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Eduarda Mansilla's Mestizo Argentina: Orphanhood, Transnationalism, and Race in *Lucía Miranda* (1860)

Sarah Moody

The first known writing of the Lucía Miranda legend, a story of Argentine national origins, dates to 1612 with a work by Spanish soldier Ruy Díaz de Guzmán. Though apparently fictional, the episode appears as a chapter in an otherwise fact-based account of early European activity in the River Plate region known as *La Argentina manuscrita*.¹ Later writers reworked the legend in their own ways, adapting it to the circumstances of their own historical moment, but the consistent points of the storyline focus on irremediable interethnic conflict: Lucía was a young, virtuous Spanish woman who accompanied her husband on an early expedition to the area, around 1532; she is kidnapped by the indigenous people, whose chief falls in love with her; she and her husband refuse to renounce their marital vows and die tragically as martyrs to conjugal love. The legend, highlighting the exchange of women in what Mary Louise Pratt calls the “contact zone,” where two cultures meet in an unequal relationship of power, keeps the point of view firmly on the side of the white settlers and what they considered their moral imperative to colonize indigenous spaces.² María Rosa Lojo points out that “[e]l relato atribuye las causas de la Guerra interétnica (guerra de conquista, por la ocupación de suelo) a la pelea entre varones por una mujer” (32).³ The legend also functions as an attempt at justification for white, creole society’s occupation of collectively-held indigenous lands, with women’s bodies standing in as a metaphor of the territory to be usurped and dominated.⁴

Throughout Argentina’s nineteenth century, creole occupation advanced over vast expanses of indigenous land, and Francine Masiello has pointed out that the recurrence of the Lucía Miranda myth became more frequent in this same period, especially “after the defeat of Rosas, when Argentines set themselves to the task of nation building and to the restoration of national mythologies” (*Between* 37). In the 1850’s, as Eduarda Mansilla and Rosa Guerra penned their own novels titled *Lucía Miranda*, the Buenos Aires press brimmed with frontier news, from military advances and defeats, to the traces of innumerable *cautivas*, or white women abducted by the indigenous communities. *Malones*, or native raids on white settlements, had become more frequent and destructive, and indigenous threats to creole safety and expansion were very much on the mind of rural and urban citizens alike (Rotker, “Lucía Miranda” 122). For example, David Rock describes an attack as late as 1876 that “penetrated to within 60 leagues of Buenos Aires,

departing afterward with a reported 300,000 cattle and 500 white captives” (154). Instability characterized both the frontier and the nation proper, as political factions struggled to define national identity following decades of dictatorship and civil war.

It has been suggested that Guerra and Mansilla turned away from contemporary issues when they wrote about a moment some 300 years before. Their gesture was certainly at odds with many of their contemporaries, who tended to locate national origins in more recent political shifts, such as independence from Spain in 1810 or the Battle of Caseros of 1852.⁵ In Mansilla’s case, the need for indirectness and allegory in her political engagement may have stemmed from her youth and inexperience (she was 22 when *Lucía Miranda* was published, and it appears to have been her first book), or it may have resulted from feeling torn between her family’s plural political identifications.⁶ Nonetheless, that two novelists chose a remote legend for treatment at the same time suggests that the story responded to concerns of their immediate context. By focusing on the *Lucía Miranda* story, Mansilla and Guerra engaged obliquely with pressing issues of their time as they brought into current debate an issue the legend highlights, and which they considered deserving of greater treatment in their context, that is, they brought to the fore the contentious issue of creole women’s role in nineteenth-century society and in the ongoing project of national identity.⁷

This essay will focus on Mansilla’s novel, *Lucía Miranda*, which was published serially in *La Tribuna* in 1860 and bound as a book for its second edition in 1882 (Lojo 57).⁸ Critics have noted Mansilla’s unusual emphasis on the early life and education of the heroine, as well as her interest in interethnic female friendships and *Lucía*’s importance as an interpreter and educator across ethnic divides. Heightened critical attention to the novel since María Rosa Lojo’s edition of 2007 continues the previous focus on the legend’s key moments, that is, on *Lucía*’s kidnapping and death, which occupy about 3% of Mansilla’s version, such that the bulk of this novel taking place in Europe has been largely untreated by critics.⁹ After exploring the complicated family circumstances of the novel’s first part, this essay will turn to a second undertreated aspect of Mansilla’s novel, the interethnic marriage of Alejo and Anté, which builds on the theme of orphanhood and flexible families to propose that Argentina should view its origins and its frontier as scenes of mixture and adaptation. In this way Mansilla will be shown to critique period ideologies of national identity based on the annihilation of indigenous bodies, as she advocates for an active role for creole and assimilated indigenous women on the national frontier.

Though *Lucía* is considered beautiful and virtuous by all the authors who treat the legend, in her version Mansilla gives the protagonist’s virtue a backstory by explaining the morally sound, protective community that forms for her guardianship as a young orphan. The first part of Mansilla’s novel narrates at length the complicated family circumstances of *Lucía*’s European childhood, a topic that critics have generally considered to be a distraction from the core story of the legend. This decision appears to be unprecedented in the legend’s history.¹⁰ Certainly many critics through the years have faulted Mansilla for her choice; nonetheless, what one of Mansilla’s first reviewers, the German critic Fernando Wolff, called “digresiones inútiles,” can be productively read as integral to Mansilla’s proposal for Argentine national identity at a historical crossroads.¹¹ The author’s invention of a loving, flexible family for *Lucía*’s childhood gives us a key to

interpreting the role of Anté, a young indigenous woman and convert to Catholicism, whom Mansilla adds to the cast of characters in the book's second half. What emerges from a careful study of the family structures in the novel is a model for national identity in which charity, education, and women's active role in public life—particularly that of creole women—make possible a new beginning after origins marked by violence and loss.

Cristina Iglesia has discussed women's captivity in the colonial and postcolonial contexts more broadly, pointing out that before the famous white captives, thousands of indigenous women were enslaved.¹² She notes that due to the paucity of metals available in the River Plate region and Paraguay, the conquistadors' plunder "ya no es el oro sino la propiedad de las mujeres y sobre todo la enorme cantidad de indios para encomendar. [...] En Asunción, a mediados del siglo XVI, 300 a 400 españoles llegan a disponer de hasta 50.000 indios" (36-7). Lucía Miranda's legend is purely fictional, and in Iglesia's reading its development responds to an anxiety about these bloody beginnings to mestizo society in the River Plate region: "cuando lo sucedido no coincide con lo debido o lo deseado según modelos éticos, religiosos o ideológicos, lo fabuloso, lo irreal, aparece para reparar esa fractura, esa falta de acomodamiento. Algo y algo muy importante no encaja, y ese desajuste es el punto de partida del mito, de lo literario" (Iglesia 56).¹³ In light of Iglesia's proposal, the legend emerges as an attempt at justification for European and creole seizure of indigenous land and bodies: "Lucía Miranda traduce la justificación de una de las conductas más salvajes que la historia registra actuada por hombres que se pensaron portadores de la civilización" (Iglesia 57).¹⁴

When Mansilla wrote her *Lucía Miranda*, creole Argentina was going through a particularly bloody period, in essence fighting two wars simultaneously, one a civil war pitting the interior against the secessionist province of Buenos Aires, and another against the indigenous communities of the frontier and beyond. Though dictator Juan Manuel de Rosas was displaced from power in 1852, some form of civil war continued until 1880.¹⁵ In María Rosa Lojo's telling, "[h]acia fines de la década de 1850, época en que se escriben las dos *Lucía Mirada* [de Eduarda Mansilla y Rosa Guerra], se buscaba desesperadamente consolidar un proyecto nacional que fuera convalidado por todos los sectores" (24). This young and divided country struggled to address the challenges of war on the frontier. Libertad Demitrópulos explains that the warring creole factions took different approaches vis-à-vis the Indian Confederation, headed by the powerful chief Calfucurá: The Argentine Confederation of the interior negotiated peace, while Buenos Aires State initially attacked in battle. After a series of defeats that left the Indian Confederation with over 60,000 square kilometers of territory, however, Buenos Aires changed tactics and negotiated peace treaties with several chiefs (Demitrópulos 161). David Viñas explains that, "desde 1855 hasta 1862, tanto Mitre como Hornos y Granada sufren serios reveses contra Calfucurá; si algo representa el gran cacique es el momento de apogeo del poder indio frente a unos blancos empantanados en sus guerras civiles" (110-11). Viñas marks Calfucurá's death in 1873 as the turning point in the Indians' success.

Against this backdrop of multiple wars with complicated allegiances and betrayals, Mansilla wrote about a conflict that seemed much simpler, with only two sides. Moreover, she chose to imagine opportunities for a qualified peace within the story's

traditional framework. It is perhaps not surprising that she emphasized the role of Europe in her story of Argentine origins. As a member of Argentina's social and political elite, the author spent much of her adult life in Europe or the United States, traveling and representing her country as the wife of a diplomat. She assisted her uncle, Argentine dictator Juan Manuel de Rosas, as an interpreter from a very young age, and she wrote one of her best-known works, the 1869 novel *Pablo ou la vie dans les pampas*, in French and for a French audience. As Masiello puts it, Mansilla's "is the voice of the multilingual woman who translates as she writes, bringing diverse cultures under her control and exposing the connections between them" ("Lost" 74). Graciela Batticuore calls her the "*embajadora oficial* de la culta Buenos Aires" que "ejercerá sin excepciones un rol de *intérprete* permanente entre dos mundos" ("Itinerarios" 170, 164). Like the author herself, Mansilla's Lucía is polyglot and remarkably well educated, and she comes from a world of shifting national allegiances. She is born in the south of Spain to a Moorish mother and Christian Spanish father. Though based around Murcia, her family's formation also includes chapters taking place in Naples, such that Lucía and her family represent a transnational, European identity that bears some similarities with Mansilla's own identifications.¹⁶

In Mansilla's elaborate stories about the family's formation, biological parenthood does not align with the care practices and emotional connections that support and protect children. It is defined rather by an absence, which the abundant narration fills with an improvised support network of foster families, guardians, tutors, and benefactors. Lucía is of mixed ethnic origin, though her Moorish mother dies soon after her birth, and her noble Spanish father leaves the child with peasant foster parents while he is away fighting wars. This biological father dies in battle and grants custody of the young girl to fellow soldier Don Nuño, who adopts the child as his own. Mansilla wrings much pathos from this plotline of multiple parents. Lucía's foster parents and adoptive father all vow that the child will not be removed from their care, leading to the eventual solution of a mixed household: once his soldierly duties have ceased, Don Nuño moves in with the foster parents and young girl. This family grows not through biological reproduction, but rather through the accumulation of non-biological lines of love and responsibility, and a new social network forms in response to the crisis wrought by warfare and illness.

The characters of Nina Barberini, Fray Pablo, and Sebastián reinforce the themes of orphanhood and the adaptable family. Nina is another childhood orphan who grew up in the care of her grandmother, Marina, with her cousin, Pietro, a second orphan taken in by Marina. As an adult, Nina lives in Naples and falls in love with Don Nuño, the soldier and Lucía's adoptive father, during Spanish occupation of that region around 1515. Nina vows to adopt our young protagonist when the couple becomes engaged: "Lucía," decía Nina, "será mi hija, yo le serviré de madre; huérfana como yo y desgraciada" (Mansilla 195). Though the planned marriage of Nina and Don Nuño is thwarted by disease, Lucía later receives a large inheritance from Nina, such that the would-be adoptive mother becomes a benefactress to the young orphan. A similar aggregate to Lucía's improvised family is Fray Pablo, who serves as Lucía's tutor and close companion throughout life. He lives near the girl's foster family and visits often for rest, study, and meals. When Fray Pablo's widowed sister asks him to take her son under his wing, 19-year-old Sebastián joins the family as well. The young man's mother dies while he is under their

guardianship, leaving him fully orphaned of his biological parents. When Sebastián and Lucía later marry, she insists on accompanying her new husband on a risky voyage to the River Plate region. Even more surprising, perhaps, is that the elderly Don Nuño and Fray Pablo decide to join the young couple. A map of Lucía's improvised but close family looks less like a traditional family tree than a net, with new lines of protectorship added at every turn. The important adult characters are loving and of rock-solid morality; all are eager to assume responsibility for the young Lucía, and the parental figures to this orphaned child multiply. Mixture defines the situation in terms of both social class and ethnicity, and orphanhood and adoption emerge as a recurring metaphor. It is noteworthy that in Lucía's European childhood, society is fundamentally good and capable of overcoming challenges, banding together to shelter its most vulnerable members from the fallout of war and illness, and giving rise to a new beginning after tragedy.

The happy perfection of Lucía's family leaves little room for the novel's moral battle, which develops instead among what Mansilla calls, with a telling oxymoron, the "habitantes del desierto" (316). The struggle on the Pampa, after Lucía's arrival there, features twin brothers who are sons of the Timbú chief, Carripilún. When their father dies, the firstborn, Marangoré, takes his place. Though both brothers are dexterous with weapons and respected by the tribe, the new chief is physically beautiful and morally good, while his twin, Siripo, has physical deformities and strategizes to overthrow his brother.¹⁷ When Marangoré falls hopelessly in love with Lucía, Siripo learns his brother's secret and uses it to manipulate him, persistently and "con diabólica maestría" encouraging an attack on the Spanish fort (Mansilla 347). Marangoré finally accedes, and in the heat of the attack Siripo kills him, "víctima de su pasión tan desgraciada" (352), and kidnaps Lucía himself, carrying her semi-naked and unconscious body past the many dead, including her adoptive father, Don Nuño. (Fray Pablo has died of natural causes before this episode, and Sebastián is away on a hunting excursion.) What I wish to underscore in relation to these Timbú brothers is their pairing as morally good and bad versions of the same character, a pairing suggested by their status as twins, and a struggle that points to a debate over the inherent morality of indigenous people; Mansilla comes to her conclusion on this debate in the scene of the *malón*, when in the narrator's view evil clearly wins out.¹⁸ Lucía was able to educate and develop a friendship with Marangoré, hinting that he (and later, his loyal tribe) might eventually convert to Christianity. In this imagined dénouement to the novel, the tribe's social structures would find a place within the improvised family of the Argentine nation. At the same time, however, the empathy developed between Lucía and Marangoré made him unfit as chief and vulnerable to manipulation, and after his death at Siripo's hand, the possibility of interethnic friendships would seem to be rejected. Mansilla appears to hew close to the broader Lucía Miranda tradition and conclude that the Timbú could not be trusted.

The status of the Lucía Miranda story as an origin myth for Argentine national identity prompts comparison with the "foundational fictions" that, as Doris Sommer has influentially argued, bound together nations in nineteenth-century Latin America. Sommer analyzes the "erotic rhetoric that organizes patriotic novels" (2), seeking "to locate an erotics of politics, to show how a variety of novel national ideals are all ostensibly grounded in 'natural' heterosexual love and in the marriages that provided a figure for apparently nonviolent consolidation during internecine conflicts at midcentury"

(6). In her chapter on Argentina, Sommer explores José Mármol's *Amalia* (1851, 1855) and the joining of the interior provinces and the city, represented by Amalia and Daniel, factions that clashed as Rosas's dictatorship waned (and, indeed, continued to do so beyond his fall from power). As a foundational novel, however, Mansilla's *Lucía Miranda* addresses a different conflict that receives little attention in the Argentine national imaginary, that of interethnic struggle in the contact zone between European migrants or creoles and indigenous communities. The typical Lucía Miranda legend would seem to be a poor fit with Sommer's schema as it applies to Argentina, because Lucía and her husband die without having children, suggesting a false start for the nation; moreover, they are both Spanish immigrants and cannot be considered to represent the union of different social sectors in the developing nation.

And yet, despite the nation's false start at Spiritu Sancti, despite the colony's failure, the legend persists. The settlement ends catastrophically and our would-be foundational couple dies as martyrs, but the story lingers, resurfacing throughout Argentine history.¹⁹ Writing eloquently about the gaps that shape Argentine national memory, Susana Rotker proposes that the Lucía Miranda myth recurs because it addresses the horror of miscegenation that underlies the canonized narrative of Argentine national identity as defined by exclusively European origins: "The violation of [Lucía's] domestic and familial space, the violation of her Christian body by an Indian, repeated so many times in the cultural history of Argentina, shows that, at bottom, the negation of racial conflicts did not resolve them" (*Captive* 102). Although white captives likely numbered in the thousands on the Argentine frontier of the nineteenth century, their stories are largely absent from the historical record. The real, historical captives' contact with indigenous communities, Rotker explains, meant that they were barred from returning to their homes; they had crossed the divide that defined national white identity, and to avoid contaminating the nation, they would never be allowed to return. Her discussion of Argentine national identity as shaped by the gaps in national memory helps to explain the resurgence of the Lucía Miranda myth in the mid-nineteenth century:

[T]he omission of the captive women from real history is like a black hole that must be filled. It is a threat to the integrity of identity and, as such, demands some form of representation, even if totally allusive and elusive. [...] Lucía Miranda reappears many times in Argentina's literary history. But never as an invited guest. She never acquires the prestige of Facundo or Martín Fierro; Lucía Miranda may be present at the national banquet, but she always enters through the back door. (Rotker, *Captive* 107)

Faced with the dilemma of founding a vision for the national future on a legend with no continuation, a truncated past, Mansilla finds an original and ingenious solution: she invents a second love story within the traditional elements of the legend, such that the values represented by the martyred couple can carry forward, even after their death. Alejo, a Spanish soldier, falls in love with and marries Anté, a young Timbú woman who, based on Lucía's teachings, converts to Christianity and is banished (and in effect orphaned) by her original community. Mansilla's description of the courtship emphasizes the lovers' mutual interest and Lucía's role as a godmother. Lucía, moreover, becomes an inspiration for the process of Anté's cultural assimilation and religious conversion:

[Alejo] amaba á la jóven Anté; y ella á su turno, se sentia fuertemente atraida por la varonil belleza, del bizarro Español. Lucia, que veia el naciente amor de los dos jóvenes, tomaba especial esmero, en preparar el corazon de la india, al goce íntimo y delicado de los dulces afectos, templando por medio de prédicas, la ardiente fogosidad de su alma de salvaje. Y á medida que el tiempo pasaba, el corazon de la española transmitia á la jóven india una porción de su delicado perfume. (Mansilla 318)

The relationship between Lucía and Anté recalls another between the Neopolitan patron, Nina, and the young, orphaned Lucía, suggesting a genealogy of generous white women helping orphans across cultural divides. Alejo and Anté function as protégés and proxies of their godparents, Sebastián and Lucía, promising a continuation of the latter's legacy in the "new" territory. Though Mansilla clearly considers marriage between Spanish men and converted Timbú women possible and desirable, it seems she rejects this option when the genders of the betrothed are reversed. Earlier in the novel, the narrator ponders and even relishes the prospect of an interracial union between white Lucía and either of the Timbú chiefs, Marangoré or Siripo.²⁰ Mansilla finally rejects this possibility, however, because the male's dominance in it would put the indigenous partner in a superior position to that of the European.²¹ The reverse of this interethnic union, with a Timbú woman and a European man, preserves the dominant position of the European partner, as would have been necessary within the logic of colonial expansion, and for Mansilla this combination is acceptable and even desirable; her narrator presents it as a way to evangelize and assimilate an indigenous individual in isolation from her original community. In addition, their union allows the author to advocate for the importance of creole women's active public role in frontier life, because it results from Lucía's work as an educator, translator, and mediator in the contact zone.

The biracial nature of Alejo and Anté's union suggests a novel approach, at least for mid-nineteenth century Argentina, to the issue of interethnic violence on the country's frontier. Powerful creoles unfailingly believed that the territory was rightfully and exclusively theirs. In 1845 Domingo Faustino Sarmiento's essay *Facundo* critiqued Rosas and set a vision for national consolidation based on education, European immigration, and "civilized" control of the national territory. His writings evidence what Viñas calls "el racismo imperial más agresivo" (63): "Para nosotros, Colocolo, Lautaro y Caupolicán, no obstante los ropajes nobles y civilizados con que los revistiera Ercilla, no son más que unos indios asquerosos, a quienes habríamos hecho colgar ahora" (Sarmiento, quoted in Viñas 61). During Sarmiento's later term as president (1868-74), his Minister of Justice and Education, Nicolás Avellaneda, who would later succeed him as president, wrote that "[l]a cuestión *fronteras* es la primera cuestión para todos, y hablamos incesantemente de ella [...]. Suprimir los indios y las fronteras no implica en otros términos sino poblar el desierto" (Avellaneda 352).²² As the principle theorizer of Argentina's bourgeoisie, Sarmiento's ideology and that of his Generation of 1837 set the ideological parameters for Argentina's post-Rosas development.²³ One result was the 1879 genocide known as the *Conquista del Desierto*, which ended indigenous hegemony over the space. The effort was financed by prior land sales and would launch the unprecedented economic expansion of Argentina's late nineteenth century (Rock 154-5).

If prior versions of the Lucía Miranda legend conclude that the indigenous populations must never be trusted, constructing a justification for their annihilation as a necessary part of conquest, then Mansilla offers a somewhat different solution. She does not question the basic logic of settler colonialism, because she sees no role for whole, functional indigenous communities within or alongside the national project of expansionist Argentina, but in contrast with the dominant opinion of her contemporaries, neither did she consider ethnic difference to be an absolute marker of abjection and a justification for annihilation. Perhaps most radically, Mansilla's proposal posits the Christian children of Alejo and Anté as the mestizo originals that would carry forward Lucía's teachings into the future of the new nation, necessary figures for the continuation of Lucía's legacy and embodiments of the new beginnings that Mansilla emphasized could overcome tragedy.²⁴

In this light, Mansilla's *Lucía Miranda* offers an interesting comparison with *Iracema*, the 1865 novel by Brazilian José de Alencar that narrates the love story of an indigenous princess and virgin priestess, Iracema, and Martim, a Portuguese soldier. Their perfect and instant love fades as Martim is called away in war, and following the birth of their son, Moacyr, Iracema dies from heartbreak and physical exhaustion. Regretful Martim and the mestizo baby, however, end the novel on a hopeful note as they set off to found the new nation of Brazil. Another novel by Alencar, *O Guarani* (1857), reverses the positions of the interracial lovers, with a white woman, Cecilia (Ceci), and an indigenous king, Peri, whose masculinity and nobility is symbolically overcome by his status as a willing slave to Ceci. In addition, Peri is a converted Christian and separated from his original community. As Sommer explains, Alencar's novels participate in a broad trend around Latin America, in which idealized interracial marriage gave nationals a romantic version of their own origins (138-71). What surprises here is that Mansilla points out some of the falsehoods and the gaps in Argentine national memory that Iglesia and Rotker identify, particularly regarding the issue of race. She reinserts the Argentine national imaginary into a fundamental dilemma of the contact zone, that is, the dilemma of mediating difference and subsuming the violence of the conquest into a narrative of national harmony and uniqueness. In addition, she finds a way to do this while advocating for women's active role in national formation, even on the dangerous frontier.

Mansilla's proposal, then, based on the family formation narrative set in Europe, emphasizes societal adaptation and growth following hardship, particularly based on charity, education, creole and assimilated indigenous women's role in society, and flexible social structures that protect some of society's most vulnerable members, including orphans and converted indigenous people. In this manner Mansilla's novel maintains the sense of creole entitlement to occupy the Pampa, a conclusion integral to the Lucía Miranda legend and readily endorsable by Mansilla's nineteenth-century readership. At the same time, however—and this point is much more daring on the author's part—the novel softens the legend's suggestion that the Other must be physically annihilated, going so far as to propose conversion, education, and biracial marriage as mechanisms that would assimilate indigenous individuals into creole society. Mansilla's many pages spent recounting Lucía's family formation in Europe thus presage the birth of the mestizo, creole community in the River Plate region. Just as the young orphan made good in spite

of her childhood's unfortunate circumstances, so too can an Argentina that embraces its mestizo origins and welcomes the participation of women in the project of creole national expansion.

The final pages of Mansilla's *Lucía Miranda* condense the violence of the legend's traditional structure, with indigenous warriors destroying the fort and capturing Lucía and Sebastián. Following the protagonists' spectacular execution in the style of their saintly namesakes, Mansilla's invented characters of Alejo and Anté escape against the backdrop of the flaming fort:

Á la luz viva del bosque que se enciende, vése un hombre que lleva en brazos una mujer desmayada. ¿Á dónde irán? ¿dónde hallarán un abrigo para su amor? ¡La Pampa entera les brinda su inmensidad!

El bosque se convirtió en cenizas; hoy no quedan de él ni vestigios. [L]os timbúes, mudaron su campamento el siguiente día. (359)²⁵

In the novel's final words, Lucía's flaming body sparks a fire that spreads and clears away the woods, as if creating the Pampa from her funeral pyre and cleansing the symbolic space of its violent past and the impediments to creole occupation. The Timbúes vacate the area, seemingly emptying the Pampa in advance of white conquest and relinquishing their claim to the space. The flight of Alejo and Anté into that space of the future national imaginary promises a difficult but triumphant national expansion. Just as Iracema's death inspires Martín's forward movement toward the Brazilian nation of the future, so too will creole Argentine identity be founded on the death and legacy of Lucía Miranda.²⁶ In this way Mansilla holds up Lucía as an inspiration in whose name and memory the conquest will proceed. Mansilla's narrator imagines the foundational moment for Argentine national culture in the mixed-race couple's turn away from the martyrs' pyre and toward a confrontation with the vast and newly empty landscape.²⁷

Although Lucía and Sebastián are childless and offer only limited allegorizing as a foundational myth for nineteenth-century Argentina, Mansilla chose to resurrect their legend and add another couple that would make possible a new generation, and thus a projection into a future national identity. What this choice highlights, perhaps unexpectedly considering the author's origins in the highest social strata of Buenos Aires, is the multi-ethnic nature of life on the frontier, and what it proposes is a mestizo but Catholic nation, based on the assimilation of indigenous individuals into European value systems and white communities through their education by gentle, creole women. In spite of the landscape's stark immensity, it receives the interracial couple welcomingly ("les brinda su inmensidad"), without the threat that it represents elsewhere, for example in Echeverría's *La cautiva*. This is the landscape of the creole nation's future, in which the young couple will carry forward Lucía's Christian and European values, in spite of the failure that ended the Spaniards' first settlement in the River Plate region. In this way the author contests the traditional relegation of women to a private sphere of influence, situating a woman protagonist at the center of a nation's origins and, allegorically, as inspiration for its future. Mansilla's model of a female nation-builder is a well-educated

and polyglot creole with special talents for translation, mediation, and teaching, pointing to women's education as fundamental to their creole nations' advancement.²⁸

Though Mansilla's proposal is somewhat progressive as regards women's role in national identity, it should not be mistaken for a clarion call to inclusive, egalitarian society. Her *Lucía Miranda* posits the future Argentine nation on limitless expansion over the figurally empty Pampa, and indigenous populations are suggested to be worthy of civil treatment only to the extent that they fragment, individually convert to Christianity, and assimilate into creole Argentine society. This proposal is undeniably racist and participates deeply in the logic of elimination proper to settler colonialism, presenting what Patrick Wolfe has called "assimilation's Faustian bargain—have our settler world, but lose your indigenous soul. Beyond any doubt, this is a kind of death. Assimilationists recognized this very clearly" (397). Moreover, Wolfe reminds us, "depending on the historical conjuncture, assimilation can be a more effective mode of elimination than conventional forms of killing, since it does not involve such a disruptive affront to the rule of law that is ideologically central to the cohesion of settler society" (402). To be perfectly clear, then, Mansilla envisioned a continuation of mestizo, creole, Catholic culture, and not of whole, functional indigenous communities occupying any space whatsoever.²⁹

At the same time, however, when considered solely against the creole milieu from which she wrote, Mansilla's proposal is more open and less absolutist regarding race than both the beliefs of many of her contemporaries and the current-day understanding of Mansilla critics. In essence, the author advocates for assimilation of indigenous communities to creole Argentina as complimentary to and more palatable than other methods, including homicide and displacement, and in the process of this assimilation she envisions a valued and active role for creole women in Argentine society. She bases this exculpatory allegory on her vision of an adaptable family-nation that would work together to ensure care for creole society's most vulnerable members, acknowledging and even celebrating its own mestizo origins alongside creole women's valued role in society.

The University of Alabama

Notes

- ¹ The full title is *Anales del descubrimiento, población y conquista de las Provincias del Río de la Plata*. The text's nickname derives from its late arrival to a printing press, that of Pedro de Angelis in 1835, though it circulated profusely in manuscript form (Iglesia 31). Iglesia notes that Díaz de Guzmán was “un mestizo que ha adoptado el punto de vista del invasor español, pero cuyo origen personal lo margina y lo vuelve ilegítimo. *La Argentina* se escribe para esconder— hacer olvidar—ese sentimiento de ilegitimidad” (31). Iglesia includes a complete reprint of Díaz de Guzmán's story of Lucía Miranda (41-6).
- ² Pratt writes that “contact zones” are “social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination—like colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today” (*Imperial* 7).
- ³ Nancy Hanway similarly underscores the parallel of contested property between the space of the pampa and Lucía's body, pointing out the “links between the racially marked female body and space are connected to the desire for expansionism of post-1850s Argentina” (116). Other critics noting the parallel function of territory and the woman's body as contentious property include Rotker (*Captive* 110) and Lehman (118).
- ⁴ “Whatever settlers may say—and they generally have a lot to say—the primary motive for elimination is not race (or religion, ethnicity, grade of civilization, etc.) but access to territory. Territoriality is settler colonialism's specific, irreducible element. [...] Settler colonialism destroys to replace” (Wolfe 388).
- ⁵ For example: “En 1860 se han incrementado los malones, pero Rosa Guerra y Eduarda Mansilla ignoran la actualidad, para reinsertar en la esfera pública una leyenda desplazada en el tiempo y el espacio, de una bella española que desató pasiones indígenas y fue capaz de defender — como mujer — el espacio del progreso: familia, cultura, civilización. Quiere decir: no se habla de la criolla sometida en la frontera, sino de una española remota. No se construye la épica del presente, sino el relato de un fracaso blanco. No se denuncia una política (o la falta de ella): se consagra una leyenda con el peso de la Historia, en la que la conciliación entre blancos e indios es imposible” (Rotker, “Lucía Miranda” 122).
- ⁶ Her mother was the younger sister of Juan Manuel de Rosas and her father was a decorated general. Her brother, Lucio V. Mansilla, was a diplomat, general, and well-known writer, principally remembered today for his *Excursión a los indios ranqueles*. Eduarda caused a scandal in 1855 by going against her family's political leanings and marrying Manuel García, who was a Unitarian.
- ⁷ Masiello argues that Mansilla “questioned the purpose of conquering the pampas [and] condemned the political practices of federalists and unitarians alike” (*Between* 40). Women's engagement with politics was always contentious because, as Mary Louise Pratt points out, “[w]omen inhabitants of nations were neither imagined as nor invited to imagine themselves as part of the horizontal brotherhood” (“Women” 51).
- ⁸ The original publication bore the pseudonym of Daniel, but the book printing was published under Eduarda Mansilla de García. For analysis of Mansilla's use of pseudonyms, see especially Batticuore's *La mujer romántica* (229-34). For more information on Rosa Guerra's novel, see Forcinito and Masiello (*Between*).

- ⁹ In Lojo's edition, the kidnapping and executions occupy eight pages of about 220. Noteworthy exceptions to the lack of critical attention to the novel's first part include articles by Irene Chikiar Bauer and Mabel Susana Agresti. Chikiar Bauer focuses on the novel's intertextuality, including Lucía's reading material, the numerous citations appearing as chapter epigraphs, and the relation between the novel and the *Cantar del mío Cid*; she argues that the first half of the novel "defiende las bondades de la educación popular" (37) and served the function of establishing Mansilla's erudition and authority as a writer, which for a woman in nineteenth-century Argentina were always under attack (38-9). Agresti explores the novel's structure of nested narrations and the Renaissance themes of its first half.
- ¹⁰ For example, Rosa Guerra's version of the same year begins with Lucía already inhabiting the Spanish fort near the Paraná River.
- ¹¹ Wolff's review, translated by Lucio V. Mansilla and published in 1863 in the *Revista de Buenos Aires*, cited Eduarda Mansilla's "digresiones inútiles," "introducciones muy largas," "diálogos extensos," and "sentimentalismo hinchado" (cited in Batticuore, *La mujer* 225 and 269). The German ultimately endorsed *Lucía Miranda* with a favorable opinion, effecting what Batticuore calls her "verdadero jalón literario que la transforma de inmediato en lectura recomendable y recomendada para los compatriotas" (224-5).
- ¹² "La cautiva blanca nace, en nuestra literatura, sobre la abrumadora realidad de la cautiva india" (Iglesia 52, my emphasis).
- ¹³ "No existe confirmación documental ni del hecho, ni de la fecha, ni de uno solo de los personajes que participan en la narración" (Iglesia 55).
- ¹⁴ Other critics have agreed with and expanded upon this assessment. Bonnie Frederick, for example, writes that as a result of the Lucía Miranda legend, "[t]he Indians were branded as savages incapable of respecting the nobility of white women, thus providing the justification for and necessity of genocide" (88).
- ¹⁵ More specifically, the novel was published between the battles of Cepeda (1859) and Pavón (1862), which negotiated the reintegration of Buenos Aires as a province within the Argentine Republic, thus doing away with the Argentine Confederation and the State of Buenos Aires.
- ¹⁶ Eduarda Mansilla was also a journalist and, after 1880, a well-known author of children's literature. For more information on Mansilla's life, writing, and travels, see Batticuore, Frederick, Jagoe, Lojo, and Torre.
- ¹⁷ Other versions of the legend use the names Mangoré, Siripó, Siripa, etc. Here I use Mansilla's spelling, except when quoting other authors. I also maintain Mansilla's non-standard or archaic spelling in quotations.
- ¹⁸ For example, the narrator describes Siripo as "pérfido," "desatinado," and "dando feroces alaridos," while Marangoré is "hermoso," "infeliz," and "víctima de su pasión tan desgraciada" (Mansilla 352).
- ¹⁹ For more information on the many rewritings of the Lucía Miranda myth, which space constraints prevent me from detailing here, see especially Lojo and Rotker (*Captive*).
- ²⁰ Rotker writes that "Guerra's and Mansilla's texts are ambiguous regarding the relationship with Mangoré: there is a sort of identification with the realm of the abject, of the excluded, of the unrepresentable" (*Captive* 111). She later mentions Lucía's "ambiguity, sexual desire, and feminine curiosity" vis-à-vis Marangoré (*Captive* 114). In Rotker's analysis, this openness and even identification with the Other was a

short-lived possibility, nonexistent earlier and made impossible again by the time Celestina Funes released her own *Lucía Miranda* in verse, in 1883, following the *Conquista del desierto*, when the frontier wars had ended: “With their curiosity, with veiled fantasy, Guerra and Mansilla have opened a tiny breach in racism’s logic of exclusions: incurring into the terrain of the abject, they discard the horror of violation and deliver themselves to a more romantic fantasy through which they filter, perhaps for the only time, a desire for the Other *without disgust*” (*Captive* 116).

- ²¹ Lojo concurs, considering acceptable for Mansilla “un mestizaje donde el elemento masculino dominante (el padre) es blanco y cristiano, y por lo tanto puede dar *forma* a la ‘materia bárbara’. Pensar lo contrario (que Lucía tuviera descendencia de Siripó) subvertiría las relaciones de dominio y humillaría a la cultura del conquistador, al transformarla, como a una mujer, en objeto/cuerpo penetrable” (33).
- ²² The later governor of Buenos Aires and Patagonia provinces, Álvaro Barros, focused on the economic consequences of an unstable frontier, reminding his audience that “la propiedad rural carece absolutamente de garantías” (343), and that “[l]a falta de seguridad interior, de garantías de la propiedad rural, de extension de los campos de pastoreo, son sin duda las causas inmediatas y ponderosas que, deteniendo nuestro progreso, destruyendo nuestra riqueza, debían gradualmente conducirnos a un porvenir ruinoso, más o menos lejano” (Barros 349-50).
- ²³ Masiello writes that “their goal was to populate the nation with racially uncontaminated subjects” (*Between* 5). For more information on Sarmiento and *Facundo*, see *Sarmiento, Author of a Nation* by Tulio Halperín Donghi, et al.
- ²⁴ Mansilla did not maintain this limited but positive assessment of indigenous characters throughout her career. Referring to the author’s later novel, *Pablo ou la vie dans les pampas*, Batticuore asserts that the narrator’s opinion of indigenous characters “no es compasiva ni vacilante sino de repudio” (*Mujer* 261). The Indians are so reviled that an Afro-Argentine nursemaid named Rosa murders her white charge because “ha preferido a su niña muerta antes que cautiva” (263). Nonetheless, Batticuore also notes a willing *cautiva* in this same novel, the wife of a *capataz* who prefers to stay with her captor over being ransomed by her husband (*Mujer* 261).
- ²⁵ Lucía and Sebastián are condemned to burn at the stake and die shot with arrows, respectively, but Lucía preempts the execution of her sentence and dies instead from love: “el silbido de las flechas que debian atravesar el pecho de su esposo, hirió de muerte el corazon de Lucia; matóla su amor, el exceso del dolor” (Mansilla 359). In an interesting coincidence, the death of Echeverría’s Unitarian in “El matadero” is caused not directly by his would-be executioners, but by the strength of his anguish and outrage: “Reventó de rabia el salvaje unitario” (Echeverría 114). Echeverría’s widowed character of María in “La cautiva” also dies from emotion when she learns her son has been killed (Echeverría 213).
- ²⁶ In Rotker’s phrasing, “[t]he heroine’s death, like every beautiful woman’s, makes the preservation of dominant cultural values exigent. Over her dead body—Lucía’s, María’s [in *La cautiva*, by Echeverría]—the norms are reconfigured and secured: she must be sacrificed if the danger her presence presents is to disappear” (*Captive* 103).
- ²⁷ Masiello argues that in this novel, “American geography can harbor only doom” (*Between* 43). Similarly, Nancy Hanway reads the Alejo-Anté couple as “doomed,” proposing that “their escape into the pampas at the end of the novel represents Lucía’s repressed desire for Mangora” (128), the Timbú chief: “In Mansilla’s

romanticizing view, the pampas is the only place that will accept an interracial union; in part, Mansilla suggests, because it is a place that knows ‘no other law than desire.’ Mansilla has constructed the pampas completely in terms of its use for and its relationship to the white Argentine nation: as a space to contain the complexities of race” (128). Agresti disagrees, briefly mentioning Alejo and Ante’s escape as a “destello de esperanza [...] son un español y una india, son el futuro criollo de estas tierras regadas en sangre” (1001).

²⁸ For more information on women’s reading and education in this novel, see especially Chikiar Bauer.

²⁹ Referring to varied strategies for assimilating indigenous people into creole culture, Wolfe is right to point out that, “[t]hough ‘softer’ than the recourse to simple violence, [...] these strategies are not necessarily less eliminatory” (401).

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