

# Understanding Present Through Past: Allison W. Bunkley's *Life of Sarmiento*

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One aspect that many of the studies centered on the life and works of Domingo F. Sarmiento have in common is that they use as a principle resource the biography of the Argentine author penned by Allison W. Bunkley. General consensus holds that *The Life of Sarmiento*, completed in 1949 and published posthumously three years later, represents the pinnacle of the many studies written in English on the life of the author of *Facundo*, which is the work that both the author, Sarmiento, and his biographer, Bunkley, will use as their point of departure to effect an analysis of Argentine society. The relationship created between Bunkley and Sarmiento, however, will not be based solely on *Facundo*, but will go beyond this specific work to include a conception of art and of the figure of the artist that will lead them to a point in common, where the general and the individual meet, where history is the process, not the object, of observation. To that end, what this paper seeks to demonstrate is how Bunkley, by tracing the genesis of *Facundo*, repeats the same method that Sarmiento employed when he wrote what would become one of the cornerstone works of Latin American Literature. In this process Bunkley constructs a concept of art and artist that highlights above all the individuality that underlines the process of creation and the microhistories that form the basis of History.

Allison W. Bunkley (1925, Manila - 1950, Princeton) centered his brief intellectual career on Sarmiento. Educated at Princeton University, he wrote his undergraduate and doctoral theses on the life of the Argentine intellectual, both of which can be seen as steps leading to the composition of a biography that is considered to be one of the most complete. After his graduation in 1944 from the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs and a brief stint in the army, Bunkley went on to earn his doctorate in history in 1948. In 1947, after a year of research in Argentina, he joined Princeton University as a professor with a joint appointment in the departments of History and Modern Languages, where he taught European languages and literatures,<sup>1</sup> and Latin American history and affairs. Both departments formed part of a new program of studies that aspired to prepare students for careers in business and diplomacy in Latin America, from which we can infer that Bunkley's interest in Latin America was the product of a tendency that became generalized following World War II. Bunkley was later promoted to professor in the Woodrow Wilson School, but he was not able to take up his post due to his tragic death in 1950.<sup>2</sup>

Apart from his aforementioned biography, Bunkley edited an anthology of Sarmiento's texts, *A Sarmiento Anthology* (1948), and wrote various articles related to the Argentine author: "Sarmiento and Urquiza" and "A Note on an Incident in the Life of Sarmiento," both posthumously published. He also wrote articles on Perón, both in the *Yale Review* as well as in newspapers with much wider distribution, such as *Newsweek Magazine*;<sup>3</sup> these publications generated animosity toward the North American academic from Perón's followers, and even from Perón himself.<sup>4</sup> At Princeton, Bunkley wrote and edited for a year a small weekly magazine, *Argentine News*,<sup>5</sup> on the current state of affairs in Argentina. During his second visit to the South American nation, he realized that all the writers who were opposed to Perón were being or had already been either silenced or eliminated, which resulted in the arrival of only news that had been approved by Perón. For this reason, Bunkley decided to publish these four weekly pages that he wrote, edited and laid out on his own to counteract what he saw as the highly manipulated flow of information that had been created by Perón's government (*Nassau Sovereign* 22).<sup>6</sup> This information reached him via a network of Argentine informants in Montevideo, Uruguay and, once published, Bunkley translated his weekly newsletter to other languages, including French, German and Spanish, and then had them circulated in Argentina. Both the State Department of the United States as well as the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of various other countries were interested in this publication, because it provided access to information about Argentina which would have otherwise been impossible to obtain (*New York Times* 2).

Among the various projects on which Bunkley was working at the time of his death

are a history of Peronism in Argentina and an English translation of *Islamic Poetry and the Christian Tradition in the Archpriest of Hita*, a book written by Américo Castro, who was Bunkley's professor and mentor at Princeton. Both projects were cut short by his death and have been lost to oblivion.<sup>7</sup> Finally, we know that Bunkley also initiated at least one documented attempt to publish fiction, what he called a "fact story"; in the magazine entitled *Adventure*, he published the short story "Escape to El Dorado" (1947), in which using as his point of departure a fact supposed to be real, he develops an entirely fictitious narration.

Both his brief literary career and his professional life indicate the close ties that bound the North American biographer to Latin America, in particular to Argentina and Sarmiento,<sup>8</sup> and both are reflected in his written production. In relation to these two topics, as has already been mentioned, Bunkley made two trips to Argentina, one in 1946 and the other in 1948, in order to carry out extensive research on the life of Sarmiento. In the brief introduction to his biography, he explains that he had access to more than 15,000 unpublished documents, which he aimed to use to give a fresh perspective to his subject in his work (*Life* xi). It is unknown exactly to which documents he had access, and, in fact, one of the criticisms that arose following the publication of *The Life of Sarmiento* is the scarce presence of this unpublished material in the foreground of the biography; Bunkley's footnotes, according to this view, are insufficient in determining the repercussions of this material in the development of his narration.<sup>9</sup> All the same, a look at his archive housed in the Rare Books and Special Collections at the Princeton University Library can give an idea not only of the materials that Bunkley accessed, but also the methodology that he employed.

The biographer's archive is composed of thirteen notebooks written during his second trip to Argentina. On first sight, these notebooks show a group of citations extracted from articles, letters and books written by Sarmiento, and also summaries of books that Bunkley consulted. Among these materials, drafts of what would later be the biography itself are not to be found, although it should be kept in mind, as has already been stated here, that this biography of Sarmiento had been in gestation since at least 1946, the year in which Bunkley wrote his undergraduate thesis, and would pass through at least one other finished version, that of his doctoral thesis, which was the product of his first trip to Argentina. His second trip to Argentina would serve him not only to enrich the detail of his biography, which can be appreciated, for example, in the inclusion of new letters between Sarmiento and Quiroga Rosas, but also to establish his consideration of Sarmiento as an artist and thus give a new orientation to the whole project, as we will see shortly.

Another type of material found in Bunkley's archived notebooks is a selection of newspaper clippings from Argentina. In most cases, it is difficult if not impossible to know the date of publication or the newspaper in which they were published, being that they were roughly clipped and only on one occasion show the date and place of publication. These articles are, in large part, reports and summaries of lectures given by the professor in Buenos Aires. The whole of this set of information contained in the Princeton University Library's archives will help us to understand, on the one hand, the methodology that Bunkley followed in crafting the culminating work of his brief career, and on the other hand, it will offer

us testimony of the interpretation that the biographer himself had of his own book.

Vis à vis this methodological approach, in Chapter XII of *The Life of Sarmiento*, Bunkley, commenting on the intellectual development of Sarmiento, explains the following: "To understand the Sarmiento of later years, the politician, educator, diplomat, and president, we must get at the essence of his ideas in this period. This can best be done by using as often as possible his own words, and then trying to understand their importance" (147). While it is true that Bunkley often turns to biographies of Sarmiento that predate his own in order to explain certain stages of the Argentine author's life and, above all, to establish parallels between the events of his life and the history of Argentina, it is also true that his principle source is always Sarmiento himself. The professor's notebooks make this fact all the more clear through their content: citations extracted from Sarmiento's writings, on a wide, but always thematically relevant series of topics (education, mining, railroads, cultivation of silk worms, etc.). When considered as a whole, these citations build toward a crescendo of what could best be described as Sarmiento's ideology according to Bunkley. However, it is to be noted that the voice of the Argentine author is always favored over any other version of the deeds of his life, and, even when he is believed to have lied or exaggerated, Bunkley sees there an attestation of his character. One example that we find of this revelation of character is in an anecdote that involves the Governor Gregorio Quiroga<sup>10</sup> and is characterized by Nerio Rojas and Manuel Gálvez as "a product of the overinflated ego and the overactive imagination of Sarmiento" (*Life* 68), in view of which Bunkley adds,

I recount it as it appears in Sarmiento's Autobiography and in countless biographies of the Argentine leader, for if it is not literally true, it is just as valuable as a symbolic explanation of how events force the young man to a crucial decision, and how circumstances had a great influence on that decision. (*Life* 68)

The biographer reads into the voice of Sarmiento but, nevertheless, always goes beyond the Argentine author's self, which is to say, he reads into the conditions in which this voice was produced. He scrutinizes the historical moment, the extenuating circumstances, searching for an explanation or interpretation that might shed light on any given situation, however incongruent it may seem at first glance. Here we are presented with another fundamental aspect that is always in the foreground of this biography and which will further reveal to us the methodology exercised by Bunkley: the presence of history.

In several of the newspaper articles included in the pages of his archived notebooks, Bunkley stresses his condition as a foreigner, which grants him a more lucid view than that of Sarmiento's contemporaries; however, this distance implies at the same time a deficiency, which Bunkley describes as the difficulty of positioning the protagonist in the adequate historical perspective. For this very reason, Bunkley explains in one of his notebooks that what he seeks to do is to present Sarmiento:

... seen from the point of view of the foreigner who seeks to situate him in an historical perspective. The details of his life and ideas are of utmost importance to understand him. But, of even greater interest is his relation to the great historical movements of his country and to historical world problems. (*Bunkley Research*)

In this sense, Bunkley's interpretation of Sarmiento's life can be compared to the idea of intellectual field, as developed by Pierre Bourdieu. As the latter explains, neither a work nor its characters are conceived as isolated elements, but rather, as the result of a system of forces that oppose or collide with each other, thus conferring upon them a specific structure in a determined moment of time. Sarmiento inserts himself into the intellectual field by means of, for example, his relations with the *Salón Literario*, or, in his travels, with important people such as Esteban Echevarría; in this way he is able to develop as an intellectual who is autonomous, but who is also directly linked to the social, political and cultural context of his times. These connections will facilitate the development, evolution and maturation of Sarmiento's ideology, and, as we will see shortly, they will at the same time help Bunkley to establish in his biography a periodization, one which will not depend so much on the dates of major historical events as much as on key elements in the Argentine author's evolution as an intellectual figure.

Another aspect of Bunkley's archive, which can be related to this concept of intellectual field, reveals an important dimension of this biography of Sarmiento: the reading that Bunkley does of *Facundo*. In one of the lectures that he gave in Buenos Aires, documented in the archive's newspaper clippings and entitled "Intento, expresión y contenido de Sarmiento," Bunkley reads Sarmiento's life as if it were a work of art. He divides his existence into three parts: content, intent and extent.<sup>11</sup> Content, he explains, is the essential part that exists subconsciously in a being and is created by tradition, environment and other transcendental, physical and cultural factors that act upon an individual. Intent is the intellectual part that exists consciously and

formulates one's life projects. Extent is the result of the interplay between intent and content, and is perhaps best defined as the scope of its reach, what is seen by one's contemporaries and, later, posterity (*Bunkley Research*).

Bunkley's method here is to read Sarmiento through Augusto Centeno, whose introduction to *The Intent of the Artist* ponders how the work of art can be examined in relation to its author. As Bunkley noted, Centeno describes the aforementioned three operational modes of a work of art. By content, Centeno understands the work of art itself, as a physical object, formally organized and complete. The path of content, inevitably, follows a forked road: on the one hand, it points toward its creator as the expression of conscience, however (un)intended, that is to say, as a spiritual effusion or an energetic power that originates in an act of taking possession of reality (i.e. intent); and on the other hand, it points away from its creator, outward toward innumerable potential spectators, all different in their individual, social and historic qualities (i.e. extent). These two directions are variable, although always within the boundaries of interpretation. When the biographer refers to the concept of intent, he understands it as "das Erlebnis" or "experience" and utilizes it to describe the origin of *Facundo* (*Life* 198). It is in this aspect, in the correlation between the theory espoused by Centeno and the one elaborated by Bunkley in a determined moment in his biography, that we can affirm that Bunkley applies this theory directly to Sarmiento and, somewhat indirectly, to his reading of *Facundo*.

Bunkley's point of departure for his biography of Sarmiento is precisely his most well known work, *Facundo*, itself a biography of the life of the *caudillo* Facundo Quiroga and which sought to describe the problems faced by

Argentine society in the nineteenth century and their possible solutions. The two paths described by Centeno can be discerned in the influence that *Facundo* had on the writing of *The Life of Sarmiento*, and take two disparate directions. The first points toward the past, to a reading of Sarmiento's life in direct relation to Facundo Quiroga, the historical tyrant; the narration of this biography is deftly used by Bunkley as a tool to reconstruct Sarmiento's personality. The second direction taken by Bunkley in his reading of *Facundo* looks forward, relating the ideas expounded there by Sarmiento to his life following its publication and demonstrating where they led him. This reading of *Facundo* reveals as much about Sarmiento and Quiroga as it does about Bunkley and the framework of his methodology.

Moreover, it is worth adding that in the same way that a work of art is as related to its author as it is to its social and cultural context, *Facundo* is read by Bunkley not only to analyze the life and individuality of its author, but also to examine the external factors that lead to his particular evolution and development. This division between author and historical context first appears in *The Life of Sarmiento* as two clearly differentiated narrative lines in which Bunkley presents the early life of Sarmiento and the history of Argentina at that time. These two lines run parallel, without fusing, in the first chapters of *The Life of Sarmiento*, and introduce the binary opposition that will dominate as much in *Facundo* as in Sarmiento himself: the dichotomy of civilization and barbarism. Bunkley describes a brief interweaving of these two parallel lines with a physical image, that of a young Sarmiento who confesses, watching Facundo's hordes pass in front of his store: "It was enough to convulse the nerves to see parade by those hordes of dirty, shaggy savages ... It was all changed now. What I

saw was simply detestable” (*Life* 63). With this image, a profound transformation is perceived in Sarmiento, whose life, until this moment, was lived on the sidelines of social and political affairs as one more spectator in the life of the nation; at the same time, we behold the pervasive influence of Facundo, whom Sarmiento both admired and loathed, in the history of the country. These dual lines, which briefly cross here, will later become inextricably merged when Sarmiento decides to become an agent of history, to intervene himself. For the time being, what is important to highlight is how, from the very beginning, Bunkley underscores the characteristics and development of these two elements, which will be key in the intellectual evolution of Sarmiento and will formally culminate in *Facundo*. In this tack, Bunkley not only reads the life of Sarmiento through his *magnum opus*, but also helps the reader to discern its composition.

The function of these two parallel lines that we have seen, however, is not limited to being solely an indicator of a transformation inside of Sarmiento himself. Their opposition will allow Bunkley to develop the two key concepts that will serve to create his own unique periodization: nomocracy and personalism. Bunkley understands as nomocracy “the form of government in which an abstract system of law is above and beyond the personality. To this system, whether it be constitutional or traditional, the personality owes its loyalty” (*Life* 19). Personalism, then, would be characterized by personality, that is to say, the subordination of any and all government or law to the figure of a single person. In Latin America, as Bunkley explains, personalism was manifested in the figure of the *caudillo*, who in theory, if not always in practice, adhered to a constitutional model of governance, but only when it suited him and modifying it when it was disadvantageous

to him. In other words, “Caudillism made ‘the country subservient to the individual rather than the individuals to the country.’ Principles and dogmas were unimportant. The personality was supreme” (*Life* 43).

Bunkley employs this opposition to frame a way of viewing and understanding tradition, so as to create a *longue dureé* that enables the articulation of the multiple; this structuring of time is not just a sequence of chronological realities, but is more gradually and deliberately organized to facilitate the observation and recognition of all of the stages and social elements implied by the make up of a historical topic.<sup>12</sup> Consequently, this opposition permits Bunkley to intertwine the Spanish past,<sup>13</sup> and the Argentine present and future, that is to say, the contemporary moment that the biographer experiences in his travels to Argentina; the articulation of these three distinct time periods shows the reach of Sarmiento’s work. Simultaneously, Bunkley is able to place Sarmiento, as a *mise-en-scène* himself of the problematic issues raised in *Facundo*, in the context of his life and times. The principle polemic in question is undoubtedly the confrontation of the binary pair civilization and barbarism, which Bunkley takes up again with his new nomenclature of nomocracy and personalism.

This periodization even helps Bunkley to understand the true nature of this confrontation not as a political battle, but as a phenomenon that goes beyond the social province, which can be seen in how he interprets the concepts of Federalism and Unitarianism. These two concepts are the fruit of a specific historical moment, in the early nineteenth century, and represent two political bents, but if we read them in the wake of Bunkley’s twin concepts of nomocracy and personalism, we can see

how they are used anachronistically. Bunkley explains that what Rosas envisioned was uniting the entire nation under his persona, in spite of the fact that he was considered a Federalist, while the Unitarians, or Nomocrats as Bunkley called them, “came to favor a doctrine of states rights and federalism” (*Life* 66). Thus Bunkley contributes a new perspective to the opposition: it is not a question of centralization or decentralization of power; instead, it is a conflict between one government to be ruled by law and another one ruled by the cult of personality.

This opposition, as has been mentioned several times now, helps Bunkley to structure his biography of Sarmiento around the resolution of an essential conflict: the contradiction in the Argentine author’s persona. This conflict is represented in a wider plane by the struggle between nomocracy and personalism, and in the persona of Sarmiento by the battle between rationalism and romanticism.<sup>14</sup>

He had entered the melee with the attitude of a romantic young man. He had been a revolutionist against the political beliefs of his family and the predominant political forces of his region. He had attacked them with the idealism of a young man who had read about a beautiful and rational world and who wanted to make the world around him fit the pattern of his reading. (*Life* 82)

From the first pages of his biography, Bunkley defines Sarmiento and his actions as romantic, even though the latter always finds an underlying rationalist attitude in his own actions. As the Argentine author progresses in his intellectual education, a more and more direct criticism of romanticism resounds in his writings, which contradictorily enounce at the same time his clearly romantic tendencies (197). Here we witness the difference between intention and

intent, between the objective with which one writes and the will that is reflected in these intentions: “His writings were intended to reform the world, but his personality seemed to be drawn to ‘the way of the titan’—the tradition that he had inherited from his family and his history” (197). This “way of the titan,” defined by sentimentalism and willfulness, as Bunkley explains, along with his reforming zeal, lay bare the interior contradiction in Sarmiento. On this matter, Bunkley states,

The intent of his own work at this time and for years after reveals many Romantic elements. It demonstrates that his “livingness” was choosing a Romantic solution, while his intellect was turning to a way of reform. The most important indications of his intent, his subject matter, his interests, his characters, his style—all have strongly Romantic features. (199)

In order to reach this conclusion, Bunkley performs a statistical analysis of Sarmiento’s writings. This analysis can be seen in the biographer’s archived notebooks, where he analyzes several passages and considers to be very revealing aspects such as the use of topos—the incidence, for example, of the word “heart” in the text—, and the contrast or repetition of certain concepts.<sup>15</sup> This stylistic analysis is also applied to *Facundo*—the use and interpretation of nature, a predilection for contrasts, its spontaneous style, etc.—<sup>16</sup> showing how Sarmiento’s formal rebellion, for example, which eschews the traditional rules of grammar, corresponds to his spiritual rebellion.

At the same time, Bunkley executes a search for what he calls “titanism,” meaning a strong, rebellious, exceptional spirit, “a personality who breaks all the bonds of rational and social order. He is the character who ignores all rules,

whose will is his yardstick to measure his ethics, his morality and his aims" (*Life* 200). As we can see, this is the very definition of Sarmiento's personality, one which imposes itself on the tradition that has itself been imposed upon him and one which follows its own rules. Moreover, this is the type of personality that must resolve the problems facing Argentina, although to do so absolute concepts must be abandoned and a rationalistic concept of life must be adopted.<sup>17</sup> But Sarmiento, Bunkley explains,

... sensed reality through its emotions, and he sought to recreate those emotions artistically. He was interested in becoming a titan, and he was interested in writing about titans. This was his vital intent. The distinction between the intention and the intent in the writings of Sarmiento resolves the enigma of his thought. (*Life* 204)

And it is here where we see a pact with the devil: his attraction toward the titanic personality. In this regard, Sarmiento is a man on the border between two worlds: between sentimentalism and rationalism; fiction and history; his readings and what he actually experienced in his participation in the social and cultural episodes of the nation. This duality is what expressly transforms Sarmiento into an artist according to Augusto Centeno's definition, which states that an artist is one who is inside of life and history, but at the same time out of their range for some reason (*The Intent* 21); in Homer's case because he was blind and in Sarmiento's because he was exiled. This strange relationship between distance and proximity can be applied to this state of abiding between two ways of seeing life, specifically the criticism of and attraction to titanic personalities.<sup>18</sup> For this very reason, *Facundo* is essential to the understanding of Sarmien-

to's life and its publication denotes the crowning achievement of Sarmiento's thought.

Until the publication of *Facundo* in 1845, Sarmiento's life was following two separate tracks, his intellectual development and the social and political life of Argentina—what we have called history. His understanding of the problems facing Argentina, embodied in the personality of Rosas, is seen through his creation of an ideal formed by his readings, implying that his life revolves around a dialectical opposition to this character. Concerning this connection, Bunkley states,

*El Facundo* is the culmination and the summary of Sarmiento's thought and artistry during his many years of exile in Chile. It contains the conclusions of his analysis of the ills of his nation, and it reveals the Romantic technique already noted in the author. *El Facundo* is primarily an attack against Rosas and his regime, but to effect such an attack, the author must analyze the situation that he is opposing and at least hint at some solutions for it. (*Life* 209)

It is not surprising then, that Bunkley hangs his biography of Sarmiento on these two figures, *Facundo* and Rosas, and logically, on the work that depicts both of them. *Facundo* allows the biographer to have a vision that goes beyond the merely historical. By considering *Facundo* as a sociological study, he recognizes that he must go beyond the artistic object and the intellectual field to consider the multiple social, cultural, political, historical and personal relations that combine to create Sarmiento's personality, whose existence, upon Bunkley's analysis, also becomes a work of art.

For this reason, the importance of the titanic figures in the life and works of Sarmiento make the use of *Facundo* one of

the defining features of Bunkley's narration. These titanic figures allow him to elaborate a periodization based on the dueling concepts of nomocracy and personalism that punctuate the historical period encompassing Rosas's regime from beginning to end, not because Sarmiento goes from being an unknown character to one of relative importance in the social and political life of Argentina, but rather because it is in these formative years that he comes to the decision to abandon his role as a mere spectator, as the boy who watched from the corner as Facundo's hordes passed by, to become an actor, abandoning verbal battles to enter the fray more literally. This periodization, which includes Sarmiento's most productive years as a writer, furthermore offers Bunkley the possibility of establishing through the author's stylistic evolution a working hypothesis about his personality, or as we have denominated it, his "intent," which would escape him if he limited the scope of his biography only to the Argentine's historical actions. This positioning provoked some criticisms of Bunkley's biography, criticisms that considered as a flaw the fact that Bunkley did not pay more attention to the stage of Sarmiento's life when he was the president of the republic (Lloyd 189). This critique indirectly marks again the importance of *Facundo* to this biography: what seems to interest Bunkley is not so much emphasizing Sarmiento's protagonism on the social and cultural stage of Argentina, of which there can be no doubt, as it is to see how his ideology developed and evolved and how he later tried to apply it to the governance of the republic. In this respect, *Facundo* represents a clear before and after in Sarmiento's ideology. If we are mindful of the division and progression of chapters in Bunkley's biography, we can recognize the importance paid to the

culmination and application of an idea of the perfect society, whose design is articulated in *Facundo*.<sup>19</sup>

This influence of *Facundo* on Bunkley's approach to Sarmiento's life can be seen more clearly when his prior steps, his undergraduate and doctoral theses, *Domingo Faustino Sarmiento* and *Titan of the Andes, the Life of Domingo Faustino Sarmiento* respectively, are taken into account.<sup>20</sup> His undergraduate thesis is almost wholly based on *Facundo*, which is the object of a detailed analysis whose goal is to reveal and interpret Sarmiento's evolution and is even utilized here as a primary source for descriptions of the history of Argentina. In this use of *Facundo* we see the methodology that Bunkley will continue to use and which we have already seen throughout these pages, embodied in two principle characteristics: the use of Sarmiento's own voice as essential testimony on his life, and the perspective of the foreigner. Bunkley, like Sarmiento, turns to travel writing and authors like Walter Scott to atone for and, at the same time, accentuate the perspective of someone who views from a distance, in an attempt to define an objective process that can never manage to exist. This effort to distance himself can also be observed in his doctoral dissertation, where *Facundo*, so essential as a primary source in his first thesis, becomes, as in *The Life of Sarmiento*, one essential part among many. Bunkley begins to use other history books, especially other biographies, in order to more accurately insert Sarmiento into his place in history. In this sense, his second trip to Argentina was essential, as it offered him a totally new view of the Argentine writer. It is during this second trip that he appears to have read Augusto Centeno, who provides him with the theoretical footing for the ideas that he had developed previously, which is to say, as an

individual straddling two ways of contemplating life, as represented by *Facundo*. But above all, this second trip allowed him to see how Sarmiento's "extent" outlived the nineteenth century. In his doctoral thesis as well as in the newspaper clippings in his archive, Bunkley concludes that the Argentina contemporary to him in the middle of the twentieth century was no longer the same one described by Sarmiento in *Facundo*; thanks to the social, cultural and political advances that he implemented, Argentina was totally different than what it was in the previous century. Nevertheless, Bunkley recognized that the Hispanic world rejected many of the solutions that Sarmiento proposed, as happened with Larra in Spain, favoring the search for a Hispanic tradition that contained an inherent value for centuries lost (*Titan* 876). This inclination is not perceived as a criticism, but rather as a reality that a society under construction must face and which Sarmiento always takes into account:

In the political history of Argentina, Sarmiento remains representative of one of the two sides of the perennial split between the tradition of personalism and the ideal of nomocracy, and even in the politics of a century later his name can be invoked in the Chamber of Deputies in symbolic opposition to the name of Rosas. (*Titan* 876)

This perspective, which could be described as objective, disappears in the final draft, in which Bunkley exchanges this ending for a criticism of Perón, for the way that the Argentine leader dramatizes a return to the personalism that is and has been the central political force in Latin American history:

Almost three-quarters of a century after the death of Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, the

struggle between personalism and nomocracy continues in the politics of Argentina. Sarmiento has been repudiated by the new personalism. His statues have been defaced by the "nationalist" followers of Perón. His pictures have been taken down from the walls of the schools that he founded. He has been painted in black terms by some of his latest biographers, and the historical revisionist school of scholars set out to destroy his reputation while whitewashing that of Rosas. (*Life* 518)

With this draft of his biography, Bunkley assumes Sarmiento's slant: although he had until this moment been a mere observer of the history of Argentina, like the young Sarmiento who observed from a distance how history, in the figure of *Facundo*, passed before his very eyes, during his second trip he decided to wade into the battle for history, his intervention being his critique of Perón, who could also be called a titanic figure. Indeed, although the North American biographer's protagonism, as defined by his writings and actions, did not have the same reach or magnitude, that is to say, extent, as those of Sarmiento, his articles and criticism, as much his *Argentine News* as his *The Life of Sarmiento*, nevertheless contributed a personal intervention in the contemporary history of Argentina by making manifest the opinion that he held of the Argentine president.

By engaging the life and times of Sarmiento as a critique of the historical conditions contemporary to the biographer, *The Life of Sarmiento* becomes a strange interplay of mirrors, in which the process of composition as well as its final result reflect in Bunkley a process of evolution and transformation similar to the one that Sarmiento experienced. Sarmiento availed himself of the biography of *Facundo* to criticize and to admire, just as does Bunkley.

In both cases we have a subject in the presence of an enigma. In Sarmiento's case, this enigma, Facundo, allows him to identify the problems facing the Argentina of his days. For Bunkley, Sarmiento is the enigma that grants him the faculty not just to see the origins of what he considers to be the problems facing Argentina in the twentieth century, but also to understand his role as a historian, as a subject at the crossroads of multiple social, cultural and political planes.

## NOTES

1 The course that Bunkley taught allows his approach to his subject to be seen: he turned to Cervantes to try to explain the Latin American way of thinking. He employs this same approach, as we will see, in his biography of Sarmiento.

2 Allison W. Bunkley died as the consequence of a joke gone wrong. The statements given to the police by Bunkley's friends and students present the night of the tragedy explain how the young professor enjoyed shocking friends by playing Russian roulette using a circus trick that—performed correctly—guaranteed that no bullet would be in the revolver's chamber when he pulled the trigger. On the night of his twenty-fifth birthday, however, the trick did not work.

3 Bunkley was a reporter for *Newsweek* in 1947, writing for the section on Latin American affairs. He worked as a special envoy from the magazine in Paraguay during the revolution of 1947.

4 During Bunkley's second trip to Argentina in 1948, rumors of his harsh criticisms of the Argentine regime reached the general himself, which forced the professor to leave the country before he had originally intended (*New York Times* 2). An article published in the *New York Times* recounts a very revealing anecdote on the matter: "Prior to his running afoul of General Perón, professor Bunkley reported, he was honored by the President for his work. 'Perón presented me with two gifts,' he said. 'One was a small statuette of the patriot. The second was a broad smile ... Neither of which I would receive today'" (2). Following his death, Bunkley's roommate told police that, as a result of his articles, he had been criticized in various Argentine newspapers and had been receiving death threats from Perón's followers.

5 This publication remains unedited, but may

be found at Princeton University's Mudd Library.

6 This publication was a student serial disseminated in 1948 and 1949 at Princeton University, whose Mudd Library contains a large, although ultimately incomplete, selection of its issues.

7 Documentation of these two projects is provided by Bunkley's academic transcript, which can be found in Princeton's Mudd Library. It is unknown what became of them or how advanced they were at the time of his death.

8 Bunkley's archive, which will be presented further on, explains how he made a pilgrimage to visit all of the places where Sarmiento had been: Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, where he found himself unexpectedly in the middle of the revolution of 1947 and seized the opportunity to report these events as a journalist for *Newsweek*; and, in the United States, where he went from New York to New Orleans, following the same route that the Argentine author took. This intensive search is testimony of the thoroughness with which Bunkley worked on this biography.

9 Madaline Nichols says, "In the utilization of new materials, the book is somewhat disappointing ... His bibliographical note gives scant particularized information about this collection, and an analysis of footnotes indicates remarkably little actual use of the material" (675).

10 The anecdote tells of how Sarmiento, being a soldier of the Governor, decided to desert from the army because the obligations that it imposed on him were beginning to interfere with his obligations in his aunt's store. In a meeting with the Governor, Sarmiento became threatening and refused to follow protocol, which showed, according to the biographer, bravery (*Life* 68).

11 We would be remiss not to point out the slight difference in the terminology employed here. "Expresión," as used by Bunkley for the title of his lecture, may be translated into English as both "expression" and "extent." We have chosen the latter term since it is obviously the concept that Bunkley had in mind, as we will see in his reading of Augusto Centeno.

12 To clarify, here we are resorting to the terminology of Fernand Braudel and the explanation that he offers in his book *On History*.

13 Bunkley also understands through this opposition the relationship that Sarmiento has with the Spanish past: "... Sarmiento broadened his attack upon Rosas and his personalistic dictatorship into an attack upon Spain and the Spanish way of life" (*Life* 171).

14 Before going any further, we need to make a brief clarification: our intention is not to offer categorical definitions of the concepts of rationalism and romanticism, but rather to examine what Bunkley understands them to be and, more importantly, to attend to the characteristics that he highlights to tip the scales in one direction or another with respect to Sarmiento's inclinations.

15 In one case, for example, he takes an article published in the newspaper *El Mercurio* (February 12, 1817) and searches for those descriptions that respond to this criteria: "La fría fisonomía de los ciudadanos corresponde también a la alegría decretada, como la de la vírjen a quien un sórdido cálculo de familia une al esposo que su corazón no ha elejido, con los atavíos nupciales sobre el cuerpo i el disgusto reconcentrado en su pecho, coronado de guirnaldas la cabeza i el pesar pintado en su semblante" (Bunkley Research). The underline is Bunkley's and is precisely indicative of the contrasts that he describes.

16 Bunkley emphasizes the speed with which Facundo was written: in theory it was to be a long term project, but historical circumstances interfered again; the arrival of Rosas's ambassador, Baldomero García, who had a "belligerent attitude toward the Argentine exiles," accelerated its redaction and publication, sacrificing any literary aspirations that it may have had (Life 208).

17 In one of his archived notebooks, Bunkley includes an extract from an article by Sarmiento, "El mulato-drama de Alejandro Dumas" (*Mercurio*, July 15, 1847) and in which he described the play using the term "titanism." This usage of the term is revealing because it shows Sarmiento's unconsciousness of his own romanticism while at the same time illuminating his reading of Facundo: "Creo que no puedo equivocarme en decir que el drama es de suyo inmoral, porque las acciones morales i las pasiones ordenadas nada tienen de dramático. Se necesitan virtudes grandes i pasiones fuertes i rebeldes para mover el corazón del espectador" (Bunkley Research).

18 Another moment in Sarmiento's life that helps to understand this positioning is when he visits, on the way to Europe, the island of Más a Fuera. This island represents, on one hand, his readings, the fictional world in which he was educated (Rousseau, Defoe, etc.), and on the other, peaceful living, in communion with nature—which on other occasions, in Facundo for example, we have seen represented in the border characters of Fenimore Cooper. Sarmiento has to choose between this world and civilization, to dwell forever in fiction, ide-

alization and writing or to pass into history, which he understands as the more active of the two options (Life 234).

19 The section titles for *Life of Sarmiento* demonstrate this building momentum: The Raw Materials, The Commencement, The Conception, The Confirmation, The Construction, The Consummation, and The Counteraction.

20 While neither of these theses has been published, they may be accessed at Princeton University's Mudd Library.

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