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ARTICLE

Mercer's Belles and Sarmiento's Teachers: Female Pedagogues within Two Transcontinental Emigration Projects of the Nineteenth Century

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Abstract
Situating the endeavors of Asa Shinn Mercer and Domingo Faustino Sarmiento within the broader settler colonial histories of the US and Argentina, this study provides two cases in which men representing prominent settler groups in the Americas attempted to regulate via internal educational colonialism populations they considered divergent from the nations' ideals. Both projects recruited women to serve as civilizing agents who would help align disparate groups with the desired standards of citizenship. The female participants, however, did not blindly conform to their leaders' expectations of behavior, instead asserting their own will at key points during the projects' execution. Examining the groups' dynamics in tandem provides new examples of the gendered processes at play within the settler colonialist structures of two nineteenth-century American countries.

Keywords: Domingo Sarmiento; Asa Mercer; female teachers; settler colonialism; internal educational colonialism

As women in the US contributed to the national expansionist agenda by extending the reach of the New England educational model to the frontiers of nineteenth-century America, the emigration projects of two men from opposite ends of the Americas, Asa Shinn Mercer of Washington Territory, and Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, minister to the US from Argentina, collided aboard the steamer *Continental* at a small port in Lota, Chile, in 1866. The widows and unmarried women aboard embodied for each man an opportunity to improve his country's future. Mercer, acting as a private citizen, orchestrated the sea journey from the eastern US to Washington Territory of a group that came to be known eponymously as "Mercer's Girls" or "Mercer's Belles."[1] Sarmiento was residing in the US as Mercer made his scheme a reality. During his tenure as a foreign dignitary, Sarmiento's search for North American teachers that would undertake a three-year teaching commitment in Argentina became a key aspect of the nation-building plan that he believed would transform his country into a modern society. He hoped to seize the

[1]Since Mercer's undertaking took place nearly half a century before the Panama Canal opened, steamers traveling from New York to Seattle were obligated to sail past Argentina and around Cape Horn before heading north along the Pacific coast.

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opportunity to secure teachers from Mercer's ship, as it was docked in a neighboring country, but ultimately, Sarmiento's plan to divert Mercer's passengers to disembark in Chile was unsuccessful. He would have to wait three more years for the first of "*las maestras de Sarmiento* (Sarmiento's teachers)" to arrive in Argentina.

This study aims to show the transcontinental enterprises of Mercer and Sarmiento as specific gendered processes that intersected and diverged within larger structures of nineteenth-century settler colonialism.[2] Although they briefly converged and ostensibly shared similar goals, these projects have never been studied in tandem. Margaret Jacobs's comparative analysis of the role of White women within the settler colonial structures of nineteenth-century US and Australia serves as a model for examining two societies that may at first appear disparate, but which share a settler colonialist structure.[3] The nation-building processes of Argentina and the US depended on the removal of indigenous peoples from their territories, either through relocation or violence, and the subsequent appropriation of that land by European settlers.[4] Both countries are ensconced within settler colonial systems driven by a "logic of elimination" that spurred the United States' implementation of Manifest Destiny and Argentina's analogous Desert Campaigns.[5] A side-by-side comparison of the concomitant projects of Mercer and Sarmiento in the North and South American continents reveals gendered processes in which male administrators recruited a female teaching force in order to impose a model of civilization on settler populations that were perceived to be victims of ignorance or in danger of moral corruption.[6] As Francine Masiello notes, "In America, a feminization of values was destined not only to challenge the frontier but to offset barbarism in men themselves."[7] While the

[2]For studies on the inextricability between settler colonialism and gender processes, see Maile Arvin, Eve Tuck, and Angie Morrill, "Decolonizing Feminism: Challenging Connections between Settler Colonialism and Heteropatriarchy," *Feminist Formations* 25, no. 1 (Spring 2013), 8–34; David Camfield, "Settler Colonialism and Labour Studies in Canada," *Labour / Le Travail* 83 (Spring 2019), 147–72; Margaret D. Jacobs, *White Mother to a Dark Race: Settler Colonialism, Maternalism, and the Removal of Indigenous Children in the American West and Australia, 1880–1940* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009); and Scott Lauria Morgensen, "Theorizing Gender, Sexuality, and Settler Colonialism: An Introduction," in "Karangatia: Calling Out Gender and Sexuality in Settler Societies," ed. Michelle Erai and Scott L. Morgensen, special issue, *Settler Colonial Studies* 2, no. 2 (2012), 2–22.

[3]Jacobs, *White Mother*.

[4]For specific analysis of Latin America as a site of settler colonialism, see Stephanie E. Smallwood, "Reflections on Settler Colonialism, the Hemispheric Americas, and Chattel Slavery," *William and Mary Quarterly* 76, no. 3 (July 2019), 407–16; Michael Goebel, "Settler Colonialism in Postcolonial Latin America," in *The Routledge Handbook of the History of Settler Colonialism*, ed. Edward Cavanagh and Lorenzo Veracini (New York: Routledge, 2017); M. Bianet Castellanos, "Introduction: Settler Colonialism in Latin America," *American Quarterly* 69, no. 4 (Dec. 2017), 777–81; Richard Gott, "Latin America as a White Settler Society," *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 26, no. 2 (April 2007), 269–89; and Ricardo D. Salvatore, "The Unsettling Location of a Settler Nation: Argentina, from Settler Economy to Failed Developing Nation," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 107, no. 4 (2008), 755–89.

[5]Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006), 387–409.

[6]Camfield notes, "In the societies where it is present, settler colonialism exists as part of an interlocking or mutually mediating (internally related) matrix of social relations including those of class, gender, sexuality, and race." "Settler Colonialism," 153.

[7]Francine Masiello, *Between Civilization and Barbarism: Women, Nation, and Literary Culture in Modern Argentina* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 20.

degree to which education was a primary motive differs, both men established women as the embodiment of the "civilizing" force education was perceived to exert on the targeted settler populations.[8]

Mercer did not have a cohesive educational plan in mind, but rather seems to have landed on the recruitment of schoolteachers because of the respectability the profession lent his venture. Regardless of whether they actually taught in Washington Territory, women were the core of his project. Mercer described the male settlers as in danger of losing all they had learned on the East Coast. He portrayed them as young men

> fresh from the home circles and families of the East, with fond memories of prayerful mothers and watchful fathers; yet distance and time were rapidly changing those memories and altering character. The tendency with both young and old was to forget their associations, and in a certain degree to depart from their former course of conduct.

It was woman's ability to regulate and refine children and men alike that Mercer called upon to "aid in throwing around those who have gone before the restraints of well-regulated society; to cultivate the higher and purer faculties of man by casting about him those refining influences that true women always carry with them."[9] The main aim of Sarmiento's project was pedagogical. Unlike Mercer, he did not recruit teachers to settle a region of the country, but rather depended on female teachers to export the liberal ideals of a New England common school education to the far corners of the Americas, as he proclaimed was their duty: "What a magnificent task for the noble ardor of their educationalists, having the world before them, to perfect the work in one place, to initiate in another, with a certain success, with the approbation of whole populations, and having before them the blessings of the coming generations!"[10] This study will start by considering the perceived need in both locations for female pedagogues trained in the New England model of education and then examine the men's recruitment strategies and the women's motivations for participation. Finally, by analyzing the gendered dynamics within the enterprises of Mercer and Sarmiento, I will show that within these settler societies European descendants not only sought to control indigenous populations, but also how female-directed education could be used as a means to bring into line members of the settler population that were seen as deviating from the proposed ideals of nationhood.

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[8]For a deeper understanding of the role of education in the formation of the identity of the Western US, see Nancy Beadie et al., "Gateways to the West, Part I: Education in the Shaping of the West," *History of Education Quarterly* 56, no. 3 (Aug. 2016), 418–44; Nancy Beadie et al., "Gateways to the West, Part II: Education and the Making of Race, Place, and Culture in the West," *History of Education Quarterly* 57, no. 1 (Feb. 2017), 94–126; and Margaret A. Nash, "Entangled Pasts: Land-Grant Colleges and American Indian Dispossession," *History of Education Quarterly* 59, no. 4 (Nov. 2019), 437–67.

[9]Asa Mercer, "Mr. Mercer's Emigration Scheme," *New York Times*, October 24, 1865, p. 5.

[10]Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, "Education in the Argentine Republic," in *Proceedings and Lectures of the National Teachers' Association, the National Association of School Superintendents, and the American Normal School Association at their Annual Meetings Held in Indianapolis, Ind. August, 1866* (Albany: Office of the New York Teacher, 1866), 80, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=miua.0677752.1866.001&view=1up&seq=86&q1=sarmiento.

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Historiography of the Mercer and Sarmiento Projects

From its inception in the mid-1800s, and for most of the twentieth century, the story of Mercer's Belles was portrayed as a quaint anecdote about women willing to undertake the long journey from East to West in search of a husband.[11] While Mercer claimed he was recruiting schoolteachers, their intended profession was in reality subordinate to their eligibility for marriage. An anecdotal treatment of Mercer's project belies its role as part of a larger story of settler colonialism in the western US, in which a greater presence of White women was deemed necessary to curb miscegenation between the White male population and Native women.[12]

Descriptions of the women's journey come from the published accounts of three passengers. A *New York Times* reporter, Roger Conant, accompanied the group to send regular dispatches to the paper detailing life aboard.[13] Conant's narrative is full of gossipy anecdotes and is often derisive of Mercer's attempts to control the actions of his passengers, especially the single women. Two female passengers retold their voyages in Washington newspapers. Harriet Stevens, who often dined at Mercer's table, presented a predominantly rosy picture of her experience at sea, which she called "the greatest three months of our lives."[14] Conversely, Flora Pearson Engle's account, published nearly fifty years after the fact, is scathingly critical of Mercer, her fellow passengers, and the conditions aboard the ship.[15]

Lenna A. Deutsch conducted the first academic research of the venture, publishing together Conant's journal, a passenger list of the *Continental*, and a collection of letters and articles significant to the documentation of Mercer's project.[16] Kerry Abrams's is the first and up to now only study that looks at the project critically, as part of a broader system of Western settlement. Examining in detail the media's

[11]Clarence B. Bagley, "'The Mercer Immigration:' Two Cargoes of Maidens for the Sound Country," *Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society* 5, no.1 (1904), 5; and "Mercer's Girls," *Washington Standard*, Feb. 24, 1866. Looser interpretations of historical fact include *Mercer's Belles*, a collection of romance stories (Teri Harman, Linda Carroll-Bradd, and Heather B. Moore, *Mercer's Belles* [Lehi, Utah: Mirror Press, 2019]) and a television series, *Here Come the Brides*, which ran for two seasons on the ABC network from 1968 to 1970. The comedy series borrowed the conceit of a shipload of women arriving in Washington Territory in search of husbands.

[12]For examples of such attitudes, see Charles Prosch, "A Good Wife," *Puget Sound Herald*, October 22, 1858; and "The Scarcity of White Women," *Puget Sound Herald*, October 22, 1859. For scholarly analyses of the White man– Native woman relationships in the early days of Western settlement, see Dee Brown, *The Gentle Tamers: Women of the Old Wild West* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1981); and Sheila McManus, *Choices and Chances: A History of Women in the U.S. West* (Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, 2011), 73–103.

[13]Roger Conant, *The Cruise of the Continental or An Inside View of Life on the Ocean Wave*, in *Mercer's Belles: The Journal of a Reporter*, ed. Lenna A. Deutsch, 2nd ed. (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1992), 23–108.

[14]Harriet Stevens, "A Journal of Life on the Steamer Continental Part 1," *Puget Sound Weekly*, June 4, 1866, p. 3, and "Part 2," June 11, 1866, p. 3. The second article was also reprinted in the *Annals of Wyoming* as "One of the Mercer Girls: A Journal of Life on the Steamer Continental," 35, no. 2 (Oct. 1963), 213–28. Deutsch reprinted the first article in *Mercer's Belles*, 129–32, and Clarence B. Bagley republished selections from Stevens's accounts. See Bagley, "'The Mercer Immigration,'" 1–24.

[15]Flora Pearson Engle, "The Story of the Mercer Expeditions," *Washington Historical Quarterly* 6, no. 4 (1915), 225–37.

[16]See Deutsch, *Mercer's Belles*.

shifting portrayal of Mercer and his passengers, she shows how gendered issues that arose within his project exemplify the role immigration law played in shaping the population of the West.[17]

The first in-depth collection of information about the teachers who participated in Sarmiento's project was published by Alice Houston Luiggi in the 1950s.[18] Julio Crespo's bilingual update adds an analysis of the historical context, fills in some missing details, and eliminates the inconsistencies of numbers throughout Luiggi's work.[19] Letters published between Sarmiento and Mary Peabody Mann provide valuable insight into the selection of suitable candidates and the challenges he faced in carrying out the plan.[20] There has been some study of Sarmiento's use of education in nation-building and the role of education in his diametric concept of civilization and barbarism, but until now, that project has not been explicitly identified as a form of internal settler colonialism, as I propose it to be.[21]

Few firsthand perspectives of the North American women have been published, with the exception of Jennie Howard's diary, written and published in 1931,

[17]Kerry Abrams, "The Hidden Dimension of Nineteenth-Century Immigration Law," *Vanderbilt Law Review* 62, no. 5 (Nov. 2009), 1353–1418.

[18]Alice Houston Luiggi, *Sesenta y cinco valientes: Sarmiento y las maestras norteamericanas* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Agora, 1959). An English-language version was published after her death: *65 Valiants* (Gainesville, University of Florida Press, 1965). In the footnotes of her article Karen Leroux indicates that her research brought the number of total participants to over seventy, a number Luiggi also mentions at one point, despite the title of her book. See Leroux, "'Money Is the Only Advantage': Reconsidering the History of Gender, Labor, and Emigration among US Teachers in the Late Nineteenth Century," *International Labor and Working-Class History*, no. 87 (Spring 2015), 207n3 and 209n36.

[19]Julio Crespo, *Las maestras de Sarmiento* (Buenos Aires: Grupo Abierto, 2007), 63–64 and 306. Since Crespo's book is bilingual, all citations include two page numbers. The first is the Spanish version of the text; the second is the English translation.

[20]See Alice Houston Luiggi, "Some Letters of Sarmiento and Mary Mann 1865–1876, Part I," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 32, no. 2 (May 1952), 187–211; "Part II," no. 3 (Aug. 1952), 347–75; and Barry L. Velleman, *"My Dear Sir" Mary Mann's Letters to Sarmiento (1865–1881)* (Buenos Aires, Argentina: ICANA, 2001).

[21]While Sarmiento embraced the terms "civilization and barbarism," Nicolas Shumway notes, "He did not invent them. They were already in Argentine political discourse at least as early as the Rividavians [1820s]." See Shumway, *The Invention of Argentina* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 90. Marta B. Rodríguez Galán examines how Sarmiento's understanding of culture as equating to European and US civilization informed his educational policy in Argentina. See Galán, "La conceptualización de la cultura en la obra de Sarmiento e implicaciones en su política educativa," *Espéculo: Revista de estudios literarios* (Madrid: Universidad Complutense, 2005), http://www.ucm.es/info/especulo/numero29/sarmient.html. Evan C. Rothera and Georgette Magassy Dorn situate Sarmiento's educational policies within a Pan-American liberal perspective. See Rothera, "Our South American Cousin: Domingo F. Sarmiento and Education in Argentina and the United States," in *Reconstruction in a Globalizing World*, ed. David Prior (New York: Fordham University Press, 2018), 21–49; and Dorn, "Sarmiento, the United States, and Public Education," in *Sarmiento and His Argentina*, ed. Joseph T. Criscenti (London: Lynne Rienner, 1993), 77–89. Karen Leroux separates Sarmiento's project from other "Americanization" initiatives that the US imposed on other countries. See Leroux, "Sarmiento's Self-Strengthening Experiment," in *Teaching America to the World and the World to America: Education and Foreign Relations since 1870*, ed. Richard Garlitz and Lisa Jarvinen (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 51–71. Noel F. McGinn asserts that while Sarmiento believed universal education to be the driving force of Argentine modernity, in reality its economic effect was minimal. See McGinn, "The Failure of Modernization Theory in Nineteenth-Century Argentina," in *Sarmiento and His Argentina*, 131–42.

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forty-eight years after her arrival to Argentina with a group of twenty-three teachers.[22] Julyan G. Peard's biography of Mary Gorman, the first female teacher Sarmiento recruited, examines Gorman's lifelong teaching profession and provides detailed insight into her experiences in Argentina.[23] Karen Leroux challenges the pervading image of nineteenth-century female pedagogues as self-sacrificing reformers, situating them instead within the history of labor in the US.[24]

The Perceived Need for Female Educators in Washington Territory and Argentina

As prominent citizens of Washington Territory expressed their concern regarding a lack of marriageable White women and held bachelors' meetings to "strategize the means of obtaining a wife for all involved," Mercer took up the challenge to bring about a large-scale immigration of women from the East Coast.[25] He was the younger brother of a prominent Seattle judge, Thomas Mercer, whom he joined out West after graduating from Franklin College, Ohio, in 1860. A childhood friend of Thomas, the Methodist minister Rev. Daniel Bagley, served as president of the board of the still-new Washington University and gave Asa the job of helping construct the university building. When the university opened in 1861, twenty-two-year-old Mercer served as president, professor, and janitor of the school.[26]

Mercer's determined efforts to recruit students to the new school, including traveling four hundred miles by canoe to logging camps in Puget Sound, soon secured him from Governor William Pickering the position of commissioner of immigration.[27] Charged with increasing emigration to the territory, Mercer struck upon the idea of traveling to the East to recruit female teachers. He was supported in spirit if not in funds by the legislature and Governor Pickering, whose facetious description of the venture as a "raid on the widows and orphans of the East" alludes to the dire circumstances that most likely induced many women to emigrate west.[28] Mercer

[22]Jennie E. Howard, *In Distant Climes and Other Years* (Buenos Aires: The American Press, 1931). Mónica Szurmuk contextualizes Howard's experience within Sarmiento's plan to wrest the educational system from the grip of the Catholic Society of Beneficence. See Szurmuk, "Traveling/Teaching/Writing: Jennie Howard's *In Distant Climes and Other Years*," in *Women in Argentina: Early Travel Narratives*, ed. Mónica Szurmuk (Gainesville, University of Florida Press, 2000), 78–86.

[23]Julyan G. Peard, *An American Teacher in Argentina: Mary Gorman's Nineteenth-Century Odyssey from New Mexico to the Pampas* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2016).

[24]See Leroux, "Money." For an analysis of the economic focus of teaching associations formed in nineteenth-century America, see also Karen Leroux, "'Lady Teachers' and the Genteel Roots of Teacher Organization in Gilded Age Cities," *History of Education Quarterly* 46, no. 2 (Summer 2006), 164–91.

[25]"Steilacoom Bachelors," *Puget Sound Herald*, March 2, 1860, 2.

[26]Lawrence Woods, *Asa Shinn Mercer: Western Promoter and Newspaperman, 1839–1917* (Spokane, WA: Arthur H. Clark, 2003), 19–22.

[27]In spite of his efforts to make the university successful, Mercer was unable to prevent the institution from closing briefly in 1863. The *Puget Sound Herald* in March of that year hinted that Mercer's mismanagement caused a dramatic drop in enrollment, a claim he denied and cited as "libel" two issues later. See *Puget Sound Herald*, March 12 and 26, 1863. At the end of the following month, the same paper announced a reopening of the school under a new president. See *Puget Sound Herald*, April 30, 1863. Soon after, Mercer left for the East on his first recruitment voyage.

[28]Bagley, "'The Mercer Immigration,'" 17.

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sought donations from private investors expecting him to acquire wives for them and set off for Boston in 1863 with the hope of obtaining fifty female citizens for the territory.

He had promised the eager bachelors of Washington Territory that he would return with brides, but his recruitment strategy deliberately downplayed the option of marriage and emphasized the women's prospects for supporting themselves financially.[29] He returned to Seattle on May 16, 1864, with eleven women who all successfully found work as teachers. Despite a much smaller group than hoped for, the public response to Mercer's efforts was positive and secured him elected office later that same year. Eventually, eight of the eleven married and settled permanently in the area.[30]

Buoyed by his success the year before, Mercer again went east in 1865, claiming his mission was "to aid in the development of the material resources of the territory, and the establishment of right principles in society." Even as he recruited women as teachers, Mercer implied in the press their most effectual work was to be done in the domestic sphere, where they could "build up happy homes."[31] Throughout the summer and autumn of 1865, national newspapers printed varying details as to the number and makeup of Mercer's passengers as well as the actual date that the ship would sail, reflecting his struggle to solidify the practical details of his project. The number of complications Mercer encountered while organizing the trip, especially financial difficulties, delayed the departure until January 16, 1866, with a significantly lower number than had been predicted in any of the earlier reports, some of which had reached nearly eight hundred.[32]

As Mercer was recruiting participants for his second venture, Sarmiento was in America serving as a diplomatic minister. Born in San Juan, Argentina, in 1811, Sarmiento spent his youth in a newly established country consumed in political chaos.[33] An autodidact, Sarmiento believed passionately in the necessity of a nationwide common education to form a democratic society.[34] He embraced the diametric concept of "civilization and barbarism" first promoted among the country's intellectual elite a decade after Argentina's independence and made it the lifelong driving

[29]"Female Emigration: Women Colonizing the Far West," *New York Times*, Sept. 30, 1865, p. 8.

[30]Bagley, "'The Mercer Immigration,'" 8.

[31]Mercer, "Mr. Mercer's Emigration Scheme," 5. Describing Mercer as a "cagey spin-doctor," Abrams details the financial scheming and fraud Mercer committed during his second trip, including overbooking the ship, taking people's money with promises he could not possibly keep, and taking passenger fares and then neglecting to notify them of the ship's departure. See Abrams, "Hidden Dimension," 1369–74.

[32]In July, Mercer claimed he would be returning with three hundred "war orphans," and exhorted Seattle citizens to be prepared to receive the women in their houses as they settled into their new city. See Bagley, "'The Mercer Immigration,'" 10. The *New York Times* published an article on September 30, stating that Mercer would be setting sail the following month with "seven hundred young women, thirty or forty families and twenty young men." See "Female Emigration," *New York Times*, September 30. *Harper's Weekly* placed the number at four hundred. See *Harper's Weekly*, "Emigration to Washington Territory of Four Hundred Women on the Steamer 'Continental,'" with drawing by A. R. Waud, 1866, pp. 8–9.

[33]For a fairly detailed biography of Sarmiento, see Allison Williams Bunkley, *The Life of Sarmiento* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1952).

[34]While in self-imposed exile under the regime of Juan Manuel de Rosas, Sarmiento joined the faculty of Philosophy and Humanities at the University of Chile and established the first normal school of Latin America in 1842.

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precept behind his political and educational ideologies.[35] Pronouncing a dichotomy between what he saw as rural barbarism and urban cosmopolitanism, Sarmiento determined that the development of a strong education system was the only way to save Argentina from the savagery to which it had succumbed under the dictatorial rule of the caudillos, which he believed anchored his country to the past and prevented it from entering modernity: "Without civilization, without enlightenment, there is no possible government other than despotism: there is no public opinion, no liberty, no institutions, no industry nor wealth."[36]

As the intellectuals of nineteenth-century Argentina were decrying what they perceived as Spain's legacy of barbarism, they maintained a settler colonialist structure that divided the nation into the liberal, European-educated criollos and the religious, rural populace that they viewed as hindering the country's progress toward a modern, industrialized nation.[37] Leading intellectuals left no place in the system for the Afro-Argentine and indigenous populations, at the same time they encouraged the immigration of British and Northern European settlers in the hopes of further Whitening the population. Comparing that era with the extermination of the indigenous population at the hands of the Spanish during the conquest, Richard Gott contends that "the real Latin American holocaust occurred in the nineteenth century."[38] Juan Manuel de Rosas's Desert Campaign against the Mapuches and Ranqueles (1832–1833) started the decline in Native populations, while Julio Argentino Roca's Conquest of the Desert under Sarmiento's administration forty years later was even more devasting.

Sarmiento undertook a research trip in 1845–1847 to Europe and the US, ultimately finding a model educational system for Latin America in New England and the educator Horace Mann's common school system for Massachusetts.[39] Twenty years later, and again in the US, he read about Mann's death and the statue being erected for him outside the Massachusetts State House in Boston and reconnected with his widow, Mary Peabody Mann.[40] A quintessential New England educator of her time, Peabody Mann actively promoted a coed common school education. She introduced Sarmiento to her influential friends in Concord and Cambridge, including Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, and Henry Wordsworth Longfellow.[41]

[35]He explicitly developed these ideas in his 1845 fictionalized biography *Facundo: Civilization and Barbarism*. I agree with Gott's assertion that Sarmiento's adherence to presenting the country's development as a battle between "civilization and barbarism" is rooted in a racist settler colonialist mentality. See Gott, "Latin America," 274.

[36]Sarmiento as quoted in Bunkley, *The Life of Sarmiento*, 191.

[37]Salvatore notes that into the twentieth century, "intellectuals, borrowing from the tradition of the generation of 1837, managed to erase the Indian and the gaucho from the space of the nation. To the extent that this textual operation proved successful, the works of these intellectuals constituted Argentina as a white, European nation." See Salvatore, "The Unsettling Location," 779.

[38]Gott, "Latin America," 286.

[39]Bunkley, *The Life of Sarmiento*, 288; Crespo, *Las maestras de Sarmiento*, 6 and 273.

[40]Velleman, "*My Dear Sir*," 3. Sarmiento had talked to Horace in French with his wife, Mary, serving as interpreter. The correspondence of Sarmiento and Peabody Mann was at first in English via his secretary, Bartolomé Mitre. Back in Argentina, his letters were usually in Spanish.

[41]Longfellow simultaneously impressed Sarmiento with his Spanish language skills and disappointed him with his ignorance of literature from the Southern Cone, which Sarmiento attempted to remedy by giving him several books by Argentine authors. See Michael A. Rockland, "Henry Wadsworth

Sarmiento also became friends with Mary's sister Elizabeth Peabody, whose books on education, especially kindergarten, he read enthusiastically.[42] A key ally in his project to bring North American teachers to Argentina, Mary Peabody Mann translated many of Sarmiento's works, including various articles he wrote for American newspapers and *Facundo*, for which she also wrote a brief biological sketch of the author.[43]

Arriving as a foreign minister to New York Harbor in 1865, Sarmiento shunned the traditional diplomatic life of Washington, DC, preferring to use New York City as a base from which to travel in order to learn about the country's educational system. For three years Sarmiento attended and spoke at many education conferences throughout the country and published articles both in the US and Argentina, including a biography of Abraham Lincoln. These initial stages would lead to his initiative to establish normal schools throughout Argentina based on the New England model headed by North American teachers.[44] Between November 1867 and July 1868 he published four issues of *Ambas Américas* (Both Americas), a journal he hoped would foster a Pan-American collaboration promoting the common school system as a civilizing anecdote to the savagery he believed to be ravaging the nation. "We need to shape the public opinion; raise the insurmountable barrier that keeps us in backwardness and barbarity," he wrote. "Overcome it, or die of inanition."[45]

The Role of Female Pedagogues and the New England Model of Education

In the first half of the nineteenth century, Catharine Beecher declared women's obligation to become teachers: "Every woman is bound to bring [teaching] into the list of *her duties*, and, as one of her most imperious duties, *to do all in her power to secure a proper education to the American children now coming upon the stage* [emphasis in original]."[46] Given the new emphasis in education on what was perceived as the inherently feminine traits of nurturing and compassion, women teachers could serve a public role that was still sheltered within the boundaries of proper female decorum.[47] Throughout the century, reformers would zealously spread the New

Longfellow and Domingo Faustino Sarmiento," *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 12, no. 2 (April 1970), 271–79.

[42]Cesare H. Guerrero, *Mujeres de Sarmiento* (Buenos Aires: Artes Gráficas Bartolomé U. Chiesino, 1960), 257–64.

[43]Domingo F. Sarmiento, *Facundo: Life in the Times of the Argentine Tyrants, or, Civilization and Barbarism*, trans. Mary Peabody Mann (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1868), https://catalog.hathitrust.org/api/volumes/oclc/1999764.html.

[44]Normal schools of the nineteenth century US were state-run teacher-training colleges for elementary school teachers.

[45]Sarmiento, *Obras completas*, vol. 29, *Ambas Américas* (Buenos Aires: Mariano Moreno, 1899), 146. All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

[46]Catharine Beecher, *The Duty of American Women to Their Country* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1845), 74. Allison Speicher notes that in her first publication, *Suggestions Respecting Improvements in Education*, Beecher called for women to take up pedagogical arms in defense of education as a means to a civilized society. See Allison Speicher, "Catherine Beecher Educates the West," *Connecticut Explored* 15, no. 1 (2017), 33.

[47]Masiello indicates that in both nineteenth-century United States and Argentina, women writers and activists promoted the power of domestic feminism to shape national identity. See Masiello, *Between Civilization and Barbarism*, 64–65.

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England model through a form of internal educational colonialism that tamed those parts of society that did not fall in line with the Protestant vision of what constituted a "civilized" America.[48] As the US expanded, educators following the New England model considered it their duty to align the outlying regions of the nation to their educational standards. Educational missionaries were trained in institutions such as the Troy Female Seminary in New York, which placed teachers throughout the West and South in the 1820s, and Zilpah Grant's Female Seminary in Ipswich, Massachusetts, which provided scholarships, training, and placement for teachers in western territories starting in 1835. A decade later, Beecher's National Board of Popular Education sent over six hundred female teachers to positions in Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Kentucky, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Missouri, Iowa, and Oregon.[49] The projects of Mercer and Sarmiento were a natural extension of those early initiatives, with their call for female pedagogues to travel long distances for the sake of educational missionary work.

In the liberal New England tradition, the term "missionary" was used to describe pedagogues who considered it their duty to civilize via education rather than evangelical Christian doctrine. Educators during Reconstruction were depicted as active agents of social change. Just as their brothers, husbands, and friends had sacrificed themselves in the Civil War for the good of the nation, now it was their duty to bring those outlying territories into the folds of the nation. Thus, Massachusetts governor John Andrew was described in the newspapers as assisting Mercer in "sending a missionary ship of women to humanize Washington Territory."[50] Peabody Mann's recommendations for teacher candidates to Argentina are imbued with a missionary rhetoric, such as when she relates the expectations of two potential candidates for Sarmiento's project: "They say they do not consider education to be confined to the schoolroom—that they should undoubtedly have a great deal of outside work to do which they should do in the spirit of missionaries."[51] Likewise, John Ogden, the president of the First State Normal School of Minnesota, which supplied many of the teachers who went to Argentina, addressed the inaugural class as missionaries: "My young friends, when you enter this field, you not only pledge yourselves the public servants of the State, but you enter a missionary field. In the highest and truest

[48]Andrea Turpin delineates between two differing pedagogical ideologies inspiring Protestant reformers in the first half of nineteenth-century America. While both advocated for a common education that incorporated spirituality, morality, and knowledge, Beecher and the Manns followed liberal pedagogical principles while Zilpah Grant and her colleague Mary Lyon, who founded the Mount Holyoke Female Seminary in 1837, adhered to more religiously evangelical tenets. See Turpin, *A New Moral Vision: Gender, Religion, and the Changing Purposes of American Higher Education, 1837–1917* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016), 24.

[49]For a detailed description of the National Board's project, with testimony from participants, see Polly Welts Kaufman, *Women Teachers on the Frontier* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984); and Speicher, "Catharine Beecher."

[50]"Governor Andrew's Missionary Ship," *Boston Daily Evening Transcript*, Jan. 19, 1866, p. 1. The article also describes Sarmiento's efforts to recruit North American teachers to Argentina and translates into English the letter he wrote to Chilean newspapers galvanizing its citizens in Lota to entice the schoolteachers to stay in South America rather than continue on their voyage with Mercer.

[51]Velleman, "*My Dear Sir*," 86.

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sense of the term."[52] While the administrators' rhetoric suggested they should have been motivated by a missionary purpose, Karen Leroux shows that many of the teachers who went to Argentina deliberately distanced themselves from an image they perceived to be self-subordinating and unmodern.[53]

Originating with the educational missionary initiatives from the first half of the century, the image of the New England educator embodied a civilizing force steeped in Protestant values whose influence would transform society. Beecher's creation of the National Board of Popular Education was motivated by the desire "to remake the Midwest and West in her own image, to turn what she saw as an educational and moral wasteland into a place far more like her idealized vision of New England."[54] Mercer portrayed himself as the savior of Washington Territory's perceived crisis of morality, for it was not enough to have educational and religious institutions if there were no women to embody the tenets those institutions claimed to uphold: "Churches and school houses there were, but the great elevating, refining, and moralizing element—true woman—was wonderfully wanting."[55] Mercer's modifier, "true," draws a dichotomy between those women he hoped to bring to the territory and those who already resided there, who were considered a threat to the "civilized" society they envisioned, such as Native women or those on the margins of respectable society who were working in brothels and saloons.[56] He reiterated, "It is simply a matter of duty on the part of Eastern women to go to the West, where their presence and influence are so much needed."[57] Mercer's gendered discourse implies that women could perform their duty as much in the home as in the classroom. He places female teachers on par with wives and mothers, seeing one as a natural extension of the other.

Just as the New England teachers took their educational system to the West and South in order to enfold those nascent regions into the nation, Sarmiento dreamed of schoolteachers traveling to Argentina to bring civilization to his country. "For Sarmiento, as for [Peabody] Mann, Argentina is a variation on the US South, and would do well to follow its Northern Hemisphere counterpart's path on the road to civilization."[58] In the pedagogical tradition of female educators of New England educating (i.e., "civilizing") undeveloped regions of the Americas, Peabody Mann suggested the competence and the charitable spirit of the many women who contributed to the education of freed slaves both in Boston and in the South before and after emancipation prepared them well for a similar role in Argentina.[59] Peabody Mann

[52] *Address Delivered at the Opening of the State Normal School, Winona, Minnesota by Edward D. Neill and John Ogden with a Report on the Course of Instruction, and Other Documents* (Saint Paul, MN: Pioneer Printing, 1860), 31.

[53] Leroux, "Money," 199.

[54] Speicher, "Catharine Beecher," 34.

[55] Mercer, "Mr. Mercer's Emigration Scheme."

[56] For a detailed analysis of the social and legal implications of intermarriage between White settlers and Native women in the western territories, see Abrams, "Hidden Dimension," 1409–13.

[57] Mercer, "Mr. Mercer's Emigration Scheme."

[58] Thomas Genova, "Sarmiento's *Vida de Horacio Mann*: Translation, Importation, and Entanglement," *Hispanic Review* 82, no. 1 (Winter 2014), 32.

[59] Velleman, "*My Dear Sir*," 56. The women who taught during Reconstruction were not compensated, as they were considered volunteers serving a patriotic duty. Contrastingly, the question of pay was essential to the women traveling to the West and Argentina.

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was so convinced that New England educators were the best in the nation, in the initial planning stages of the project, she encouraged Sarmiento to only choose candidates that had been trained in New England, even if they did not know Spanish. Her influence is evident in an article describing Sarmiento's search, which noted that while there were many Spanish residents in New York, "Mr. Sarmiento would value still more the influence of New England in his Republic."[60] When the choice for a position was down to two candidates, Peabody Mann determined that a New England education was the deciding factor.[61] However, despite her partiality toward New England–trained educators, ultimately almost half of Sarmiento's teachers came from normal schools in New York or the Midwest.[62] Their specific origin was less important for Sarmiento than their embodiment of those characteristics associated with New England liberalism.

Sarmiento envisioned himself ushering his nation into a Pan-American modernity in which Argentina would be on par economically and politically with its northern counterpart. In his travels throughout the US, Sarmiento superimposed his own country onto the scenes he observed, noting the potential of the Argentine pampa reflected in the rapidly growing young city of Chicago, which he portrayed as having only recently been part of America's lawless West.[63] The parallels that Sarmiento drew between the western United States, as embodied in Chicago and its surrounding plains, and the geography of his own country gave him hope that the progress he witnessed there could come to fruition in his own land.[64] He also recognized aspects of the Reconstruction-era South that he believed to be reflected in the current state of many Latin American countries, including his own.[65] The fact that most of the North American teachers were Protestants teaching in a Catholic society was not a deterrent for Sarmiento, as he considered their instruction to be "in the practical Christian spirit" rather than in a specific religious doctrine.[66] In fact, Sarmiento preferred Protestant teachers, because they fit his cosmopolitan ideal of what Argentina should become: "In purging Argentinian education of its religiosity, Sarmiento expected to attract the Anglo-Saxon immigrants he envisioned as instrumental in

[60]"Governor Andrew's Missionary Ship."

[61]In a letter to Sarmiento on March 21, 1869, Peabody Mann shows a preference to Edward Allen as candidate for Superintendent of Schools over J. P. Wickersham of Pennsylvania because Wickersham "probably . . . is not so imbued with New England educational views" (Velleman, "*My Dear Sir*," 245–46).

[62]See Crespo, *Las maestras de Sarmiento*, for a brief biography of most of the participants, as well as a list of the schools in Argentina that had North American teachers or directors.

[63]"Where the Lynch law had reigned, thousands of buffalo had wandered and Indians had scalped, and today is the seat of the most stupendous creations of human intelligence." Sarmiento, *Ambas Américas*, 144. [Here, Lynch law refers to the West's method of justice wherein perceived criminals were summarily tried and executed without due process.]

[64]As an example, see Sarmiento's description of Chicago that parallels the Midwestern plains with the pampa and Lake Michigan with the Río de la Plata. Sarmiento, *Ambas Américas*, 186–87. He was not the only one to see parallels between these two regions. North American investors and entrepreneurs often attempted to apply the same principles for economic development to Argentina as those that had worked at home. See Peard, *An American Teacher*, 146–48.

[65]Sarmiento, *Ambas Américas*, 146.

[66]Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, *North and South America: A Discourse Delivered before the Rhode Island Historical Society, December 27, 1865, by His Excellency Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, Argentine Minister to the United States* (Providence, RI: Knowles, Anthony & Co., 1866), 43.

the construction of a modern Argentina."[67] In bringing the New England normal-school model to Argentina via female teachers, Sarmiento wanted to build a society in which men would shape the laws, while women shaped its customs.[68]

Both Sarmiento and Mercer operated with the gendered assumption that women wielded an ennobling force that would refine those settler populations considered to be stuck in barbarity. For Mercer, the West depended on women from the East Coast to help it adhere to national ideals through the propagation of White settlers. For Sarmiento, the teachers embodied the noble characteristics of the New England model of education that he considered key to guaranteeing a consolidated government and economically successful nation.

Channels of Recruitment and Motivations to Participate

The men's gendered expectations of their project participants reflected nineteenth-century modalities that still viewed women as economically dependent and self-sacrificing. Thus, Mercer's party was portrayed in the national press as a shipload of young women seeking marriage, when in fact, of the approximately one hundred passengers that finally accompanied Mercer west, Engle indicates that the steamer set sail with only thirty-six unmarried women; ten of these were widows, seven of whom had children. Sixteen of the unmarried women disembarked in California, rather than continuing the voyage up Puget Sound into Seattle. The rest of the passengers were families, single men, and a woman who was traveling to meet her husband already in Washington Territory.[69] Conant, the journalist on the *Continental*, perpetuated the false trope with frequent references to his fellow passengers as "the virgins."[70] The conflation of the women as schoolmarms and brides-to-be discredited the possibility that they were traveling solely to work and, in turn, subjected their moral character to public scrutiny. Susan Armitage notes, "The scandal surrounding the Mercer project, and the source of titillation ever since, arose from the belief that the women of the expedition were willing to marry any presentable man who happened to be standing at the end of the gangplank when they disembarked in Seattle."[71] The passengers' testimonials reinforce how strongly the marriage question held sway within the group. Harriet Stevens defends her fellow passengers from defamation by emphasizing their marriage eligibility: "It is impossible that the lofty girls who are with us should have left the East because their chances of matrimony were hopeless."[72] Flora Engle, on the other hand, contrasts Mercer's first group with the second one. The first were respectable wage earners—"Not a word was spoken concerning any matrimonial advantage . . . they belonged to some of the best and oldest families in the city"—while the second group was the product of Mercer importing "a goodly number of the

[67]Szurmuk, "Traveling/Teaching/Writing," 80. Subsequent administrations would see a backlash by the Church that led to a small contingent of Catholic teachers arriving to lead schools in conservative cities.

[68]Masiello, *Between Civilization and Barbarism*, 54.

[69]Engle, "The Story of the Mercer Expeditions," 232.

[70]He also used the terms "little school marms," "girls," and occasionally the more neutral "ladies." Conant, *Cruise of the Continental*.

[71]Susan Armitage, foreword to *Mercer's Belles*, viii.

[72]Stevens, "A Journal of Life on the Steamer Continental Part 1."

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numerous widows and orphans of the Civil War, for the express purpose of furnishing wives to the many unmarried men of that region."[73] Although Conant referred to the passengers as "little school marms," he noted that many were not opposed to the idea of marriage, such as a "Miss A.," who told him, "I did not come out for that purpose but if I receive a good offer, I shall take the matter into consideration."[74]

As Mercer's project was subjected to public scrutiny, his portrayal of the women as teachers with strong character references and respectable family heritages provided his enterprise with a veneer of respectability through the guise of an educational mission. Nevertheless, many in the press saw through the facade, and their negative portrayal of Mercer's venture was detrimental to his recruitment efforts, since women who joined Mercer's voyage risked endangering their reputation. Susan Armitage notes, "Proper gentlemen did not print words about respectable women. This made the raucous and suggestive newspaper comments about Mercer's 'belles' particularly insulting; it was a type of leering male commentary normally meted out by newspapermen only to disreputable women, or to those who stepped out of place."[75] Stevens describes the negative reception she and her fellow passengers received in California before continuing on to Seattle, in which one woman stated, "No respectable woman came on the Continental," and another warned her, "We should never be respected because we came in on that disreputable ship."[76] Clearly, the simulacrum of an educational mission was not strong enough to alleviate the precariousness of their status as unmarried women seeking economic self-sufficiency. Leroux's commentary on the Argentine teachers' precarious class identities and gendered issues of self-support is equally applicable to Mercer's unmarried participants.[77] They risked emigrating with the expectation that it would bring them security, whether through employment or marriage.[78]

Given that Mercer's recruitment process was prominent in the national press during the summer of 1865, and Sarmiento was residing in New York City during the summer and fall of that year, it is highly likely that he followed with great interest the newspapers' coverage of Mercer's project. Crespo indicates that on September 30, 1865, Sarmiento first presented to Argentina's minister of education the idea of enlisting a New England educator to organize and manage Argentina's educational system.[79] A letter from Peabody Mann to Sarmiento two weeks later indicates that he must have also begun discussing an educational exchange with her during that same period.[80]

Mercer's project, with its tenuous pedagogical veneer, required little of its participants other than character references and the funds to travel. Sarmiento and Peabody Mann, on the other hand, determined that the teachers who went to Argentina had to

[73]Engle, "The Story of the Mercer Expeditions," 226–28.

[74]Conant, *Cruise of the Continental*, 39.

[75]Armitage, foreword to *Mercer's Belles*, xi.

[76]Stevens, "A Journal of Life on the Steamer Continental Part 1."

[77]Leroux, "Money," 187.

[78]Engle claimed that Mercer enticed candidates with promises of large teaching salaries in "real California gold." Engle, "The Story of the Mercer Expeditions," 225–26.

[79]Crespo, *Las maestras de Sarmiento*, 38 and 289.

[80]Velleman, "*My Dear Sir*," 55.

come from a normal-school background and be "young but with teaching experience, from a good family, of irreproachable conduct and manners, and, if possible, have a pleasant appearance."[81] Many of the women possessed a normal-school diploma, which Leroux notes, "represented a mark of distinction."[82] A healthy body and "pleasant appearance" were positivist hallmarks believed to demonstrate the bearer's intelligence and sound moral compass.[83] Peabody Mann assured Sarmiento that her recommended candidates would not "assume any unpleasant airs of superiority there. They are too superior in reality, and can appreciate the importance of giving respect to good aspirations of the people even if they did not find them much cultivated."[84]

Unlike Mercer, Sarmiento did not advertise his search for educators in newspapers, trusting instead Peabody Mann's extensive network of colleagues and friends as well as those educators he met in his travels around the country. Likely noting the notoriety Mercer's project garnered in the press and its derisive comments about the participants, Sarmiento would have wanted to maintain the prestige he envisioned for his Pan-American enterprise. He appealed to the education community in his role as a fellow settler, wielding the sword of education to civilize all corners of the Americas: "Your teachers will then open colleges in twenty South American states, in two hundred capitals and provinces, in a thousand towns and villages. . . . This is the only conquest really worthy of a free people; this is the 'Monroe Doctrine' in practice."[85] Excerpts of the speech were published in an education journal and in a pamphlet that Peabody Mann distributed to potential candidates for the project. Thus, while Mercer was recruiting via the national press and therefore was subject to the public scrutiny and criticism this method garnered, Sarmiento sought his candidates specifically within the educational community, which reduced ambiguity regarding the participants' qualifications and intentions.

From Leroux's thorough study of the teachers who traveled to Argentina, we understand the profile of a typical participant was a middle-class woman of the age of thirty who had experienced the death of at least one parent and bore financial obligations of some sort. Three-fourths of the teachers had already experienced a migration or came from a family who had done so before they undertook the long journey south. Leroux demonstrates that "money, more than anything else, persuaded these women to migrate."[86] Orphaned with two siblings to support, Jennie Howard was likely drawn to the high salary offered in Argentina. She notes that while she was encouraged by her teachers to pursue a literary education due to her "natural inclination," economic considerations forced her to pursue a teaching career instead.[87] Sarah Chamberlin Eccleston, who became known as the mother of kindergartens in Argentina, plainly stated that her pursuit of a teaching profession was provoked by the death of her husband and then brother a year later: "It was then I was

[81]Crespo, *Las maestras de Sarmiento*, 39 and 289.

[82]Leroux, "Money," 193.

[83]Practically speaking, healthy schoolteachers were also less likely to succumb to illness while undergoing a long journey.

[84]Velleman, "*My Dear Sir*," 87.

[85]Sarmiento, *North and South*, 44. See also Sarmiento, "Education in the Argentine Republic," 80.

[86]Leroux, "Money," 195.

[87]Howard, *In Distant Climes*, 16.

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resolved to carry out my desire to prepare for a teacher of kindergarten—altho' firmly opposed by Mother, brothers, and relatives—I wanted to be independent, to no longer be supported by them, willing as they appeared to be to maintain me and my children."[88] Leroux cites two pairs of sisters, Anna and Isabel Dudley and Florence and Sarah Atkinson, for whom abrupt changes in family circumstances spurred them to accept the higher salaries of Argentina in order to more quickly pay off debts.[89]

Sarmiento's endeavor was principally didactic, and the women's motivations were primarily financial, but this did not preclude him from suggesting in a candidate interview that in addition to finding a good job in Argentina, the young woman would likely be married within a year of her arrival. She retorted (justifiably, he later admits), "You all believe . . . that we women only think about getting married."[90] In fact, Leroux notes, "the rate of marriage among these migrant teachers was much lower than among US women overall."[91]

Aboard the *Continental* in Lota, Chile

The *Continental* left New York on January 16, 1866. Conant's account, written for an audience interested in anecdotal details of life aboard a cramped steamer, provides insight into passengers' interactions with the male passengers and crew and reveals the women did not necessarily fit the genteel image Mercer had depicted in the papers as capable of taming the immoral West. In spite of evidence to the contrary, Mercer and Conant fixed the women into the archetype of girls eager for any marriage proposal. Engle mockingly described Conant as openly courting one woman then another, "but," she notes, "the ardent wooer failed to make a permanent impression."[92] For his part, Conant remarks of Mercer: "Poor deluded young man! He imagined that simply because he was the agent of this expedition, that all the virgins were desperately in love with him, and were only waiting for him to offer himself, to fly into his arms." After Mercer suffered a failed proposal, Conant, in delight, records the woman exclaiming, "The old fool wants to marry me, and I hate the very sight of him."[93]

Many of the single women enjoyed the new freedom being out to sea afforded them, far from the anxious and judging eyes of family and society, and so they openly scorned Mercer's attempts to regulate their actions. After witnessing various instances of flirtation between the ship's officers and the young passengers, Mercer forbade the women from associating with the crew. The women rebelled by playing cards with the men and flaunting their disobedience in his face: "Several of the girls, casting a look of defiance at Mercer, accepted the proffered arms of the officers, and took particular pains to walk by him as often as they could during the promenade." Later, they mocked his insistence that they go to bed at ten o'clock, by again, "promenading

[88]Sarah Chamberlin Eccleston, Diary and Journal, 1864–1916, p. 152, https://digital.libraries.psu.edu/digital/collection/chamberlin/id/81.

[89]Leroux, "Money," 194.

[90]Sarmiento, *Ambas Américas*, 211.

[91]Leroux, "Money," 203.

[92]Engle, "The Story of the Mercer Expeditions," 231.

[93]Conant, *Cruise of the Continental*, 47–48. After that rejection, Mercer successfully courted Annie E. Stephens on the journey, and they were married in July of that same year. See Bagley, "'The Mercer Immigration,'" 19.

up and down the deck, exclaiming, as they passed Mercer 'Go to bed! Go to bed!' And go to bed they didn't till they got ready." On Sundays, Mercer would lead religious services, which Conant scornfully described as a "farce." Rather than follow the service devotedly, he noted, most of the women sat in the back reading or "making up faces at Mercer."[94] A particularly defiant young woman refused to heed Mercer's warning about the intentions of the ship's officers, declaring that "she should flirt with the officers as much and as long as she pleased and that she should like to see him prevent her."[95] The Captain's attempts to prohibit flirtation were likewise repudiated: "The Captain finds the enforcing of his order rather up hill business. The girls have denied his right to issue such an order, and have combined together to break it, and they seemed determined to flirt as much as they please." Far from docile and pliant, these women boldly asserted the right to moderate their own behavior.

The battle of wills between Mercer and his passengers reached an apex in Lota, Chile, as Sarmiento's ambitions threatened to derail Mercer's project. As the ship was anchored off the coast of Chile for nearly a fortnight, Sarmiento, in Boston, took advantage of the *Continental*'s long stay in port to write to the editor of *La Patria* in Valparaiso, Chile. The article was widely circulated in that country's press as well as translated and reprinted in the *Boston Evening Transcript*.[96] Unlike most depictions of Mercer's enterprise as a matchmaking scheme, Sarmiento referred to the passengers as "school-mistresses," proclaiming them essential to the civilization of a territory striving toward statehood: "They are [seven] hundred Massachusetts school-mistresses, sent to Washington Territory, to prepare the way for the advent of a new Republic when the Territory shall be converted into a State and admitted into the Union."[97] For Sarmiento, the common school system education spread by "schoolmistresses" willing to emigrate where they were needed was the civilizing force that would bring the Americas out of the shadow of Spanish colonialism by indoctrinating the people in the principles of a free republic: "Thanks to the system of *common school education*, the inhabitants of New England carry to the extremities of the Union the doctrine and practice of fertilizing liberty [emphasis in original]." In his letter, Sarmiento encouraged the inhabitants of Chile to entice the women to change their original plan and remain in South America:

> How sad it would be if that enterprise which sends the population of Massachusetts to fertilize Free States, should pass the coasts of a whole continent . . . without meeting with a single country or nation which would desire to shorten its long passage, and appropriate it for its own benefit. [Seven] hundred North American school-mistresses in the Argentine Republic or in Chili, would repair in ten years the ravages of three centuries.[98]

[94]Conant, *Cruise of the Continental*, 40–41.

[95]Conant, *Cruise of the Continental*, 51.

[96]"Governor Andrew's Missionary Ship."

[97]In Sarmiento's original letter, he cited seven hundred teachers, not the six hundred translated by the *Boston Evening Transcript* (see Sarmiento, *Ambas Américas*, 78). He got the amount of seven hundred from the *New York Times* article "Female Emigration."

[98]"Governor Andrew's Missionary Ship." Leroux notes, "Ideologies of gender, class, and nation building downplayed these teachers' identities as workers and mystified teaching as a gendered, benevolent, and patriotic calling." Leroux, "Money," 190.

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Local men and women of upper-class society answered Sarmiento's call, befriending Mercer's passengers with daily visits. The visitors' attentions flattered the women, seemingly elevating them to a similar social standing on par with that of the visitors:

> Every day the ladies were on shore riding, walking, and visiting. Some of the native women of the better class came to visit us on shipboard. They danced and played for us. Their cordiality and gaiety were truly delightful. We decorated the upper saloon with flowers, and every day during our stay at [L]ota a party of gentlemen came from the shore to pass the evening with us. There was much flirtation, very pleasant to witness.[99]

Harriet Stevens's recounting of their interactions with the Chileans did not mention attempts to convince the women to stay, and left out the dramatic scene that ensued when some of the women accepted the offer to stay in Chile to work as schoolteachers.

Conant, on the other hand, expressed dismay at what he saw as their visitors' constant presence: "Ever since our arrival at this port, the *Continental* has been completely overrun, night and day, with Chilian [*sic*] officers."[100] Unaware of Sarmiento's public letter, Conant assumed the Chileans were merely taken with the women: "Most of the officers are working with the girls to induce them to remain in Chili and teach. One of them received an offer of $1000, to teach in a convent 15 miles in the interior. They have made some impression and there is no knowing but that we shall lose some of our party here."[101] While Conant conceded that "some of them are very intelligent and well educated men," he contended, "South America is not a suitable residence for a young lady."[102] It appears that from Conant's viewpoint, a hierarchy of wilderness existed in which Washington Territory, already populated (however sparsely) with White eastern settlers, shared the women's culture and language, while South America's differences rendered the whole continent an inappropriate location for the women to settle on their own.[103]

The night before the ship was scheduled to depart, the Chilean consul and a large party of officers and gentlemen were invited to dine on the ship with Mercer and the captain. Mercer forbade the women to attend or even look over the railing at the

[99]Stevens, "A Journal of Life on the Steamer Continental Part 2." Leroux demonstrates that for the teachers who later undertook Sarmiento's project, travel abroad also induced a profound awareness of class distinctions and access to opportunities not afforded them at home: "Such genteel sociability en route to Argentina contributed to teachers' hopes that migration would yield social and economic opportunities, perhaps transforming them into the expatriate ambassadors of education that Sarmiento and Mann envisioned." Leroux, "Money," 198.

[100]Conant, *Cruise of the Continental*, 89n13.

[101]Conant, *Cruise of the Continental*, 79.

[102]Conant, *Cruise of the Continental*, 89n13.

[103]The degree of barbarity ascribed to a place seems to have much to do with its remoteness from cultural centers. Washington Territory was also deemed inappropriate by the Californians, as Stevens relates: "There was no change in the clamor against Washington Territory. It daily increased. The friends of the ladies assured us in the most positive manner, that Puget Sound was the last place in the world for women, and offered all sorts of inducements to remain." Stevens, "A Journal of Life on the Steamer Continental Part 1."

diners below deck. Conant related a tense exchange between one of the women and Mercer when he discovered some women were watching the men dine:

> Mercer came up and seizing one of the young ladies by the arm rudely pulled her away from the railing, at the same time telling her not to make a fool of herself.
>
> "Mr. Mercer," she exclaimed, "I am a lady, and am not accustomed to being treated in that way by ruffians."
>
> "Your conduct, Madam in looking down upon that table, while the company were eating was most unlady like," said Mercer.
>
> "Oh! Mr. Mercer," she again exclaimed, "I hate you. And if my hatred could have killed you you would have been dead long ago."
>
> Mercer made no reply, but turned on his heel and walked away.[104]

The crux of the argument between Mercer and the passenger is the contention regarding "proper" comportment. Mercer's attempts to censure the woman's behavior insulted her, as he implied that she did not know the established boundaries. She, on the other hand, flung his accusation back at him, signaling the impropriety of his use of physical force and its apparent lack of respect for her.

The following morning, two officers returned with the intention of conveying to shore the luggage of the women who wanted to remain in Chile. Mercer, however, was not going to give up his passengers so easily:

> Some of the ladies threw their arms round the girls and vowed that they should never go on shore with these men. Mr. Mercer stood in the gangway, with pistol in hand, his carroty locks floating in the breeze. "No one," he hoarsely exclaimed, swinging his arm wildly in the air, "takes one of these girls from this ship except they passes over my dead body!" The girls cried and struggled with their friends, while the men in the boat swore great terrible oaths in Chilian [*sic*]. While this interesting excitement was at its height, the Captain came on board, and quietly ordered the 2d Mate to draw up the ladder.

Straining to calm the women, the captain soothed them with promises that they could go ashore the next day if they wished. Subdued, the women called the captain a "dear old angel" and, pacified, they all went to sleep, Conant imagined, with dreams "of the delightful schools they expected to have when they left the ship." Waking up the next morning, the women who had hoped to start new lives in Chile were dismayed to find themselves far out to sea, too seasick to even protest.[105] Even though the women were free agents, Mercer, the captain, and even some of their fellow passengers determined by force that they would not stay in South America.

By encouraging Chilean citizens to persuade the women to stay in South America rather than continue on to Seattle, Sarmiento hoped his educational initiative could begin before he returned to Argentina. Envisioning seven hundred adventurous and

[104]Conant, *Cruise of the Continental*, 87.
[105]Conant, *Cruise of the Continental*, 87.

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willing schoolteachers available for hire, Sarmiento underestimated Mercer's determination even as he overestimated the number of eligible passengers. His scheme thwarted, he would have to wait until he was back in Argentina and leading the nation to carry his plan forward.

Sarmiento's Teachers

When Sarmiento returned to Argentina to assume the presidency in 1868, yellow fever and typhoid periodically devasted towns and cities all over the country, while the War of the Triple Alliance (1864–1870) significantly reduced the national population of young men as Argentina, Uruguay, and Brazil fought against Paraguay.[106] Sarmiento immediately promoted education as the solution to saving the nation from the religiosity and caudillismo in which it was mired. Stating "we must make the entire Republic into a school,"[107] Sarmiento envisioned a Pan-American effort that intentionally used the North American model to establish common schools as a means to democracy and economic progress.[108] Teachers who participated in the project signed renewable three-year contracts, and the arrangement lasted only until Argentine teachers had been suitably trained. The American teachers were not seen as settlers, but rather as instruments for indoctrinating the population into a liberal republican system. While it is true that "Sarmiento's project to Americanize Argentine schools . . . challenges the paradigm of Americanization as a strategy of imposing U.S. values and practices on a less powerful society to foster relations of dependency," it is an example of internal, rather than externally imposed, colonialism.[109] Sarmiento's plan operated within a settler colonialist structure that replaced the Spanish empire with an American-based system that he believed would instill in his countrymen his vision of modernity. The female pedagogues, with their supposed propensity for nurturing and embodiment of republican ideals, would introduce a new model of citizenship that would bring about an economic prosperity such as that he had witnessed in the US.

Sarmiento envisioned the teachers as soldiers on a patriotic mission spreading the achievement of a republican government. Leroux writes, "Seeking to imbue their efforts with broad significance, these teachers sometimes aligned the meaning of their work with the objectives expressed by the originators of the project. Describing teaching as a republican obligation conferred honor and respect on women who taught."[110] However, the women were not self-sacrificing to the point of putting their lives in danger, and their refusal to blindly follow orders at times incurred Sarmiento's wrath. The first teacher arrived in Argentina in 1869 with recommendations from both Peabody Mann and Kate Newell Doggett, a prominent

[106]Shumway, *The Invention of Argentina*, 252–53. Sarmiento would lose his only son, Dominguito, to this war in 1866.

[107]As quoted in Bunkley, *The Life of Sarmiento*, 448.

[108]Crespo, *Las maestras de Sarmiento*, 241 and 400; and Leroux, "Sarmiento's Self-Strengthening Experiment," 64. For an analysis of Sarmiento's Pan-American liberal perspective, see Rothera, "Our South American Cousin."

[109]Leroux, "Sarmiento's Self-Strengthening Experiment," 66.

[110]Leroux, "Money," 192.

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botanist and suffragette in Chicago.[111] Mary Gorman's childhood growing up as the daughter of Baptist missionaries in New Mexico and her ability to speak Spanish seemed to qualify her as the ideal candidate to help Sarmiento start a school in his remote birthplace of San Juan. Accustomed to unfavorable living and working conditions, Gorman was at first willing to take up the challenge, but after spending time with prominent expatriate families in Buenos Aires, she became convinced that a move to San Juan would be too dangerous. However, she was adamant about honoring her contract with the Argentine government and, with the help of educational reformer and writer Juana Manso, taught in Buenos Aires despite hostilities from city and community authorities that opposed a foreigner teaching in their schools.[112]

The next group of teachers arrived in 1870. The small group included the Dudley sisters, who went to teach in Argentina expressly to pay off the mortgage of the family home, and Fannie Wood, who had founded the first freedman school in Warrenton, Virginia.[113] Wood and the Dudleys also refused to go to San Juan, incurring Sarmiento's wrath a second time:

> A furious Sarmiento commanded the women to be ready to leave for departure [to San Juan] in a week, whereupon Wood and the Dudley sisters personally confronted the president and refused to be ordered around in a despotic manner. According to Manso, the president "blind with rage, half in English, half in Spanish . . . said that which a gentleman *never* should say to a lady [emphasis in original]."[114]

Sarmiento blamed Gorman for influencing the others, saying of the incident, "I lost my patience and have not seen them since."[115] Manso's description of the teacher as a lady and Sarmiento's ungentlemanly behavior echoes the scene in which Mercer chastised a passenger for observing the dining room she had been barred from entering. Both Sarmiento and Mercer expected the women to passively accept their power as the project administrators, but many would not be cowed. Like Gorman, the three women refused to go home, and instead sought out other ways to fulfill their contract. In both instances, Sarmiento cut ties with the women he had hired, because they refused to go to a place they deemed perilous, even though they expressed a desire to fulfill their obligations in safer circumstances. Luckily, the first wave of teachers found an ally in Manso. She both recognized the women's value as educators and

[111] See Velleman, "*My Dear Sir*," 10–11; and Crespo, *Las maestras de Sarmiento*, 43 and 291, as well as 58–59 and 300 for more about Doggett's role in recommending teachers to Sarmiento.

[112] Peard, *An American Teacher*, 153–55.

[113] Peard, *An American Teacher*, 157–58.

[114] Peard, *An American Teacher*, 159. Crespo also mentions this anecdote. See *Las maestras de Sarmiento*, 86 and 313. For an examination of Juana Manso's contributions to Argentine education, see Julyan G. Peard, "Enchanted Edens and Nation-Making: Juana Manso, Education, Women and Trans-American Encounters in Nineteenth-Century Argentina," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 40, no. 3 (Aug. 2008), 453–82.

[115] Luiggi, "Some Letters, Part II," 357.

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sympathized with their need to support themselves, setting up a school in Buenos Aires where the women were able to teach and thus meet their obligations.

Ultimately, at the invitation of the Argentine government, approximately seventy North American teachers traveled to Argentina between the years of 1869 and 1898. Their responsibilities ranged from teaching to establishing or directing normal schools. The last North American teacher arrived in 1898, so by the turn of the century, only a handful of American teachers continued to work in the Argentine system, many of whom had been serving the country for several decades. It was a short-term but significantly impactful project. Sarmiento's enterprise took longer to implement, and fewer teachers traveled to Argentina than he had originally planned, but the project did produce tangible results. During his six-year term, the number of children educated in common schools in Argentina rose from thirty thousand in 1868 to one hundred thousand in 1874.[116] Subsequent presidents continued the initiative, primarily relying on the teachers' own personal networks to recruit new candidates. Between 1870 and 1885 twenty-two normal schools were established throughout Argentina.[117]

Several of the North American women who had taught in Argentina continued their professional connections with Latin America when they returned to the United States. Leveraging their experience abroad to further their profession at home, they worked with Mexican American populations in Southern California and the Southwest and taught Spanish in New York and Florida. Clara Armstrong, who had taught in Argentina for twenty-four years, directed the "Cuban Annex" of the State Normal School at New Paltz, New York, in 1901 with Rosa Dark and Amelia Wales, who had also directed schools in Argentina.[118] This yearlong initiative trained sixty female teachers from Cuba who had previously attended summer institutes at Harvard University and New Paltz, continuing the tradition of educating populations the US considered in need of civilizing.[119]

Conclusion

Even after the US and Argentina gained their independence, a settler colonialist structure remained embedded in each nascent nation. While scholars have begun to scrutinize the separate settler colonialist histories of the United States and Latin America, a comparative examination of the projects of Mercer and Sarmiento provides examples of internal educational colonialism implemented by dominant settler groups to "civilize" those they considered to be outside the ideals of nationhood. In both cases,

[116]Crespo, *Las maestras de Sarmiento*, 213 and 385; and Bunkley, *The Life of Sarmiento*, 467.

[117]Crespo, *Las maestras de Sarmiento*, 241 and 401.

[118]Alex Beattie, "The Cuban Annex: New Paltz's Place in Latin American History," *Observer SUNY New Paltz*, Winter/Spring 1986, p. 7.

[119]For more on this initiative, see "The Harvard Summer School for Cuban Teachers," http://library.harvard.edu/university-archives/featured-item/8_CubanTeachers. See also Walter Crosby Eells, "An Episode in International Education: The Cuban Expedition to the United States," *Journal of Higher Education* 34, no. 2 (Feb. 1963), 67–72; and Lisa Jarvinen, "Educating the Sons of the Revolution: The Cuban Educational Association, 1898–1901," in *Teaching America to the World and the World to America: Education and Foreign Relations since 1870*, ed. Richard Garlitz and Lisa Jarvinen (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 73–91.

women played a key role in the establishment of social principles of citizenship, as they were tasked with aligning the outlying settler populations to the nation's prevailing standards. Acting on the will of prominent Seattle citizens, Mercer sought White women from the East Coast to ostensibly extend their civilizing presence to schoolrooms and homes of the West. In this way, officials hoped to supplant what they feared to be a growing tendency of miscegenation in the region between White male settlers and Native women. Sarmiento systematized the values he believed to be most beneficial to the modernization of his country by creating a nationwide educational structure based on the New England common school model. According to his plan, female pedagogues would indoctrinate all residents into cosmopolitan ideals, including and especially those citizens in the provinces and recently arrived immigrants to the country.

Both Mercer and Sarmiento hailed women as archetypes of civilization and the anchor of values through which their country could be unified. While overall the women readily embodied the enlightened image the leaders bestowed upon them, they also refused to conform to those societal standards that did not suit their will or well-being. Mercer's "belles" faced infamy and ridicule in the national press to seek out a new life in the West, dictating from the start their own definition of what it meant to be a lady. "*Las maestras de Sarmiento*" did not hesitate to stand up to the Argentine president when they felt their lives were in danger, reinterpreting the terms of their contract without breaking their commitment to the country. The gender dynamics at play in the endeavors of Mercer and Sarmiento demonstrate one manifestation of the process by which settler colonialist systems in the Americas engendered power structures that upheld the objective of regulating those settler groups perceived to be a hindrance to the dominant group's vision of nationhood.

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