Faust* was the most popular opera in the world;¹² its performance was a vivid projection into Buenos Aires of the lofty heights of French culture. In turn, the very building of the Teatro de Colón, which opened in spring 1857, was part of a wider and conscious emulation of Western European urban values of which London, and especially Paris, were clear models. Indeed, the building was designed by a French-born portrait artist, Carlos Pellegrini, with parts transported in from Britain. The theatre was constructed on the edge of the main square that contained the Pyramid of May, raised in 1811 to commemorate the 1810 revolution against Spain, and renovated in 1856 by Prilidiano Pueyrredón so as to include Dubourdieu's statue of liberty. Nearby on the square was the seat of the presidency. Since the 1810 rising, the main square had become an emblematic location for national gatherings.¹³ The construction of the theatre was therefore part of a clear civic vision: that at the heart of the modern identity of Buenos Aires was its government and its theatre, public (or public-orientated) spaces in which the country was to be shaped by political and cultural advances, founded on a further open public space dedicated not least to the revolution which had given birth to them. In all these respects, the redevelopment and redeployment of the main square echoes the increasing dominance of public and civic space and buildings in Paris since the French Revolution (and to some extent during the Enlightenment), including the conversion of existing spaces and buildings to that end.

¹² Richard Osborne, 'Cluytens Conducts *Faust*', notes to Gounod, *Faust* (EMI, 2003), 14-17.

¹³ Jason Wilson, *Buenos Aires: A Cultural and Literary Companion* (Oxford; Signal Books, 1999), 60-61, 66, 129. *Sitio web oficial del Teatro Colón*, 2006, <http://www.teatrocolon.org.ar/inicio.htm>, accessed 3 October 2006; Martín A. Cagliani, *Las plazas de Buenos Aires y su historia*, <http://www.saber.golwen.com.ar/plazas.htm>, accessed 3 October 2006.

During the 1850s and 1860s, and under new ideological direction, the redevelopment of the public space under Napoleon III was transforming the city.¹⁴

The performance of *Faust* at the Teatro de Colón is thus an expression of the incorporation of modern European values into Argentine national life. As such it corresponds to the aspirations of key Argentine intellectuals, in the line of Sarmiento's seminal work *Facundo* (1845), who sought to overcome both the supposed legacy of the Spanish, and the distinctive nationalism of the hinterlands, which had been at the core of the Rosas dictatorship. The future, Sarmiento remarked, would be transatlantic, by which he meant it would emerge from Europe, by which meant for the most part French, thought. It is true that Sarmiento rejects earlier Argentine revolutionaries, primarily on the grounds that their inspiration in the supposedly universal values of French Enlightenment and Revolutionary thought showed scant regard for the historical, social, and geographical realities of the southern cone. In this respect, Sarmiento seeks to recognise what Ariel de la Fuente has recently termed 'the decisive participation of the peasantry in larger historical processes', and thus to recognise more than had earlier Unitarian (that is anti-Federalist) thinkers the reality of the power of provincial life. However, even in making this criticism, Sarmiento is explicitly echoing the major turn in contemporaneous French political thought towards a dialectical historicism that sought to remedy the same supposed defect in their own earlier revolutionaries. The method for addressing Argentine realities is French in origin, and the aim is to drag the rest of Argentina towards Buenos Aires (or at least to what is European in it, what is open to the Atlantic, literally and metaphorically), and to take Buenos Aires further eastwards

¹⁴ Bayly, 186; Anthony Sutcliffe, *Paris: An Architectural History* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1993), 58, 69, 77, 88; Robert Cole, *Paris: A Traveller's History* (Moreton-in-Marsh: Windrush Press, 1994), 136-37, 144-45, 152, 165.

towards Paris. In de la Fuente's interpretation, the reality behind Sarmiento's view of the hinterland is that Federalism was supported widely among the rural lower classes, across heterogeneous social groups, was neither predominantly criminal, nor based on banditry, and involved substantial, if complex political mobilisation based, among other things, on patron-client relations, kinship, ethnic loyalties (in some instance), and the perception of charisma. When Sarmiento's transatlanticism classifies the *gaucho* as inferior, the thinker is contributing to a central dispute over the power of local *caudillos* (leaders) in provincial, and in consequence national life, and over such related issues as the state's legitimate monopoly of violence, political rights, and the viability of rural finances and economies. The historian Slatta notes that in a particularly virulent outburst in 1861 Sarmiento called for the blood of the gauchos to be spilt, because the country needed this and having blood was all they had in common with humans.¹⁵

In this light, Del Campo's treatment of his subject matter is peculiarly striking: not only does he set his poem outside Buenos Aires, but the performance of Gounod's opera is recounted by a *gaucho* (El Pollo), the very sort of hinterland livestock farmer castigated by Sarmiento as the source of knife-wielding, despotic, Asiatic barbarism. El Pollo's account of the opera is told furthermore in a pointedly rustic language and simple verse markedly at odds with that of the decorous libretto and the sophisticated music of Gounod's work. Seeing the difficulties encountered by Faust in seducing Marguerite,

¹⁵ Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, *Facundo: Civilización y barbarie* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sopena, 1945); Noël Salomon, *Realidad, ideología y literatura en el "Facundo" de D.F. Sarmiento* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1984), 5-9; Ana María Barrenechea, 'Sarmiento, and the "Buenos Aires/Córdoba" Duality', in *Sarmiento: Author of a Nation*, ed. Tulio Halperín Donghi, Iván Jaksí'c, Given Kirkpatrick, and Francine Masiello, 61-63, 68 (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1994); Natalio R. Botana, 'Sarmiento and the Political Order: Liberty, Power, and Virtue', in *idem*, 103-05; Ariel de la Fuente, *Children of Facundo: Caudillo and Gaucho Insurgency During the Argentine State-Formation Process (La Rioja, 1853-70)* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2000), 6, 19-21, 24-25, 32, 100-101, 125-27, 188-92; Richard W. Slatta, *Gauchos and the Vanishing Frontier* (Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 180-81.

Gounod's Devil remarks: 'Allons! à tes amours | je le vois, docteur | il faut prêter secours'. In El Pollo's account, Lucifer says in decidedly incorrect Castilian, 'Si en el beile no ha alcanzao | el poderla arrocinar, | deje; le hemos de buscar | la güelta por otro lado'.¹⁶ In the course of the telling, long lyrical passages about the characters' feelings and preoccupations are omitted, events are telescoped, and the narrator drinks progressively more alcohol. What primarily matters to El Pollo's interlocutor, Don Laguna, is the storyline, and what ultimately matters to them once the story is told is to find a bite to eat at an inn with which the work ends. The nearest we get to a moral summary of the tale of Faust's desperation and Margueritte's salvation is Laguna's observation that 'what I really admire is your nerve watching all that witchcraft' ['lo que almiro es su firmeza | al ver esas brujerías'], to which El Pollo replies, roughly speaking, 'It's done my head in for four or five days' ['He andao cuatro o cinco días | atacao de la cabeza'].¹⁷

Most importantly still, El Pollo's narrative does not distinguish between the operatic narrative and reality. At the beginning and end of each act, he reminds us that the curtain rose and fell; the building in which he saw the opera has a proscenium stage of the sort that clearly delineates the external world of the audience from the theatrical production being seen; the performance is in-doors, gas-lit in darkness, and makes use of elaborate stage-sets. And El Pollo has paid for a ticket in order to get in. There is every indication here of a theatrical divide between art and reality, but El Pollo ignores all these

¹⁶ Gounod, 87; del Campo, 76.

¹⁷ de Campo, 139.

not so subtle clues. Indeed, he even overlooks the fact that the characters are singing in Italian. Instead, he tells us that ‘la otra noche lo he visto | al demonio’.¹⁸

In this respect, we are seeing something more than a Quixotic affliction, long familiar in Hispanic letters. There is no ongoing, explicit contrast within El Pollo’s narrative between fiction and reality (implicit contrasts will be addressed later in this article). There is no explicit frame separating El Pollo’s account from what really happened on stage. The story-teller, in that sense the producer of the work of art, presents us with no distinction between the work of art and an external reality. The one has become totally absorbed into the other within El Pollo’s experience and his narrative. El Pollo himself experiences the work of art as if it were real: he is totally absorbed in the performance.

In the terms of the sophisticated, urban, Francophile culture of a Buenos Aires elite, El Pollo is not merely a stupid livestock farmer; he is infantile, childishly incompetent in cultural matters. However, it is precisely this that lends him his significance in the terms of the most experimental French culture of his time. El Pollo’s version of *Faust* has broken the barrier between the theatricality of art and reality, bringing to the fore a pointedly clumsy, culturally innocent, popular mentality. It does so through methods of story telling that are associated with labouring classes. There are relevant and significant parallels here with Courbet’s Realism because El Pollo’s re-telling of Gounod’s work collapses the distinction between art and artist, and the real world that they represent, both by rejecting the boundary between art and reality, and by emphasising the place of story-telling in the life of labourers, just as Courbet emphasised the artistry of workers. By recreating *Faust* among ‘barbarians’ in the countryside, far

¹⁸ del Campo, 33.

from the stereotypically modern space of Buenos Aires, Del Campo presses forward with the notion that ‘absorption’ is key to modern art. The point is echoed in some Argentine painting of the time, also dealing with *gauchos*. One year before Del Campo’s poem, the artist Prilidiano Pueyrredón painted his *Surveying the Ranch*, depicting a *gaucho* on horseback. The image features on the characteristic devices of absorptive painting: the main character’s face is almost totally hidden from the viewer, turned inwards on the landscape, and the individual seems deep in reflection on his world of rural labour. At the same time, the light, bright colour patches that constitute the image provide the sketch-like immediacy of what the Italians called ‘*macchia*’. Hanway comments on how Pueyrredón breaks down divisions of civilisation and barbarism; indeed, his preference for fairly bright colours may link to another side of his work may themselves be linked to a parallel repressed and rejected female disturbance, in the terms of his time.¹⁹ The beauty of immediacy and absorption is at the heart of *gaucho* life, in the very centre of their ranches. Where Courbet looked to French peasantry to achieve the most avant-garde of visions, Del Campo turned to his *gauchos*. Put at its most extreme, the barbarians are the founders of a new, and finer, civilisation.

However, it would be wrong to think that Del Campo is simply endorsing the vision represented by El Pollo’s narrative. As many critics have observed, it is hard to take the poem seriously or at face value. However stupid livestock farmers might be claimed to be, it beggars belief that El Pollo should have mistaken an opera sung in Italian for Spanish conversation. More subtly, it has been observed that much of the supposed *gaucho* language is not authentic at all, but a clearly literary version of

¹⁹ Hanway, 45-47.

gauchismo, a pastiche.²⁰ In this light, the poem itself seems like a literary joke, informed by a sophisticated cultural awareness. After all, it takes an informed and educated cultural brain, such as one might find in the heart of Buenos Aires, to produce such an extensive pastiche of the world's most popular opera, at the very apex of contemporary French cultural exports. A self-conscious author reveals a fascination with patterns of re-creation across European and European-influenced culture. An educated Argentine presents us with a pastiche of a Gaucho who presents a version in (false) rustic Argentine Spanish, of an Italian version of a French opera, performed in Buenos Aires, and deriving from a substantial reworking of Nerval's translation of the first part of a German text by Goethe. Even if we turn to El Pollo's narrative itself, there are repeated signs that it is meant as a *patraña*, a shaggy-dog tale, as some critics have noted. El Pollo reminds us far too often that he is not making this stuff up. In that respect, the work is indeed, as Ludmer comments, part of an 'autonomization of the literary' which is 'typically modern'.²¹

On this account, what Del Campo and Europeanised Buenos Aires really has in common with the gaucho is a fascination with falsity and artifice, and pastiche. The poem, *Fausto*, first appeared inside several of the leading newspapers of the time, presenting an arch commentary on a celebrated contemporary event, of a kind that is not untypical of mid-nineteenth-century Western journalism. The point is not the Courbetian absorption, but the joke. In that respect, the poem echoes too the mid-century enjoyment of *blagues*, in which solemn works of art might be mockingly recreated or reinvented (one thinks, of course, of another Parisian triumph, Offenbach's *Orphée aux enfers*). In

²⁰ See, for example, Jorge Borges, 'Prólogo', 17-18, in *Fausto*.

²¹ Josefina Ludmer, 'The Gaucho Genre', in *The Cambridge History of Latin American Literature*, I: *Discovery to Modernism*, ed. Roberto González Echevarría & Enrique Pupo-Walker, 622-23 (Cambridge: CUP, 1996).

this respect, del Campo has more in common with the world of Manet and Flaubert than that of Courbet, and seems to be part and parcel of the mid-century's fascination with pastiche, with producing cultural objects that are no longer about the representation of emotion or of external realities, but rather are about the representation of modes of representation.

In short, as regards the central concern in cultural modernity with absorption and with the medium-in-itself, Del Campo's poem pulls simultaneously in two different directions. In Ludmer's words, 'the two cultures parody one another'.²² It can be read as a story of profound, even extreme absorption, that destroys the theatrical barrier between art and reality, producing a fresh seeing. Even if ultimately, we conclude that El Pollo does not really believe his own story (and we have little certainty on this point), it seems that Laguna, for all his doubts, ends up giving them credence, or there would be little sense in his statement that what he admires is El Pollo's nerve in being able to watch so much witchcraft.²³ But, equally, the poem can be interpreted as primarily ludic game with representational media, showing no serious concern with absorption at all. This combination is not *per se* novel or surprising: the fusion of absorption with a turn to the medium in itself was at the heart of canonical cultural modernity, as we have seen. But what is striking is the absence of any clear way in which these two aspects of the poem can be reconciled or fused with one another: to take one view of the work seems quite clearly to require us to reject the other, because on the one account absorption is seriously recommended, and on the other it is not a matter for serious interest at all. In this respect, we look in vain to Estanislao del Campo's own narrative voice to provide any such

²² Ludmer, 623.

²³ del Campo, 139.

reconciliation of these two major aesthetic trends of cultural modernity in the mid-century, even at the level of providing a distinct style that could subsume and transcend the differences between them. In this key respect, del Campo is clearly at odds with the cultural world of Manet and his fellow Parisian early modernists. The poem mixes together pastiche informed by a Europeanised cultural awareness, gaucho shaggy-dog stories that are not informed by a deep awareness of a European cultural heritage, and a state of innocent absorption that transcends the divide between art and reality in the European cultural heritage. But it does not resolve the relationship between any of these elements. As Ludmer puts it, del Campo ends up in a 'no-man's land'.²⁴

The source of this split voice, torn radically between sophisticated cultural awareness and primitive absorption, lies clearly in the failure of del Campo's overarching narrative persona to define clearly the relationship between the *gaucho* and Parisian culture. The very suggestion that Argentines could treat the greatest opera in the world in such a rustic fashion serves immediately to underline once more the gulf between Parisian culture and the gaucho hinterland, the abyss between Buenos Aires and the rest of the country. During the 1840s, in his *Facundo*, Sarmiento had reinvented the dialectical thought he had learnt from his French masters such that the interplay between antithetical elements of progress and resistance to it (here represented by liberals and dictatorial, violent *gauchos*) would be resolved not so much by an even-handed synthesis as by the synthetic mastery that progress would be able to exert over the hinterland through a proper understanding of it. Or, perhaps rather, Sarmiento reveals his hostility even to some European political theories (the *doctrinaire* or eclectic) that advocated a synthesis or equilibrium of opposites, and was closer to those in Europe who sought an

²⁴ Ludmer, 624.

alternative, ostensibly ‘post-Utopian’ or ‘post-revolutionary’ dialectic founded on some radical principle of legitimacy.²⁵ The historicist rejection of universals, the location of political theory within the description of historical struggle, serves as a means to outmanoeuvre the *gauchos* and all they (supposedly) represent. By the time Del Campo wrote, Sarmiento’s old enemy Rosas was gone, and Buenos Aires was back on the path to Europeanisation, as is seen in the very fact of the Gounod performance and by the urban developments to which I referred earlier. But unlike in *Facundo*, in *Fausto* it is unclear that the sophisticated commentator on the *gauchos* is, in fact, able to direct his observations about them towards a programme of Europeanised cultural renewal in which the hinterland is bound to the values of Buenos Aires: too great a gulf separates the two interpretations of the poem that I have underlined above. Indeed, recent history had rather dramatically underlined the extent of the problem in the relationship between Buenos Aires and the rest of the country, and more broadly between Federalists and Unitarians. In 1853 the provinces of Argentina signed up to a new confederal constitution, but in a new and profound division of the country, Buenos Aires did not, seceded from the Confederation, and was not to rejoin the rest of Argentina definitively until 1862, four years before the performance of *Faust* to which Del Campo alludes. It only did so after managing to inflict a decisive defeat on the Confederation in battle. The years following 1862, during which there were a series of revolts in the provinces, have been described by de la Fuente as ‘one of the most conflictive periods in the history of Argentina, and a crucial phase in the process of state formation’. In 1865, a further Rural Code was introduced, in Slatta’s words, to ‘set out the boundaries of the gaucho’s shrinking world’,

²⁵ See Botana, 107; Andrew Ginger, *Political Revolution and Literary Experiment in the Spanish Romantic Period (1830-1850)* (Lampeter, New York, Ontario: Edwin Mellen Press, 1999), 47-93.

with stringent regulations on rural life and labour.²⁶ It is highly significant in this respect that, whatever his sympathy for rural ills, and even sympathetic attraction to the world of the gaucho, Estanislao del Campo was a military and political follower of Valentín Alsina, a key leader of the September revolt of 1852 against the Confederation that led to the 1853 secession of Buenos Aires. Indeed, he was a ‘crudo’ not a ‘cocido’; that is to day, he supported the integrity and autonomy of Buenos Aires.²⁷ Whilst, in one sense, Ludmer is correct that the poem is striking for a lack of explicit political comment, in comparison with its predecessors, the deep societal and cultural divides related to political divisions are clearly exhibited in *Fausto*.²⁸ The split narrative voice of the poem is redolent with the exacerbated tensions of the immediately preceding period.

In the end, the various impulses towards a radically new modern culture are unresolved, held together only by a quizzical irony. In the end, Buenos Aires is not quite Paris, and the theoretical fusion at the heart of canonical theories of cultural modernity proves unsustainable in Argentina’s distinct environment. In one sense, the exchange of ideas and cultural and civic trends across the globe has led to parallel developments with comparable characteristics, something like the global or Atlantic ‘exchangeability’ that Brettell discerns in cultural modernity, or the increasing uniformity across the world described by Bayly. Yet, at the same time, that core element of the canonical project of cultural modernity, its subtle fusion of ‘fresh seeing’ with a turn to the medium-in-itself is shattered by Del Campo’s *Fausto*. A truly Atlantic perspective on the origins of

²⁶ de la Fuente, 7-8; Slatta, 114

²⁷ Horacio Jorge Becco, ‘Estanislao del Campo’, in *Enciclopedia de la literatura argentina*, ed. Pedro Orgambide and Roberto Yanhi, 182-83 (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1970); Augusto Raúl Cortázar, *Poesía gauchesca argentina: Interpretada con el aporte de la teoría folklórica* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Gaudalupe, 1969), 62; Slatta, 185-86.

²⁸ Ludmer, 622.

cultural modernity is indeed transnational, and undermines at once the assertion of Parisian centrality and the affirmation of polycentric, national modernisms. But the moment that we try to conflate or equate developments in this Atlantic space with one another, to find the theoretical commonality that they share, we find that the most fundamental presuppositions of theories of cultural modernity are called radically into question. The deep level of the differences that we encounter mean that the internationalisation or transnationalisation of cultural modernity in the Atlantic space shatters the generic intellectual patterns that underlie the very theorisation of international modernism itself.