

Charles Wicksteed Armstrong e a eugenia positiva: estudo de caso a respeito de um eugenista e sua experiência no Brasil

*Charles Wicksteed Armstrong and positive eugenics:
a case study regarding a eugenicist and his experience in Brazil*

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Resumo:

Charles Wicksteed Armstrong (1871-1963) foi um escritor, diretor de colégio e eugenista britânico que viveu a maior parte da sua vida no Brasil, em três distintos períodos. A sua experiência no Brasil serviu como uma forma de ganhar prática e conhecimento para propor suas medidas eugênicas positivas na Inglaterra ou, especialmente, com ingleses. Desta forma, usando de variadas fontes documentais e da análise documental e bibliográfica, este artigo busca mostrar como o Brasil serviu de laboratório experimental eugênico para Armstrong. Logo, como o artigo busca demonstrar, isto deu a Armstrong a crença de que possuía o conhecimento necessário para cumprir o seu dever patriótico de salvar a Inglaterra de um suicídio racial. Neste contexto, o ambiente físico, a saúde (mental, física e intelectual) e a hereditariedade de um indivíduo eram importantes fatores que poderiam influenciar na sobrevivência de um povo.

Palavras-Chave: Charles Wicksteed Armstrong; Eugenia; Brasil; Ingleses; Saúde.

Abstract:

Charles Wicksteed Armstrong (1871-1963) was a British writer, schoolmaster, and eugenicist who lived most of his life in Brazil during three distinct periods. His experience in Brazil served to gain practical experience and knowledge to propose his positive eugenic measures in England or, especially, with Englishmen. Thus, using a variety of primary sources, with documentary and bibliographical analysis, this article seeks to show how Brazil served as an experimental eugenics' laboratory for Armstrong. This made Armstrong confident that he possessed the necessary knowledge to fulfill his patriotic duty and to save England from racial suicide. In this context, the physical environment, health situation (mental, physical and intellectual) and heredity of an individual were important factors that could influence the survival of the people.

Keywords: Charles Wicksteed Armstrong; Eugenics; Brazil; Englishmen; Health.

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Introduction

This paper seeks to demonstrate how the experience gained by Charles Wicksteed Armstrong's living in Brazil influenced his proposal for eugenic settlements to be implemented in England or to Englishmen abroad. Therefore, he believed those settlements would help him fulfill his duty as an Englishman and save the "English race". However, a brief historical context of the eugenics' movement in England and the Eugenics Society is necessary before coming into the specific objectives of this paper and on how Brazil had a major role in Armstrong's eugenic measures. This context will help understanding Armstrong himself, since he was an active member of the Eugenics Society, often publishing his work in *The Eugenics Review*, and sought to leave his mark within the English eugenics' movement¹.

The origin of the eugenics movement is traced back to the beginning of the twentieth century in England. According to Pauline Mazumdar (2006, p. 2), the elements that came together to form the movement, were "the tradition of middle-class meliorism, the new ideas about heredity introduced by Charles Darwin and his cousin Francis Galton, and the Malthusian concept of the dangerous fertility of the poor". In 1907, the Eugenics Education Society (which would become the Eugenics Society after 1926) emerged within the eugenics movement in Britain. This society, as stated by Mazumdar (2006), emerged as an organization to press for legislative policies regarding its view on what fundamentally caused pauperism, since the pauper class was the central concern of the Society's program.

¹ Even though Armstrong was active within the Eugenics Society, often exchanging letters with the latter, it appears that he was not well respected within the Society. This conclusion can be reached based on a memo to the Executive Committee of the Society, dated January 1st, 1931, which starts with the following statement: "C. W Armstrong is worth, I believe, about £20 a year to the society". Then it continues, "we have not, in the past, given serious consideration to his work as much as he would like, because it does not really deserve it. He is liable to feel injured, and indeed, has done so several times". Armstrong was often dismissed, "politely", when he requested support from the society for his ideas. In the memo mentioned above, it was even confessed that they had lied to him. When Armstrong wrote to the society requesting what had happened on a certain matter, to which the memo states: "I consequently had to invent a polite lie – to the effect that the matter had been deferred for a report by a special committee (this lie was so phrased that it is possible to declare it untrue without committing anybody). I sincerely beg the Executive to pay attention to this and to do what they can to return a polite and encouraging answer to him" (THE EUGENICS SOCIETY, 1931, p. 1-2).

It is also pertinent to mention, *The Eugenics Review* was a quarterly publication of the Eugenics Education Society/Eugenics Society.

However, the eugenics movement in Britain failed to implement any legislative measures. The reason for this, according to Hansen and King (2001, p. 239), was due to three conditions: “when there is a synergy between ideas and interests, when the actors possess the requisite enthusiasm and institutional position, and when timing contributes to a broad constellation of preferences that reinforce these ideas, rather than detracting from them”. Hansen and King (2001) claim that sterilization policies failed in Britain because eugenic ideas did not meet the strategic interest of the policymakers. The latter lacked the proper individual enthusiasm to pursue it since they did not want to be associated with a controversial issue that faced opposition from the labor movement and the Catholic Church. Sterilization policies also faced suspicion from the working public, who saw those as a class conflict. In addition, there was also the issue of timing, since an exploratory committee regarding the sterilization policy in Britain only happened within a few years before the Nazi sterilization law of January 1, 1934. As stated by Hansen and King (2001), the sterilization proposal of the British eugenicists came to be discredited due to the excesses of Nazi law.

The findings of Hansen and King (2001) regarding policymakers’ lack of interest were surely in agreement with the thinking of British eugenicist, writer and schoolmaster Charles Wicksteed Armstrong. The latter believed segregation and sterilization of the unfit in Britain would be hard to accomplish because of its democratic government. The policymakers were more concerned with votes than implementing unpopular eugenic measures. Due to this, Armstrong believed negative eugenics would be hard to implement in Britain, the reason why he sought a positive eugenics’ approach, with his eugenic settlement proposals (Eugenic School, Eugenic Orphanage or Eugenic Colony). These settlements proposed the separation of a certain group of people considered fit, generally English, to live in a certain area separated from those considered unfit. This regarded the fact that according to Strongi’th’arm (1892, p. viii) – which was Armstrong’s pseudonym -, “we must take the healthiest material and save that; we cannot save fruit already decayed”. Therefore, his eugenic settlements had the purpose to save the English race, since England possessed, according to Armstrong (1931, p. 15), “the finest human stock in the world”.

In 1913, Charles Armstrong became a member of the Eugenics Education Society/Eugenics Society and in 1936 he became a life fellow. He was part of what Mazumdar (2006, p. 256) claims to be a homogeneous group of members, “from the point of view of class”, that formed the Eugenics Society since they were middle-class activists. Like Armstrong, some members of the society came from the educational field, while others from medical, sociological, and

political backgrounds. Their focus, according to Mazumdar (2006, p. 256), was “upon the concept of a hereditary pauper class”. With this wide professional spectrum of fields, it is easy to understand why the Eugenics Society advocated for both negative and positive eugenics measures, but still maintaining its emphasis on class, as stated by Mazumdar (2006).

The negative and positive eugenics approaches from the Eugenics Society make us wonder why certain individuals, inserted within the same eugenic movement, from the same country, and during the same period, followed either a more positive or a more negative eugenics approach. Using Charles Wicksteed Armstrong as a case study, this paper seeks to show that his positive eugenics approach was mainly connected to his interest in directly participating in the British eugenics’ movement rather than Britain’s governmental structures. This is connected to another argument this paper seeks to demonstrate: Armstrong had the practical knowledge and confidence to implement his eugenic settlements due to his professional and personal experience in Brazil, a country he used as his eugenic laboratory. This paper, therefore, seeks to demonstrate that his experience in Brazil, overall, in addition to his patriotism, affected his approach for a more positive eugenic perspective in England since this would allow him to personally participate in implementing his eugenic settlement proposals. Consequently, he would leave his mark in England, saving the country from “race suicide” and fulfilling his patriotic duty. What this case study will show is that Armstrong’s eugenic proposals linked environment-related issues to a person’s health and heredity, and consequently their influence in the maintenance of a race. He favours certain environments, such as the beachside or rural areas, over the city life, since they influence the health of an individual, as will be seen throughout this paper.

Charles Wicksteed Armstrong and Brazil: an experimental laboratory

Charles Armstrong was born on August 9, 1871, in Nottingham and deceased around 1963, in Rio de Janeiro. Throughout his lifetime, he lived in at least four countries: England, Brazil, Spain and Canada. He lived in Brazil for approximately 58 years, in three distinctive periods: from 1893 to 1923; from 1932 to 1938; and lastly from 1941 up till his death.² Each of these periods can be associated with a certain eugenic perspective within Armstrong’s beliefs. The first

² These dates are an approximation based on Brazilian newspaper reports; *the Eugenic Review* and Armstrong’s personal letters to the Eugenics Education Society/Eugenics Society.

period is connected to his practical eugenic approach, regarding the role of the environment and physical activity in improving a child's mental and physical health. It is also associated with his practical eugenic experiment. The second period is connected to his proposal for an eugenic colony in Brazil, which would be formed with English, German and Italian members. The last period is connected to his concern with the miscegenation in England, due to the presence there of colonial Africans. He used his experience in Brazil to show the negative effects of miscegenation among Europeans and Africans. However, this paper will focus on the first two periods, since they are the precedent of Armstrong's positive eugenics perspective for his eugenic settlements.

First period (1893-1923) and eugenic settlement proposals

Charles Armstrong's experience with his schools in Brazil, during this period, gave him the proper practical knowledge and confidence to propose his eugenic settlements, since he was able to put in practice his belief that heredity and environment played a major part in an individual's development. Besides, Armstrong (1931) believed that a fit individual would have the greatest value regarding their physical, moral and intellectual characteristics. Physical characteristics and their improvement were a major focus in Armstrong's schools in Brazil and he was able to improve his students' physical characteristics by implementing daily exercises. The improvement of morality and intellectuality was also implemented, perhaps to a lower extent in comparison to physical development. To understand how Armstrong's schools in Brazil influenced his positive eugenics proposals, we will thoroughly present how they were set up.

The first period (1893-1923) of Armstrong's life in Brazil was marked by the foundation of his schools, which also served as boarding schools, for boys from ages 6 to 16³. In 1899, he founded the *Gymnasio Anglo-Brazileiro* (the Anglo-Brazilian School) in São Paulo. The task was successful since his school moved to a different location in 1900 and again in 1902, to an area over 66,000 square meters and was "situated in the healthiest and highest suburb of S. Paulo. Steam trams pass the door every half hour, which are shortly to be substituted by the electric cars" (ARMSTRONG, 1901, p. 7). In 1910, Armstrong opened a branch of the school in Niteroi, Rio de Janeiro. In 1912, the latter was moved to its building by the sea, at the Vidigal beach (Leblon), Rio de Janeiro, and Armstrong made his residence there⁴. Rio de Janeiro became his primary focus, although both schools appeared to have a deputy director to assist Armstrong. The schools followed the English system and its faculty consisted of English, German and Brazilian masters, to prepare the students for universities abroad or commercial life.

³ Charles Armstrong also opened schools for girls in Brazil. However, his focus was on the boys' units.

⁴ Armstrong also became the director-president of the *Lycée Franco-Anglais* in 1917. However, it appears that this school was not founded by him; therefore, this paper will only focus on The Anglo-Brazilian Schools (ARMSTRONG, 1917a, p. 24).

The Anglo-Brazilian schools were meant exclusively for members of the elite. It gained prestige among the Brazilian elite to such a degree that it reached its maximum capacity for boarding students by 1912, in both São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. The school rejected applicants on eugenic grounds. According to the statute from 1910 of the *Gymnasio Anglo Brasileiro*, whose original citation can be found in Farias (2009, p. 44), “the school is a sanatorium and makes a special study of the laws of hygiene. It does not, however, accept as students weak and anemic boys or those with contagious or hereditary diseases. These are excluded for the benefit of others”. Armstrong’s school, according to Farias (2009), even had an English nurse living there and a medical doctor made regular visits to the schools, to guarantee the health and hygiene of the students. The school’s motto was even *Mens sana in corpore sano* (ARMSTRONG, 1909, p. 7), which translates to a healthy mind in a healthy body. Thus, Armstrong’s schools followed the ideal of “perfect harmony of moral, intellectual and physical development” (ARMSTRONG, 1902, p. 12).

The body’s health was a major concern in both Armstrong’s schools, from the quality of the food served to the practice of physical activities. “The cooking is English, and the food of the most nourishing kind”, with an abundance of pure milk and oatmeal porridge (ARMSTRONG, 1902, p. 12). The boys were “encouraged to play cricket and football (soccer) and other healthy games” (ARMSTRONG, 1901, p. 7). Armstrong believed that sports were an important part of the school, because it “develops the body, while at the same time it raises the ‘*esprit de corps*’, instilling courage and sacrifice” (FESTAS, 1912, p. 5).

During a “garden-party” at the end of the school year, in 1913, at the Rio de Janeiro branch, a reporter for the *A Ilustração Brasileira* highlighted what a delight to watch the performance of Swedish exercises by all 200 students.

The unknown reporter also stated that:

The beautiful situation of the school, with a wide view of the ocean, the healthy faces and the robustness of the students, resulting from such a magnificent climate and a regime that includes so many athletic and gymnastic exercises, could not fail to impress the guests. It would indeed be difficult to find anywhere landscapes as beautiful or with pure air as those enjoyed by this educational establishment. (UMA FESTA, 1913, p. 425)

In 1914, the schools introduced anthropometric measurements of children’s height, weight, chest area, arm, and forearm, and they compared the results at the beginning and in the end of the school year. The table below shows the average increase of measurements for the academic school years of 1914; 1916; 1917; and 1921 (ARMSTRONG, 1914, 1917a, 1921b).

Table 1— *The average increase of the anthropometric measurements by academic school years.*

Academic school year	Average increase				
	Height (mm)	Weight (Kg)	Chest (mm)	Arm (mm)	Forearm (mm)
1914	60.5	3.550	39	37	12.5
1916	62	4.470	43	15	16
1917	60	4.231	60	16	17
1921	37	4.360	52	10	16

Source: Armstrong (1914, 1917a, 1921b).

Armstrong used those measurements to compare them with the statistical data regarding the public schools in London, published by the London County Council. The data for the year 1914 showed an increase far superior to Armstrong's students in comparison to those from London, except regarding the height. According to Armstrong (1914), the daily gymnastic exercises performed by his students justified the reason why their average increase for the arm measurement was almost double in comparison to the London students. For the measurements for the years 1916 and 1917, he compared them to those published in 1913 by the London County Council (Height-52mm; Weight-3.460Kg; Chest-35mm; Arm-13mm; and Forearm-10mm).⁵

In addition to the physical exercises as a justification for the boys being healthy and their anthropometric improvements, Armstrong also adds the environment. Indeed, the location of his schools followed an environmental and health concern perspective. The São Paulo unit was located, according to Armstrong (1901, p. 7), in the "healthiest and highest suburb", while the branch in Rio de Janeiro was located near Vidigal beach, a perfect location for the students to enjoy the sea. All the exercise activities in Rio de Janeiro branch were performed by the sea. In 1917, even a 230 square meter pool was built by the sea, using seawater to fill it. In 1921, the exceptional climate near the ocean and the forest of Rio de Janeiro branch, along with the exercises performed outdoors, were used as a justification by Armstrong (1921b) for the exceptional physical state of his students, regarding their anthropometric measurements.

Overall, the teaching of morality was present in his schools alongside the teaching of proper academic knowledge and Charles Armstrong's concerns with the physical health (nourishment and physical activities) of his students, the environment and hygiene. Every Sunday, Armstrong would read stories regarding chivalry and morality to his students,

⁵ Unfortunately, Armstrong does not state from which year he used the data published by the London County Council when he started the comparison in 1914.

promoting good character and moral behavior. The boys were also meant to study practical gardening and carpentry, which followed the new system adopted by the best English schools at the time, according to Armstrong (1902). His experience with his schools, most likely, led him to try to experiment a practical eugenic settlement in Brazil with Brazilian boys coming from the pauper class.

In what appears to have been a pamphlet sent by Charles Armstrong to the Eugenics Society, circa 1921, he describes the experiment in practical eugenics performed in Brazil. Whether this experiment happened is uncertain, therefore the possible results from it are unknown. Nevertheless, it is useful to show Armstrong's mindset and how he viewed Brazil as his own personal eugenic laboratory. In this pamphlet, Armstrong (1921a) makes it clear that he is more interested in the practical side of eugenics, rather than the theoretical. Armstrong was driven to perform this practical eugenic experiment in Brazil as a way for him to improve his future models, regarding a eugenic orphanage or school in England.

For the experiment, Armstrong selected only six boys, who were sent to his farm.⁶ The reason for the limited number was because the boys had to fit certain criteria. First, he only selected those who were strong, healthy, eugenically fit, and in need of elementary instruction and of earning an income. This resulted in the rejection of 95% of the applicants. After the first selection, those that continued faced a second selection process in which their morals, intellectual or physical shortcomings were analyzed. Those considered unsuitable were rejected.⁷ The costs of maintaining the boys, before they could pay it back with their work, were a third reason for the low number of boys.

In this experiment, the boys only dedicated one hour a day for their studies, which consisted of learning how to read, write and to sum. They had to spend five to six hours a day performing farm work, which consisted in taking care of animals (poultry; pigs; bees; cows; and goats), market gardening and fruit growing. The boys also had, according to Armstrong (1921a, n.p.), "the use of an open-air swimming bath". This shows that his concern was still connected to the environment and health. Armstrong's aim with this experiment was to

6 The location of the farm is unknown. However, it appears to have been in the state of Rio de Janeiro, since Armstrong used papers with the headings from The Anglo-Brazilian School branch in Rio de Janeiro.

7 Charles Armstrong stated in this pamphlet: "As eugenic assets, in choosing amongst candidates, I have weighed the following qualities: freedom from diseases of every sort, good appearance, love of work, honesty, general intelligence, as well as a few minor points, such as punctuality, cleanliness, etc. It may be remarked that punctuality and cleanliness should not be called minor points, but in as much as they are less apt to be transmitted through heredity than some of the others mentioned, I think I am justified in considering them eugenically less important" (ARMSTRONG, 1921a, n.p.).

encourage the boys, once they were old enough to marry suitable mates; once they did it, they would receive a cottage, a small piece of land, a few animals and a certain amount of money, eventually forming a eugenic colony.

According to Charles Armstrong, this experiment took place in Brazil for three reasons. The first one, because he was living in Brazil for many years and had founded schools. The second reason, because that education in the country was neither free nor compulsory. This made, according to him, “easier to get the class of boys that one wants, and wages for youngsters have not attained the ridiculous height they have reached at home [England]” (ARMSTRONG, 1921a, n.p.). The last reason was because that he believed such experiment would have been impossible in England, due to taxation. However, he does state that if it was not for those reasons, “patriotism would certainly cause me to work in England, so that the Homeland should reap whatever benefit may result eventually to the race, if and when such schemes as mine shall be worked on a large and effective scale” (ARMSTRONG, 1921a, n.p.).

The result of this experiment and even its continuity are unknown since, in 1923, Armstrong retired and moved to Spain the following year. In 1924, Charles Armstrong (1924a), confident on the knowledge and experience gained in his practical eugenics scheme in Brazil and with his schools, sought out the President of the Eugenics Society, Major Leonard Darwin, seeking encouragement for his Eugenic school in England. He elaborated his project entitled *Eugenia*, which consisted of “a home school and settlement for children likely to prove of highest value to the nation” and would be established in the countryside of England, for its “healthy and beautiful surroundings” (ARMSTRONG, 1924b, n.p.). The school was meant to be free for suitable children if they proved to be fatherless; mentally and physically fit; and without any hereditary defects, regarding their physical, intellectual, and moral characteristics.

There the children would receive a general education (non-sectarian and with simple moral instructions); gardening and farming would be part of their occupation. If any child showed a special aptitude for a certain career, they would receive special attention in that area. The others would eventually receive smallholdings and neighboring land to settle, when becoming adults, thus, forming “a true Eugenic Settlement” (ARMSTRONG, 1924b, n.p.). However, he did not receive encouraging feedback from the Eugenics Society regarding this proposal, for there were schools with similar objectives already functioning in England, and they rather encouraged him to seek “a training centre for emigrants of good stock” (THE EUGENICS SOCIETY'S SECRETARY, 1925, n.p.). He thus abandoned this idea, since the Eugenics Society's

idea, according to Armstrong (1925, n.p.), “would lose its meaning, and principal object, which is to make a tentative start at improving, through charity, instead of deteriorating, the stock at home in England”.

Although the project *Eugenia* did not go forward, due to the lack of support, it shows the influence that Armstrong’s experience in Brazil had in this proposal, from the environmental choice of the place for the Eugenic School, to the moral education and even from the children’s activities in gardening and farming to the selection of those only considered fit. Brazil was a precursor for how he would implement a eugenic school model in England. His project *Eugenia* also shows why Armstrong pursued a positive eugenics perspective because he wanted to directly participate in saving England from race suicide, as so he claims in this project proposition. He states in his letter to Major Leonard Darwin that he was ready to leave Spain and go back to England to pursue this project, claiming he had the required experience and leisure for it since he was a retired schoolmaster (ARMSTRONG, 1924a).

The rejection for his project *Eugenia* was the impetus for Armstrong to begin pursuing his Eugenic Colony proposal. In 1931, he published a revised edition of his book *The Survival of the Unfittest* (ARMSTRONG, 1931), which was first published in 1927. In this book, Armstrong claims he has a fascinating scheme and he views it as the only hope for the salvation of the English race, due to Britain’s democratic government and the impossibility of implementing negative eugenic policies. The scheme was the proposal of a eugenic colony, which would take place preferably in England, in an area with fertile land. However, due to the difficulty of acquiring land in England and the high taxation and legislation of that country, he states that the settlement could take place in a different country, as long as the land was fertile and was “not to be too far away from England, English thought, and English blood” (ARMSTRONG, 1931, p. 166). The land would be divided into holdings and would be offered, rent-free, “to families of high eugenic, physical, intellectual and moral values” (ARMSTRONG, 1931, p. 150). The families selected would be mostly among the Anglo-Saxons (especially English) and Latins (from European countries, especially from the Mediterranean areas) because their crossing brings excellent results, according to Armstrong (1931).

Armstrong believed that English moral and intellect were far superior from anywhere else in the world. He also believed this to be true regarding their physical characteristics, although the English still had a few notable physical defects. The first one, according to Armstrong (1936, p. 157), was “the relative ungainliness of a large proportion of women, especially those

of the middle classes after passing the age of thirty, a defect we share with the Germans and most Northern peoples”. The other two physical defects were eyesight, which Armstrong also considered a trace shared with the Germans, and teeth, which according to Armstrong (1936, p. 158) was “perhaps the greatest physical defect of the British”. Therefore, since Armstrong believed that individuals from the Mediterranean did not have those physical defects, he considered crossing them with the English to eventually fix their physical defects.

Armstrong even states in this book, regarding eugenic values, that he is a true believer of the motto *mens sana in corpore sano* since it is always applicable in cases of racial matters. Once again it is possible to see the connection of his eugenic proposals and his experience with his schools in Brazil since both shared the same maxim. Most eugenicists, as claimed by Armstrong, disagreed regarding this motto. However, his personal experience with the improvement of the eugenic values (physical, moral, and intellectual) of his students in Brazil gave him the confidence to believe that his motto was accurate. Another connection between his experience and his eugenic proposal was regarding the environment since, according to Armstrong, beauty and environment are related. He even states that:

It should be noted, too, that most of the well-favoured races of the world inhabit beautiful countries, which suggests that lovely scenery tends to develop human beauty; and as these same races are amongst the morally highest and the most intellectual, we see that beauty has probably a causal connexion (*sic*) of one kind or another with all evolutionary progress. (ARMSTRONG, 1931, p. 154)

Another connection between Armstrong’s eugenic colony proposal and his schools in Brazil was regarding those considered unfit. This selection process was mimicked in his eugenic colony proposal. For Armstrong, if a couple living in his settlement gave birth to a degenerate child, the latter would have to be either sterilized, institutionalized or even sent away from the colony. This would be of the utmost importance because, according to his thinking, “the settlement would be at stake” (ARMSTRONG, 1931, p. 169). Therefore, neither his students nor the settlers could be in contact with the eugenically unfit, since this would be prejudicial for the development of the entire school or settlement.

However, in 1932, Charles Armstrong’s life suffered a major change. The remittance of funds from Brazil to Europe suffered changes, making it impossible for Armstrong’s agents in Brazil to send him money. He, eventually, had to move back to Brazil, since he had invested his life savings there with the purchase of large land properties. In 1933, with Armstrong already living

in Brazil, he sent a letter to the secretary of the Eugenics Society, Dr. Blacker, saying he did not see any prospect of “ever being able to return to England”, since he had been “condemned by politicians to life-long exile” (ARMSTRONG, 1933b, n.p.). This brings us to the second period of Armstrong’s life in Brazil.

From 1932 to 1938 and Armstrong’s eugenic colony in Brazil

During this period, Charles Armstrong was once again living in Brazil and the future did not seem positive for his return to Europe or even for a “flying visit”, as so Armstrong claimed (1936, p. 8). Hence, he adjusted his eugenic colony proposal accordingly. Instead of the settlement being near England, he now proposed it to be located in South America. This change was intended to make it possible for him to directly participate in setting up the eugenic colony with English subjects. He wanted to be present and fulfill his patriotic duties toward his homeland. As Armstrong (1931, p. 115) claimed, “true patriotism seeks to improve the inborn qualities of a race, so that it may deserve its heritage of land and power”. His eugenic colony proposal will be presented in better details, to understand how Armstrong’s second period in Brazil influenced his views on eugenics.

Due to his forced exile in Brazil, Armstrong decided to visit the South of Brazil searching for an ideal location for his eugenic colony. He had heard that the southern states of Paraná and Santa Catarina were “exceptionally favoured by Nature”. (ARMSTRONG, 1936, p. 9) The plateau area of Santa Catarina was considered by Armstrong one of the most fertile land in the world, with virgin forest, a temperate climate and with abundant rainfall. Within that region, was the town of Blumenau, “a little model township of some six thousand souls, founded just fifty years ago” (ARMSTRONG, 1936, p. 11).

In 1933, Charles Wicksteed Armstrong published his article “A Eugenic Colony: A Proposal for South America” for the July 1933 edition of the English periodical *The Eugenics Review*. In this article, he proposed a eugenic colony in Blumenau. Armstrong believed that it was perfect for the location of his project since there were no poor families there, the cost of living was low, and the streets were clean. In addition, the inhabitants were almost exclusively of German settlers, who received Armstrong with open arms, when he told them his plan of possibly bringing English families to live there. The German settlers were simple, hard-working and honest people, which made police unnecessary, therefore, making excellent neighbours. Some did not even speak Portuguese, the language spoken in Brazil.

The eugenic colony proposal aimed to bring suitable British families to live in the Eugenic Colony in Brazil. Armstrong's proposal first meant to bring farmers and their families, especially those with numerous children, providing they were mentally and physically fit. After this group, "carpenters, electricians, builders, mechanics, schoolmasters, musicians and men with superior status in any useful occupation" (ARMSTRONG, 1933a, p. 96) would be needed for the settlement. However, those preselected had to accept two conditions before being finally accepted: they had to be willing to have as many children as possible and to obey only one law, that being "do unto others as ye would that they should do unto you", (ARMSTRONG, 1933a, p. 96) with the term "other" also including the future generations. "For the Colony should be a home of perfect freedom, and that is the only law a free community requires" (ARMSTRONG, 1933a, p. 96).

Armstrong's proposal also relates to his previous Anglo-Brazilian Schools in Brazil, regarding his primary focus on physical health and his exclusion of students based on hereditary qualities. The British candidates were to be selected based on, according to Armstrong (1933, p. 96), "first and foremost, freedom from hereditary defect and such physical qualities as robust health, sound teeth, hearing, eyesight, heart, and lungs, together with some degree of physical beauty". Although he had previously claimed that moral and intellectual fitness was more important than physical fitness, his writings and his focus on his students' physical health proves differently.

In addition to the British families, the eugenic colony proposal also aimed to offer land lots to Germans already present in Blumenau, but only to those of the "highest eugenic value and many sturdy children" (ARMSTRONG, 1933a, p. 94) to live along with the British settlers to come.

These [Germans] would eventually blend in excellently with British stock and reinforce the Nordic blood of the latter, together with those qualities of honesty, orderliness, love of work, of family, music, and social life which are among the best characteristics of the Nordics wherever found. (ARMSTRONG, 1933a, p. 94)

In addition to the British and German settlers, there was also the possibility of adding Italian immigrants, since they were also present in settlements in neighboring towns to Blumenau. The Italians would also be selected for the best value and adding "their artistic temperament and physical charm" (ARMSTRONG, 1933a, p. 94) to the European blend of the Eugenic Colony.

The main objective of this eugenic colony in Brazil was to "eventually become the refuge of civilization, of culture, and human evolution – physical, intellectual and moral" (ARMSTRONG, 1933a, p. 92), due to the possibility of a new world war in the horizon. To put this scheme into

action, Armstrong just needed to raise money, to start buying land and initiate the eugenic colony. Charles Armstrong (1933, p. 96) was, as he stated, “ready to begin at once carrying out my scheme, by buying the land”. This shows that Armstrong wanted to directly participate in the English eugenics’ movement, by leaving his own mark in saving England and its people from “race suicide”.

In 1936, Armstrong published his fictional book *Paradise found or where the sex problem has been solved (A story from South America)*; Brazil was the scenario of this utopian novel. This book is about a eugenic colony called Eugenia, located in the South of Brazil. The people that lived there called themselves “Eugenians” and their ancestry was from Anglo-Saxon and Latin countries of Europe. The colony scientifically applied positive eugenics, resulting in a population with “artistic, scientific and other talents” (ARMSTRONG, 1936, p. 95) due to the careful breeding of its people. Positive eugenics was also used to remove ill-health, unkindness, and laziness from the “Eugenians” since those characteristics were considered as hereditary.

In the book, if a physically defected child was born, by rare chance, it was sacrificed. Euthanasia was also practiced there, to avoid the burden upon other members of the colony. Those with poor hereditary traces also had the choice of sterilization to avoid procreation, but most committed euthanasia since they were ashamed of their defects. The colony worked based on gender roles. The women were busy with household duties and taking care of their children, while the men were busy with farming, combat, working and interchanging services among their fellow colonists. The children were naked all the time, to receive the benefits from the environment, by getting sunlight all over their bodies. The school classes were outdoors, and the children would practice Swedish exercises.

Even though this book is a utopian novel, it serves to understand Charles Armstrong’s mindset. Hence, *Paradise found or where the sex problem has been solved (A story from South America)* is an epitome of the connection between Armstrong’s experience in Brazil and his views in positive eugenics. In connection with the Anglo-Brazilian Schools, the novel shows the importance of the environment and physical activities in the development of children. It also relates to the exclusion of those considered eugenically unfit for the benefit of the community. In connection to Armstrong’s positive eugenics belief, it shows his desire to perform selective breeding of those considered eugenically fit and to eventually remove traces he considered as hereditary. This book, in a way, ties together the practical knowledge he gained in Brazil with his schools, his eugenic experiment with the six boys, his desire to participate in the British eugenic

movement, especially regarding the perspective of positive eugenics, selective breeding, and eugenic settlements.

Final considerations

Charles Wicksteed Armstrong's eugenic settlement proposals, more specifically, his eugenic school and colony, was inserted within the eugenic thought during the interwar period. According to Marius Turda (2010, p. 69), "eugenicists reinstated the sacred nationalist connection between identity and territory". During this period, eugenicists sought "racially healthy and morally powerful" societies to protect one's nation from "biological degeneration and social decline" (TURDA, 2010, p. 69). The key, according to this author, was to have a health reform and an education in hygiene, both linked to eugenic schooling. Armstrong was highly connected to the interwar eugenics movement, however, he was also influenced by his practical experience and life in Brazil, and his wish to directly participate in the British eugenic movement, to which he stated, in 1942, "if I don't succeed in either [eugenic settlements] I shall consider my life has been a failure" (ARMSTRONG, 1942, n.p.).

Charles Armstrong practical experience in Brazil, regarding how he set up his schools in excluding those considered eugenically unfit and his focus on the influence of the environment and physical activities regarding the physical development of his students, gave him the confidence to seek the support of the Eugenics Society for his eugenic school proposal. In addition to his practical experiences with his schools, his practical eugenics experiment in Brazil with the six boys gave him the knowledge on how to educate them while also making his farm profitable, with the usage of their labor for farming and taking care of animals. With the rejection of his eugenic school proposal, he turned to seek support for his eugenic colony proposal, to be set initially in Europe. However, since his financial situation forced him to move back to Brazil, he started to promote a eugenic colony in Brazil, with English families along with German and Italian settlers.

Charles Wicksteed Armstrong's practical experience in Brazil and his eugenic settlement proposals support the argument that he pursued a more positive eugenic perspective to directly be involved in implementing his proposals and assisting England in saving the English race from degeneracy. This was how he planned to fulfill his patriotic duty and he was definitely eager to start his endeavors. However, he never received the necessary financial support

nor even the emotional support from the Eugenics Society to start implementing either his eugenic colony or a eugenic school. During World War II, Armstrong also sought support for a Eugenic Orphanage in England, but like his other eugenic settlement proposals, it was never implemented.

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