



The Oxford Handbook of Latin American History

Jose C. Moya (ed.)

<https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195166217.001.0001>

Published: 09 December 2010

Online ISBN: 9780199940479

Print ISBN: 9780195166217

Search in this book

CHAPTER

Introduction: Latin America—The Limitations and Meaning of A Historical Category

Jose C. Moya

<https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195166217.013.0001> Pages 1–24

Published: 18 September 2012

Abstract

The introductory article addresses the following issue: the limitations and meaning of Latin America as a historical category. It does so in consecutive sections that explore other categories that could be more meaningful than the categories of Latin and North in the conceptual organization of space within the Americas; the commonalities that distinguish the Americas from the rest of the world; the commonalities that distinguish Latin America from both the rest of the Americas and the rest of the colonized world; and the reasons why a region that is in the Western Hemisphere in many more ways than geographically became excluded from “the West”.

Keywords: [Latin America](#), [historiography](#), [historical category](#), [New World](#), [Western Hemisphere](#)

Subject: [History of the Americas](#), [History](#)

Series: [Oxford Handbooks](#)

Collection: [Oxford Handbooks Online](#)

DOES the term Latin America provide an appropriate label for the historiography discussed in this volume? Historians south of the Rio Grande write local and national rather than hemispheric histories. With few exceptions, Brazilians write about Brazil, Mexicans about Mexico, and that is even more true of historians in smaller countries. As a group, historians north of the Rio Grande do not limit their inquiry to a single country. Indeed, it could be said that Latin American studies are an Anglo-American creation. Still, historical studies in the North rarely encompass the entire “South” unless they are textbooks. Most of the works discussed in this volume deal not with Latin America but with specific countries, and more often with specific regions, cities, and towns.

Can the phrase then offer more than an inaccurate but convenient label for books and maps? Is it a meaningful category of historical analysis or, as some have suggested, an artificial and arbitrary invention?¹ From various

perspectives, Latin America as a category seems too broad and internally diverse to pack much meaning. What do Hispaniola (a tropical island where 95% of the population traces its roots, at least partially, to Africa), Guatemala (a mountainous region where a similar proportion of the inhabitants are of full or mostly Amerindian descent and close to half speak indigenous languages), and Argentina (a temperate region larger than Western Europe where more than half of the population is of non-Spanish European stock) have in common? In terms of historical development, economy, and social structure, are not Sao Paulo and Buenos Aires more similar to New York or Toronto than they are to Lima or Salvador do Bahia? Do not the pampas have more in common ↳ geographically, historically, socially, and economically with the U.S./Canadian prairies than with the Andean altiplano?

p. 2

In this respect, a conceptual triad that fuses geographical and ethnohistorical components offers more meaningful criteria for dividing the Western Hemisphere than the traditional categories of Latin and North (or Anglo-) America. The first type in the triad would consist of the western highlands of the hemisphere, which ethnically correspond to Indo- or mestizo America. It includes what anthropologists have called nuclear America: the densest concentrations of Amerindian population, both in pre-Columbian times and today, in Mesoamerica and the central Andean altiplano. Demographically and culturally, these two regions are most indigenous in their core and become more mestizo as one moves either north or south. This historical region developed a colonial economy and social complex based on the exploitation of indigenous labor, silver mines, haciendas, and landowning Indian villages. It contained the wealthiest colonies of the Spanish empire, but also rigid corporatist arrangements and highly unequal social structures that sometimes have persisted, in both obvious and veiled ways, into the present.

The second geographic/ethnohistorical category in the New World would comprise its tropical coastal lowlands, and corresponds to Afro-America. These regions were not densely populated in pre-Columbian times to begin with, and the European conquest and Old World diseases decimated or wiped out the local population. Their historical development was based on the importation of western African and Bantu slaves and the production of tropical cash crops for export to Europe. These plantation complexes developed in tropical lowlands on small islands or close to the coast. Even in places as small as Puerto Rico, the distinction between a coastal complex once based on plantations and slavery and an interior highland ecology once based on independent farming and a Hispanic peasantry is still visible. More so than Indo-America, Afro-America transcends the traditional categories of Anglo-, Spanish-, and Luso-America, because it encompasses the British, French, Hispanic, Dutch, and Danish Antilles; the Northeast and areas of central Brazil; parts of the South of the United States; the Caribbean coasts of Central and South America; and Pacific coastal strips in Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Panama, and Mexico.

These regions share with Indo-America a wealthy colonial past. Saint-Domingue was probably the richest place in the world in the decades before the 1791 Haitian Revolution, worth to the French much more than the immense expanses of Quebec or Louisiana.² Barbados made more money for Britain than all thirteen mainland colonies put together.³ The South of the United States was wealthier than the North as late as the early nineteenth century, and so was the Northeast in Brazil compared to the South. Yet social inequality probably surpassed that of Indo-America. Saint-Domingue may have been the wealthiest place on earth in relation to its territory, but nine-tenths of its inhabitants were slaves, and the nation constructed on this unbalanced foundation became the poorest one in the Western Hemisphere. The rural population in Afro-America lacked the basic economic and social security that Indian villages and communal land tenure provided in Indo-America. The social consequences are visible even today. For example, divorce or separation rates, ↳ out-of-wedlock births, common-law unions, and single-parent households are more common in Afro- than in Indo-America.⁴

p. 3

The third geographic/ethnohistorical region of the New World encompasses the temperate lands on the northern and southern edges of the hemisphere that correspond to Euro-America. This zone comprises the north of the United States, Canada, and the temperate belt that stretches from São Paulo to southern Argentina

and the southern half of Chile. Without precious metals and indigenous labor (the population density here was the lowest in the hemisphere in pre-Columbian times),⁵ and with no tropical lands that could grow the cash crops that Old World markets demanded, these regions remained marginal backwaters during colonial times.

This state of affairs was drastically changed by a series of socioeconomic revolutions in Europe during the nineteenth century. The demographic explosion in the Old World created a massive market for New World temperate foodstuffs that had not existed before and provided much of the workforce that would cultivate the crops. The Industrial Revolution created demand for other temperate-zone New World commodities—such as hides, tallow, wool, and flax—that had not existed before; it promoted urbanization in Europe, which in turn further increased the demand for American staples, as fewer people grew their own food; and it provided the transportation innovations (particularly trains and steamships) that made possible the massive movement of goods and people across the Atlantic and across the temperate plains of the New World. The prairies and the pampas, which before the middle of the nineteenth century had been just semi-empty grasslands, became in the next century the biggest producers of agro-pastoral wealth the world had ever seen.

The poorest colonies thus became during the nineteenth century the richest countries of the Americas and the richest regions within those countries. By the early twentieth century, per capita GDP in the United States, Canada, Argentina, Uruguay, and Chile was two to six times higher than the average elsewhere in the hemisphere.⁶ The North, the South, and the East of the United States, Brazil, and Argentina respectively—which had been the least developed areas of those countries before 1800—became the wealthiest. The late development of Euro-America proved to be a blessing in the long term. Relatively unencumbered by rigid colonial institutions (from a strong church to commercial monopolies, guilds, latifundia, ejidos, and plantations) and by highly vertical social structures, these regions became not only the richest in the hemisphere but also the most egalitarian in terms of the distribution of material, political, and cultural resources.⁷ One can say that they were born “modern” as opposed to “early modern”: capitalist and liberal rather than colonial and mercantilist.

This volume takes into account these realities, these categories within the Western Hemisphere that in terms of historical trajectory, ethnoracial composition, economic development, and social structure are more cohesive and meaningful than those of Latin and North America. All four chapters on the colonial period address these divisions. So do many of the thematic chapters, particularly those on rural and religious history. And two chapters deal specifically with postcolonial Afro- and Indo-Latin America.

p. 4 The works reviewed in this volume’s essays, however, also show—although rarely in an explicit way—that despite its diversity and sharp distinctions, Latin America represents more than a convenient label with little inherent meaning. Indeed, a focused interpretation of scattered studies could demonstrate that, as broad categories go, this one has more historical significance and cultural meaning than other continental labels such as Europe, Asia, and Africa.

To begin with, the multiracial history that divides the Western Hemisphere into the three major categories discussed above also distinguishes it from the rest of the globe. Ethnoracial diversity is common in most of the world. But in the case of the Western Hemisphere this is not only the result of ethnolinguistic differences between neighboring groups but also, and most uniquely, of transcontinental migrations. The aboriginal inhabitants were simply the first to come. Sixty million Europeans, eleven million Africans, and five million Asians arrived after 1492. The term “New World,” originally a product of Eurocentric arrogance related to the notion of “discovery,” does denote a distinctive role and position in the history of humanity. It accurately names a hemisphere where *Homo sapiens* arrived long after the rest of the planet had been populated, and one that became a receptacle for the people of every other continent.

The newcomers may have concentrated in different regions of the hemisphere, but all New World countries have or had multiracial societies to some extent, and this appears as a unifying motif in the historiography.

Mexico and Argentina have no visible African presence today, but Terraciano and Sousa discuss a boom in studies of the African experience in their chapter on New Spain, and Johnson and Socolow as well as Butler and Helg mention numerous studies of blacks in Argentina. Although Amerindians represent less than one-third of 1% of Brazil's population today, histories of the indigenous presence have become so numerous that Schwartz includes a section tellingly titled "The Return of the Natives" in his chapter on colonial Brazil, and Weinstein refers to a recent revival of "Indian" identity in her chapter on postcolonial Brazil. The works discussed in most other chapters remind us that although the proportion of the elements may vary drastically between regions, the Indigenous-African-European demographic and cultural tripod marks the history of the entire hemisphere.⁸ Race has thus been a more central theme in the historiography of Latin America and the Western Hemisphere than in that of other parts of the world.

This historiographical feature reflects a historical one: the New World's particular propensity to racialize ethnicity. Phenotypical difference is not a prerequisite for this process. Countless ethnic groups throughout the world that are not physically distinguishable from each other swear that they are and use racial language to define collective identities. But the greater phenotypical dissimilarity that transcontinental migrations produced in the New World facilitated and promoted the tendency to perceive ethnic difference as biological and permanent and to define them in racial terms related to putative pigmentations (white, black, yellow, redskin, *raza cobriza*, *pardo*, *preto*, etc.).

p. 5 Racialization, and the resulting racism, is in turn connected to another distinguishing characteristic of the Western Hemisphere: its relatively high levels of social inequality. Those levels have varied historically and geographically. They have been generally lower during periods of labor scarcity and/or redistributive policies and in regions where free immigration played a more significant role than slavery or conquest. But in global comparison all Western Hemisphere countries, with the exception of Canada and Cuba, appear in the top two quintiles in Gini coefficient measures of income inequality in the early twenty-first century.

Transcontinental migration promoted not only a tendency for racialization and exclusion but also, and somewhat contradictorily, an inclusive definition of nationality that eventually found legal expression in the concept of *jus soli*, which bestows citizenship on the basis of birthplace rather than ancestry and distinguishes the New World from the Old. All thirty-eight countries in the Western Hemisphere except two (Haiti and the Bahamas) confer citizenship to anyone born there (with some exceptions for children of diplomats), compared to only ten of the 156 countries outside of the Americas.

Given all the history and traits that the New World shares, it seems fitting that south of the Rio Grande the Western Hemisphere is thought of as one continent rather than two. The Americas are conceived in the singular: as America, a landmass that stretches from the Bering Strait to Cape Horn rather than from New York to California. Yet Anglo-Americans normally do not include themselves even in the plural "Americas," an ambiguous term that is often associated, including in academic circles, with the countries south of the Rio Grande. The cartographical distinction that makes America a continent rather than a country has important historical, political, and ideological implications. After all, the Rio Grande was until the 1840s just a river rather than a political, socioeconomic, and cultural frontier, and California (and most of the U.S. Southwest and Florida) were once part of "Latin" America. Many of the leaders of the independence wars in Latin America used *americano*, rather than creole or national gentilics, to refer to themselves and establish a separate identity from peninsular Iberians. Many Latin Americans still resent what they view as an imperious appropriation by the United States of a demonym that belongs to all of the inhabitants of America.⁹

The primary element that makes part of America "Latin" is a shared history of Iberian colonialism. Indeed, Ibero-America is a more accurate appellation for the region than Latin America, a controversial term that was first promoted by the French during their imperial adventure in Mexico in the 1860s and became common only in the twentieth century.¹⁰ If speaking a Romance language were really the criterion—the standard explanation for the use of "Latin"—then Quebec too would be considered part of Latin America. The fact that

Haiti is sometimes included reflects, then, not the use of a common Latinity as a norm of membership but the tacit application of underdevelopment as a definitional principle for the category—an economicist tendency that surfaced with the post—World War II boom in development studies.

p. 6

Iberian colonialism distinguishes Latin America not only from the rest of the Western Hemisphere but also from the rest of the developing or postcolonial world. Spanish and Portuguese colonialism in the Americas began much earlier than other ↳ European colonial incursions elsewhere, lasted much longer, ended a century and a half earlier, and left a much deeper impact.

At the most primary level, Iberian colonialism transformed the physical ecology of the Americas to a degree unknown in the history of European colonialism in the Afro-Asiatic world, or for that matter of Arab colonialism in North Africa. This transformation of the hemisphere's biota had momentous demographic, economic, and social consequences. At the most microscopic level, imported pathogens decimated the indigenous population in a demographic catastrophe of a magnitude without parallel anywhere else.¹¹ Scores of new plants and animals, along with imported technology, transformed elemental aspects of quotidian life that ranged from eating habits, clothing, work, and leisure to land use, specifically the introduction of extensive agriculture, ranching, and equestrian cultures. Whether they were estancias in the pampas, fazendas in Brazil, haciendas in Indo-America, or plantations in Afro-America, the prevalence of latifundia, a land-tenure system dominated by large estates, shaped rural space and social relations in most of Latin America. The precocious development of commercial agriculture—whether export-oriented or domestic—became another distinguishing historical characteristic of the region. Renaissance Mediterranean urban planning—with its central plazas and checkerboard grid—shaped space in towns and cities from Chile to Mexico. Iberian law imposed a unifying legal (and legalistic) culture that affected everything from marriage and domestic relations to inheritance and commercial contracts. Roman Catholicism had a unifying and lasting effect on the entire region, both as a set of beliefs and practices and as a public institution.

The Iberian languages imposed a degree of linguistic unity that sets Latin America apart from any other continent. In colonial Brazil, more than two hundred languages disappeared in the confrontation with Portuguese. In the Spanish possessions, the fact that during the first century of colonization arrivals came basically from Andalusia, Extremadura, and New Castile—rather than Spain in general—shaped and unified American Castilian. Despite the existence of regional accents, Spanish and Portuguese in Ibero-America developed no creole languages similar to the French-based creoles of Haiti, Guiana, or New Caledonia; the English creoles of Belize, Guyana and the West Indies; or the Papiamentu of the Netherland Antilles. Indeed, it is revealing that with a single minor exception (Palenquero, a Spanish-Bantu patois spoken by less than two thousand descendants of runaway slaves in a village southeast of Cartagena) the only creoles in Ibero-America are English-based languages introduced by West Indian immigrants in the Atlantic coast of Central America and the Colombian islands of San Andres and Providencia. The absence does not reflect any intrinsic trait of the Spanish and Portuguese languages or of Iberian imperialism in general. After all, a Spanish-based creole developed in the Philippines (Chabacano), and eighteen Portuguese creoles have emerged in Africa, Asia, and even the Americas (Portuguese accounts for over half of the vocabulary of Papiamentu in Aruba, Bonaire, and Curacao, and for a quarter of Saramaccan in Suriname).

p. 7

A comparison of the saturation level of colonial languages worldwide highlights the distinctiveness of the Iberian colonial experience in the Americas. English ↳ is spoken by only 10% of the population of India and Pakistan, and less than one-quarter of 1% speak it as a first language. The proportion is similar or lower for Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya, Malawi, and Swaziland and higher in other African countries, but the figures include speakers of local pidgins.¹² French-based creoles (generically referred to as African French) are spoken to different degrees in thirty African countries, but only small numbers of urban inhabitants speak French as a first language. The same is true in Haiti. Forty percent of Mozambicans speak Portuguese, but only 6% do so as a first language. The proportion of the population in the ex-Russian colonies that speaks Russian as their main language ranges from less than 15% in Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan,

Armenia, and Georgia to a high of 72% in Belarus.¹³ Dutch is spoken as a first language by only 60% of the population in Suriname, the same proportion that speaks Portuguese in Angola and Arabic in Algeria and Morocco, despite the fact that Arab colonialism in Berber North Africa is more than eight centuries older than Iberian colonialism in the Americas. French has practically disappeared from Indochina, and so have Dutch from Indonesia, Portuguese from the Lusitanian ex-colonies in Asia, and Spanish from the Philippines. By comparison, Portuguese is spoken by virtually the entire population of Brazil, as is Spanish in Spanish American countries, with the exception of Paraguay, where it is spoken by 70% of the population, and Guatemala, Bolivia, and Peru, where it is spoken by 86%–88%.¹⁴

These drastic contrasts in the usage of colonial languages and the absence of Spanish or Portuguese creoles in Ibero-America reflect a broader phenomenon that transcends linguistics: the cultural breadth and depth of Iberian colonialism in the New World. Its impact runs the gamut from the most primary and physical to the most ethereal. It is palpable in the ecology, flora and fauna, agriculture and husbandry, food and cooking, urban space, public and domestic architecture, politics, law, language, literature, music, high and folk art, naming patterns, and just about every aspect of social life. Even some Latin American cultural artifacts that came to be seen as quintessentially indigenous—such as the bowler hats, traditional *polleras* (skirts), and *charangos* (small guitars) of the Andean region—are actually Castilian imports from the sixteenth century. Indeed, the Iberian cultural imprint often became invisible precisely because it was so deep and buried in time that it appeared to most observers as local, natural, and indigenous. And the recent emphasis of the historiography on the Amerindian and African components of Latin America has contributed its share in making such an omnipresent, and presumably obvious, element less visible.¹⁵

This has obscured two factors crucial in defining Latin America as a meaningful category beyond mere geographical adjacency. One is internal: the Iberian cultural imprint is the principal commonality that warrants including countries and regions that are drastically different in ethnoracial composition, levels of economic development, and social structure in the same category. The other is external.

p. 8 The Iberian imprint distinguishes Latin America from the rest of the so-called global South. Nowhere in the Afro-Asiatic world did European culture spread so widely and penetrate so deeply. In part this reflects a much thicker inflow of colonial settlers (about one million Spaniards and half a million Portuguese), followed by a bigger wave of seventeen million European immigrants during the national period (43% of them Iberians and 40% Italians).¹⁶ In many regions, the Iberian colonizers and their descendants, and later European settlers, came to represent the majority, making these areas more akin to a southern European version of Australia than to any postcolonial country in Africa or Asia. This is true even in zones outside of Euro-America, such as Antioquia and Caldas in Colombia, the Altos de Jalisco and other areas in northern Mexico, the central highlands of Costa Rica and Puerto Rico, and western and central Cuba. Where this did not happen, populations nonetheless became much more Hispanized or Lusitanized than people in colonies in Africa or Asia became Gallicized or Anglicized. Even in the least Europeanized countries of the region—say, Guatemala or Bolivia—Spanish and Christianity are almost universal, in dramatic contrast to the situation in India, Indonesia, Indochina, Iraq, Iran, or the Ivory Coast—to use just one letter in the postcolonial alphabet.

Latin America's third major unifying and distinguishing trait, besides its shared history of transcontinental multiraciality and deep Iberianization, is its centrality in the twin processes of globalization and modernity. Although vast stretches of Eurasia had been connected since the time of the Mongol empire, it is impossible to speak of globalization (a term that refers to a globe or sphere) before 1492. Eurocentric periodizations used to date the beginning of modern history to the fall of Constantinople in 1453, but the “discovery” of the Indies obviously makes a better candidate for an admittedly arbitrary birthdate.

The aftermath of that event drastically transformed worldviews—literally—and the world itself. Karl Marx described the Columbian exchange as the threshold of the modern world in the first page of the *Communist Manifesto*. Adam Smith, capitalism's philosophical sire, deemed it one of the two “most important events

recorded in the history of mankind.”¹⁷ The contention may be hyperbolic in regard to the general history of humanity. But it is irrefutable when it comes to the origin of modern capitalism. American silver (which accounted for 85% of the world’s output between 1500 and 1800) made possible the development of mercantile capitalism in Europe, as economic historians have long maintained.¹⁸ It spurred the first truly global trade system, according to, among others, the new “California School” of Sinologists, who have shown that for three centuries Europe paid for all of its imports almost exclusively with American silver, and that much of it ended up in China.¹⁹ And, along with other New World resources, it was also the single most important element in explaining the Industrial Revolution, according to bolder—and less convincing—accounts.²⁰

Whatever the weight of Latin American silver in ushering Europe’s industrialization, it did foster levels of industrialization and urbanization within the region itself that have gone unnoticed in Eurocentric, and more recently Asiacentric, accounts of world economic history. Around 1600, Potosí’s population surpassed that of any Western European city with the exception of Paris and Naples, and its silver mines represented the largest industrial complex in the world. Two centuries later, Ibero-America contained forty-five of the fifty largest cities in the New World; the population of Mexico City alone exceeded that of the five largest U.S. cities put together; and in terms of output, technology, the size of the labor force and its organization, and productivity, the mining complex of the Mexican Bajío probably surpassed the presumed cradle of the Industrial Revolution in the English midlands. The effect of that output transcended the silver regions. Western Cuba developed a precocious service economy to supply the silver fleet that turned the island into the most urbanized area in the world around 1800, again, ahead of the putative global vanguard sites of urbanization in England and the Netherlands.²¹ A few decades later, steam sugar mills, the seventh railroad in the world, and other technologies made the island a pioneer in the Industrial Revolution—a process that has only been told from the other side of the Atlantic or the northern side of the Mason-Dixon line. And, despite Anglo-Gallic assumptions of Hippocratic supremacy, Cuba had more physicians per capita during the nineteenth century than England or France.²²

Latin America’s central, and at times pioneering, role in the development of globalization and modernity did not cease with the end of colonial rule and the early modern period. Indeed, the region’s political independence places it at the forefront of two trends that are regularly considered thresholds of the modern world. The first is the so-called liberal revolution, the shift from the monarchies of the *ancien régime*, where inheritance legitimated political power, to constitutional republics and the notion of popular sovereignty, where legitimacy originates from the consent of the governed. This presumed shift serves as the basis for the traditional periodization of Western history, with the French Revolution marking the transition from early modern to modern history, or from modern to contemporary in the usage of continental European historians.

Here, Latin America has usually been excluded from a Western current in which it played a pivotal role. The centrality of liberalism since the early nineteenth century makes the region’s political history parallel to that of Europe and distinguishes it from that of the rest of the world. Liberalism became a popular ideology, rather than simply an elite creed, earlier in parts of Latin America, particularly in Mexico, than in Eastern and parts of Northern Europe. Latin America’s struggles against the Iberian monarchies preceded similar movements in Central and Eastern Europe against the Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian, and Russian empires by fifty to a hundred years. Latin American liberals’ crusade against the temporal power of the church during the nineteenth century coincides in content and timing with similar struggles in Catholic Europe but precedes some of them, such as the case of Italy. The fact that Benito Mussolini was named after Benito Juárez may seem just a curious anecdote, but it is indicative of the iconic status that some Latin American liberal leaders attained in the Old World.

The second, and related, trend consistently considered a threshold of modern history that saw Latin America at the forefront is the development of nation-states. No decade since 1800 has failed to witness the birth of at least one of these polities. But the production of these peculiarly modern forms of organizing and delimiting physical space has been concentrated in four temporal booms that coincided with the end of more expansive

p. 10 imperial entities. The first rose from the ashes of the ↵ Iberian dominions in the Americas between 1810 and 1824; the second from the ruins of the Austro-Hungarian, Russian, and Ottoman empires after World War I; the third followed the disintegration of European overseas empires after World War II; and the fourth sprung in the 1990s from the communist carcass of what few now remember used to be the “Second World.”

This means that Latin America went through a process that, for better or for worse, is the quintessential expression of political modernity more than a century before all but a dozen or so of the 190-plus countries that control or claim every square inch of the planet today. What is still news in many parts of the world (including parts of Europe) in the twentieth-first century—secessionist movements, regional caudillismo or warlordism, and the struggle to forge cohesive nation-states—forms part of a specific period of nineteenth-century history in Latin America. This gives the region’s historiography an element of thematic and temporal unity, since, with the exception of Cuba and Puerto Rico, all its countries went through a similar process (even those, like Brazil and Chile, where the struggle was less pronounced) within roughly the same time period.

Latin America may thus be part of the New World, but it has old countries. Its states are relatively strong and its nations stronger, not only in contrast to newer countries in the Afro-Asiatic world but also in comparison to Western Europe, the reputed cradle and site par excellence of mature and cohesive national polities. Latin America has nothing similar to the Basque, Catalan, Corsican, Flemish, Northern Irish, and Scottish ethnonationalist, and often violent, separatist movements. No Latin American country sends four “national teams” to the World Soccer Cup, like the apparently not-so-united United Kingdom. Only clichés such as “banana republics” or “emerging countries,” accumulated prejudice, and unexamined assumptions can sustain the notion of Latin American nations as relatively new and incomplete projects in comparison to Western Europe.

Latin America’s connections to the world economy declined during the aftermath of independence. But they revived with such force after the middle of the century that the region came to play as important a role in the second stage of globalization and the parallel spread of global/financial capitalism (circa 1870–1930) as it had played in the first and the accompanying expansion of commercial capitalism after 1492. Transatlantic trade during this period surpassed, in volume and value, that of the colonial era.²³ Hides, wool, and flax from the pampas, rubber from the Amazon, and minerals from Chile and Mexico fueled the Industrial Revolution on the other side of the ocean. Latin America became a major market for this revolution’s output, and its most advanced regions became early participants in the process itself. The number of arrivals from Europe dwarfed the number of colonial settlers by a factor of ten to one. So did capital flows, westward in the form of—mostly British—investments, and eastward as immigrant remittances. The transatlantic circulation of goods, money, people, technologies, institutional practices, ideas, and all sorts of material and cultural goods acquired unprecedented intensity and density.

p. 11 Because the factors in this circulation tended to move in unison and unequally toward different destinations, the process reversed the economic rank of colonial ↵ times and opened the regional gaps that came to characterize Latin America and the Western Hemisphere in general during the national period. Europe’s exports, capital, technology, and emigrants headed mainly to those New World regions from which it imported the most, namely temperate North and South America and Cuba.

But although the level of integration into the global economy differed significantly, Latin America’s geographical situation in what was an Atlantic-dominated system gave it an advantage over other regions of the world. Argentina and Uruguay may have boasted the highest levels of international trade per capita in the world and ranked among the ten richest countries by the outbreak of World War I. But trade and GDP per capita for Latin America in general were higher than for the most of the rest of the world. Mexico’s GDP per capita surpassed that of Hungary and Poland, and Peru’s doubled that of China.²⁴ Demographic growth was higher in the countries of immigration. But Latin America in general and Europe increased their share of the world’s population during the period, while Asia’s and Africa’s declined. When it came to those living in cities, Uruguay

may have been the most urbanized country in the world after England around 1900, and Cuba, Argentina, and Chile ranked among the top dozen. But Latin America in general has been the most urbanized region in the world outside of Northern Europe and its colonies of settlement since the middle of the nineteenth century. Cuba was the seventh country in the world to have railroads, those quintessential symbols of nineteenth-century modernity. But five other Latin American nations were among the first twenty countries to build them, and all twenty were within the Atlantic world. The advantage of geography could even trump levels of development. The “iron horse” arrived in a dozen Latin American countries (including landlocked and poor Paraguay and Bolivia) before it reached Japan.

A similar pattern of diffusion appears in political and social practices associated with modernity. Mass politics were most advanced in Uruguay—which developed a welfare state in the early 1900s that preceded most of its counterparts in Western Europe—and in Argentina, which established universal, secret, and obligatory male suffrage in 1912, elected the first socialist senator in the Western Hemisphere a year later, and saw the founding of the second communist party in the world in 1918, two months after the October Revolution in Russia itself, and almost a year before Rosa Luxemburg founded the third in Germany. But communist parties appeared in five other Latin American countries (Mexico, Uruguay, Cuba, Chile, and Brazil) before 1922, a timing that coincides with that of the U.S, Canada, Western Europe, and Australia/New Zealand and precedes that of most of Africa and Asia by decades.

p. 12 The geographical spread of May Day celebrations draws a similar map. This “international” worker’s day saw street demonstrations by socialists and anarchists during its debut in 1890 in sixty-three European cities that stretched from Helsinki and Warsaw in the east to London and Lisbon on the west, and in six cities on the other side of the Atlantic: Chicago, New York, Havana, Buenos Aires, Rosario, and Montevideo. From these pioneering loci of working-class activism, the practice spread over the next two decades to Eastern Europe and eight other Latin American countries, but not to any place outside the Atlantic world unless it was a settlement ↴ of European immigrants. As James Brennan discusses in his chapter, southern cone countries and Cuba developed some of the earliest and largest organized labor movements in the world.

Whether we consider GDP, demography, urbanization, or the spread of technology, political parties, and workers’ collective practices, the pattern is the same. Some Latin American countries occupy the same level and time period as Western Europe and what we would call today the First World, and the others—with the exception of the poorer Central American and Andean countries—occupy a point or time closer to the European periphery than to Asia and Africa.

The pattern persists regarding the major political trends of the twentieth century. In 1910, Mexico had the first social revolution of the twentieth century, seven years ahead of the one that presumably shook the world in ten days. During the 1930s and 1940s, Cuba, Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, Mexico, and Chile were at the forefront of a global trend in the formation of populist regimes and in the move from liberal/free-trade policies to autarkic plans for import-substitution industrialization. In 1959, Cuba revived the communist dream worldwide, after public awareness of Stalinist purges seemed to have eroded it beyond repair, and led—often with military support—the expansion of communism in the Third World during the next two decades. From the 1970s on, Latin American countries, particularly Chile, were at the vanguard of a reverse curve toward neoliberal, market-oriented reforms. From the 1980s on, the move, or return, to democracy in the region preceded similar trends in Eastern Europe, Asia, and Africa. And in the twenty-first century, countries such as Venezuela, Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Ecuador, Uruguay, Paraguay, and Honduras appeared to be leading the way in a global leftist cycle away from neoliberalism and toward more social democratic forms of capitalism. The similar content and timing of these cycles also augment the unity that a shared experience of colonial rule and of liberalism and nation-state formation during the nineteenth century impart to Latin American political history.

Latin America’s greater proximity to the West, or to its European semiperiphery, than to the Third World, to which it presumably belongs, transcends political history and runs the gamut from population structures and

industrialization to educational levels and gender relations. In the same way that the region followed on Europe's heels during the growth phase of demographic modernization in the long nineteenth century, it has kept close during its downward phase in the last third of the twentieth. Fertility rates, population growth, and infant mortality declined, and life expectancy increased, much earlier and faster than in Africa, the Middle East, and most of Asia.²⁵ By 2008, Cuba and Uruguay had joined Japan as the only countries outside of Europe with natural population decline, and Puerto Rico will soon join them, since its fertility rate of 1.76 is significantly below the 2.1 replacement level.

p. 13 The timing of industrialization in the larger Latin American countries also mirrors that of Europe outside its manufacturing core rather than that of even pioneering regions outside the Western world. In a 1989 study of the most industrialized areas of the developing world that stressed Latin America's underperformance, sociologist Gary Gereffi admitted that in contrast to East Asia's so-called Four Tigers (South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore), the conventional phrase "newly industrializing countries" was a misnomer when applied to Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico (and he could have added Chile, Uruguay, and Cuba), since rapid industrial growth there dated at least from the 1920s.²⁶

Education presents an analogous pattern. Already by the early 1900s, the primary school enrollment rate in Argentina surpassed that of Italy, Chile's and Ecuador's exceeded Finland's, Mexico's and Honduras's were above Russia's, Uruguay's and Costa Rica's doubled that of Yugoslavia, and Brazil's was ten times higher than Korea's.²⁷ In 1920, Puerto Rico's rate was above that of all seventeen Southern and Eastern European countries, with the exception of Czechoslovakia.²⁸ During the first decade of the twentieth century, the literacy rates in Chile and Costa Rica were a little higher than in Spain, and that of Mexico was similar to Portugal's.²⁹ The rates in Uruguay (75%), Cuba (70%), and Argentina (65%) made them some of the most literate societies in the world at the time, ahead—in some cases by a wide margin—of all of Southern and Eastern Europe.³⁰ India, Pakistan, Morocco and forty-some other countries had not reached those levels a century later. By 1965, enrollment in primary education was universal in nine Latin American countries, and the region's rate in general was similar to that of Europe but 27 percentage points above that of South Asia, 32 points higher than in the Middle East and North Africa, and 50 points higher than in sub-Saharan Africa.³¹ The disparities in tertiary education were even more pronounced. In an extreme example, from the 1950s to the 1980s, higher education enrollment in Argentina exceeded the levels in the Western European "core" (France, Germany, and the U.K.).³²

Gender patterns show similar parallels in various facets. In terms of rural-to-urban migration, demographers have found two distinct global patterns: a female predominant one characteristic of Western Europe, the European areas of settlement, and Latin America, and another where men predominate characteristic of the Middle East, Africa, South Asia, and to a lesser degree East Asia and Eastern Europe.³³ The domestic service became feminized in Latin America, Western Europe, and North America during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, while in sub-Saharan Africa and India, men still accounted for 64%–87% of servants in 1970.³⁴ Latin America shares with Europe and the areas of European settlement early and high ratios of female to male enrollment in primary, secondary, and tertiary education and high levels of female literacy. These are the only regions of the world where women outnumber men among university students.³⁵ Indeed, Panama was one of the first countries to reach that threshold in the early 1970s, and by the early twenty-first century the female proportion in higher education enrollments in that country and in Argentina, Uruguay, Cuba, Paraguay, Honduras, the Dominican Republic, and at times Brazil surpassed those of the United States and Europe.³⁶

p. 14 Gendered political trends follow a similar direction. In terms of female suffrage, no independent country outside of Europe, the Soviet Union, and the areas of European settlement had granted it in 1929 when Ecuador did; and nine other Latin American countries did so before France extended the right to vote to women in 1945. Since the late twentieth century, Argentina, Cuba, and Costa Rica have ranked, along with Scandinavian countries, among the top ten nations of the world in terms of women's proportional presence in national legislatures. The World Economic Forum's *Global Gender Gap Report* for 2008 shows that thirteen of the nineteen Ibero-American countries ranked higher than the United States and Canada in a composite measure

of women's political empowerment. This not only contradicts the persistent North American stereotypes of Latin America as an exceptionally patriarchal region but also makes them particularly ironic.

Why would a region that already by 1800 was the most Europeanized area of the globe outside of Europe itself and its colony of settlement in North America and that continued to have much stronger historical parallels to the West than to the rest of the world during the next two centuries be consistently categorized as non-Western? Part of the answer to this conundrum lies in the early definition of Latin America as the polar opposite of North America. During the nineteenth century and much of the twentieth, the United States defined the hemispheric South in the dichotomous terms it described its own national South. The North was modern, capitalist, industrial, democratic, and rational; the South traditional or backward, feudal, rural, authoritarian, and suffused by premodern codes of honor. Vis-à-vis the hemispheric South, three other dyads were added: Anglo/Latin, Protestant/Catholic, and white/mixed-race. Some of those dualities were still prevalent in modernization theory, and development studies in general, during the 1950s and '60s.

Most scholars in the twenty-first century would either dismiss these dualities as examples of Western orientalism (although "australism" would be a more accurate term, given that they relate to the south rather than the east) or deconstruct them as Derridean binaries.³⁷ Yet Latin America continues to be categorized as non-Western in various scholarly disciplines. In political science, it is normally studied in the field of comparative politics, which despite the name, focuses, at least de facto, on the non-Western world rather than on comparisons. In economics, it is treated as part of the "developing" world, a supposedly more positive version of the older "underdeveloped," "less-developed," or Third World that still basically coincides with the non-Western world. In most departments of history in North American universities, the Latin American field is grouped with other non-U.S./non-European fields, and Latin American history classes fulfill "multicultural" (a code for non-Western and nonwhite) requirements.

p. 15 This reflects the fact that the definition of the West continues to be plagued by presuppositions and metanarratives about modernity, development, democracy, and race. The relative economic decline of Spain and Portugal and the weakness of their representative politics during the nineteenth and much of the twentieth century made them ineligible for a label that had become synonymous with modernity and liberal democracy. So, despite the facts that the Iberian Peninsula occupies the western end of Europe and that its inhabitants were the pioneers of western overseas expansion and prime standard-bearers of that process for more than two centuries, Spain and Portugal were relegated from the center to the semiperiphery and from the West to the South.³⁸ A selective cartography moved them from western to southern or Mediterranean Europe, even though Portugal does not face the Mediterranean. The linguistic component of this process saw the marginalization of Spanish and Portuguese as French and later English became the dominant global languages of Western culture and power. The West became, at least implicitly, a label for the North, a synonym for Northern Europe and its colonies of settlement. If Iberia moved, at best, to a quasi-Western semiperiphery in Anglo-French conceptual cartography, Ibero-America became stuck in a non-Western periphery. The Spanish "economic miracle" during the last quarter of the twentieth century, the return of democracy, and European Union membership eventually gained that country, and increasingly Portugal, "admission" into the conceptual West. But, despite the almost total consolidation of liberal democracy on the other side of the Atlantic, the Iberian ex-colonies are still assumed to be too poor to join.³⁹

The assumption rests on historical myopia and the conceptual homogenization of an economically diverse region. During colonial times, the Indies were associated in Europe with wealth rather than poverty. The phrase "rich as Peru" became a cliché in most western European languages.⁴⁰ During the national period, much of Latin America has ranked within the top tenth of the world's population in terms of income. From the middle of the nineteenth century to the 1950s, Argentina's and Uruguay's GDP per capita was regularly higher than those of most European nations, including, at times, France and Germany. Chile, Cuba, Venezuela, and Costa Rica have also had historically higher incomes than most of the world and than most of southern and eastern Europe. In the twenty-first century, many Latin American countries continue to rank in the top third of the

world in terms of wealth. The average GDP per capita in this century of Uruguay, Argentina, Chile, and Puerto Rico surpasses those of sixteen European countries.

Broader indicators of social development show similar patterns. In the United Nation's Human Development Index, eight Latin American countries rank in the top third worldwide and none in the bottom third. Infant mortality is significantly lower in even the poorest Latin American countries than in the world as a whole. Life expectancy in ten Latin American countries for 2005–09 surpassed those of fifteen European nations. In the cases of Costa Rica, Puerto Rico, Chile, and Cuba, it exceeded that of the United States. Nine Latin American countries are more urbanized than twenty-five European countries, including Italy, Switzerland, and Austria. And they rank even higher in the HPI, a newer index that combines subjective life satisfaction, life expectancy at birth, and ecological footprint per capita. Latin America accounted for nine of the top ten countries in 2009.⁴¹

This leaves race as the other criterion that keeps Latin America out of the conceptual West. Although the latter term supposedly corresponds to a geocultural entity, its association with race has been explicit since at least the late nineteenth century. By then whiteness had long surpassed Christianity as an occidental distinguishing marker vis-à-vis the rest of the world.⁴² This coincided temporally with the increased identification in the United States of Latin America as racially mixed.⁴³ The racialization of Latinos in that country strengthened such association and carried it into the twenty-first century. The U.S. government officially defines Hispanics as a nonracial category, but in ordinary usage they are listed as one more group in the conventional racial pentalogy of the country, along with whites, blacks, Native Americans, and Asians. So although Latinos, like Americans in general, represent simply a metacategory made up of the other four, their regular inclusion in this racial classification has helped cement the designation of Latin America as nonwhite in lay, and even scholarly, language. Language, in turn, has naturalized the assumption.

Scholars from various disciplines have contributed their share to cementing the conceptual separation of Latin America from the West by both their choice of topics and their approach to them. Anthropologists, particularly those coming from outside the region, have directed their gaze to the “primitive” and alterity. During the last four decades they have written, for example, more than twenty books in English about the Yanomamo in Brazil but not a single one about Portuguese immigrants, who are forty times more numerous but apparently not “other” enough. Anglo-European literary and cultural studies have tended to stress the exotic and the magical. Literary works in that vein are in turn more likely to be translated, furthering the external association of Latin American literature with the magical rather than the rational. Political scientists have penned hundreds of volumes on dictatorships, repression, and revolutions but few on democracies, institutions, and electoral politics. Economists and economic historians have often underscored underdevelopment and poverty to a point that the history of the region seems one of unmitigated failure.

The lack of a global perspective has compounded the misrepresentations. In terms of economic history, Latin America is rarely placed in a global context but is compared to the United States instead, as if a country that contains less than 5% of the world's population were some sort of universal standard. Political history can be even less comparative. The disproportionate emphasis on tyrannies and repression without any external reference has obscured the fact that compared to most regions of the world, including Western Europe, what stands out about Latin America is the general absence of international wars, genocides, holocausts, and state-organized slaughter.⁴⁴

The point in the last section was not to demonstrate that the West is just a capricious concept. Like many other expansive social categories, including Latin America, it is inconsistent, malleable, and fluctuating but ultimately meaningful. Neither was the intention to decry stereotypes, which are, per se, just cognitive mechanisms. The section aimed to debunk only those clichés that are particularly divorced from empirical evidence and distorting of historical and social realities, and then to explain why and how Northern European and North American economic and political hegemony during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries

produced—partly by design and partly through ignorance—a historiography and general discourse that occluded Latin America from “the West” and from narratives of modernity.

p. 17 This has tended to conceal the critical role the region played in the latter process. Unlike the Old World, Latin America, as a historical category rather than a landmass, has no ancient or medieval history. It both sprang from and spawned modern history. The notion is not original. It has been expressed by thinkers from Marx to post-Marxist literary scholars such as Walter Mignolo, who, in one of the most recent ruminations on the topic, tellingly titled *The Idea of Latin America*, stresses that America was invented rather than discovered and links the invention to the modernity/coloniality dyad.⁴⁵

The argument in this essay, however, has differed in its conceptualization of the dyad. It has treated modernity not only as a Western ideological concoction or metanarrative but also as a factual trend in the history of humanity that encompasses the massification of demographic reproduction, production, exchange, consumption, politics, culture, and long-distance connections, communication, and mobility. It has placed less emphasis on European imperialism, echoing the findings of more than a generation of historians of early Latin America that have shown the limits of Iberian imperial dictates and the primacy of local forces in the development of the region.⁴⁶ It has stressed the importance of Iberian colonialism, but as a broad social, economic, and cultural process that gives meaning to Latin America as a historical category and differentiates it from the rest of the Western Hemisphere and the rest of the postcolonial world, rather than as mere political rule. The accent here has been on the American side of the Atlantic and on broad history rather than on the eastern side and ideological/discursive currents. Latin America was indeed invented rather than discovered, but mainly in the first definition of the term (to create something new) rather than the second (to make up something false).

That creation, it is true, seems too internally disparate to make a cohesive category. The contrasts between countries and regions in terms of geography and climate, ethnic composition, social structure, and the distribution of material and cultural resources can be sharp. Vast disparities in levels of development existed in pre-Columbian times, continued with some changes during the colonial period, reversed during the nineteenth century when the most marginal colonies became the most developed countries, and widened during the next century. Around 1900, the richest countries in Latin America were about four times wealthier than the poorest; by 2000, they were six times wealthier (or nineteen times wealthier if one counts Haiti). The income gap between the poorest and richest countries in Ibero-America is twice as wide as that between the latter and the United States.⁴⁷

p. 18 These gaps, however, are actually wider within most other regions of the world. Tunisia's and Libya's GDP per capita are nine to twenty times higher than those of their neighbors in the Sahel; South Africa's and Botswana's are ten to fifty-two times higher than those of twenty other sub-Saharan countries. In the Middle East, or actually just within the Arabian Peninsula, the “oil kingdoms” are four to thirty-six times wealthier than Jordan and Yemen. In South Asia, Malaysia and Singapore are ten to thirteen times richer than Bangladesh and Indonesia. In East Asia, the per capita GDP of South Korea is sixteen times higher than North Korea's. In Europe, Switzerland, Luxembourg, and the Scandinavian countries are seven to twelve times richer than the poorer countries of the Balkans and Eastern Europe. Only Western Europe has narrower income gaps than Ibero-America, but this is the result of recent convergences. Before the 1960s, the GDP gap between the richest and the poorest countries was similar in both regions (a ratio of about four to one).

If Ibero-America is less internally disparate than most other regions of the world in terms of economic development, it is even less so in most other aspects. The salience of transcontinental immigrations and the resulting particular type of multi-racialism, derived from transoceanic movements rather than ethnolinguistic differences between neighbors, give the region a unifying historical thread that distinguishes it, and the Western Hemisphere in general, from the Old World. The depth of Iberian colonialism imparted a rare level of cultural unity. Ibero-America is the largest contingent area in the world bound by similar legal practices,

language, religion, naming patterns, and the arrangement of urban space, among other cultural markers. There are fewer major languages (those with half-million or more speakers) in all of Ibero-America (nine) than in many a single country such as Ghana, Kenya, or Myanmar (ten each), Pakistan and South Africa (eleven), Iran (thirteen), Uganda (fourteen), the Philippines and Mozambique (fifteen), Ethiopia and Nigeria (seventeen), Tanzania (eighteen), the Democratic Republic of Congo (twenty-four), or even part of a country, like the European portion of Russia (eleven) or the island of Sumatra in Indonesia (fourteen), not to mention subcontinental-sized India, where there are more major languages beginning with a single letter (k, sixteen) than in all of Latin America, or in all the Western Hemisphere for that matter.⁴⁸

The depth of Iberian colonialism and its amalgamating capacity makes problematic the application of postcolonial theory to Latin America. “Postcolonial” here is not a neutral temporal term referring to a period after political emancipation in any ex-colony, from Australia to Zimbabwe and from Algeria to the United States. Postcolonial studies emerged from, and responded to, a particular situation: ex-French and particularly ex-English colonies that became independent after World War II or even later, where European cultural penetration was relatively superficial, especially at the level of popular culture, and where, somewhat ironically, the symbolic presence of the ex-colonizer looms large particularly vis-à-vis the Europeanized native intelligentsia. The situation is almost antithetical in Latin America, where Iberian colonialism began centuries earlier, lasted much longer, and left a much deeper cultural impact, not only in contrast to other European overseas colonial ventures but also when compared to Russian colonialism in Eurasia and Arab colonialism in North Africa. Moreover, postcoloniality in Latin America is a two-century-old phenomenon, and the ex-imperial powers declined into semiperipheral status, eliciting more pity than resentment. By the twentieth century, Spaniards and Portuguese in Spanish America and Brazil respectively had become more the butt of popular jokes than the objects of anti-imperialist diatribes or Fanonian meditations by local intellectuals.

p. 19 Postindependence trends furthered the internal cohesiveness and external distinctiveness that Iberian colonialism had laid down. Despite the continued and indiscriminate application of categories such as “emerging countries” to Ibero-American nations, most countries in the region emerged within the first quarter of the nineteenth century, and even the “young” ones, Cuba and Panama, are over a ½ century old—which is ancient by global standards when it comes to nation-states. During the nineteenth century, most of them shared a sequence of regional struggles and politicoeconomic instability, followed by a period of national consolidation, liberal ascendancy, and reintegration into the Atlantic economy that had no counterpart in the rest of the “postcolonial” world at the time. During the twentieth century, they witnessed the emergence of universal suffrage, of populist, developmentalist states, and of Keynesian economics and the resurgence of liberal democracy and neoliberal economics, followed by a (re)turn to the left in the next century.

Finally, Latin America has been defined and differentiated by the timing of postcolonial modernization—a process that includes the demographic transition, trends toward mass production and market integration, urbanization, the appearance and spread of new technologies, the development of organized labor, mass politics, mass education and literacy, greater global connectivity, and a protracted tendency toward gender parity. The pace has varied internally. In some countries and for some indicators, it kept step with, or even outpaced, that of core Western European countries. More commonly, it resembled that of the European eastern and southern periphery. But Latin America as a whole has outpaced most of the rest of the world with the exception of precisely the countries it has been consistently compared to by economic historians and economists: the Anglo settler societies, Japan, and, since the 1970s, the “four Asian tigers” (South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore). Such selective comparisons have fostered myopic and exaggerated notions of laggardness and failure.

This essay’s purpose has not been to push forward Latin America’s position in a teleological race or claim its admission into the “West,” as if this were a membership in an elite club, but to elucidate its meaning as a historical category by placing the region in a global rather than selective perspective.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank all the contributors to this volume for their patience, work, and dedication, and Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, Susan Ferber, Emilio Kourí, Claudio Lomnitz, Nara Milanich, and Paula Soler-Moya for their careful reading and useful comments on this introduction.

Notes

1. In Mauricio Tenorio Trillo, *Argucias de la historia: Siglo XIX, cultura y "América Latina"* (Mexico City: Paidós, 1999), the scare quotes on "Latin America" in the title are repeated throughout the text to stress the arbitrariness of the concept.
- p. 20 2. Alex Dupuy, "French Merchant Capital and Slavery in Saint-Domingue," *Latin American Perspectives* 12:3 (1985): 82, 91–92.
3. David Eltis, "The Total Product of Barbados, 1664–1701," *The Journal of Economic History* 55:2 (1995): 336.
4. Douglas S. Massey, Mary J. Fischer, and Chiara Capoferro, "International Migration and Gender in Latin America: A Comparative Analysis," *International Migration* 44:5 (2006): 63–91 show that the differences in family structure between Afro- and Indo-America also affect the sex ratio of emigration flows. The Dominican Republic, with higher rates of consensual unions, separation, and single-headed households than Mexico, also exhibits a higher level of female participation in emigration.
5. The aboriginal populations of the regions that came to form Euro-America experienced a less severe decline during the colonial period than that of nuclear America precisely because of their low density, spatial dispersal, and limited contact with Europeans, and the fact that those contacts occurred over centuries rather than being temporally concentrated. But they continued to be relatively small. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the entire Amerindian population of the United States (400,000), Canada (100,000), and southern Brazil, Uruguay, and eastern and southern Argentina (80,000) amounted, all together, to less than one-third of the population of the city of London alone. Jose C. Moya, "Immigration, Development, and Assimilation in the United States in a Global Perspective, 1850–1930," *Studia Migracyjne* [Warsaw], 35:3 (2009): 89–104.
6. Data compiled by Angus Maddison in *Monitoring the World Economy, 1820–1992* (Paris: Development Centre of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 1995) show that by 1900 the United States had the second highest per capita GDP in the world, after New Zealand, and the highest in the Western Hemisphere. An extrapolation of Maddison's data shows that Uruguay ranked second in the Americas, with a per capita GDP that amounted to 81% of the U.S. GDP; Argentina and Canada came next with 68%; and then Chile with 54%. There are no comparable data for Cuba, a country whose per capita GDP was higher than that of the United States as late as the 1820s. But the figures for other Latin American countries are two to five times lower than those for the Southern Cone: Mexico, 24% of the per capita GDP of the United States; Colombia, 24%; Venezuela 20%; and Peru, 17%.
7. Jose C. Moya, "A Continent of Immigrants: Postcolonial Shifts in the Western Hemisphere," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 86:1 (2006): 1–28.
8. The Indigenous-European-African triad in the Americas affects the history of even places where one of the elements disappeared as a cultural group, such as the Caribbean with Amerindians, or arrived relatively late, such as Canada with Afro-descendants.
9. Walter D. Mignolo, "Afterword: Human Understanding and (Latin) American Interests—The Politics and Sensibilities of Geocultural Locations," *Poetics Today* 16:1 (1995): 175.
10. As late as 1918, Aurelio M. Espinosa, a linguist at Stanford University, was dismissing the term Latin America as "an intruder ... a new name [that] is not only vague, meaningless, and unjust, but what is much more, unscientific": "The Term Latin America," *Hispania* 1:3 (1918): 135–43. Three years later, the term Latin America was formally repudiated at the Second Spanish-American Congress of History and Geography at its meeting in Seville: *Hispania* 4:4 (1921): 194.
11. The pandemics most similar to the one brought to the New World by the European conquest are the Black Plague in Asia and Europe during the middle of the fourteenth century and the misnamed Spanish influenza of 1918–20. Fatalities were

similar in absolute number (estimates range between forty and seventy million in the three cases) but not in the proportion of the population affected (estimates are 70%–90% for nuclear America, 30%–60% for the Black Death in Europe, and about 3% of the world's population for the 1918–20 global influenza pandemic). There are many other cases in world history, from the Spanish occupation of the Canary Islands to the Austronesian migrations to Polynesia, where mortality rates matched or surpassed those of the Americas, but in these cases the number of people affected was in the tens of thousands rather than the tens of millions.

- [12.](#) David Crystal, ed., *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), 100–09; M. Paul Lewis, ed., *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, 16th ed. (Dallas: SIL International, 2009), also used for the other cases in this paragraph.
- [13.](#) Jacob M. Landau and Barbara Kellner-Heinkele, *Politics of Language in the Ex-Soviet Muslim States* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001).
- [14.](#) Francisco Moreno Fernández and Jaime Otero Roth, *Demografía de la lengua española* (Madrid: Instituto Complutense de Estudios Internacionales, 2006), 19–28.
- [15.](#) The lack of attention to the Iberian component in recent Latin American historiography is tellingly demonstrated in the chapters on the colonial period. Terraciano and Sousa have only a short section on Spaniards in their essay on New Spain and state that we now know more about indigenous society—and they could have added, the African population—than we know about the colonizer. Johnson and Socolow do not mention a single work on Spaniards in their chapter on Spanish South America. Schwartz has long sections on the African and indigenous population in Brazil but none on the Portuguese. Most of the literature on the Lusitanian side mentioned in the chapter deals with colonial governance and the Portuguese empire, much of it published in Portugal, rather than with the Portuguese in Brazil and their sociocultural impact.
- [16.](#) Jose C. Moya, “Migration,” *Encyclopedia of Latin American History and Culture*, 2nd ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons/Thompson Gale, 2008).
- [17.](#) *The Wealth of Nations* [1776] (London: Cannan, 1904), Vol. II, 125.
- [18.](#) See, for example, Earl J. Hamilton, “American Treasure and the Rise of Capitalism, 1500–1700,” *Economica* 27 (Nov. 1929): 338–57.
- [19.](#) Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: Europe, China, and the Making of the Modern World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 159–61 and chap. 6; Richard Von Glahn, *Fountain of Fortune: Money and Monetary Policy in China, 1000–1700* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), chap. 4.
- [20.](#) See Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence*, chap. 6, which gives the Columbian exchange a prominent role in producing that divergence, and Andre Gunder Frank, *ReOrient: Global Economy in the Asian Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), an Asiatic retort to Eurocentric accounts of the world economy between 1400 and 1800 that diminishes the importance of 1492 outside the Atlantic world (pp. 328–30) but ends up arguing that it was basically American silver, resources, and markets that allowed European economies to keep up with China and India until 1800 and then surpass them, thus having a catalytic effect beyond the Atlantic (pp. 262–63, 277–85, 344).
- [21.](#) Eric E. Lampard, “Historical Contours of Contemporary Urban Society: A Comparative View,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 4:3 (1969): 3–25 claimed that “even as late as 1800 only the Dutch Netherlands and Britain had as many as one person in five regularly domiciled in towns and cities” (p. 3). But calculating the Cuban urban population in 1792 conservatively as those living in cities of over 10,000 inhabitants, from data in Richard Morse, “Trends and Patterns of Latin American Urbanization, 1750–1920,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 16:4 (1974): 439, produced a figure of 30%. The comparable figures given for 1800 in Jan de Vries, *European Urbanization, 1500–1800* (Cambridge, 1984), 39, are 29% for the Netherlands and 20% for England and Wales.

- [22.](#) Adrian Lopez-Denis, “Disease and Society in Colonial Cuba, 1790–1840” (PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2007), 66–67.
- [23.](#) Kevin H. O'Rourke and Jeffrey G. Williamson, *Globalization and History: The Evolution of a Nineteenth-Century Atlantic Economy* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2001).

24. Data for GDP per capita come from historical sets constructed by the economist Angus Maddison and available at www.ggd.net/maddison.
25. Wolfgang Lutz and Ren Qiang, "Determinants of Human Population Growth," *Philosophical Transactions: Biological Sciences* 357:1425 (Sept. 29, 2002): 1197–210; *Population and the World Bank: Adapting to Change* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2000), 3, 6, 8; Christopher J. L. Murray et al., "Can We Achieve Millennium Development Goal 4? New Analysis of Country Trends and Forecasts of Under-5 Mortality to 2015," *The Lancet* (London) 370 (Sept. 22–28, 2007): 1040–55.
26. Gary Gereffi, "Rethinking Development Theory: Insights from East Asia and Latin America," *Sociological Forum* 4:4 (1989): 505–33.
27. Richard A. Easterlin, "Why Isn't the Whole World Developed," *The Journal of Economic History* 41:1 (1981): 1–19 (table on pp. 18–19); Iván Molina and Steven Palmer, "Popular Literacy in a Tropical Democracy: Costa Rica, 1850–1950," *Past and Present* 184:1 (2004): 169–207. The educational reforms of the Mexican revolutionary government apparently had an impressive effect. By 1930, the country's rate of primary school enrollment was 50% higher than those of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, tripled Turkey's, and surpassed that of Italy. For the impact of the Mexican revolution at a local level, see Stephen A. Kowalewski and Jacqueline J. Saindon, "The Spread of Literacy in a Latin American Peasant Society: Oaxaca, Mexico, 1890 to 1980," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 34:1 (1992): 110–40.
28. Aaron Benavot and Phyllis Riddle, "The Expansion of Primary Education, 1870–1940: Trends and Issues," *Sociology of Education* 61:3 (1988): 191–210.
29. Literacy around 1900 varied dramatically within Latin America. But even the countries with the lowest rates in the region (Honduras, 18%; Bolivia, 17%; and Guatemala, 13%) did not rank much below Portugal's 25% and Serbia's 21%, surpassed Bosnia's 12%, and doubled or tripled the rates in India (6%), Egypt (5%), and Turkey (5%). The fact that literacy among the black population in Cuba in 1860—that is, eighteen years before the abolition of slavery—was higher than that of the population in general of the last three countries almost half a century later underlines the gap in education levels between Latin America and the non-Western world. From data in UNESCO, *Progress of Literacy in Various Countries* (Paris, 1953), 200–22, and Carlos Newland, "La educación elemental en Hispanoamérica: Desde la independencia hasta la centralización de los sistemas educativos nacionales," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 71:2 (1991): 378.
30. Literacy rates around 1910 were 35% in Russia and Poland, 42% in Bulgaria, 50% in Spain, and 62% in Italy. The highest rates in the world were found in Great Britain, where it had become universal, among South African whites (97%), and in the United States (92%), Canada (89%), and France (87%); Boris N. Mironov, "The Development of Literacy in Russia and the USSR from the Tenth to the Twentieth Centuries," *History of Education Quarterly* 31:2 (1991): 240; Gabriel Tortella, "Patterns of Economic Retardation and Recovery in South-Western Europe in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," *The Economic History Review, New Series* 47:1 (1994): 11; UNESCO, *Progress of Literacy in Various Countries*, 144, 200–22.
31. World Bank, *Peril and Promise: Higher Education in Developing Countries* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2000), 104–07. The nine Latin American countries with universal primary school enrollment rates in 1965 were Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, Peru, Cuba, Costa Rica, and Panama. They were followed by Venezuela (94%), Mexico (92%), Ecuador (91%), Dominican Republic (87%), Colombia (84%), El Salvador (82%), Honduras (80%), Bolivia (73%), Nicaragua (65%), and Guatemala (50%).
32. World Bank, *Peril and Promise*, 104–07.
33. Siew-Ean Khoo, Peter C. Smith, and James T. Fawcett, "Migration of Women to Cities: The Asian Situation in Comparative Perspective," *International Migration Review* 18:4 (1984): 1247–63.
34. Jose C. Moya, "Domestic Service in a Global Perspective: Gender, Migration, and Ethnic Niches," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 33:4 (2007): 559–79.
35. UNESCO, *Global Education Digest 2007: Comparing Education Statistics across the World* (Montreal: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2007), 132.
36. UNESCO, *Global Education Digest 2007*; German W. Rama and Juan Carlos Tedesco, "Education and Development in Latin America, 1950–1975," *International Review of Education* 25:2/3 (1979): 187–211; Karen Bradley and Francisco O. Ramirez, "World Polity and Gender Parity: Women's Share of Higher Education, 1965–1985," *Research in Sociology of Education and Socialization* 11 (1996): 63–91.

37. Román de la Campa, "Latin, Latino, American: Split States and Global Imaginaries," *Comparative Literature* 53:4 (2001): 377, perceives in the term Latin America an Anglo-American effort to establish otherness, a form of North American orientalism.
38. Enrique Dussel, "Eurocentrism and Modernity," *Boundary* 20:2 (1993): 65, briefly mentions the marginalization of Spain and Portugal in the discourse on Western modernity. Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, *Puritan Conquistadors: Iberianizing the Atlantic, 1550–1700* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006) has recently confronted these assumptions, making a powerful case for the centrality of the Iberian presence in the shaping of not only Latin America but the entire Atlantic world.
39. A good example of Anglo-American assumptions about the backwardness of the Iberian world is unwittingly provided by the English historian Lawrence Stone in "Literacy and Education in England 1640–1900," *Past and Present* 42 (Feb. 1969): 69–139. In a concluding aside that bears little relation to the topic of the article, Stone muses about how "modernizing tyrannies," such as communist and fascist regimes, carry within them the seed of their own undoing because of their emphasis on mass education, and are thus transient, adding: "it is only nonmodernizing tyrannies, such as are found in Iberia and Latin America, which are capable of enduring for centuries" (p. 86). Despite Stone's certainty, these backward and interminable Iberian tyrannies lasted not centuries but five years in Spain and less than two decades in all of Latin America.
40. The phrase "rich as Peru" was still common enough in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries to appear in musical entertainment such as Mozart's opera *Così fan tutte* (1790) and Rossini's *Il viaggio a Reims* (1825).
41. The New Economics Foundation, "The Happy Planet Index, 2009," p. 3. Available at www.happyplanetindex.org/public-data/files/happy-planet-index-2-0.pdf (accessed May 12, 2010).
42. Paul B. Rich, *Race and Empire in British Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986).
43. Rubin F. Weston, *Racism in U.S. Imperialism: The Influence of Racial Assumption on American Foreign Policy, 1893–1946* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1972); and Michael L. Krenn, ed., *Race and U.S. Foreign Policy in the Ages of Territorial and Market Expansion, 1840–1900* (New York: Taylor & Francis, 1998): pp. 43–116 for four chapters on the annexation of Texas and the Mexican-American War, pp. 208–40 for "Imperialism and the Anglo-Saxon," and pp. 254–65 on Cuba and Puerto Rico.
- p. 24 44. Miguel Angel Centeno, *Blood and Debt: War and the Nation-State in Latin America* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2002), 7–10.
45. Walter D. Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005).
46. The shift in emphasis from imperial dictates to local processes in the history of the colonial period was first advanced by social history's concern with quotidian realities and popular culture rather than elite politics and later by the "New Philology," a school of ethnohistory that stressed the importance of using American sources, particularly those written in indigenous languages. See the essay in this volume by Terraciano and Sousa.
47. All data for GDP per capita by country come from Maddison, *Monitoring the World Economy, 1820–1992*, his webpage (see note 24), and United Nation and World Bank reports.
48. Calculated from data on languages and numbers of speakers in Lewis, *Ethnologue*.