

**Ariana Crosses the Atlantic: An Archaeology of
Aryanism in the Nineteenth-Century River Plate**

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Nadie se atrevería a negar sin disparatar, que el español, el francés y el italiano derivan del latín, y que éste no esté ligado con el antiguo griego, el antiguo sajón, el sánscrito, etc., denotando esto a su vez un origen común para todos dichos idiomas. Desde los confines orientales de India, de Asia, hasta las márgenes del Atlántico en el occidente de Europa, se extiende una familia de lenguas reunidas por afinidades incontestables, y derivadas por transformaciones sucesivas, en gran parte conocidas, de un tronco común actualmente extinguido. . . . El nombre de esa lengua no se ha conservado en ninguna parte; era preciso bautizarla, y cual nosotros lo hacemos con los animales extinguidos, designaron esa lengua fósil, puesto que es perdida, con el nombre de lengua aria primitiva. La teoría de la evolución en la serie animal es tan cierta, que el naturalista puede en este caso proceder de la misma manera.

—Florentino Ameghino, “*Un recuerdo a la memoria de Darwin*” (99–100)

(No one would be so foolish as to dare to deny that Spanish, French, and Italian are derived from Latin, and that the latter is linked to ancient Greek, ancient Saxon, Sanskrit, etc., which in turn denotes a common origin for all of the said languages. A family of languages stretches from the eastern confines of India, of Asia, to the shores of the Atlantic in the west of Europe, joined by incontrovertible affinities and derived, through successive evolutions already known for the most part, from a common trunk presently extinct. . . . The name of that language has not been preserved anywhere; it had to be baptized, and, just as we do with extinct animals, they designated that fossil language, [I say *fossil*] because it is lost, with the name ‘primitive Aryan language.’ The theory of evolution in animals is so sound that the naturalist can in this case proceed in the same fashion.)

The invention of prehistory and the invention of the Aryan coincided with the birth of archaeology, a historical and ideological convergence that appears to have passed unnoticed. That triumvirate nonetheless was to inspire much of what was written and displayed under social science rubrics in the late-nineteenth-century River Plate. Archaeology and anthropology were intertwined in the Museo Arqueológico and Antropológico (Archaeological and Anthropological Museum) founded in Buenos Aires by Francisco Moreno, while paleontology and geology were the cornerstones of prehistoric archaeology (Moreno, “Estudio” 132). In the 1830s, Scandinavian philologists and historians coined the term *forhistorisk* (*prehistory*), which appeared in print for the first time in 1834. The Danish had been using the terms Stone Age, Bronze Age, and Iron Age (known as the Three-Age System of prehistory) since the early 1820s (Rowley-Conwy). In the second half of the nineteenth century, archaeology came into being by dint of prehistory, and both began to change rapidly. The Stone Age was subdivided into Paleolithic, Mesolithic, and Neolithic by John Lubbock in his 1865 *Pre-historic Times*, a work carefully read and cited by social scientists in the nineteenth-century River Plate. As Isaac Taylor explained in his 1890 *Origin of the Aryans: An Account of the Prehistoric Ethnology and Civilisation of Europe*, this tripartite division of the Stone Age made man in Western Europe “the contemporary of the mammoth, the woolly rhinoceros, and other extinct pachyderms” (18–19).

Notwithstanding Taylor’s title, Aryanism had started off as a comparative philology pursuit, rather than an ethnological quest. “The first stone of the edifice,” as he characterized it, was laid in 1786: the genealogical mapping of the “common parentage” of Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, German, and Celtic, which Hegel would later compare to the discovery of the New World (1). In the 1850s, the German philologist and Orientalist Max Müller derived “Aryan” from ancient Ariana, the area around Herat known today as Afghanistan, which was supposedly “the cradle of the Aryan languages” (I. Taylor 3). Other linguists plotted the affinities between Sanskrit in ancient India and Indo-European languages such as Greek, English, Spanish, and German. Still others wrote about the Sumerian and Phoenician origins of the Aryan or Indo-European tongues. Once it was established by prehistoric archaeology that “present inhabitants of Spain, France, Denmark, Germany, and Britain are to a great extent the descendants of those rude savages who occupied the same regions in neolithic or possibly paleolithic times” (I. Taylor 19–20), anthropologists began to reject Asia as the epicenter of Aryanism (i.e. Western civilization). By the late 1880s, France and Germany were in a pitched battle to represent the cradle of the Aryan race, fetishized as the cradle of (Western European) civilization itself. Following upon that Indo-European tapestry of Aryanism, there arose in the

River Plate and other parts of the Americas what I call either New World or pre-Columbian Aryanism, according to which ancient Incas, Mayas, and Aztecs represented in the New World the remnants of Aryans from the Old World—or perhaps Aryans who had engendered Old World Aryans. This pre-Columbian Aryanism was a variegated tapestry that stretched from the United States to Mexico and Argentina.¹ As in the Old World, the linguistic designation was soon transferred to the terrain of race and nation, though Müller himself did not countenance this racialization. Whether novelists, museum directors, social scientists, philologists, or politicians, most New World Aryanists would be forgotten; others would become canonical figures; and still others would be repurposed by eugenicists and social scientists in the twentieth century (Hill, “Primeval Whiteness”).

Both types of Aryanism—New and Old World—appeared in writings by the historian, senator, and president of Argentina, Domingo F. Sarmiento, who steadily became an armchair archaeologist through dialogues with paleontologists, geologists, anthropologists and museum directors. Sarmiento’s Old World Aryanism and New World Aryanism equally depended on the Atlantic Ocean, as well as on rivers, streams, and other bodies of water that were believed to yield evidence of the existence of prehistoric man and beast in the Americas, contemporaneous with or anterior to their existence in the Old World. Before analyzing the nationalization and regionalization of Aryanism in the River Plate, it is important to disinter the Aryan’s two companions—prehistory and archaeology—and to sketch the ideological purposes surrounding them.²

Excavating Sarmiento’s Tropics of Archaeology: From Geology to Evolution

Sarmiento’s patterns of archaeological knowledge and language are embedded in his narrative as fossils in a riverbed. Paradoxically, however, the politician and historian only rarely employed the terms archaeology or paleontology when dealing with bodies of water, dry riverbeds, river valleys, fossils, and geological strata. In their stead, he commonly used either geography or geology, a fact that should not surprise us given the newness of prehistory, the Aryan, and archaeology as a discipline in the nineteenth-century River Plate. His fluid nomenclature requires the twenty-first-century reader to read underneath the geological and cartographic figurations of scientific and historiographical discourse from that era, for they often function as surrogates for archaeology and as a teleological narrative of human history shaped by Darwinian evolution. Sarmiento’s mental and linguistic patterns in this area require an excavationist approach.³

On October 11, 1858, after being named Director of History at El Ateneo del Plata, the future senator and president of the Argentine Republic delivered a speech entitled “Espíritu y condiciones de la Historia en América” (The Spirit and Conditions of History in America). A cluster of geological figurations from Sarmiento’s 1858 speech is illustrative. In the first figuration, his familiarity with scientific theories about the formation of continents is easily passed over due to his deft rhetorical touch:

La súbita aparición de la América en la escena histórica, humedecida aún con las gotas de agua que revelan su reciente emersión, y no obstante armada de todas las artes y el poder de las civilizaciones más adelantadas . . . , ha trastornado todo el plan de la historia como arte, como enseñanza y como ciencia. (73)

(The sudden apparition of America upon the scene of history, an America still moist from the drops of water that reveal her recent immersion and nonetheless armed with all of the arts and power of the most advanced civilizations . . . , has thrown into disarray the plan of history as an art, as a lesson, and as a science.)

Here America is not the Atlantis of Plato’s *Timeus*—not a submerged land—but, rather, a continent that has recently emerged from the waters of world history and has come to dominate that history.

Sarmiento’s second figuration is as maritime and geographical as the first, transforming America into a haphazardly drawn archipelago on the map of human history and one whose revolutions and civil wars obfuscate the map’s viewer (75). In the third figuration, he casts Western European political institutions as a political geology belonging to the dark ages (82), claiming that such Old World traditions cannot adapt to the American environment and will therefore become extinct. All three archaeological figurations convey Sarmiento’s conviction that the first Renaissance, a European affair which resulted in the discovery of America, was culminating in the second Renaissance, an American affair that changed history and historiography forever by making both global, or universal (“Espíritu” 76). This hemispheric Americanism—what Martínez Estrada aptly termed Sarmiento’s *nuevo americanismo* (192) (new Americanism)—constitutes a transnational American exceptionalism nesting within what Sarmiento depicted as an era of globalization. His own times defined the second chapter of modernity or globalization, a second Renaissance that entailed a different sort of aquatic crossing: the underwater telegraph (77). Modern modes of navigation and communication—the steamship and the underwater telegraph—effectively erase national, regional and continental divides. They make bodies of water serve the land and its inhabitants, rather than divide them.

In 1865, while living in the United States as Argentine consul (Carilla), Sarmiento delivered a speech to the Rhode Island Historical Society, in Providence, entitled “North and South America” (1866). Sarmiento’s new Americanism in this published speech is like an underwater telegraph of great expectations that are simultaneously nationalist, regionalist, and trans-American. The entire first section is by turns geographical, economic, and archaeological. He breaks off his description of Argentina under the tyrant Juan Manuel de Rosas by stating, “I will not extend this picture of a fossil world” (7), before fashioning a tableau of the nineteenth-century renaissance in the River Plate—its railroads, steamships, electricity, and industries fomented by North American magnates.⁴ The geographical and the hydrological converge as Sarmiento describes attractions and currents that allegedly link the River Plate and Narraganset Bay, Buenos Aires and Providence, and North and South America.

The very same year, in his *Vida de Abrán Lincoln* (Life of Abraham Lincoln), Sarmiento avails himself of geological and hydrological figurations in order to acknowledge a trans-American union as a work-in-progress on both sides of the Mexican border.⁵ First, he argues that the institutions and rapid rise of the United States of North America were an itinerary for South America due to their similar colonial origins and their existence as a continental community with rivers flowing from the Andes, Sierra Nevada, Chimborazo, and Tupungato (xiv). The Mexican-American War, which began when United States soldiers illegally crossed the Colorado River (xxxi), becomes a prelude to the American Civil War, i.e., the circumscription of constitutional rights (life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness) and the subordination of United States national interests to a planter class who were to trespass against their own country. Southern slavocrats were the descendants of George Washington: they embodied the spirit of the American South. New Englanders, in contrast, represented the authentic Union of Abraham Lincoln’s gliding across the sea of contemporary human history like the Dunderberg, the most technologically advanced military ship in the world, on the waves of the Hudson River (xliv).

Why should this matter to Latin Americans? Once again, Sarmiento resorts to geology, one of prehistoric archaeology’s cornerstones, in order to affirm the pre-modern state, or arrested evolution, of the American South and South America. Whilst the North had consistently adapted or invented outright the cultural practices and institutions of modernity, the South, with its slaves, was like the geological stratum prior to modernity; figuratively, it was the natural sinking of South America into North America (xxv). The American Northerner rushes along the Argentine’s second Renaissance, the American Renaissance of the nineteenth century. The triumph of the modern North in the American Civil War is figured as a tidal wave striking the colonial feudalism of the American South, and by extension South America

(xxvii); the latter was not unlike that dying political geology of medieval Europe in Latin America in Sarmiento's 1858 essay.

The Argentine statesman's passion for archaeology framed his understanding of Argentine history even more explicitly in *El Chacho, último caudillo de la montonera de los llanos. Episodio de 1863* (El Chacho, the Last Caudillo of the Plains Insurgency: Episode from 1863). *El Chacho* is a biography of the rebel leader Vicente Peñaloza as well as a justification of Sarmiento's political and moral conduct.⁶ Two geological figurations in this account are especially poignant. The first occurs when he is reviewing the fortunes of republican governments in England and the United States and characterizes liberty as fertile sediment from which Plymouth Rock was built (316–17). The second, which closes *El Chacho*, uses the prehistory construct as well as the advent of archaeology as framing mechanisms for Argentinian history and for Peñaloza's and Sarmiento's respective biographies. Sarmiento writes that railroads will extinguish primitive political and cultural customs in the Pampa, and caudillos will become prehistory like the megatheriums and glyptodonts dug up from the Pampa soil (318). Such caudillos are part of that "fossil world" invoked in his earlier "North and South America," the remains of pre-human life on earth.

In *Conflicto y armonías de las razas en América* (Conflict and Harmonies of the Races in the Americas), written between 1882 and 1883, Sarmiento heightens the role of the Reformation within the European Renaissance that displaced the ancient Mediterranean and Asian program (280). He also seeks to fasten more tightly the European Renaissance to the American Renaissance (281), a transatlantic and hemispheric paradox in which he shifts Old World prestige to a New World that supposedly eclipsed the Old World. The American Renaissance proved to Sarmiento that Anglo America and Latin America, notwithstanding their differences, inevitably formed one America, just as rivers joined the River Plate nations of Argentina and Uruguay: "Tal como el río Uruguay se confunde a cierta altura con el Paraná, para formar el Plata, así ambas Américas moviéndose con movimiento diverso, pobladas por nacionalidades distintas, acaban por ser una América" (277–78) (Just as the Uruguay River at a certain height runs into the Paraná, so too both Americas, moving on different courses [and] populated by different nationalities, are in the end one America).

The early-nineteenth-century inventions of prehistory, archaeology, and Aryan were central to the gestation of *Conflicto y armonías*. Indeed, by the early 1880s, the archaeological was structuring Sarmiento's understanding of human history to an unprecedented degree. This is particularly evident as he argues that, in order to enter into the communion of American ideas and ideals, Latin Americans must understand that Spain is not evolving. He makes this Darwinist thrust through geological imagery on three occasions. First, he notes that Spain belongs to Europe geographically but geologically belongs to the Atlantic or Africa (208). Second, he parallels Spanish culture

with the geology and fauna of Australia (208). Third, his dismissal of Spain yields to an alignment of the historiographical, political, and racial deposits of every nation with their geological strata (214). This Darwinian correspondence between the geological, biological, and cultural extended beyond Spain, of course: it was most explicit in his explication of population analysis (64).

Aryans and Fossil Men in the River Plate

Concisely and independently of a vast critical literature on archaeology and the prehistoricization of Native Americans,⁷ Latin American literary historian Jens Andermann has written of the “paleontologization of the Other” in late-nineteenth-century Argentina (*Mapas de poder* 125 [my translation]). He thus renders prehistory synonymous with one of its ideological vertices in the Americas: chronological distancing (124–25) or the erasure of Native Americans from local, national, and regional histories—first ideologically, then physically (Sider; Wolf; Matthews; Dombrowski). The “petrified homeland,” as Andermann calls the Argentina that emerges in the writings of natural historians in the late 1800s, necessarily entailed not only Indians but also Caucasians, or white Argentinians. The “paleontologization of the Other” was necessarily coeval, I argue, with the prehistoricization of the *Western European*, i.e., with the invention of the Aryan.

Already in the 1850s, Sarmiento wrote urgently about Aryan languages and races and about how the discoveries of both Indies had each opened up a new chapter in human history, had each formed a renaissance centered on the Atlantic Ocean (76). He linked the philological discovery of Sanskrit and the archaeological discovery of the Aryan in India to the paleontological discovery of prehistoric man in the Indies (76). By this rendering, the European Renaissance in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries had made both discoveries—the Discovery of America (or the Indies) and the Discovery of Ariana (in India)—possible, and the American Renaissance of the 1800s was being carried out by Aryans (so-called Caucasians) on his side of the Atlantic. There can be no greater contrast to this paean on ancient Aryans and their modern Caucasian descendants than Sarmiento’s deformation of un-Westernized natives in Argentina via a disturbing aquatic analogy:

El derecho natural sigue las mismas leyes de la religión y de la razón naturales. Las tinieblas son invisibles por su naturaleza, porque son la negación de la luz; y en los lagos subterráneos de las cavernas del Kentucky, los peces nacen y viven sin ojos, que serían en su mundo oscuro un lujo de pura forma. (“Espíritu” 75)

(Natural law obeys the same laws as religion and natural reason. Shadows are by their very nature invisible because they are the denial of light; and in the underground lakes of Kentucky's caves fish are born and live without eyes, which would be a purely formal luxury in their dark world.)

Here he rebukes the Noble Savage concept propagated by Rousseau, in favor of Scottish philosopher Ferguson's stadialism (Haberly, "Scotland on the Pampas").

Although Sarmiento portrayed modern Native Americans as "degenerate Aryan communities," to borrow Tony Ballantyne's formulation of one skein of British Aryanism (3), the Argentine statesman nonetheless left the door ajar for pre-Columbian Aryanism in 1858. European scientists and philosophers had failed, he laments, to recognize the sophistication of the civilizations built by peoples who had been transported to the New World in prehistoric times: "Sucédeles lo mismo con respecto a los pueblos civilizados transportados a América a quienes por faltarles el finido de obra artística, colocan en el prólogo o entre los andamios de la historia, si no es que los miren como feto viviendo aún de la vida maternal" (75) (The same thing occurs to them [i.e., to Europeans] with respect to the civilized peoples transported to America who, because they lacked the finish of [European] artistic works, Europeans situate them within the prologue or the *andamios* of history, that is, when they don't approach them as fetuses still living in the womb). I have left *andamios* untranslated because it is a double-entendre functioning as a nexus between the rhetorical and the archaeological. While attributing to Europeans this mischaracterization of pre-Columbian civilizations, Sarmiento's linguistic and conceptual patterning remains his own: both the skeletal structure (i.e., bones) and the scaffolding, or outline, of human history are conveyed by *andamios*. In 1858 Sarmiento could not yet explain to budding River Plate historians how these civilized peoples were transported to the Americas, or how they devolved into eyeless fish, but in the subsequent decade his knowledge of developments in the social sciences deepened and his speculations increased.

In 1866, Sarmiento advocated a pre-Columbian Aryan thesis explicitly in "North and South America." He waxed poetic about mummies, pyramids, temples, and palaces in petrified cities, and about the grandeur of the ancient civilization that built them. "When these monuments," he boldly asserted,

which begin with the mound and end with enormous masses of hewn stone, sculptured with a thousand hieroglyphics, have been studied, classified, and compared, the history of *both Americas* will begin upon the same page, will be illustrated with the same lights from the time of their origin to that of Columbus. (24–25)

To make his case he quoted extensively (25–26) from Judge Robert Anderson Wilson’s *New History of the Conquest of Mexico* (1859) in order to prove “the Egyptian and Phoenician origin of every vestige of civilization found on this continent” (27) [Fig. 1]. Sarmiento did not use the term Aryan in his “North and South America” speech, nor did the American jurist. Still, both amateur social scientists claimed that the first peoples in the Americas descended from peoples who were included by philologists within the family of Aryan languages.

Another, and decidedly local, flavor of pre-Columbian Aryanism was especially significant for Sarmiento in those years. In a series of essays published in *Revista de Buenos Aires* (1865–1866), the jurist Vicente Fidel López embraced pre-Columbian Aryanism:

No trepido en establecer que ahora veinte mil años, a lo menos, la raza de los Keshuas—o más bien la raza de donde los Keshuas y Aymarás traen su origen, sus tradiciones y su lengua, vivía bajo una misma atmósfera social con la raza o razas que dieron su población y sus tradiciones al Egipto, a la India, a la China, a la Etruria Romana, y a la Polinesia. ([1865] 13)

(I do not hesitate to affirm that at least twenty-thousand years ago, the Quechua race—or, rather, the race from whom the Quechuans and Aymarans got their origins, their traditions, and their language—was sharing a social sphere with the race or races who gave their population and their traditions to Egypt, India, China, Roman Etruria, and Polynesia.)

López traced the origins of Quechuan numbers to Sanskrit in India ([1865] 183–96). These “Estudios filológicos y etnológicos” (Philological and Ethnological Studies) would be fashioned into his widely circulated *Les races aryennes du Pérou: Leur langue, leur religion, leur histoire* (The Aryan Races of Peru: Their Language, Their Religion, Their History) in 1871 (Quijada Mauriño 246–51).

Soon after the publication of López’s essays, Sarmiento’s *El Chacho* laid bare the mobility and fluidity of the Aryan and its relationship to paleontology and archaeology. His archaeological gaze narrates caverns and riverbeds as if these proved the existence of pre-Columbian Aryans and, consequently, the antiquity of a proto-Caucasian New World. He begins by asserting the common (Aryan) source language and race of the indigenous communities in Rioja. The ubiquity of the *-gasta* suffix in the region convinces him that all of these towns were inhabited by the same race of people. He further notes that a Norwegian linguist had linked indigenous songs from the region to Scandinavian ballads and the *-marca* ending for so

many towns to Gothic and, ultimately, to Sanskrit, both branches of the Aryan language used by the people who were the ancestors of Western Europeans (226). He next turns to explicitly geological and paleontological evidence: fossils in riverbeds and mummified, cardboard-like human remains in caves (227). In his account, both are directly traced to a New World Aryan people (the people with the *-gasta* endings), and all are rendered memes of ancient European counterparts. Sarmiento's gaze then shifts to the valley of Calingasta to describe skeletons piled up in crypts near a riverbed and mummies with their hair reddened by time and the elements (227–28).

Sarmiento's surveillance is an optic of state (Andermann, *Optic*) that communicated to readers in 1868 a national unity achieved, at long last, by government control over the entire territory of the Republic. The illusion of national unity is redoubled in *El Chacho* by the alleged discovery of Aryan origins (linguistic and racial) in the more primitive and remote areas of the nation. Dried-up rivers and streams and forgotten caverns become repositories of nationalist fairy dust, of Argentine-Aryan mummies, for future scientific research and state use.

Sarmiento's pre-Columbian Aryanism did not, of course, invest the Indians of his own day with dignity or agency. Although "la América era la más avanzada antigüedad de la historia humana" ("Espíritu" 76) (America was the most advanced antiquity in the history of humanity), subsequent generations of indigenous peoples did not adapt, did not evolve, he attests. For him, Indians were representatives of prehistoric man at best and degenerate Aryan communities at worst. Hence my insistence that nineteenth-century Indians and Caucasians, ontologized by two transatlantic and hemispheric categories (prehistory, Aryan), be scrutinized and theorized in tandem today.

As we saw in "Espíritu," Aryans from Asia and the Mediterranean had developed technologies—gunpowder, paper, the printing press, the compass—with which to cross the Atlantic Ocean and expand their dominance over non-Aryans or bastardized, former Aryans. In *Vida de Abrán Lincoln*, still another figurative alignment of the maritime, the political, and the racial comes into play, one that centers on the Atlantic Ocean. The latter effectively becomes an extension of the Adriatic Sea and the Tiber River, so that the historian can identify democracy in the bloodlines of his Aryan conquerors and their modern descendants. Sarmiento and his fellow modern Aryans in Latin America were descendants of Latium, who famously founded Venice, the independent republic on the banks of the Adriatic Sea, as well as Genoa, Pisa, and Florence, the incubators of modern commerce and industry. The genius of the Latin race embodied by Columbus and Cabot, modern-day Aeneases, would take that democracy rehearsed on the banks of the Tiber to a new battleground: Anglo and Latin America (*Vida de Abrán Lincoln* xiv). Sarmiento suggests that

republicanism is a racial characteristic of both Aryan families, but that Latins manifested this characteristic first.

Some ten years later, a remarkable convergence of the Aryan, prehistory, and archaeology manifested itself in the works by Sarmiento's young friend and compatriot Moreno. In "Estudio del hombre sudamericano" (Study of South American Man), the self-styled anthropological archaeologist suggested that in prehistoric times a dolichocephalic "first man" existed in the Americas who was almost identical, physically, to the ancient European, and distinct from the (brachycephalic) Indians of his own day. Culturally, Moreno pondered the links between the prehistoric European and his/her American meme by lauding López's research on Aryans in the River Plate (143). His 1879 *Viaje a la Patagonia Austral* (Voyage to Southern Patagonia) again credited the lawyer-turned-linguist while it placed one of his own prehistoric findings in bold relief. The latter consisted of symbols from prehistoric times allegedly drawn by an extinct race who had preceded the Indians of his present and who linked the Americas to each other ethnographically (321–22). Thus, his own excavations and López's findings were integrated into a sweeping nationalist, regionalist, and trans-American narrative of prehistory. These developments would soon be welcomed and publicized by Sarmiento.

Conflicto y armonías became the Argentine statesman's most elaborate display of Old World Aryanism and New World Aryanism. He claimed that he had come up with his race-based historiographical methodology during the writing of *El Chacho* (Conflicto y armonías, "Dedicatoria"). In his Prolegomena, the elderly former president launches a preliminary discussion of Aryanism, which leads to a well-referenced summary of local and national findings about prehistoric man in America (65–72). He begins with a pivotal figure he had described a year earlier as "the first paleontologist" and "my friend, the sage Burmeister" ("Darwin" 68, 69). Burmeister was a Prussian zoologist and founding director of the Public Museum in Buenos Aires, the archaeological core of which was his collection of crania and fossils (Burmeister, "Sur les cranes"; Salgado and Navarro Floria; Schávelzon). Sarmiento dismisses his friend's 1843 *Historia de la Creación* (History of the Creation) outright. Thereafter he quotes from Plato's dialogue between Solomon and Egyptian priests on Atlantis (64–65). An Italo-French geologist, Antonio Snider-Pellegrini, is quickly invoked to confirm the existence of Atlantis (65). Snider-Pellegrini's 1858 *La Création et ses Mystères Dévoilés* (The Creation and Its Mysteries Unveiled), a seminal contribution to continental drift theory, portrays Atlantis/America before and after the Universal Flood [Fig. 2 and 3]. The geologist had paralleled Egyptian and Inca monuments (332–33), compared pre-Columbian tombs and fortifications to those of Assyrians (326–28), and asserted that both Mexico and Peru had once formed part of Atlantis, the first having been in direct contact with Egypt and the second with Assyria

(334–35). Sarmiento ties Greeks and Romans to India, giving voice to the Old World Aryan thesis, before he circles back (66) to Snider-Pellegrini's thesis and illustrations.

Although Snider-Pellegrini's illustrations bolstered Sarmiento's argument about America as Atlantis, the geologist had in fact not written a word about Aryans in the Americas. To convincingly establish his pre-Columbian Aryan thesis, Sarmiento had to rely on more recent scientific theories, such as archaeology's construct of prehistory: that the world had been inhabited by savage men before history had become common knowledge in the space of a decade (69–70). Sarmiento set about to Americanize and nationalize that concept of prehistory by showcasing Moreno and Ameghino's respective scientific contributions. He informed readers that in Moreno's Museo Antropológico y Arqueológico there was an extensive collection of American skulls that proved the existence of prehistoric man in the Americas (*Conflicto y armonías* 68; Moreno, "Description"). Sarmiento also reported on Ameghino, whose theories transformed the Stone Age into a transatlantic and hemispheric phenomenon whose epicenter was Argentina. In a speech delivered at the Instituto Geográfico, Ameghino had proclaimed that paleographic evidence from prehistory—fossils and flints from the Stone Age—had been disinterred in Asia, Africa, the Americas, and Europe; it was a global fact (*Conflicto y armonías* 71; Ameghino, "La edad" 54–55). Ameghino was convinced that the Americas had been peopled much earlier than Europeans scientists believed (*Conflicto y armonías* 69; Ameghino, "La edad" 59). Indeed, Ameghino was adamant that remote ancestors of man and early man himself had migrated from La Pampa to Europe and the rest of the world. He had classified this early man as *Homo pampaeus* [Fig. 4].⁸

With even more flourish, Sarmiento exulted the excavation of the origins of Western European civilization (i.e., the white man's discovery of himself) in *Conflicto y armonías* (274–75). While correlating Aryan intellectual movement to physical movement, he instrumentalized bodies of water as spaces of fated expansion and domination for Aryan families—England had crossed the Atlantic Ocean as a sort of New World vanguard of human democracy and prosperity—whose origins lay in Ariana (275–76). The newest chapter in the Aryan book of history was being written in the Americas, thanks to the republican traditions of the Mediterranean Aryans, which had propelled the English and the Spaniards alike to cross the Great Ocean. The Atlantic Ocean washes out the ballyhooed Latin-Anglo divide, becoming the shared destiny of those two Aryan modern races: the crucible of modernity and the global that would inevitably free the Old World from the chains of tyranny and empire. Simultaneously, Sarmiento washes over modern indigenous peoples—"our prehistoric fathers," he calls them, of "limited intellectual power" and a "pathetic" existence (Prolegomena)—as

decrepit descendants of an Aryan Atlantis, as fossils embedded in the River Plate's future.

Conclusion

For nearly three decades, Sarmiento's geological poetics signaled not only his fervent interest in the steamship and the underwater telegraph (global communications and media of globalization) but also his recalcitrant desire to articulate racial projects of various ideological stripes (nationalist, regionalist, global). In the works analyzed above, bodies of water surface and recede as Sarmiento rhetorically links continents and communities, Mediterranean and Atlantic cultures, Old World and New, engaging in a historical revisionism that is simultaneously transatlantic and hemispheric, intra-European and inter-American. Those geological figurations are clarions of the Argentine's protracted engagement with prehistory, archaeology, and the Aryan.

Pre-Columbian or New World Aryanism was a variegated tapestry in which (Latin) American exceptionalisms, racial formations, and social-scientific nationalisms were less visible, but more enduring, patterns than scholars have previously acknowledged. Latin American Aryanists deployed Aryanism as a means for integrating the Americas into what was then called universal history or, as Sarmiento called it in 1858, "a new, third world," the global community (87). For intellectuals like López, Moreno, and Sarmiento, what better way to answer European detractors of the United States and Latin America than to argue that the New World was not very new at all? Or, for those like Ameghino, to sustain vehemently that the Old World was actually younger than the New World, the latter being the site not only of dinosaurs but, more significantly, of the first human, *Homo pampeus*? Pre-Columbian Aryanism should therefore be interrogated both in reference to what or whom it left out of the nation or state and as a regionalist project respondent to anxieties in both the United States and Latin America about the past, present, and future of the New World.

Notes

1. New World Aryanism has received scant critical attention. Hispanists such as Rebecca Earle and Jens Andermann have devoted a few lines or paragraphs, and a Spanish historian Mónica Quijada has devoted an entire article to Aryanism in nineteenth-century Argentina. Those bits and pieces of a future critical literature present New World Aryanism as an uneven, even kooky, nationalist affair that sought to present pre-Columbian cultures as equal or superior to the ancient cultures of Rome and Greece.

2. Because Sarmiento's interpretations and representations of prehistoric America were interpellated by the emerging discipline of archaeology, "prehistory" and "prehistoric" throughout this essay signify the construct or structuring concept of archaeology as it was produced in early nineteenth-century Europe and, subsequently, in the Americas. Recently, ethnographic archaeologist Christopher Matthews has made "archaeology" and "prehistory" synonymous, which opens up the possibility that even the postmodern can be prehistoric, and vice versa. Timothy Taylor has observed that some scholars reserve "prehistory" for the period before history was consciously recorded as history by its agents, while others push out the category to include even thirteenth-century Europe ("Prehistory vs. Archaeology" 4).
3. On Sarmiento's engagement with topography and hydrology before George Lyell's and Darwin's respective discoveries in modern geology (i.e., before the 1850s), see Madan.
4. The very same year in which Sarmiento's "North and South" was published the Argentine historian Vicente Quesada proudly recounted in *Revista de Buenos Aires* the inauguration of the first underwater telegraph in the River Plate.
5. Sarmiento's hastily assembled homage to the assassinated United States President was written in Washington, D.C., and New York City in 1865 and published that year. I quote from the 1866 edition.
6. Sarmiento refers to El Chacho in three ways: Peñalosa, Peñaloza, Peñaloya. When Sarmiento was governor of San Juan in 1863, the summary execution of El Chacho marked the end of the *lucha del desierto*, which pretended to unify national territory by quashing indigenous, mestizo, and poor white insurgents—all of them indistinguishable in physiognomy, customs, and ideas (311). For Sarmiento, the demise of the "last caudillo" Peñaloza signified the completion of an evolutionary stage in the life of the Argentine Republic that had started with the "first caudillo," Facundo Quiroga. The latter is the subject of his most influential work, *Vida de Facundo Quiroga. Civilización y barbarie* (1845), translated into English by Mary Peabody Mann as *Life in the Argentine Republic in the Days of the Tyrants, or Civilization and Barbarism* in 1868, but already known to United States readers a decade earlier (Haberly, "An Unknown Reading"). *El Chacho* was first published by Appleton in New York as part of the fourth Spanish edition (1868) of *Vida de Facundo Quiroga. Civilización y barbarie*.
7. The late 1970s and early 1980s were an especially intense period of disciplinary reflection on the ideologies of archaeology as an institution, and on the real-life consequences for Native Americans, or first peoples in the Americas, put in motion or legitimated by such ideologies, since the early-nineteenth-century. Seminal works by E.R. Wolf and Gerald Sider were followed by Alice Beck Kehoe's searing critique.
8. On Ameghino's claims and evidence, see Hrdlička 13; Novoa and Levine 111.

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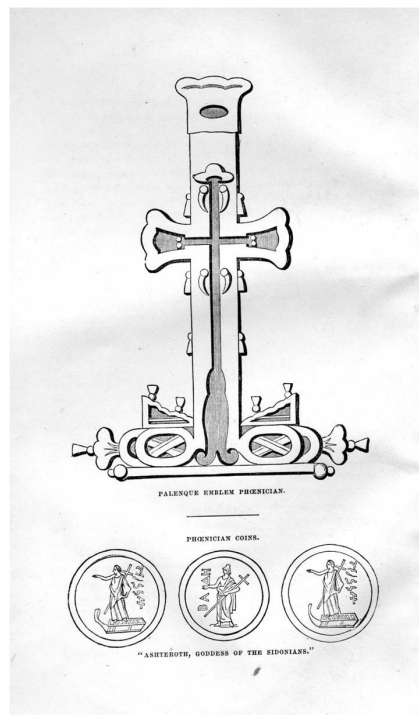


Fig. 1. Palenque Emblem and Phoenician Coins from *A New History of the Conquest of Mexico in Which Las Casas' Denunciations of the Popular Historians of That War Are Fully Vindicated*

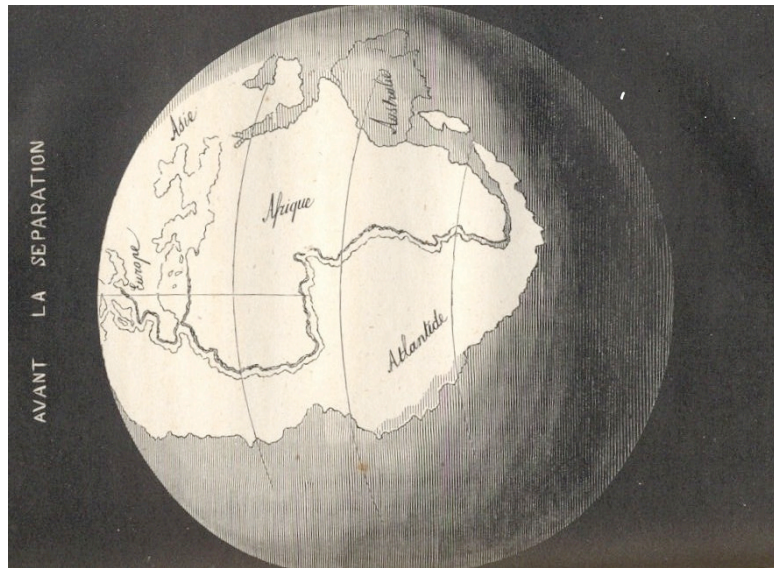


Fig. 2. Before the Separation of Africa and Atlantis/South America from *La Création et ses Mystères Dévoilés*



Fig. 3. After the Separation of Africa and Atlantis/South America from *La Création et ses Mystères Dévoilés*

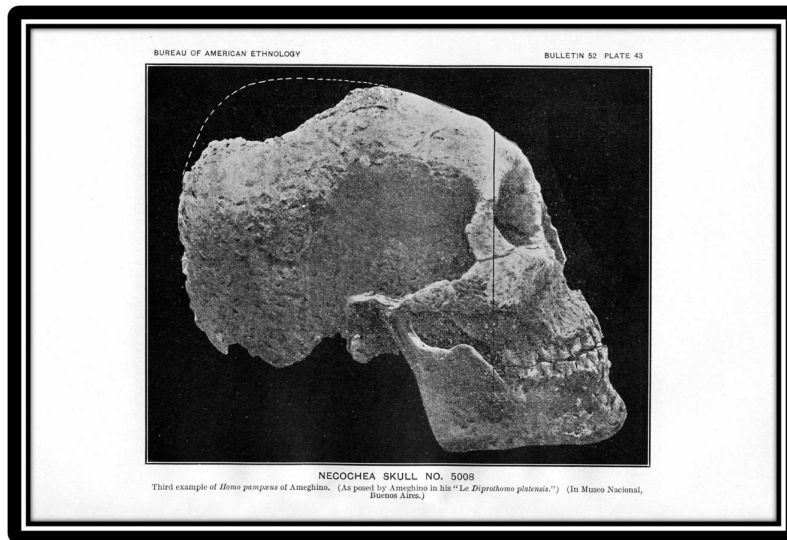


Fig. 4. An example of Ameghino's *Homo pampaeus* from *Early Man in South America*