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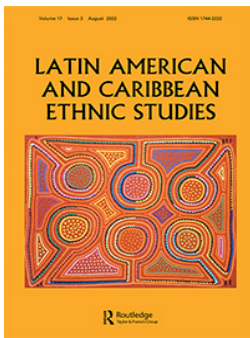


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White animals: racializing sheep and beavers in the Argentinian Tierra del Fuego

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ABSTRACT

In the summer of 1946, a landowning bourgeoisie organized the II Livestock Exhibition of Tierra del Fuego, and the Argentinian Navy filmed the introduction of twenty Canadian beavers in the region. Both events echoed power disputes between a military government seeking to nationalize lands and capitals and the European landowners whose privileges were threatened. The events show that landowners and state officers negotiated their interests by articulating Argentina's white exceptionalism with animals and against racialized others. Interrogating the interspecies articulation of whiteness in Tierra del Fuego during the 1940s, I examine how sheep and beavers helped secure white privilege through land concentration, breeding, racial purification, nature modernization, and eugenic moralities. To answer these questions, I analyze documents and films from local and national archives. My analysis shows the entangled racialization of humans and animals and its effects, including the appropriation of the Fuegian and native identification categories by settlers and the state. This article demonstrates that 'White Argentina' is a project desiring to live not only among white citizens but also among white animals. More broadly, I argue that including animals in race and ethnicity studies can better explain the intersectional production of race inequalities.

KEYWORDS

Argentina; multi-species; racial articulation; settler-colonialism; Tierra del Fuego; whiteness

During the summer of 1946, two events took place in the Argentinian Tierra del Fuego: a livestock exhibition and the introduction of beavers, a semiaquatic rodent species native to North America and Europe. The II Livestock Exhibition of the Rural Society of Tierra del Fuego was celebrated at the Estancia José Menéndez in Río Grande to show and prize the best sheep breeds. The flying of twenty beavers from Canada and their release into Fagnano Lake to create a fur industry in Tierra del Fuego was recorded by a national newsreel and shown in cinemas across Argentina. Both events discursively produced and circulated demands, narratives, and signs that go beyond the event itself. In particular, they reflected power disputes between a landowning bourgeoisie and the nation-state that were resolved by mastering nature and mobilizing whiteness against racialized others. The animals participating in the events, primarily sheep and beavers, became more than signs of whiteness. On the one hand, their reproductive and territorial possible

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worlds were shaped by white social, political, and moral orders. On the other hand, sheep and beavers' ecologies and economies helped legitimate, envision, and produce those white orders.

With these cases, I argue that whiteness in Argentina is not-only-human. Gordillo (2016) has defined 'White Argentina' as a desire to experience a national space made of mostly European citizens. This article shows how White Argentina in Tierra del Fuego has also desired to be defined with European and white animals. Saraiva (2016) has illustrated how livestock and crops in the German Nazi state embodied fascist ideologies and helped secure them. The idea of white animals, in this article, leaves behind the question of animals' intentionality to examine the discourses that informed the introduction and expansion of beavers and sheep in Tierra del Fuego and the white orders they helped produce. Attending to animals in race and ethnicity studies can illuminate histories of race and intersectional injustices in not-only-human worlds. It can also contribute to debates around the natural versus social construction of race by moving beyond the nature-society distinctions that have served to justify racialized oppressions. This recognition implies not equating humans and animals but rather acknowledging that nature is political too.

This work results from my ethnographic and archival dissertation research conducted between 2018 and 2020, mainly in the Argentinian side of Tierra del Fuego but complemented with short visits to the Chilean side. I moved to Ushuaia with the desire to examine the politics of animals in science and return to my home country. As repressed histories of violence started to haunt my research, I also began to interrogate science's colonial and racial politics in Tierra del Fuego. I conducted 65 in-depth interviews, carried out more than one year of participant observation, and analyzed local and national Argentinian repositories. While this ethnographic experience informs this paper, results are limited to the analysis of archival documents and audiovisuals. Unless otherwise indicated, the translation of documents and audiovisual discourses are my own.

Argentina's desert, mestizaje, the not-only-human demographic problem

Argentina's nation-state inherited the racial politics articulated by the Spanish Empire, which had codified differences between Europeans and others, introduced new racial categories, and favored the more whitened workers through hierarchies that recognized social heterogeneity (Alberto and Elena 2016, 5; Quijano 2000, 537). During state-building processes, three interrelated discourses rearticulated whiteness. First, the metaphor of the desert that referred to the extension of uncultivated lands in Argentina served to disavow indigenous genocide and justify land-grabbing (Bayer and Lenton 2010; Briones and Delrio 2007).¹ Second, histories of genocide, disease, war, and mestizaje gave rise to narratives of indigenous and black extinctions – both fictions also fabricated through statistics that stopped registering nonwhite citizens (Chamosa 2008; Edwards 2014; Geler 2010; Rodríguez 2016). Third, the idea that Argentina needed a larger population to develop modern economies led governments to promote European immigration (Garguin 2007; Halperín Donghi 1976). Argentina entered the 20th century circulating the idea that mestizaje had produced white citizens. This white exceptionalism claimed that European blood and traditions had gradually 'dissolved' any trace of nonwhiteness (Dicenta 2020, 120–121; Geler and Rodríguez 2020).

The first two Peronist governments (1946–1955) provoked some ruptures and continuities. With a planned economy that would integrate and develop territories and populations, social protection and participation measures increased working and family rights and living standards (Oszlak 1997). European landowners and national elites had secured their power by enduring violent and racist regimes. The genocide of organized workers accompanied the timid attempts to redistribute lands during the 1920s. Hence, when the Peronist government put the previously disposable worker at the center while circulating discourses on land expropriation, elites mobilized whiteness to defend their privilege by subordinating racialized others (Adamovsky 2017). The inflation crisis that followed World War II also forced a shift from an export-oriented economy to an import-substitution scheme that required negotiations with the elites and their capital in Argentina (Almirón 2018; Balsa 2012). In this scenario, the state softened its discourse on land reforms to emphasize propagandistic strategies that would support state sovereignty, and which tended to depict a homogeneous society to foster national cohesion. Through signs and social protection, the idea of gradual whitening became entrenched with the biopolitics of assimilation and modernization (Elena 2016; Martínez-Echazábal 1998).

White exceptionalism reemerged through positive inclusion and through negative dialectics against external threats, which Esposito (2009) calls immunitarian politics. To be integrated and protected, citizens had to become Argentinians and enter modern forms of labor. To ensure family and workers' rights, social policies that focused on education and behaviors still reproduced eugenic ideas around the already racialized disorder, degeneration, and deviance (Miranda 2005; Ramacciotti 2003; Rodríguez 2016). The fear of external others that threatened modernity, unity, and white exceptionalism became focused primarily on indigenous peoples, anarchists and communists, and foreigners who kept their traditions. Hence, in addition to social welfare measures, the government shifted its politics of 'open doors' for Europeans to one of 'doors ajar' (Novick 2018, 193). This shift highlighted culturally and racially akin immigrants' attraction and avoidance of 'inconvenient immigration from the political or racial perspective.'² If Europeans were a foundational element of the nation, as acknowledged by the 1853 Constitution,³ Perón claimed in 1949 that immigration demanded 'wary vigilance and careful planning for selecting, channeling, and distributing immigrants' (Perón 2016, 345).

This promotion and selection of immigrants occurred along with the introduction of animals from Europe and North America. Especially during Sarmiento and Perón's governments, the state introduced productive and modern species, including ornamental flowers, deer, banana trees, rabbits, wild boars, beavers, and goats (Archibald et al. 2020). Like immigrants, certain nonhumans became vehicles for modernity, including livestock animals for food, gaming species for tourism, fur animals for the industry, or charismatic species to recreate European landscapes. Given the lack of co-evolution stories, Europeans perceived native species as wild, poor, and unproductive. Moreover, they became frontier signs for nature to master through the civilization of wilderness. Together, human and nonhuman settlers helped each other expand at the expense of native populations, or what Alfred Crosby (1986) has called 'ecological imperialism.' In this scenario, desires to experience the national space as populated with white and European subjects, or the project of White Argentina (Gordillo 2016), has not only referred to *citizens* but also to nonhuman animals.

Governed through biopolitics as species, individuals, and populations, animals embody, reproduce, and exceed social, moral, and economic orders. Scholars have argued that nonhuman diversity is optimized and hierarchized (Wolfe 2003; Sandoval-Cervantes 2016). Animals work (De La Cadena 2015, 12), are medicalized (Asdal, Druglitrø, and Hinchliffe 2017), and are enhanced and secured (Braverman 2015; van Dooren, Kirksey, and Münster 2016). As bare life (Agamben 1998; Wolfe 2003), animal signs have served to stigmatize others, hide history, and naturalize injustices (Musolff 2012). Nonetheless, metaphors always entail a world of material and experienced realities (Bhabha 1990; Shukin 2009, 1–10). As such, animals have symbolically and materially helped to secure nations and empires (Duarte 2006; Saraiva 2016; Shukin 2009).

Illustrative cases of the reproduction of social, moral, and political orders by animals include the 1960s eradication of bears in Japan, which became an urban enterprise against wildness (Knight 2000, 157). In Zimbabwe, Yuka Suzuki (2017) explains the shifting relations between lions and whiteness, from a wild predator to conquer by settlers to an exotic species to protect in enclosed conservation parks at the expense of local populations. In the Malvinas Islands, Jay Blair (2017) analyzes the politics involved in recognizing sheep as a national symbol while using militaristic metaphors to raise awareness against ‘invasive species’ originally from Argentina. In Patagonia, scholars have shown how consumption needs from the North Atlantic have put human-animal relations at the edge (Coronato 2017; Harambour 2019; Soluri 2013). Others have traced how different representations of animals and nature have responded to various urban, national, and transnational interests (Chamosa 2016; Doallo 2012; Marini 2020; Núñez 2014).

In this article, I engage the scholarship mentioned above to explore not-only-human whiteness in Tierra del Fuego. In this region, the myths of the desert, indigenous extinction, and underpopulation crystallized later, during the 1940s (Gerrard 2021, 15; Zusman and Minvielle 1995). Analyzing two multispecies events occurring in 1946, I trace the whitening politics of the time. I first explore how the II Livestock Exhibition of Tierra del Fuego fostered white settler demands through sheep, land tenure, and racial purification practices. Second, I examine how the military introduction of Canadian beavers into Tierra del Fuego helped legitimate state sovereignty through animal signs reproducing white moralities. Both events illuminate how a landowning bourgeoisie and the state negotiated their political and economic authority by articulating whiteness with animals and against racialized others.

White sheep: land property, racial purity, and erasure of the native

The II Livestock Exhibition of the Rural Society of Tierra del Fuego took place during the summer of 1946, on February 24 (‘Las Exposiciones . . . ’ (1946)). Like other Patagonian societies, influential sectors had founded the Rural Society of Tierra del Fuego in 1937 to protect their interests, promote their identity, and secure their status (Ruffini 2012b, 2016). The transformation of the National Territory of Tierra del Fuego into a Maritime Government in 1943 gave more authority to the nation-state in the region (Bucciarelli 2016; Ruffini 2016). With the region regarded as a geopolitical resource at risk, the lack of Argentinian population and the presence of foreign threats justified military governance. When society favored land distribution discourses as a vehicle for progress and optimization, the increasing authority of the state in Tierra del Fuego challenged the political and

economic oligopoly of a livestock landowning bourgeoisie. In this context, livestock exhibitions attended by landowners and their cattle, regional and national state officers, and workers became a site for articulating demands. The 1946 exhibition honored landowners, and a jury formed by the National Ministry of Agriculture prized their best sheep and breeds. In turn, owners of the honored sheep donated their prizes to schools and children. During the event, officers, landowners, and the 'distinguished ladies' that had counseled and supported frontier men ('Las Exposiciones . . .' 1946, 18) all shared lunches, festivities, and speeches. Their discourses and arguments were later circulated nationally through journals, including *Argentina Austral*, the series created in 1929 by the landowning bourgeoisie of Tierra del Fuego (Ruffini 2012a).⁴

This European landowning bourgeoisie had begun to accumulate most of the land and political power of Tierra del Fuego by the end of the 19th century. Argentina had annexed Tierra del Fuego in 1884, but the absence of infrastructure and connections with the administrative center in Buenos Aires implied a lack of effective presence. After corrupt agreements between the national elite and European capitals, the state let the private sector act autonomously to exploit the region's lands through donations and land tenure agreements. Without a colonization plan, like those made for other areas of Argentina, by 1911, all the central territory of Tierra del Fuego on both the Argentinian and Chilean sides was appropriated by four stock corporations (Livraghi 2011, 48).

Missionaries and European immigrants had configured this oligopoly through their capital and their families. By introducing and raising cattle, mostly sheep, they fostered a global wool and meat trade route from the port of Punta Arenas, in the Chilean Magallanes, to the European markets. The British Thomas Bridges, who had helped settle the first Anglican Mission of Tierra del Fuego, left his missionary role to raise sheep after receiving two thousand hectares of Yaghan lands to found Estancia Harberton. After he traveled to Buenos Aires, the government agreed to donate the extensive plot to him as a prize for his evangelical services (Bridges 1987; Mastroscello 2007). Bridges and his children became known as triple pioneers, having established the first mission, the first farm (*estancia*), and the first sheep, introducing a herd from the Falkland Islands to be reproduced with four *Romney Marsh* breeding males from the United Kingdom.

After Bridges, other Europeans arrived with their sheep and accumulated lands and power at the expense of workers and indigenous peoples. These European families became even more powerful when they allied with each other through the marriage of the Menéndez-Behety daughter and the Nogueira-Braun son. Their marriage opened the path for an oligopoly that joined Patagonia's elite livestock societies and created the Sociedad Anónima Importadora y Exportadora (Bandieri 2015). This corporation enabled the diversification and concentration of power, wealth, and land in such a way that Bridge's estancia became a small enterprise by comparison. To develop their economies, these families hired temporary workers, primarily Chilean and indigenous peoples, in low-ranking positions with extreme working conditions and meager salaries; when these racialized workers demanded rights and improvements, landowners and officers violently repressed them (Bayer 1997). To protect the territories occupied with their sheep, these landowners also organized the persecution, assassination, and confinement of indigenous peoples, many of whom resisted the livestock expansion that stole their territories by coordinating *malones* (*Indian raids*), destroying fences, and taking cattle.

White sheep helped justify indigenous genocide and secure white settler property arrangements at the expense of indigenous peoples. Because settlers arrive to stay, this form of settler-colonialism was built upon the logic of disappearing, killing, displacing, integrating, and silencing ‘the native’ (Wade 2016; Wolfe 2006). The Fuegian native peoples were criminalized for stealing sheep and destroying property. Arguing western capitalist moralities, landowners paid bounties to ‘hunters’ to capture or kill native peoples. If grabbing lands for white sheep was a vehicle for modernity, the theft of cattle by indigenous peoples was a sign of wildness and hence criminalized through white moralities that described these acts as proof of racial inferiority. Stealing as a moral issue had a long history within Argentinian colonial encounters. The journalist Roberto Payró had already described indigenous peoples as inferior for stealing in his Patagonian chronicles at the end of the 19th century. When Payró learned that the selk’nam peoples had stolen sheep from the British consul in Punta Arenas, he argued that ‘indigenous peoples have a low morale since stealing white guanacos, or sheep, from Christians is not a crime for them’ (Payró 2001 [1898], para. 124). With a discursive power that still endures (Bayer 2010), indigenous genocide was legitimated through narratives about the frontier and civilization, and it was secured with sheep (Harambour 2017).

White sheep also helped to assert white settler privilege by radically transforming the environment. Given the lack of shared economies and relational histories with Fuegian ecologies, European settlers equated native species with wilderness and sheep with modernization. Sheep represented the prosperous economies of Europe and materially reproduced their white settler environments of Australia or North America. As a population to protect and propagate, white sheep radically transformed the environments of Tierra del Fuego by displacing and erasing native species. Sheep added value to a territory experienced as useless and sterile from a modern agricultural cosmovision. In this region of dispersed resources, each individual sheep required one hectare of land for grazing. Without regulations that would have forced them to invest in technologies for pasture enhancement and intensive livestock, landowners simply let sheep graze over long distances. In addition to organizing genocide and exploitation, this capitalist land-owning bourgeoisie also externalized all environmental costs into nature’s capacity to sustain sheep (Coronato 2017; Livraghi 2011).

The previously valued white sheep and landowner economies became problematic during the 1920s and during the Peronist governments of the 1940s. Without a national colonization plan, landowners mostly sold raw wool without adding value. They sent most of their proceeds back to Europe, with minor regional investment and without generating infrastructure, urbanization, or population growth. While sheep populations grew and expanded, the minimal worker population was primarily temporary, male, and Chilean. Moreover, this oligopoly promoted the integration of Chilean and Argentinian Tierra del Fuego by concentrating most commercial activity in Punta Arenas (on the Chilean side) and prioritizing sheep grazing over national borders (De Imaz 1972).

To reverse this situation, the Argentinian government of Irigoyen tried to reclaim public lands occupied by the European landowners in the form of land trusts. At that time, land expropriation discourses were socially accepted, even if not so much for social justice goals but for optimizing land cultivation (Ruffini 2012b). In 1925, the state recaptured some public lots for state industries or national parks, and others were parceled out to workers to create smaller farms that would contribute to populating the region.

Indigenous peoples received the less productive lots for reservations (Livraghi 2011, 50). Despite the timid redistribution attempts, the landlord bourgeoisie responded by threatening many workers and indigenous peoples; often, these landowners maintained the effective exploitation of the land despite property titles (Livraghi 2011, 51). Landowners with homes in Buenos Aires also prevented state response by using their power and social capital in the city. Additionally, the rural landowning bourgeoisie created institutions to unify and protect their collective interests, including the journal *Argentina Austral* in 1929 and the Rural Society of Tierra del Fuego in 1937.

Tensions between landowners and the state increased when Juan Domingo de Perón took the presidency in 1946, the same year of the II Livestock Exhibition of Tierra del Fuego. Amidst discourses to protect workers and expropriate land for redistribution and cultivation, the Tierra del Fuego oligopoly downplayed its authoritarian discourse and defended private property to dissuade the administration from expropriating their land in exchange for increasing national productivity (Ruffini 2012b, para. 211). In the summer of 1946 and after three years without *ferias* (exhibition fairs), the Rural Association of Tierra del Fuego celebrated the II Livestock Exhibition. The society's president opened the *feria* with a speech defending private property as a fundamental right that could guarantee capital accumulation. In exchange, they would limit their concentration of accumulated capital. Landowners symbolically offered their white sheep no longer as a sign of white Europeanness, but as a source for generating the national wealth needed to industrialize Argentina. Surrounded by sheep, workers, landowners, their spouses, and state officers, the president of the society opened the ceremony by claiming:

We have experienced the evolution of this Territory before the arrival of the State. In the last twenty years, we have seen the creation of some roads and public services indicating the territory's evolution towards progress [...]. To ultimately develop the south, we need the vital structures of a steady and secure life for their population. Rural settlers in these vast land extensions need to feel free from the threats of an uncertain future. Inhabited and worked *lands need to be owned*. This fair condition *should not scare the State* [...], which has mechanisms to prevent hoarding and any other obstacles for the evolution of national development. *Progress will only* be possible if the fundamental groundwork is laid for a healthy and organized society *through private land ownership*; this measure, more than any other, will form the *core of spiritual and material bonds* between land and men as the essential elements of the nation. ("Las Exposiciones ... " 1946, 19, italics added)

The right to private property was interrelated with breeding practices and national discourses on racial purity. Sheep breeding informed and naturalized notions of mestizaje as gradual whitening and racial homogeneity. The strategy for breeding was no longer to introduce the best European sheep but to breed those that could best adapt to particular territories (Rodríguez Escalada 1947).⁵ Sheep had reinforced settlers' land ownership since the end of the 19th century. With the intensification of state presence in Tierra del Fuego, livestock owners demanded public services and technical schools to help them improve their sheep breeds, health, and productivity. With more technical capacities to define sheep racial types according to productive and aesthetic standards, sheep breeders first defined the purity of each race in their European origin countries. After that, Fuegian breeders selected herds and breeds upon their capacity to endure Fuegian geographies

and climates. Once in Tierra del Fuego, inbreeding helped to fix 'good characteristics' at the same time that 'racial, physical, or productive defects' were eliminated by 'refreshing the blood with an outsider reproducer' (Rodríguez Escalada 1947).

The reproductive labor of sheep was asymmetrically distributed among racialized and classed workers and animals. Economic capital produced by sheep, peoples, and exploitation of nature was appropriated by livestock owners who now negotiated the reduction of their international investments in favor of national industries. Symbolic capital emerging from sheep refinement and racial purification was captured by landowners who received the prizes and honors for their breed lines, and who offered to share and resignify such wealth in national terms. Through practices, knowledges, and symbolic exchanges, notions about racial purity circulated among sportspeople, zootechnical and health experts, breeders, statisticians, explorers, and Argentinian citizens. The 1946 exhibition was saturated with signs that had translated, on the one hand, sheep expansion into a race to master and civilize nature and, on the other, the pursuing of finer wools, more beautiful sheep, and more healthy breeds into national signs of racial purity. While obscuring sheep's daily life and death in the cold fields or within the efficient slaughter and shearing infrastructures (Bandieri 2015),⁶ white and purified sheep became part of a narrative and an object of national admiration.

Signs circulate social and moral orders across distinct domains while obscuring the stories and conditions of production (Ahmed 2004; Shukin 2009). Payró had made explicit the exchanges between racial notions about humans and animals in his chronicles:

A powerful race is in the making by nature in collaboration with social forces [...]. European housemaids arriving at the farms (*estancias*) will find partners and become future ancestors naturally, just like sheep do. If she (nature) made a sheep race for Patagonia without the need of intellectuals or statistics, with the same easiness will she make a *pueblo*. (Payró 2001 [1898], 56)

Women and sheep had been crucial figures in the evolutionist tale of the Argentinian race. The 1946 Livestock Exhibition illuminates how white sheep helped to continue socializing and asserting racial notions of purity and homogeneity. Like other animal signs, white sheep obscured the racial injustices that were reproduced by projects of *mestizaje* as gradual whitening. After felicitating the distinguished women who had counseled and supported the ranchers, the military government in Tierra del Fuego, represented by Eduardo Irazoqui, responded to landowners' arguments about land ownership in an attempt to reach common ground. Avoiding references to landownership, he stressed the national moral and economic value of sheep breeds for the Argentinian race:

I am honored to be in an exhibition with such significance. Beyond commercial purposes, this celebration has a great moral sense of progress. Livestock is the source of our national wealth and, in this small territory of Tierra del Fuego, it has international relevance. This ceremony represents the *Patria* [homeland]; it has a moral sign for it spreads the purification of our races, the ones that, as you all know, have a deserved enormous international prestige. The national character, in this sense, is glorious, and I know there is no need to talk about it here because it is known by everyone. I will only mention our desires to produce an even more purified and refined race to help directly achieve Argentina's aggrandizement. This collective desire is more concerning here, where paying an honorable and respectable tribute to Argentina comes from a remote Fuegian corner ("Las Exposiciones . . ." 1946, 20).

The state, represented in Tierra del Fuego, acknowledged sheep as a national *symbol* of *mestizaje* as gradual whitening and modernization. Sheep represented development, enhancement, and refinement. Whereas before foreign landowners had mobilized sheep as a sign of the British presence and power in Tierra del Fuego, the state now resignified sheep as ‘white gold,’ or a source of national richness and development, and as ‘Patagonian’ sheep in particular to imply national and racial purification. With the goal of negotiating power with Fuegian landowners, this resignification did not imply the inclusion of the stories of racialized workers who had participated in the realities the white sheep represented. Instead, it served to continue disavowing and legitimating a violent and asymmetrical history of exchanges between settlers, indigenous peoples, workers, animals, and nature.

Lastly, identity negotiations around being ‘Fuegian’ are reflected in the discourses of the II Livestock Exhibition. The speeches maintained that pioneers were the original population before the arrival of the state and the birth of Tierra del Fuego. In agreement, landowners and state officers crystallized the imaginary of the region as a desert without population and the myth that indigenous peoples had been killed or disappeared. Although more indigenous peoples than immigrants lived in Tierra del Fuego until 1920, indigenous peoples were now registered by the state as either extinct or assimilated (Gerrard 2021). After genocide, confinement, displacement, or imported disease, many had died, and those who survived after such terror learned to hide their language, ancestors, and history, as demographic censuses show (Marchante and Alonso 2019; Pantoja 2018; Rodríguez and Horlent 2016). Hegemonic discourses started to circulate the idea that indigenous peoples had gone extinct or had become Argentinians, and assimilation was celebrated as peaceful, for indigenous peoples would not be killed but instead invited to participate, in the lower ranks, in the construction of modernity.

After arguing the extinction of the native, ranchers (who were now pushed to abandon their European attachments and become Argentinians like the rest of the citizens) started to construct their white identity not so much against the indigenous other as against the new racialized incoming others. The state had suggested capital nationalization and population growth by promising lands to anyone who was not Chilean (Mastroscello 2007) but mainly to national immigrants and ex-prisoners of the Fuegian penal colony in Ushuaia (Nacach 2012).

Highlighting they had inhabited Tierra del Fuego before the state (‘Las Exposiciones . . . ’ 1946, 19), landowners claimed status and privilege through permanence, sacrifice, and sheep-related knowledges (26–27). Since then, and partially in response to the risk that newcomers could pose to their dominion, ranchers started to appropriate the category of ‘Fuegians.’ Previously reserved for indigenous peoples or prisoners of the penal colony, ‘Fuegians’ began to be related to pioneers and asserted through notions of permanence and sacrifice. In this construction, sheep and their breeds were the sign of their successful efforts. White sheep as a sign of mastery over nature, civilization, and racial supremacy became entangled with pioneerism. Since then, disputes over *fueguinidad* and permanence have been constant over different periods of regional population growth through relocation incentives (Hermida, Malizia, and Van Aert 2016) in a way that has secured the recognition of pioneers’ work in the past without questioning its silenced genocidal origins (Bayer 2010; Gerrard 2021; Harambour 2017).

'White' beavers: Argentinization, moralities, and landscape design

The second event I analyze also took place in the summer of 1946, when the Argentinian Navy introduced twenty Canadian beavers into Fagnano Lake in Tierra del Fuego. They intended for the species to bring Argentina the prosperous fur-trade economies of Europe and North America. Recorded by the state-controlled news agency *Sucesos Argentinos*, the event was shown in every cinema across the country, becoming a nationally significant event. While some sources cite Eva Perón as the one who suggested bringing beavers for fur (Landman 1959), a close reading of the film and complementary documents shows a diversity of actors and goals configuring the introduction of 'white' beavers.

With the first Perón government (1946–1952), *Sucesos Argentinos* gained more funding and protection. The postwar economic crisis led the government to moderate its discourses against landownership and negotiate with wealthy property owners. In turn, as shown in the II Quinquennial Plan (1952), the state strengthened moralizing and discursive strategies for making the new body politic of 'the new Argentina.' Iconography and propaganda became crucial for building sovereignty, national unity, and social change. In this context, *Sucesos Argentinos* supported the nation-state's interests by displaying statistics, images of the past and a future in the making, and an absent narrator whose voice represented the government (Wernecke 2014). The series deployed fiery speech and bombastic metaphors, accompanied by archetypes reducing national differences to ideal behaviors.

The particular film in question, 'Flight to the South (Vuelo al Sur)' (Ángel Díaz 1947), starts with adventurous music and the heroic archetype of a criollo man and his horse advancing toward the camera, away from a tree. Their advance leaves nature behind, while figures representing progress, including a boxer, an automobile passenger, a ballerina, and a group of soldiers, appear. A voice starts narrating: 'Our Navy has acquired twenty beavers in Canada to *enrich the Argentinian fauna*; they have made an extraordinary *aerial trip* departing from Moose Lake in Manitoba with stops in Miami, Rio de Janeiro, and Buenos Aires' (italics added).

The Navy introduced the beavers because Tierra del Fuego was ruled by army officers designated by the Ministry of the Navy since 1943. This exceptional regional government denied voting and governing rights ('Censo ...' (1932)) to local residents by arguing that there was no population enough and that two-thirds of it was composed of foreigners (and half of them Chilean) (Anuario Estadístico de Tierra del Fuego 2010, 32–33).⁷ Since then, Tierra del Fuego became a site for imagining external dangers: landowners hoarding capital, speaking British and driving on the left; indigenous peoples organizing *malones*; or organized workers who had brought anarchism and communism from Europe. In this context, the military government of Tierra del Fuego produced a report in 1942 urging the '*argentinization* of a territory that threatened the nation with anti-Argentinian activities serving foreign interests' (Gobernación de Tierra del Fuego 1942).

The military report argued that Tierra del Fuego was at risk given its special conditions: geographic isolation, foreign population, and strategic location. In the event of war with Chile, it would not be easy to defend a territory whose foreign population would not support Argentina and which depended on Chilean borders to obtain troops and provisions.⁸ 'Argentinizing' Tierra del Fuego was a matter of national defense, and it implied policing language and traditions as well as increasing and selecting citizens.

Following the national shift toward a 'doors ajar' immigration policy, the report advised selecting culturally akin European immigrants, favoring 'native settlers' (understood as Argentinian-born citizens), and assimilating or '*naturalizing*' indigenous peoples.

In addition, the report recommended the introduction of valuable animals that would help Argentinian settlers' livelihoods, including livestock animals for food, gaming species like reindeer or trout for tourism, and fur animals like beavers or muskrats for trade. Not knowing how to obtain sustenance from native species like guanacos or clams and portraying them as useless from modern and industrial cosmologies, the Navy asked to also 'argentinize' Tierra del Fuego with white animals. In this context, it made sense for the Navy to introduce beavers as a species for national defense. Moreover, previous animal introductions in the region had successfully developed livestock economies, and other countries kept moving animals to dominate remote areas and civilize their peoples and natures.⁹

The beavers had been captured in Manitoba by Tom Lamb, the son of an Anglican settler. Lamb was known as 'Mr. North' for having expanded the Canadian frontier with 'traditional guts' and dominating the north with reason and technologies for flying, trapping, fishing, and hunting (Landman 1959, 25). Like those of Fuegian missionaries and ranchers, Lamb's autobiography reflects a pioneering identity built on masculinity, strength, and sacrifice. For Lamb, those were requisites to conquer the wild and to survive geographic distance and racial isolation in lands 'without other whites' (Lamb 1961, 24). Like missionaries in Tierra del Fuego, Lamb stressed using 'non-violent' methods to civilize the Indians. His sacrifice was compensated with a 'cattle empire,' an airline, and a thriving fur market. If José Menéndez called himself 'Patagonia's King,' Lamb was known as 'the muskrat king' for restocking Manitoba's beaver and muskrat populations after they were nearly driven to extinction by colonial transatlantic trade. In Lamb's memoirs, 'the flight to the south' became an exciting adventure that enabled him to visit New York and Buenos Aires and sail through the Beagle Canal.

The film follows the archetypes reproduced by the tourism industry of the time and which 'determined the visibility and invisibility of the local population' (Chamosa 2016, 55–56). In northern Argentina, people became part of the landscape as folkloric attractions to be watched by the wealthy and light-skinned traveler. In Patagonia, the emphasis on lakes and mountains rendered its peoples invisible (Chamosa 2016, 56). 'Flight to the South' venerates the modernity of transport technologies while showing the plane like a bird in the sky. When flying over Buenos Aires, the film introduces populated urban scenes and then the economic possibilities of the Pampas, showing wide rivers and extensive lands. In Patagonia, the film shows aerial visions of landscapes without people. When reaching Comodoro Rivadavia, the narrator describes it as the capital of oil production where 'engineering has conquered water.'

Once arriving in Tierra del Fuego, with charming music, the film reproduces the tensions between rural and urban life and between foreignness and tradition that have constituted the project that Gastón Gordillo (2016) calls 'White Argentina.' On the one hand, the narrator's description of Ushuaia as an 'urban center with unique natural attractions' contrasts with images of a few houses, one church, and one military base. On the other hand, while beavers are valuable for enriching the fauna of a 'poor' region, the film also presents seals and sea lions as members of the 'incalculably rich' Fuegian nature.

Leaving Ushuaia, the film shows a hydroplane with adventure music landing in Fagnano Lake, where the beavers will be released. During the trip, the beavers had been shown interacting with the hands of Tom Lamb, who feed them either with his bare hands or with fine gloves. The camera also showed Lamb's bright leather shoes next to the beavers and some carrots in other scenes. Once on Fagnano Lake, the camera centers Lamb's face, the lake, and three men wearing business suits in charge of selecting the most suitable area for the release. At a time when scientists wore suits even in the field to support their authority, the scene also asserts the participation of experts in the modernization of Argentina.

In this version of modernity, beavers were a fur-bearing species embodying certain moralities linked to the promotion of ideal social behaviors. Argentina explicitly rejected racial categories during the 1940s, not only due to the international scientific agreements to abandon them after the World Wars (Reardon 2005, 256) but also because biological and genetic visions would always classify Argentinians as inferior in a biologically determined racial hierarchy (Wade 2016, 65). In Argentina, this new form of disavowing racism related to notions of *mestizaje* as gradual whitening, and social welfare measures linked improving living standards and health with racial enhancement (Haidar 2011; Miranda 2005; Novick 2018, 38–40). Biotypes became helpful for increasing productivity and legitimate marriages to reduce birth mortality (Ramacciotti 2003). In this context of increasing racialized hygienic policies, the celebrity beavers in *Sucesos Argentinos* acquired new symbolic associations. When the camera shows the animals leaving their cages and rolling into the water, the narrator explains certain aspects of their attributed behavior: 'It is interesting to highlight the marital fidelity of these animals. They get married only once in their life and, if fatality deprives them of their chosen company, they do not look for another. As little widows, they reach the end of their days.'

Described as heterosexual, monogamous engineers, beavers became a sign of family, work, and mastery over nature. This biopolitical animal had both a positive and negative dialectical production. The positive sign of these loyal beavers legitimated heterosexual, monogamous, nuclear families. 'White' beavers helped to naturalize marriage, which was a crucial element for the argentinization of Tierra del Fuego. Previous colonization laws had already linked productivity with nationalism and the dignification of the family by promoting small family-owned farms (Asociación Colonia-Escuela Argentina 1932). On top of this, the 1946 colonization plan for Tierra del Fuego added the need to reduce the prevalence of male, indigenous, and foreign people (Scalabrini Ortiz 1936). As shown in Table 1, based upon the criteria used to select settlers for National Territories in 1946, settlers would consist of 'native workers,' 'immigrants *if needed*,' 'indigenous peoples,' and

Table 1. Points to evaluate settlers in national territories (1946).

STATUS	POINTS
Married	20
Legitimate Child	10
Argentinian Child	5
Up to 20 years of age	5
Native Argentinian (born in the territory)	10
Naturalized Argentinian	8
Foreigner	5

'former prisoners' (Ministerio del Interior 1946). Among these categories, there would be a preference for farming professionals, natives defined as Argentinian-born, and families with legitimate children.

The negative sign of these loyal beavers produced the othering and exclusion of non-monogamous, non-heterosexual, non-nuclear families. Through softer forms of settler violence and colonialism (Rivera Cusicanqui 1984; Wolfe 2006), state protection would exclude those who did not adapt to the project of a white modern Argentina. By doing so, nonwhiteness continued to be associated with deviance and immorality. In Tierra del Fuego, indigenous communities had already been racially marginalized, not only for stealing sheep but also for relating in ways described by explorers as 'promiscuous, polygamous, and lustful' (Payró 2001 [1898], 124). With the 1940s state inclusion of the worker and the family as the nation's moral foundation, indigenous peoples began to be described as either lazy or deviants when they resisted sedentism, factories, and discipline (Gerrard 2021). 'White' beavers bearing moralities served to naturalize a prophylactic project. Despite disavowing race categories, this project cultivated white behaviors while preventing others as nonwhite and deviant (Haidar 2011, 319). 'White' beavers helped naturalize the nation-state's interests, including family, private property, work, and the law. What better sign to reproduce the new Argentina than a monogamous, social, working animal?

Additionally, because beavers build impressive dams and transform entire ecosystems, they are also known as engineers. As such, beavers in Tierra del Fuego would also construct and reproduce white natures and landscapes. Once the beavers were released into Fagnano Lake, the video shows the travelers leaving in the plane and returning home while the narrator concludes, 'Freed, and given the suitable climate of these landscapes, the beavers will enrich the fauna, as the caribous of Saint Georgia and other species will do shortly. The mission is over, and the beavers are in God's hands.'

The idea that beavers, like caribou and other species, could emulate North Atlantic landscapes and natures was also scientifically supported. The Argentinian Geographic Synthesis, proposed by Federico Daus (1957), argued that given environmental conditions explained regional differences. This synthesis also argued that a robust, central state could, with planning, modify the environment and, as a consequence, also design societies (Dicenta 2020). Amidst these epistemological visions, Argentina could emulate the already whitened landscapes of developed geographies by selecting those landscapes, natures, and species to import according to the climate, soil, and environmental conditions of each region in Argentina. Geographers compared Tierra del Fuego with the Swiss Alps and with the Canadian Hudson Bay area for its latitude and climate (Taylor 1948). For that reason, others suggested designing local economies based on fur trade, sports, luxury recreation and resorts, summer colonies, and tourism in Austral Patagonia (Torres 1954). As geographer Torres envisioned, 'Winters were a punishment of nature in Canada until the 1920s. Then, Canadian workers transformed their lakes and harsh winters into a profitable stadium for sports like skiing, hunting, or fishing in which now locals and foreigners celebrate the winter as a fairy tale' (1954, 122).

In their descriptions, geographers already disavowed the colonial and racial histories that had produced such North Atlantic landscapes. When telling the Canadian fairy tale, Torres omits the fact that many of the local sports, like ice hockey or tobogganing, had been part of First Nations life in the area for a long time, just as fur trapping had been. The

reproduction of Canadian landscapes included importing western infrastructure that was associated with romanticizing nature as an escape from urban industrial life: youth clubs, resorts, summer colonies, and expensive sports. Moreover, the Argentinian tourism industry modeled western visions of nature as a refuge from modern urban life by selling racialized encounters between the wealthy, urban, and white-skinned travelers and the visited local peoples who became folkloric attractions (Chamosa 2016). Despite the Peronist inclusion of all social classes into traveling, with paid vacations to experience the *Patria* (fatherland), (Doallo 2012; Fortunato 2005; Scarzanella 2002), the importation of Canadian landscapes and animals helped to assert white, elitist, and romantic visions of nature (Cosgrove 2008; Cronon 1995).

However, once the Navy plane left, the fur industry did not develop. As often happens with innovations designed from afar, locals did not pick it up; the new species was hard to trap, and the project was forgotten. Initially protected to enable their population growth, beavers successfully adapted to the Fuegian environments and food supplies, as geographers had predicted. Given beavers' capacity to swim long distances and the lack of local predators, by the end of the 1960s, they had crossed the Beagle Canal, expanded to the rest of the Islands, and occupied most of the river streams of the Chilean and Argentinian Tierra del Fuego (Lizarralde 1993). With their growth and expansion, they have radically transformed local ecosystems because, as researchers have shown, North American beavers in Tierra del Fuego engineer differently (Anderson et al. 2009). As in North America, the dams that beavers construct inundate the area and modify rivers' organic and chemical composition. Unlike in North America, Fuegian native trees, especially the lengas, cannot regenerate after flooding. Beaver activity produced ruined, apocalyptic landscapes. Eventually beavers were declared an invasive species in Tierra del Fuego for being foreign (or 'exotic,' in scientific terms) and for severely altering local ecosystems and biodiversity. Today, beavers (genus *Castor*) Tierra del Fuego are accused of causing the most significant environmental disaster since the Holocene. In a different article, I have described how global organizations collaborate with local scientists and trappers to repair the damage produced by beavers (Dicenta and Correa 2021). In this work, we address what we call the "Castorcene," a conceptualization of harm, extinction, and apocalypse that links environmental violence with the temporalities of national settler-colonial expansion.

Conclusion: Not-only-human White Argentina and Interspecies Race and Ethnicity Studies

Three discourses reinforced the idea that mestizaje had produced white citizens in Argentina: the figure of the desert, the myth of indigenous and black extinctions, and the imaginary of underpopulation. At the beginning of the 20th century, these narratives legitimated racialized inequalities either by protecting paler-skinned people and cultivating European behaviors or by disavowing and excluding those associated with nonwhiteness (Chamosa 2008; Edwards 2014; Geler 2010; Rodríguez 2016). The idea of white exceptionalism endured by actively denying racism and exclusion (Hernández 2016). However, racial exceptionalism and denial in Argentina are endlessly haunted by the presence of supposedly disappeared nonwhite peoples (Chamosa 2016; Gordillo and

Hirsch 2010) and, as I have shown, not only peoples. If White Argentina wishes to inhabit a national space made of European citizens (Gordillo 2016), the case of Tierra del Fuego illuminates its desire to also live among white animals. Following Tiago Saraiva's (2016) analysis of animals that both helped secure imperial regimes and were shaped by them, this article shows White Argentina's interspecies and intersectional character as a not-only-human project.

In Tierra del Fuego, livestock modernization, Europeaness, racial purity, and private property had informed the production of *white sheep* since the end of the 19th century. The arrival, reproduction, and expansion of white sheep were informed by racializing orders that secured privilege and private land ownership. White sheep, including those brought to the 1946 Livestock Exhibition, were also used to justify exploitation, indigenous criminalization, and genocide. On the other hand, the introduction of '*white*' beavers in Tierra del Fuego in 1946 was informed by dreams of industrial modernities and by Canada's already whitened colonial economies. By recording the capture, flight, and release of the beavers and showing the film in every cinema across Argentina, white beavers became a national sign. Bearing brown fur but white moralities, they exacerbated national sentiments. Simultaneously, these monogamous, hard-working, and social beavers helped naturalize the racial eugenic logics that social protection measures of the time embodied.

In Tierra del Fuego during the summer of 1946, the II Livestock Exhibition and the filmed introduction of twenty Canadian beavers reflected power disputes between the landowning bourgeoisie and the nation-state. With the creation of the Maritime Governance of Tierra del Fuego in 1943, the dominant landholding bourgeoisie saw their privileges threatened by a more present state that sought to nationalize lands and capitals. As shown in this article, landowners and military state officers negotiated their interests with animals and against racialized others. Resulting from these disputes, the identification category of *Fuegian* was resignified. Previously used to identify all the region's indigenous peoples, the Fuegian identification started to be appropriated by pioneer settlers who defended their privileges against the newcomers the state was aiding to settle. Simultaneously, the state transmuted the category *native* that was also formerly used to identify indigenous peoples. With national colonization plans aiming at argentizing and whitening National Territories, *native* classifications started to refer to 'Argentinian-born citizens.' Both identification shifts helped support the myth of indigenous extinction by silencing genocide survivors who were now pressured to 'naturalize' and become Argentinians.

Negotiations between white animals, landowners, and the state analyzed in this article illustrate Argentina's entangled racialization of human and nonhuman animals. In Tierra del Fuego, introducing, selecting, and whitening animals and settlers was part of a joined and broader environmental epistemology known as Geographic Synthesis. This synthesis argued that social and regional differences were explained and determined by their environmental conditions. It also argued that a strong central state could design and modify those natural environments and, as a result, also modify society (Dicenta 2020). Following this synthesis, racial hierarchies in Tierra del Fuego did not rely on dehumanizing people but rather on enhancing and protecting some animals and humans while marginalizing and displacing others.

Including animals in our analyses can shed new light on the intersectional studies of race and ethnicity. White animals in this article illuminate how racial orders shape multi-species worlds and how animals have helped to secure those orders. On the one hand, those concerned with the life and death of animals argue that the problem of biopolitics is not the denial of humanity to some, but rather the making of entire populations disposable (Wolfe 2003; Haraway 2008). On the other hand, the politicization of animals cannot come at the expense of others. As Bénédicte Boissero (2018) has shown, animal activists have a long history of capitalizing on blackness for their goals when comparing African-American slavery and abolitionism with the future of animals. Instead, interspecies alliances should grapple with the intersectional production of racialized inequalities.

Notes

1. 'The Conquest of the Desert' was the 19th-century military indigenous genocide and land appropriation over the Pampa and Patagonia initiated by the government of Juan Manuel de Rosas (1933-1834) and officially coined with the campaigns of President Julio A. Roca (1878-1885).
2. Oficina de Estudios Económicos de la Unión Industrial Argentina, '¿Conviene La Inmigración?', 1930s, Juan B. Justo Fonds (Box 39, Doc. 213), Archivo General de la Nación, Buenos Aires, Argentina.
3. According to Article 25, Europeans should not be restricted to come to Argentina and 'work the land, improve industry, and introduce and teach the sciences and the arts.'
4. *Argentina Austral* was created by the Sociedad Anónima Importadora y Exportadora de la Patagonia to circulate their activities and assert their status among the elites in the city of Buenos Aires.
5. During the 16th century, Spanish settlers introduced the *Churra* race and African sheep from the Canary Islands. From those breeds, settlers engineered the *Pampas* and *Criolla* races, capable of producing more and finer wools. In the 19th century, the British brought the *Merino* race and the *Southdown* race, the oldest British breed. In Argentina, they were crossbred with criollo stocks or with *Neggrette* sheep to enhance them. In Tierra del Fuego, the opening in 1918 of the first meatpacking plant in Rio Grande by José Menéndez promoted two breeds for wool and meat: the *Romney Marsh* sheep from the United Kingdom and the *Corriedale* from Australia and New Zealand.
6. By 1910, 50% of all lambs slaughtered for global markets came from Tierra del Fuego.
7. In 1914, half of Ushuaia's two thousand inhabitants were not Argentiniens. In 1914, only 927 people of the 2,504 had been born in Argentina, and there were only 374 women. In 1947, two thousand people had been born in Argentina while three thousand had been born outside Argentina, and there were 3,634 men and 1,346 women.
8. The 1881 border agreement had divided the region and forced Argentinians to pass through Chile to reach the Argentinian mainland from Tierra del Fuego.
9. Between the two World Wars, Danish scientists tried to create a reindeer industry in the Arctic to domesticate both Inuit communities and landscapes (Stuhl 2016).

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