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LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES 100: "Introduction to Latin American Studies"

Video Scripts

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Table of Contents

1. "Where is Latin America?" ... 3
2. "The Meeting of Two Worlds" ... 9
3. "The Colonial Experience" ... 15
4. "Independence Narratives, Past and Present" ... 21
5. "Caudillos Versus the Nation State" ... 28
6. "Citizenship and Rights in the New Republics" ... 34
7. "The Export Boom as Modernity" ... 40
8. "Signs of Crisis in a Gilded Age" ... 46
9. "Commerce, Coercion, and America's Empire" ... 52
10. "Power to the People" ... 58
10a. "A Decade of Revolution in Cuba" ... 64
11. "The Terror" ... 70
12. "Speaking Truth to Power" ... 76
13. "Towards an Uncertain Future" ... 83
Index ... 91

1. "Where is Latin America?"

This course is an introduction to the study of Latin America. It is defined by the object of study (Latin America), rather than by any particular way of studying that object. Our approach is therefore interdisciplinary. Unlike in some other university courses, we will not restrict ourselves to any one aspect of what we are studying. Our efforts to understand Latin America touch on History, Geography, Anthropology, Politics Sociology and so on. We will look at Language, Literature, Art, Film, as well as Gender, Race, Ethnicity, and Class. We range in *time* from 1492 (and before) to the present, and in *space* from the country to the city, the highlands to the coast, Mexico to Argentina, Ecuador to Brazil, Peru, Cuba, Nicaragua...

But an introduction to Latin American *Studies* is not simply an introduction to Latin America. It is also an introduction to the ways in which Latin America has been understood, represented, and constructed. For the thing about the object that we are studying, the object that gives this course its name and its purpose, is that it is by no means obvious what or where it is. Latin America is hardly a natural or God-given entity. Indeed, in some ways it is not really an entity or object at all. It might be better to say that Latin America is an *idea*, and that what we will be studying is as much the idea of Latin America as the thing itself, especially if (as we will see) this idea doesn't correspond all that well to any thing or object that we can easily pin down. So even a simple question such as "Where is Latin America?" turns out to be a puzzle.

But you can help answer it. Now, it is true that, because this is an introductory course, we don't expect any special knowledge of Latin America or Latin American Studies. You may or may not have taken a course like this before. You may or may not have travelled to or read something about Latin America. You may even live in or come from the region. If so, that is great; if not, no worries. There is no special advantage to prior knowledge. In some ways it may be a *dis*advantage. Yet you must have *some* expectations, otherwise you wouldn't be here at all. The term "Latin America" must have some kind of resonance

or association for you. In other words, you already have an idea of Latin America. So help me out.

With a pen and paper, write an answer to the question, “Where is Latin America?” And when you have done that, take another minute or two to write down three words or phrases that you associate with Latin America. Don’t think about it too hard. The point is not to get to the right answer. (Hint: there isn’t one.) The point is to flesh out what your idea of Latin America looks like. So I say “Latin America” and you say...

OK, pause the video and write your answers. I’m off for a cup of coffee, but I’ll be back.

[…]

So how did you do? Let us think about your answers to the question “Where is Latin America?” I suspect that there are various ways you might have answered it. (If I am wrong, leave a comment.) The differences between these answers reflect the discipline or approach that, consciously or unconsciously, you chose to stress. You may have focussed on Geography, on Language or Culture, on History, or on Politics.

Geography

One answer, then, is what we could call geographical. You may have responded that Latin America is a region defined by spatial borders. For instance, you may have said that it begins in the North at the US/Mexican border, or the Río Grande. And you may have said that it ends in the South in Tierra del Fuego, or perhaps at Cape Horn. As with almost all the possible answers to the question, this one is pretty good as a rough and ready rule of thumb. But it’s not long before you run into problems.

For instance, the Caribbean: you may have noted that Latin America also includes at least some Caribbean islands (Cuba, say, or Puerto Rico), but not all of them, because there are other islands (Jamaica, Martinique, Aruba) that aren’t usually included, and are instead sometimes referred to as the (British, French, or Dutch) “West Indies.”

But even if we stay on the mainland, there are a few pockets that don't seem to fit so well into our idea of Latin America. Belize, in Central America, for instance. Or the Guyanas (Guyana, Suriname, and French Guiana), on the northeast corner of South America. Indeed, French Guiana--like Martinique--is officially part of France: its currency is the Euro; it's in the European Union; the French Guyanese vote for representatives in the European Parliament.

Then there are more problematic and contested areas: The Falkland Islands, for instance, in the South Atlantic, a British colony that Argentina claims as its own, calling them the "Islas Malvinas." Here, the Argentine claim is mostly based on geography, in that the Falklands/Malvinas are on the same continental shelf as Argentina; the British argument, however, invokes history, culture, and politics. The islands' 3,000 residents, after all, have not only voted repeatedly to keep the link with the United Kingdom. They are also mostly descended from British colonizers, drink tea rather than Argentine *mate*, eat mutton or fish and chips rather than steak, and overwhelmingly speak English. If it weren't for the geography, it would be hard to call them Latin American. So perhaps geography is not enough to answer our question.

Language/Culture

A second approach to the problem of "Where is Latin America?" draws on language or culture. You may have responded that Latin America is the part of the Americas where people speak Spanish, or (in Brazil) Portuguese. This definition deals with geographical anomalies such as the Falklands/Malvinas or the non-Hispanic Caribbean.

And certainly the vast majority of the countries that tend to fit with our idea of Latin America have either Spanish or Portuguese as official languages. In Buenos Aires, Mexico City, Bogotá, or Rio de Janeiro, street and shop signs, everyday conversation, newspapers, novels and political discussions, are all almost entirely in one of the two Iberian languages. And though there are cultural differences between these places, there are also some broad commonalities in matters of, for instance, religion or cuisine.

But new problems arise. First, if we define it according to language or culture, Latin America starts to spill out of its geographical borders. For it is not just in Mexico City or Lima that Spanish is spoken. The same is true of Miami, Florida, or many parts of New York or Chicago, let alone much of California and the US Southwest. Indeed, with around 45 million Spanish speakers, the United States is (after Mexico) the second-largest Spanish-speaking country in the world, and many of its substantial Hispanic or Latino minority retain many of the same cultural characteristics as their neighbours in Mexico, Cuba, or the Dominican Republic. So is the USA part of Latin America?

The second problem with this linguistic/cultural definition is that there remain large populations *within* "Latin America" (defined in these terms) that do *not* share these characteristics. In highland Guatemala or Andean Peru, for instance, everyday language remains largely pre-Hispanic: Quiché or Quechua, respectively. And the cultures of indigenous communities from Bolivia to Ecuador, Mexico to Paraguay, have been affected by the long Hispanic presence but not completely obliterated by it.

If we define the region only in terms of the language and customs of the colonizers, we ignore (or consign to a prehistoric past) those whom they colonized. Indeed, if we add the contributions of the many millions of African slaves and their descendants (in countries such as Brazil, Colombia, or Cuba), then in linguistic and cultural terms a better name for the place might be "Afro-Indo-Latin America."

History/Politics

So a third answer to the question "Where is Latin America?" stresses history or politics. You may have written down that "Latin America" is that region of the Americas that was colonized by Spain or Portugal. But note that this would still include large portions of the United States. And Iberian colonization was also very uneven, focussed on resource extraction (above all, mining) administered from large cities. Some parts of the region were, if you like, colonized more intensely than others. Yes, colonial history and postcolonial politics have shaped what we now call Latin America, but in very different ways in different places.

But the question (and its answer) is also historical and political in another sense. The origin of the idea of Latin America is itself political: it was invented, in fact, by the French, during the Napoleonic period. France promoted the idea of a "Latin" America, whose allegiances and interests lay with countries whose languages derived from Latin, as a geopolitical counterweight to "Anglo" America, those parts of the Americas under the influence of Great Britain. In this, original, version of the concept not only would French Guiana be integrally part of Latin America, but also (say) Louisiana and Quebec.

The fact that few people would now include Quebec within Latin America shows, then, that this definition is also historical in the sense that it is outdated. Or rather: that the idea of Latin America has its own history. What we define as (and what we think about) Latin America changes over time. Each generation constructs its own idea of Latin America. This is a mobile, malleable, elusive term that can never quite be pinned down, not least because it is more idea than reality.

Look at the words you wrote down that you associate with Latin America. Perhaps you included sun and salsa, rum or tequila; you might have mentioned Aztecs or Incas, football or fajitas; maybe narcotraffic and nationalism, poverty or protests. The point is this: your answers would have been very different twenty-five years ago, and even more different twenty-five or fifty years before that.

This is not so much because Latin America has changed (though it has), as because our idea of the place has changed. For much of the twentieth-century, for instance, the region was associated with coups and revolutionaries, and high cultural icons such as Pablo Neruda or Gabriel García Márquez; now, however, we tend to think of pop culture from sport to music to movies. North Americans are more likely to have been on a package tour or all-inclusive to Cancún or Costa Rica, and so to think of beaches rather than mountains, sunshine instead of glaciers.

And as our idea of Latin America changes over time, so Latin America, itself an idea, also changes. For just because Latin America is an idea, a construction or invention, this doesn't mean it is not *real*. Ideas *are* real, and have real effects and consequences, for both good and ill. Over time, as our expectations and definitions shift, or our sense of what

Latin America is changes, so the range of actual possibilities or outcomes for the region also change, even as we wrestle with the fact that the idea never fully accounts for or can be reduced to what the region is or could be.

Latin American Studies is an attempt to chart this complex relationship between an ever-changing, slippery, and always political idea of Latin America and the diverse range of experiences and histories that this idea tries to encompass and predict. And at the end of this course, I can't promise that we will be any closer to defining Latin America, or even to answering with any certainty the question of "Where Latin America is." But at least we will have a better sense as to *why* such a simple question has no simple answer. And perhaps we will have a better sense of the kind(s) of Latin America we want to construct, now and in the future.

2. "The Meeting of Two Worlds"

In our last video, we discussed the problem of locating Latin America in space: of saying *where* it is. We noted that its borders are fluid and uncertain, and may or may not include places such as the Falklands/Malvinas, Miami, Florida, or highland Peru, depending on the discipline or approach we take. We said, then, that it is best to think of Latin America as an *idea* rather than as a thing that can be pinned down or described with any confidence. Moreover, this is an idea that has its own history: it was invented at a particular time and place--nineteenth-century France--but it no longer has the same content today that it did then. The idea of Latin America is constantly changing, continually being reinvented. Our task is to chart the relationship between this slippery idea and the diverse histories and experiences that it tries to encompass.

When is Latin America?

Identifying *when* Latin America came into existence is equally tricky. One answer might be to examine the history of the idea since its invention, and to think about how and why it became popular during the twentieth century. Another answer might be to suggest that Latin America still *doesn't* exist: that it is a (political and social) project that remains incomplete. Both these approaches offer fruitful lines of enquiry. But finally, if somewhat anachronistically, yet another answer would trace the idea of Latin America as it has been projected back into the past, long before the term itself existed. In which case, one date immediately jumps out as an almost mythical point of origin for Latin America: 1492.

1492

More specifically, the early morning of October 12, 1492, would have been the precise instant that Latin America began, this being the moment at which the Genoese sailor Christopher Columbus, along with the crew of his three small ships, found themselves somewhere off the coast of an island in what is now the Bahamas.

1492 is a date that resonates through history, at least if we think of history as a sequence of punctual events that can be identified in terms of days, months, and years. For the Western hemisphere, 1492 marks the great dividing line between pre-colonial, pre-Hispanic (and thus, pre-Latin) America, versus the long periods of colonial rule and post-colonial legacy that follow. Indeed, we refer to indigenous civilizations, practices, beliefs, and artifacts from before that moment as "pre-Columbian": before Columbus.

1492 is one of the few dates, perhaps the only one, to trip off the tongue of just about every educated person in the Americas, and even worldwide, thanks to ditties such as "In fourteen hundred ninety-two, Columbus sailed the ocean blue." The event and its central figure are commemorated in paintings, statues, memorials, as well as the names of streets, cities, this Canadian province, and even (with Colombia) an entire country.

Yet things are not, of course, so simple. In the first instance, as we have already noted, 1492 only comes to assume this importance much later. It is a key element of a narrative that is only constructed in the aftermath of subsequent events. Whatever may have begun on October 12 of that year, the vast majority of the inhabitants of the Americas would have remained utterly unaware for decades, in some cases centuries. Nor, in an age of difficult communications and restricted information flows, would most Europeans receive the news or find their lives affected until long after Columbus and his crew returned in March, 1493. To put this another way: colonialism was an uneven process, and it would continue to be so, making a mockery of any conception of history as steady progression from one epoch to another.

In the second instance, the very notion of a founding event erroneously implies that there is some organic, even inevitable, link between what we have now and what happened then. There is no reason why history should have unfolded the way it did. After all, this was not the first time that Europeans had crossed the Atlantic: Vikings were in what is today Eastern Canada some five centuries earlier, and yet their settlement left little to no long-lasting impact. Moreover, the first several decades of Spanish exploration and colonization in the Americas were decidedly precarious, sometimes because of indigenous resistance, sometimes because of natural adversity, and at still other times because of infighting among the conquistadors themselves. History might well have

turned out otherwise, and 1492 could easily have ended up being just a date like any other.

More importantly, and in the third instance, Columbus had no idea he was founding anything. It was, at best, a purely accidental foundation of which its main architect was, and would remain, unaware. For all the praise--and vilification--he has subsequently received for what he did, whether we call it “discovery” or “conquest,” Columbus himself never recognized that he had done it. He went to his grave with the notion that he had charted a new route to the Indies, that is, to East Asia. As he says in the journal of his first voyage, however enticed he is by the various islands he comes across, he is “still determined to continue to the mainland, to the city of Quinsay [a port in what is now China], and to give Your Majesties’ [the King and Queen of Castile’s] letters to the Great Khan and return with his reply” (105).

Columbus Perplexed

There are moments when Columbus’s insistence that he has (almost) accomplished his self-declared mission sounds like denial of the facts on the ground, and we often sense his perplexity that the new terrain and its people are not quite as he had imagined they would be. His constant search for gold is testament less to greed (which he denounces in the behavior of fellow captain Martín Pinzón [122]) than to his belief that close by should be the great civilization that travellers to the East such as Marco Polo had previously reported. Hence also his frequent distrust when the natives seem to tell him otherwise, and his repeated assertions that he can never verify: “There *must be* large settlements inland here, with hosts of people, and things of great profit” (128; emphasis added). In effect, Columbus was himself pre-Columbian.

Columbus was unsure as to what (if anything) he had achieved. He shows a palpable anxiety as he tries to convince his crew, his sponsors, and perhaps even himself that this journey was worth the effort. The journal is no neutral record of a set of experiences. It is an exercise in (self-)justification. From the start, for instance, Columbus has to deal with the reluctance of his own men, to whom he provides a false reckoning of the distance travelled as they traverse the ocean. Shortly before landfall in the Americas, they are

practically mutinous: "they could contain themselves no longer" (92). And his assurances to the King and Queen are an effort in repeated special pleading, given that he has signally failed to prove his wager on a trade route to the East. He turns back for home just as he declares that "the enterprise now appears so splendid in extent and of such high promise" (159). Yet apart from a few trinkets and some no-doubt miserable (hardly magnificent) indigenous captives, all he can offer their majesties is this promise of rewards deferred to some unknowable future.

But we, too, cannot be all that certain of the significance, if any, of 1492.

Many Narratives

The literary critic and philosopher Tzvetan Todorov argues that Columbus's journey was as important for defining a European sense of identity as for any impact it went on to have for the Americas themselves. Todorov claims that the "discovery of America" is best seen as the discovery (or invention) of the modern European "self" via the American "other." As such, it "mark[s] the beginning of the modern era" (5). Modernity begins, in 1492, on a remote Caribbean island. This is a good enough a way of understanding things, if somewhat narcissistic. But it is just one narrative among many.

Let's interject a question or two here. Get a pen and paper and jot down responses to the following prompts. I wonder, first, what impression you had of Columbus *before* you looked at his own account of 1492. Had you been led to believe, for instance, that he was a hero or a villain? What narrative had you found convincing? And then, second, I'm interested in how your thoughts may have changed *after* reading about events in (more or less) his own words. Were you more persuaded of his heroism, or more convinced of his villainy? Or perhaps something else?

Pause the video and write your answers. I fancy a mug of tea, but I'll be back.

[. . .]

So what did you put? I'm sure you had a variety of answers, but in my experience these days many people are quick to point the finger at Columbus. And yet that is not the story that I, at least, was taught when I was growing up. It is that we have progressed, now that schools provide more nuanced and critical accounts?

What may surprise you is that debates over the significance and morality of Columbus's achievement, and what followed, are longstanding, and not simply a result of contemporary sensitivities or political correctness. The so-called "Black Legend," portraying Spanish imperialism as rapacious and corrupt, arose as early as the sixteenth century. Within Spain itself there were important debates about the ethics of colonialism, such as the 1550 confrontation between legal scholar Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda and Dominican friar Bartolomé de Las Casas. In 1542 (only fifty years after Columbus's first contact), Las Casas wrote a searing exposé of Spanish cruelty and genocide of the indigenous population in a book entitled *A Short History of the Destruction of the Indies*. It is then hardly a novel or radical gesture to post denunciations (say) on Facebook for Columbus Day. As Todorov points out, "There is a certain frivolity in merely condemning the wicked conquistadors and regretting the noble Indians--as if it sufficed to identify evil in order to oppose it" (254).

Such gestures (and the questions that prompt them) tell us more about ourselves than they do about Columbus or the Spaniards of the 1400s and 1500s. And to some extent that is no bad thing. 1492 is a mythic story, whether the spin is positive or negative, and myths cannot easily be surrendered. It is worth asking ourselves why we are so eager to believe them. Rather than trying to replace the myth with some "truth," perhaps it is best to acknowledge the Columbus story as an *allegory*, a literary genre whose true object is missing or displaced.

For what's intriguing in reading Columbus's journal is how hard he works, and how quickly he fails, to capture his experience in words. "I am not giving it the hundredth part of the praise it deserves," he tells us. "No one will believe it unless they see it with their own eyes"; "whatever efforts I make to tell Your Majesties about it, my tongue could not tell the whole truth, or my hand set it down" (124; 127). However little opposition he

meets from the indigenous people themselves, there is something about the place that resists or escapes.

Columbus as Literature

Columbus's text battles with a fundamental gap between the thing itself and the means he has to represent it. This is why the journal becomes inescapably literary as he is forced to employ poetic and rhetorical figures such as simile: he is always telling us that what he sees is *like* something else that is more familiar ("like a wax candle"; "like a horse's tail"; "like a baker's shovel" [93; 94; 95]), but different. Nothing can quite be pinned down, even if it can be bartered, appropriated, or stolen from its rightful owners. His task is to describe what is new, but he can only do so in terms of what is old and familiar. At best he has to make do with signs: words or things that point to his true object (signs of land, signs of people, signs of reverence [91, 125, 138]), but which can't quite take its place.

In the end, Columbus's journal charts not simply his way to the Americas, but also the onset of a crisis of representation that will affect modernity as a whole. (What comes to be) Latin America induces in a particular way an anxiety about our inability to communicate, even to say what things are. No wonder the idea of Latin America is so slippery. If it has an essence, perhaps this is it.

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3. “The Colonial Experience”

Last time, we discussed the voyage of Christopher Columbus and his crew across the Atlantic. Their arrival in the Bahamas on October 12, 1492, provides a mythic point of origin for Latin America. But we questioned the founding narrative that this date seems to anchor, and the fiction of historical progression or epochal break that goes with it. 1492 could have been a date like any other. It was only later that it was, retrospectively, imbued with such significance as the dividing line between pre-colonial, pre-Hispanic, (and thus, pre-Latin) America, versus the long periods of colonial rule and post-colonial legacy that follow.

But we went on to suggest that this doesn’t mean we can dispense with such narratives altogether. Myths are not so easily surrendered. Instead, we offered a reading of the Columbus story as allegory--a literary genre whose true object is missing or displaced--and we showed how his journal battles with a gap between the thing itself and the means he has to represent it. This battle suggests the onset of a crisis of representation that will affect modernity as a whole. Latin America induces in a particular way an anxiety about our inability to communicate, even to say what things are.

Before going on to examine how this anxiety informs and infects the colonial experience, let us return briefly to 1492.

1492

In Spain at the time, there would have been little doubt as to the significance of that date, for it was the year of two momentous events for Spanish history. First, early January saw the Fall of Granada, as Mohammed XII, Emir of that city, surrendered to the Catholic monarchs after a lengthy siege. This brought an end to eight hundred years of Moslem control (and an almost equally protracted “Reconquista” or “reconquest”) in what was known as al-Andalus, which gives its name to Andalucía, southern Spain.

Then in March, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella signed the Alhambra Decree, which ordered the expulsion of all Jews from the peninsula, unless they converted to Christianity. Tens, perhaps hundreds, of thousands were evicted over the following months. Today, we would see this as an exercise in ethnic cleansing. In this context the departure of Columbus's three small ships in August was easily overshadowed. Spain was finally coming into its own as a unified political entity (culminating in the accession of Charles I in 1516), a unity apparently purged of ethnic or religious heterogeneity.

But nothing, as we're beginning to learn, is quite so simple.

New Categories of Otherness

For the "discovery" or "conquest" of the Americas, and Spain's expansion as an imperial power, opened up a multiplicity of new categories of otherness. In some ways, then, everything that Ferdinand and Isabella had supposedly achieved in 1492 was undone in the fall-out from Columbus's various voyages. Both practically and conceptually, new means of managing difference were now required.

The first issue concerned the indigenous inhabitants of the Americas. What kind of people were they? This was the nub of the debate between Sepúlveda and Las Casas that we mentioned last time. Drawing on Aristotle, Sepúlveda claimed that the New World's native peoples were "natural slaves." But Las Casas saw them as potential converts to Christianity. In *A Brief History of the Destruction of the Indies*, he denounces conquistador cruelty above all for sabotaging the project of conversion and indoctrination by which (he argues) the indigenous would otherwise be easily claimed for the Catholic Church.

Las Casas's tireless lobbying had its effect, as in 1542 Charles I proclaimed the "New Laws of the Indies," designed to restrict the exploitation of native labour on the part of colonist landowners. Yet the attempt to enslave the inhabitants of the Americas had already run into difficulties, most obviously with the wholesale depopulation of much the Caribbean and elsewhere, thanks to the introduction of diseases from Europe to which the indigenous had no immunity. Within fifty years of Columbus's first voyage, the population of the Americas had probably halved; by 1600 it was perhaps a fifth of its pre-

conquest size. In part to compensate for this deficit, as early as 1525 the Spanish, and later the Portuguese, had begun importing slaves from Africa.

The second issue, then, concerned this new element forcibly hauled across the Atlantic. Over the next couple of centuries, many millions of sub-Saharan Africans were transported to just about every corner of the New World but predominantly to the plantations of the Caribbean and the Atlantic coast. Here the conditions of life cultivating sugar, to satisfy Europe's newly-discovered sweet tooth, were particularly harsh. Overall, by 1800 probably six times as many Africans as Europeans had come to the Americas.

It may surprise you to learn that the number of slaves that were brought to what became the United States (some half a million) was far less than the number taken to places such as Cuba (700,000), Hispaniola (900,000), or, above all, Brazil (well over three million). Even countries that we now hardly associate with slavery, such as Mexico and Peru, had significant black populations.

By 1825 (for most of Latin America, the end of the colonial period), about 18% of the region's population were of African descent. 19% were white. And around 35% were indigenous Amerindian.

But do some quick maths: what of the other 28%? They were *mestizo*, that is, a mix of white and indigenous. And in fact the figure for the black population that I've just mentioned includes so-called mulattoes--a mix of white and black. Indeed, this way of collating the data, to include everyone who has some African "blood" under the single category of "black" is, as we will see, a very North American way of understanding or constructing racial categorization. In Latin America, things were done quite differently.

We are a long way here from the dream of ethnic and religious homogeneity that the reconquest of al-Andalus and the expulsion of the Jews was supposed to have ensured. Instead, we have a bewildering array of sometimes overlapping, potential differences and distinctions. Colonial Latin America was a hotbed of diversity in ways that (for various reasons) colonial Africa, Asia, or even North America were not. And the Spanish state and its imperial bureaucracy were determined to chart and manage this complex

demography, while social mores in the colonies themselves made much of even apparently small differences.

Casta Paintings

There is no more vivid illustration of the desire to manage and negotiate difference than the so-called "casta paintings" that enjoyed a vogue in the colonial centres of eighteenth-century New Spain (that is, Mexico) and Peru.

Before we continue, I'd like you to take the time to look at some of these images. Consider the ways in which the various groupings they present are distinguished both from each other and internally. Think also about the similarities between them or the ways in which distinctions are sometimes hard to pick out. While you do that, I'll run and get a soda. But I'll be right back.

[. . .]

What did you see? Casta paintings are (almost) always multiple. They comprise a series of scenes--usually, sixteen--of racial and ethnic purity and mixture, each illustrated by a family group. They start with the basic building blocks of difference: white (*español* or "Spanish"), indigenous (*indio* or "Indian"), and black (*negro*, or sometimes *moro*). In combination, these basic elements then produce *mestizo* (white plus indigenous), *mulato* (white plus black), and *zambo* (but also sometimes *chino* or *lobo*; indigenous plus black). Things soon get very complicated. For the paintings go on to chart just about every possible succeeding combination: white plus *mestizo*; *mestizo* plus indigenous; *mulato* plus *zambo*; and so on. Few sets of paintings agree exactly on the correct designations.

At times, a spark of purported purity re-emerges to offer the promise that difference can somehow be bred back out of the system: *castizo* plus *español* produce (once more) *español*. But on the whole what explodes from the canvas is an extraordinary profusion of *castizos*, *moriscos*, *albarazados*, *cambujos*, *calpamulatos* and the like. It all gets too much: we have labels such as *tente en el ayre* ("hold yourself in the air") or, perhaps most revealingly, *no te entiendo* ("I don't understand you"). We can almost see, graphically depicted before our

eyes, the frustration of the very drive to classify that motivates these images in the first place.

The casta paintings set out to contain difference, by assigning each racial or ethnic classification (quite literally) its own box. Note the comprehensiveness of this intent. Not only is every racial combination given its "proper" name, but each is also assigned a whole series of secondary attributes: clothing, occupation, even at times the housing or landscape in each scene are calibrated in line with the proffered ethnic designation.

So the family that unites *español* and *castizo*, for example, could be portrayed as landowners with the Spanish father in a fine waistcoat (having accomplished his mission of racial whitening) puffing contentedly on a cigarillo in front of a verdant landscape. But the *zambaigo* and his indigenous partner are at each others' throats, and at the bottom of the scale the family of the *tente en el ayre* are apparently itinerant, barefoot collectors of firewood in a far harsher natural environment. In short, these paintings give us a vision of a hierarchical social order in which racial difference is in synch with a whole series of other distinctions. Everyone has a place in this panorama of colonial society, but the internal grid implacably divides one social group from another.

At the same time, the grid also functions as a mechanism to *produce* difference. Compare, for instance, the lens through which, as we said, race has been historically viewed (or constructed) in the United States: the famous "one-drop" rule, by which anyone with any African ancestry at all is construed as "black." By contrast, the micro-management of difference evidenced in the casta paintings produces an ever-more arcane set of distinctions whose logic is increasingly unfathomable. Moreover, precisely in its desire to account for all possible ethnic combinations, the casta painting cries out for us to ask about the possibilities that it inevitably cannot cover. What comes of a *zambaigo* and an *albarazada*, for instance? A *chamizo* and a *negra*?

To put this another way: the grid attempts to provide a place for everyone, and mark sharp dividing lines between them, but it is needed precisely because these same lines are, in practice, consistently crossed, forever blurred.

Anxious Identity

We have here not only, once again, a crisis of representation, of the attempt to fit names to things. We also have one of the central themes and preoccupations of Latin American self-reflection and thought: an anxiety about identity. No longer simply "What kind of people are *they*?" but now "What name should we give *ourselves*?" and perhaps--but only perhaps--more fundamentally, "Who *are* we?" It's unsurprising that, to answer this question, Latin Americans have turned to notions of (biological, cultural, and social) mixture. It's doubly unsurprising that we have a proliferation of concepts that try to denote or capture this mixedness: *mestizaje*, but also syncretism, transculturation, hybridity… each of which is (or is argued to be) slightly different, slightly more "proper" as a name for the very impropriety that it both references and hides.

So Latin America is a place where identity seems to come into focus, as in Todorov's contention that it is here that the European "self" is invented, by way of its encounter with the American "other." But it is equally a place where identity always threatens to dissolve, for both good and ill. We see the potential of such dissolution in the fascinating story of Catalina de Erauso, a Basque nun who reinvents herself in the colonial Americas as a swashbuckling conquistador, disturbing gender distinctions in some ways and reinforcing them in others. But we also see it in numerous other narratives of everything from devouring jungles to drug-trips with Shamans. Latin America makes us question where and when, but also *who* we are.

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4. "Independence Narratives, Past and Present"

In our last few videos, we have shown how Latin America--or the elusive *idea* of Latin America--destabilizes our conceptions of geography, history, and identity, that is, space, time, and self. It is hard to say where Latin America is, or when it comes into being (if indeed it has done so yet). Moreover, the place--or, again, the idea--even makes us question who we are. We have described all this as a crisis of representation, whose traces can be found right at the mythic point of Latin American origin, 1492. Moreover, as 1492 is also the founding moment of the modern age, modernity in turn is characterized and affected by this same crisis.

We have looked at this crisis mostly in terms of *aesthetic* representation: the attempt to portray things in words or images (or some other medium). We showed, for instance, how Columbus battles with words and how the casta paintings struggle in paint to provide a comprehensive visual record of colonial society and its racialized hierarchies. But there is also *political* representation: the process by which decisions are made or articulated by some people on behalf of others. It is in this sense that we elect "representatives" to parliament, for instance.

These two meanings of the term--the aesthetic and the political, portrait and proxy--are related, in that they both describe one thing standing for another. But they are also distinct, if never fully separable. And it is political representation that comes to the fore at the point at which Latin America (though remember that the name has yet to be invented) comes to throw off its colonial masters.

At issue, in other words, is who gets to make (and enforce) the political, legal, and economic decisions that affect the inhabitants of the Americas, and what rights those inhabitants have to influence (or resist) such decisions. In the late eighteenth-century, governance, representation, and rights were concerns both sides of the Atlantic.

In the 1750s, aggrieved colonists in North America spread the slogan "No taxation without representation" to protest the fact that economic decisions impacting the British colonies were made without any political input from the colonists themselves. In July 1775, the "Second Continental Congress," meeting in Philadelphia, issued a "Declaration of the Causes and Necessity of Taking Up Arms" to justify the rebellion that had broken out against the Crown earlier that year. Noting that Parliament in Westminster asserted the "'right [to] make laws to bind us in all cases whatsoever,'" the rebels objected that "Not a single man of those who assume [so enormous, so unlimited a power] is chosen by us, or is subject to our control or influence." Almost exactly a year later, the same Congress declared independence for the United States of America.

The American Revolution was an influence, alongside the writings of philosophers such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau, on the "Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen," issued by the French National Constituent Assembly in the heat of the Revolution of 1789. This document opens by proclaiming that "Men are born and remain free and equal in rights." The diffuse trans-Atlantic interchange of new ideas and rebellious sentiments then continued as slaves in the French Caribbean colony of Saint Domingue seized on this notion that freedom and equality were sanctioned by a now official discourse of universal rights. In 1791 they rose up against the plantation owners, initiating a revolutionary process that gave birth to the independent Republic of Haiti.

All this is the context to Simón Bolívar's "Letter from Jamaica" of 1815. Like the North American colonists before him, Bolívar complains that the hemisphere's inhabitants have been excluded from the decision-making processes that affect them: "politically they were nonexistent" (22); the Spanish Empire, he asserts, "has kept us in a sort of permanent infancy with regard to public affairs" (23). And like the French, his critique is premised on a discourse of inherent, natural right: "Is it not an outrage and a violation of human rights," he asks, "to expect a land so splendidly endowed, so vast, rich, and populous, to remain merely passive" (23). Then there is a nod to Haiti in Bolívar's invocations of slavery: "A people is [. . .] enslaved," he tells us, "when the government [. . .] infringes on and usurps the rights of the citizen or subject" (22).

Bolívar's letter translates and interprets for a new context a radical discourse that has ricocheted between the Old World and the New, South and North. He lays the foundation for a tradition that will be revised and reinterpreted by would-be revolutionaries and reformers right up to the present, as Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez's 2004 speech to the G-15 summit shows. In the Jamaica letter, "Bolívar reveals himself," Chávez claims, "as an anti-imperialist leader" (31) whose words resonate both with twentieth-century anti-colonial movements in South Asia and Africa, and also with contemporary struggles against neoliberalism.

But there were other contexts to (and other legacies of) the pronouncements of the so-called "liberators" of the Latin American wars of independence. We might for instance be alert to Bolívar's hyperbolic insistence that the inhabitants of the Americas were "in a position *lower than* slavery" (22; emphasis added). Many of the people whom he was addressing were, after all, themselves slave*holders*, masters rather than slaves. The creole elite in Spanish America saw the Haitian Revolution as threat as much as inspiration: like the white planters of Saint Domingue, they too might find themselves the losers rather than beneficiaries of any truly radical transformation that took the discourse of rights (let alone a long history of cruelty) too seriously.

Equally, parts of the Americas had been shaken by resurgent indigenous opposition to colonial rule, most spectacularly with the 1780 uprising led by Túpac Amaru II in (what is now) Peru. Such rebellions showed that resistance to the colonial status quo drew not only on lofty European ideas but also on deep-seated resentment of injustices in which local elites were fully complicit. No wonder that Bolívar should also say, in his disillusioned final years, that governing America was like trying to plough the sea. The creole discourse of independence drew on a multitude of sources of protest that it then tried uneasily to rearrange in its own image, according to a logic and order dictated by a privileged minority who saw themselves as the continent's rightful leaders.

To put this another way: if the notion of political representation comes to the fore at the point at which Latin America comes to throw off its colonial masters, this is because the spokesmen of the independence movement were those who most keenly felt its lack. For them, being marginalized from the official hierarchies of political power threatened their

economic freedoms (regarding taxation and commerce etc.) but also left them helpless in the face of a crisis of governance in which their own position (much *higher than* slavery) was at risk. For others, rather more basic freedoms were still at stake.

Bolívar's conclusions are ambivalent. He predicts that "we march majestically toward that great prosperity for which South America is destined" (24). Yet he foresees struggles over the political form that the new polities will take. But the Bolivarian dream of a "Patria Grande" or "Great Fatherland," of continental unity under the guidance of inspired visionaries, tends to gloss over these internal fissures and elide the question of who has most and least to gain. Bolívar argues for "paternal governments" (24), for which vast swathes of the population will continue in "permanent infancy."

José Martí's "Our America" is a much more difficult text than either Bolívar or Chávez's, and in many ways (you may be relieved to hear) that's more about him than it is about you. Yet its difficulty perhaps makes it more interesting than the other two.

It is a sign of how hard it is to pin Martí down (but also how important it might be to try) that over a century after his death people are still arguing over his legacy, not least in the homeland from which he was so frequently exiled. He is a hero to the Cuban state, portrayed as a forerunner of Castro's Revolution. But he is also claimed by that state's bitterest opponents: he lends his name to "Radio Martí," the Miami-based radio station dedicated to broadcasting anti-Castro sentiments to the island.

Martí was many things: journalist, poet, translator, diplomat, essayist, political activist, rebel. In "Our America" we see how these different roles contaminate each other. This essay first published in a New York Spanish-language magazine has come to be seen as one of the most important statements of Latin American identity, a rallying call for political movements of all stripes. But its difficulty arises in part because it is also an intensely, sometimes maddeningly, *literary* text.

Take the essay's use of metaphor and allegory. With a metaphor, one thing substitutes for another in order to reveal something new about the (now absent) original. For instance, Shakespeare's famous line "All the world's a stage" replaces world with stage

in order to highlight the ubiquity of performance. Allegory then is metaphor extended, as in Shakespeare's following lines, which develop and complicate this idea: "And all the men and women merely players; they have their entrances and exits." In "Our America," we find metaphor and allegory throughout.

If you have the text with you, pause this video now and look at a paragraph or two. Start by identifying (even counting) the metaphors you see. Then think about how they extend into allegories. And ask yourself if they clarify the essay's argument or cloud it. While you do that, I fancy a glass of juice. But I'll be right back.

[. . .]

So what did you find? I hope you noticed that Martí's prose is crawling with metaphors: in the opening paragraph, for instance, the Americas are a "sleepy hometown" and its inhabitants "prideful villager[s]" surrounded by "giants in seven-league boots" (24). With this mention of boots, plus a reference to the villagers' "sleeping cap" (25), begins a series of references to clothing. At the same time, this same paragraph also gives us martial or warlike substitutions, as weapons become pillows and ideas, trenches. And so it goes on: ideas are also clouds; Americans are jealous brothers; nations are fluttering leaves or trees; the trees "form ranks" like soldiers; the soldiers "move in lines" like "veins of silver" (25). And all this only twenty lines in!

Now, it's hard to avoid metaphor at the best of times. Even to say, for instance, that "Our America" is "crawling with metaphors" is already, implicitly, metaphorical, raising images of insects or the like; for metaphors don't literally "crawl." Indeed, in some sense all language is metaphorical in that (as we have seen in earlier videos) it involves the use of signs, words or things that point to something but can't quite take their place. Yet in Martí's case the metaphors are superabundant. Each paragraph is a thicket full of them that impedes our journey through the text.

In part, this is a matter of style. Late nineteenth-century authors and Latin American essayists are classes of writers who tend towards the florid, the digressive, and the ornate. Yet Martí seems to revel in these stylistic quirks, even as he champions the "natural man"

who, "strong and indignant, comes and overthrows the authority that is accumulated from books" (27). In short, style and content often here seem to be at odds. No wonder this text has led to such contradictory interpretations!

Are we back at our crisis of representation? Yes, but Martí makes a virtue of it. For despite his appeals to authenticity ("nature" and the "natural man") and his critique of imported adornment ("English trousers, a Parisian waistcoat, a North American overcoat" [28]), his emphasis is less on unveiling some solid reality beneath the artifice than on creativity: "salvation lies in creating. Create is this generation's password" (29). Indeed, continuing the clothing metaphor, it is not that Americans should not dress up, but that they should be more thoughtful about the motley garb with which they drape themselves, open to disjunction rather wishing difference away through fictions of natural (or national) unity. They should combine "the Indian headband and the judicial robe, to undam the Indian, make a place for the able black" (28).

Even freedom is a matter not of innate rights but of judicious dress-making as Martí argues for "tailor[ing] liberty to the bodies of those who rose up and triumphed in its name" (28). And governing is an "art" (26), not an exercise in statistics. The crisis of aesthetic representation will resolve the crisis of politics. Martí wants more and better and more creative narratives of independence. For it is precisely in the fact that words are not fixed to things that the region's liberty is to be found and that Latin America might escape the rising threat that "Our America" identifies as coming from the North.

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5. "Caudillos Versus the Nation State"

Over the past few weeks, we have traced the challenge of representing Latin America, from Christopher Columbus to José Martí and beyond. Last time we specifically looked at political representation: the process by which decisions are made or articulated by some people on behalf of others. For Simón Bolívar and the creole elite arguing for independence from Spain, the promise of political representation was both that it enabled them to take charge of their own economic affairs (taxation and trade), and also that it might stave off a greater threat to governance brewing from below.

Bolívar re-purposed a discourse of rights and representation that had ricocheted between the Old World and the New, South and North, from the North American colonists and their Second Continental Congress to the French Revolution's "Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen" and the Haitian Revolution. It was not that Bolívar wanted Latin Americans to emulate the Haitian slaves; on the contrary, he spoke for a social class that sought to avoid any such upheaval at all cost. Then in reading Martí's "Our America," written at the very end of the nineteenth century, we saw the discourse of rights replaced by a far more literary appeal to creativity. At the same time, Martí identified a potent new threat to the region: from the North, and the increasing influence of the United States.

But let us return to the early to mid nineteenth century, and to the newly-founded Latin American nations' complex internal politics. Independence brought neither order nor stability. Indeed, Bolívar feared as much and prophetically commented that governing Latin America was like trying to plough the sea. His dream of a "patria grande" uniting the former Spanish colonies was shattered by internecine strife and periodic warfare. Large political units were broken up, as when "Gran Colombia" devolved into what are now Venezuela, Colombia, and Ecuador, or when the "Federal Republic of Central America" dissolved into its constituent parts.

There were also wars *between* these new nations: for instance, the bloody conflict between Paraguay and the "Triple Alliance" of Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay, in which well over fifty per cent of Paraguay's adult male population were killed. Or the "War of the Pacific," in which Peru was over-run by the Chilean army, and Bolivia lost its access to the sea. Not that every nineteenth-century conflict was solely the Latin Americans' fault: Mexico lost much of its territory in the Mexican-American War, and was later invaded by the French; the British skirmished off Central America, creating the short-lived "Miskito Kingdom" on its Caribbean Coast, as well as sending frigates to the River Plate and snatching the Falklands from Argentina.

Finally, there were a series of civil wars within nation-state boundaries, such as the decade or more of conflicts between "Blancos" and "Colorados" in Uruguay, or the endless infighting between Conservatives and Liberals in Colombia. Elsewhere, states violently suppressed indigenous and other peoples, as with Chile's campaign against the Mapuche of Patagonia, Argentina's "Conquest of the Desert," Mexico's long-running "Caste War of Yucatán," or the destruction of the millenarian settlement of Canudos in Brazil. With these operations, the independent nations of Latin America prolonged the colonial project left incomplete by their former Spanish masters.

Nineteenth-century Latin America was often a violent place, not unlike what the English philosopher Thomas Hobbes describes as a "warre [. . .] of every man against every man" (185). To be fair, matters weren't much better in Europe, with conflicts such as the Franco-Prussian War of the 1870s or the Italian Risorgimento. But in general, the nineteenth century in Europe and North America saw the gradual acceptance of liberal doctrines and Enlightenment principles--at "home," if not in the colonies abroad. By contrast, in Latin America liberalism has never really flourished.

Liberalism involves a commitment to abstract principles of rights and freedoms based on the notion of a social contract. These rights include parity under the law, freedom of expression, the right to vote, and so on. They are abstract because they presume equality between citizens: whatever "natural" differences between us in terms of physical strength, constitution, status, gender, race, and so on, or whatever differences we may have of religion or belief, liberalism tells us that by coming together in a social contract

we have granted the state or sovereign the power to mediate when there is disagreement or infractions against the law. Moreover, the sovereign is also an abstract or ideal role: no matter who happens to occupy the seat of government, the rule of law should continue and is guaranteed by mechanisms such as the separation of powers.

There is much to say about the virtues and vices of liberalism. Many of its ideals are praiseworthy. But in practice, liberal societies consistently fail to live up to them: it took a long struggle, for example, for women to gain the right to vote; and do we really think even today that (say) African-Americans in the USA, First Nations in Canada, or Moslems throughout the West enjoy equality before the law? In any case, for our purposes the point is this: in North America and Europe, from at least the late nineteenth century, liberalism seemed to be the governing principle, the norm accepted by almost everyone whatever its glitches in practice. In Latin America, this was not so.

Moreover, even when and where liberalism gained a foothold in the region, it was what the Brazilian cultural critic Roberto Schwarz calls a "misplaced idea." Schwarz argues that, in Europe, liberal ideas could appear convincing in that, under industrial capitalism, workers are notionally free to sell their labor power, however exploitative the ensuing contract. In a place like Brazil, by contrast, where slavery was not abolished until 1888, liberalism "did not even correspond to appearances" (20). Liberal ideals were patently fictitious when men and women could still be bought and sold. And the same could be said of other parts of Latin America--such as southern Mexico or the Andean highlands--where hundreds of thousands of indigenous people lived in what was essentially indentured servitude. In such circumstances, Schwarz suggests, liberal ideas were merely decorative, ornamental trappings of "modernity and distinction" (28) while real social change was postponed to a distant future.

In place of liberalism, then, we get what Schwarz describes as "favor," or the kinds of clientelism typical of the *caudillo* system. Here, you relate to others not as an equal citizen before an abstract sovereign, but as a client whose relative well-being is determined by how close you are to one or more powerful patrons: these patrons provide favor or protection, and in return clients provide political or other forms of support. Everything is concrete and specific rather than abstract or ideal: it matters who you know and how

well you know them. With a powerful patron, you (or your community) might receive preferential services from the state, or exemption from a rule of law that is applied unevenly and unequally. Rival patrons may make your life difficult or (alternatively) offer you a better deal.

In such a system corruption and (often) violence are rampant. It seems to fall far short of our sense of fair play or democracy. In its nineteenth-century Latin American variant, the regional strongmen known as "caudillos" ruled the roost, and we can get a sense of what a liberal thinks of such an arrangement in Esteban Echeverría's short story, "The Slaughterhouse": mud and blood, superstition and prejudice, cruelty and caprice all combine to constitute a "barbarism" that blocks enlightened "civilization." Yet, as Alexander Dawson stresses, caudillos were perhaps surprisingly popular. It is worth taking a moment to consider why this might be so.

Pause this video and reflect on the following questions: Why was post-independence Latin America such fertile ground for *caudillos*? Why were *caudillos* especially popular among the poor and powerless? And does even Echeverría show them some grudging respect? While you do that, I need a glass of water. But I'll be right back.

[. . .]

So what did you come up with? I won't go over all the possible reasons that Dawson mentions--or others that you might add. Feel free to mention them in the comments. But let's note a couple of things. First, that the rewards of clientelism are often both concrete and immediate. In "The Slaughterhouse," for instance, in a time of scarcity the *caudillo* Rosas (though he is never mentioned by name) bends the Lenten rules to make meat available to his supporters. Echeverría suggests this smacks of hypocrisy, but it is hard to see those who benefit from such inconsistencies complaining about them.

Second, Dawson mentions "a sense of closeness, of fictive kinship" (54). Echeverría is scathing about the people who gather in the slaughterhouse. He sees them as an uncouth and inhuman mob: "bestial," "horrific," "horrendous," "barbaric," "grotesque," and "boorish" (adjectives all taken from just one page: 65). Moreover, their recalcitrance to

reason is inflected by both race and gender: Echeverría makes much of the role of black and mulatto women, "mythical harpies" (61) "as ugly as the viragos of legend" (64). But these very attitudes from the liberal elite only helped drive the objects of their sneers towards local strongmen who promised a sense of community and the feeling that someone had their back. This is the *affective* dimension to *caudillaje*: both Echeverría's disgust and the scene that he is portraying are intensely visceral, corporeal, embodied. So though Dawson describes the *caudillos*' role as interlocutors, their appeal lay less in what they *said* than in the *feelings* to which they appealed or that they encouraged.

But there are signs of ambivalence even in Echeverría's account. For one thing, much of his imagery is borrowed from those he opposes. Despite his condemnation of so-called Catholic superstition, and his championing of "education" and "enlightenment" (71), the vision he presents is basically a religious allegory. He draws on everything from the story of Noah, to a version of Sodom and Gomorrah, to a concluding image of a band of impious "apostles who by dagger and fist spread the gospel" conjured up by "the patron of their brotherhood" (71).

Most obviously, the unlucky young man who falls victim to the mob is presented as a Christ-like figure, "tied [. . .] down in a crucified position" in his agony (71). Yet it is hard to feel much sympathy for him. In part, this is because the story is so resolutely told from the perspective of the "barbarians": the "civilized" man is little more than a cipher. (Something similar happens in Domingo Sarmiento's classic *Facundo*: the liberal critic is enticed by the sheer flair and energy of the savagery he sets out to denounce.) Moreover, the victim, too, is ultimately defined by an excess of feeling: he dies because he "burst[s] with rage" (71). It is as though the moral of the story were that affect is always more fundamental than reason.

No wonder it was such a struggle to impose liberal ideas on the region. Perhaps the *caudillos* had a better sense than their critics of what politics is all about.

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6. "Citizenship and Rights in the New Republics"

Last time, we looked at why liberalism and liberal ideals have never really flourished in Latin America. In the nineteenth century, following independence (for most of the region) from its former colonial masters, corruption and violence tended to be the norm, rather than the peaceful civil society promised by adherents of a social contract. Looking more closely, however, at the way in which clientelism and the *caudillo* system functioned, we saw why (counter-intuitively, perhaps) they may have been popular, especially among the poor and the marginalized.

A powerful patron could offer more immediate and concrete benefits than the abstract rights promised by the liberal state. Moreover, the patron/client relationship sustained an *affective* community that appealed to those scorned and excluded by liberal elites. In this spirit, we read Esteban Echeverría's short story "The Slaughterhouse" against the grain: as an allegory of the power of affect, the pull of the body, even for those who lay claim to the Enlightenment values of sober scientific reason.

In previous episodes, we have traced the discourse of rights and representation as it ricocheted between the Old World and the New, South and North, adding fuel to the fire of liberation struggles from British North America to revolutionary Paris, and from the slave revolt in Haiti to the creole sense of injustice on the South American mainland. We have also considered the role of race in the Americas, from the conquistadors' uncertainty as to what to make of the indigenous other, to the light that casta paintings shed on the colonial obsession with categorizing and hierarchizing racial difference.

The casta paintings show that race is social construct, rather than biological fact. For one thing, we see how race is defined differently by different societies: whereas the United States, with its "one-drop" rule, treated anyone with any African heritage at all as "black," Latin Americans tended (and still tend now) to divide people up according to a much more complex set of categories and sub-categories. For another thing, we see how the drive to categorize becomes self-defeating: it aims to contain difference, but ends up

producing new modes of differentiation and distinction; it sets out to curb racial anxiety by ensuring everyone knows their place, but it ends up drawing our attention to the permeability of the very lines that it is trying to establish.

But the fact that something is a social construct does not mean it is not real, or that it does not have real effects. And just because a way of seeing or classifying the world can be deconstructed (or be shown to deconstruct), this does not mean we can simply wish it away. Race and racial distinction mark the history of the Americas with particular brutality. And the stain of racial violence endures into the present.

We have mentioned the genocide against Latin America's original inhabitants on the part of the Spanish conquistadors: by 1600 (little more than a century after Columbus's first voyage), the indigenous population of the Americas had plummeted to perhaps a fifth of its pre-conquest size. Not that such violence and upheaval is confined solely to the early years of Latin American history. With campaigns such as Argentina's "Conquest of the Desert," in the nineteenth century the region's independent nations picked up the colonial project where the Spanish had left off. And it continues in the twentieth century when, for instance, the Guatemalan state's wave of terror in the highlands left tens of thousands dead and many more displaced or refugees.

We have also discussed the fact that, from very early on, black Africans were transported across the Atlantic to work as slaves in the New World: at least ten million were forced across the ocean, with a million or more dying in the so-called "middle passage"; over three million were brought to Brazil alone; by 1800 probably six times as many Africans as Europeans had come to the Americas. Once on these shores, their treatment was often cruel and heartless; after all, the essence of slavery is that human beings are treated as objects, as merchandise to be bought and sold. Alexander Dawson notes that "more than half of Brazilian slaves died within the first three years of arriving. [Their] life expectancies [. . .] were two-thirds that of whites" (84).

Slavery was not finally abolished in the hemisphere until 1888, in Brazil. This may seem a long time ago, but consider that there were former slaves, people who had direct experience of the institution, still alive well into the twentieth century. As late as 1963,

Cuban anthropologist Miguel Barnet could interview a former slave by the name of Esteban Montejo and publish his story as *Biography of a Runaway Slave*. Or think that my grandmother, who is still alive, was born only some thirty years after abolition in Brazil. The end of slavery is about as distant for her as, say, Sergeant Pepper or Pierre Trudeau's first premiership may be for some of you.

No wonder that slavery's legacies are still with us. This was an extraordinarily violent institution that lasted many hundreds of years. Such trauma is not something that simply goes away, let alone in the relatively short span of time since abolition. Moreover, racial violence, oppression, and structural inequality continued in new forms after emancipation. We are all still living with its consequences.

Let's take a break to reflect on this. Previously, we have considered the uses of history, or the notion of a "useable past": the ways in which politicians and others appeal to the past so as to give meaning to the present. But sometimes the past is not even fully past. Pause this video and consider the following questions: How does a history of slavery shape the Americas today? Are there other examples of unresolved conflicts or tensions that linger on into the present? How might we do justice to such histories? While you do that, I fancy some *mate*. But I'll be right back.

[. . .]

So what did you come up with? Those were big questions, and we will continue to address them in other videos. You may have thought of an event such as the Holocaust as another example of a historical trauma that we are all still working through. Or perhaps the dictatorships and military rule in Latin America during the 1970s and 1980s: Argentina under the generals; Chile under Pinochet, and so on. These are issues to which we will return.

For now, having pointed out how (relatively) recently slavery was ended, let us also note that 1888 was simply the *final* date that slavery was abolished in the Americas. It was *first* abolished in 1793, in the early years of the Haitian Revolution. In the interim, it was abolished (for instance) in Chile in 1823, in the British colonies in 1833, in the United

States in 1865, and in Cuba in 1886. Moreover, there are often different dates for laws of "free birth" or "free womb": the declaration that the children of slaves are born free. And there is an entire history of the abolition of the slave *trade*, which was, for example, banned by the British in 1807 and by Brazil in 1831, although illegal shipments continued to Cuba and Brazil up to the 1860s.

In short: emancipation was less an *event* than a *process*, comprising struggles that lasted well over a century. Again, no wonder that those struggles continue to this day.

It is sometimes suggested that the abolitionist cause was led by liberals: men such as William Wilberforce, the British MP who introduced a Bill to abolish the slave trade in 1791; or Abraham Lincoln, the United States President who led the Union side during the US Civil War and issued the Emancipation Declaration in 1863. But beyond the fact that neither Wilberforce nor Lincoln were exactly liberals (Wilberforce for instance was decidedly conservative), among other things this ignores the extent to which slaves themselves pushed for their own freedom, whether through large-scale revolts, through defection and escape whether collective or individual, or in everyday resistance and efforts to conserve or construct a culture of their own.

Debates over Rights

Even where the discourse of citizenship and rights came into play, it's important to emphasize that these concepts, too, were the object of struggle and contestation. There were different conceptions of rights at stake: as Dawson observes, "emancipated slaves sometimes demanded the right to recompense for their suffering" and "peasants might insist on their right to village autonomy, to the land, timber and water rights they had enjoyed under colonial rule" (74). Moreover, even the rights upon which people agreed were still subject to different interpretations.

Rights have to be first agreed upon and then interpreted before they can be actualized. Whatever the US Declaration of Independence may suggest, no rights are ever "self-evident." The history of the US Bill of Rights and its interpretations by the Supreme Court is further evidence: the "Dred Scott" decision even endorsed slavery. Rights are at best

the site of what is often intense disagreement and rhetorical energy. Or they are the indices of a struggle that takes place elsewhere.

The to-and-fro between María Eugenia Echenique and Josefina Pelliza de Sagasta gives some indication of how such arguments can pan out.

Echenique invokes the discourse of rights, though not until close to the end of her article. Her key term instead is "regeneration." She claims that a new womanhood is being born--"The women of today are not the women of the past" (98)--and that this rebirth requires a new set of conceptual tools, indeed a shift from sentiments to concepts, from "poetry" to "philosophy, practical philosophy" (98). Echenique castigates "spirituality, sensibility, and poetry" by describing them as no more than "beautiful daydreams and gilded illusions" (98). In short, this is a critique of affect: "rights," when they are finally mentioned, are set against "the torrent of disorderly passions that destroy them" (99).

At the same time, Echenique is mindful of the power of affect. Indeed, she opens by acknowledging that she, too, is affected--"There are so many ideas and feelings overwhelming me" (97)--and by admitting the temptation of "purely imaginative games [. . .] beautiful images capable of stirring sweet emotions in the heart" (97). If only for rhetorical effect, she dramatizes the difficulty that a discourse of Enlightenment universalism faces as it emerges from a deep-rooted set of feelings associated with literature and the imagination. To some extent she wants to have it both ways, as she imaginatively charts out a new conception of women's place in the world.

Pelliza de Sagasta's response appeals unabashedly to spirituality, to an image of women's "souls with the softest breaths of divine light and their bodies with the purest of [God's] celestial conceptions" (99). Drawing on religion and tradition, she argues spiritedly that women should be "everything but emancipated, less free in independence and rights than men" (100). But hers is not an uncomplicated anti-feminism, and she indicates what some women (no doubt middle class and white) worried they might lose as one discourse replaced another. For she rejects equality in the name of the advantages that (some) women felt they enjoyed under the existing regime: the "prestige" that she mentions

three times in as many lines (99); or the “unequaled mastery” making them “strong, colossal in the midst of their weakness” (101).

The echoes of such debates resonate even today, not least in tensions within the feminist movement or among those fighting to advance the cause of racial or other minorities. Formal equality has not always treated such populations well; at times it has simply been an alibi for continued injustices. On the other hand, as we will see with organizations such as the Argentine “Mothers of the Disappeared,” the invocation of affect or the spiritual exaltation of femininity have sometimes led to powerful strategic gains where the discourse of citizenship and rights has failed.

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7. "The Export Boom as Modernity"

Last time, we looked at race in the Americas. We showed how race and racial distinction mark the history of the Americas with particular brutality: from the genocide inflicted on the indigenous by the Spanish conquistadors to terror in the Guatemalan highlands in the 1980s; and with the trade and enslavement of black Africans, which continued until 1888. We discussed how slavery's legacies are still with us, and how we are all still living with its consequences, which led us to consider the ways in which the past is not even fully past.

We then noted that emancipation was less an *event* than a *process*, comprising struggles that lasted well over a century, and we contested the narrative that suggests that the abolitionist cause was led by liberals: slaves themselves pushed for their own freedom. Even where the discourse of citizenship and rights came into play, these concepts, too, were the object of struggle and contestation. We looked finally at how rights are at best the site of what is often intense disagreement and rhetorical energy, taking the to-and-fro between two nineteenth-century Argentine women as a case study of debates over the discourse of rights, whose echoes resonate even today.

These struggles for freedom and these debates over citizenship and rights are all part of the contested history of modernity in the Americas. There are some who argue that modernity, emancipation, and enlightenment go hand in hand: that the more modern a society, the more it forsakes prejudice and injustice. This is a view, shared by many nineteenth-century Latin American intellectuals, that projects modern "civilization" as an antidote to the "barbarisms" of the past. There are others, however, who claim that the racial and gender inequalities typical of colonialism are simply the "darker side" of modernity, that colonialism is already an inextricably modern phenomenon. Similarly, the German critical theorists Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, writing in the shadow of the Second World War and the Holocaust, famously expressed a disenchantment with the "dialectic of Enlightenment" that promises liberation but brings only "triumphant calamity" and "mass deception."

We now shift our focus from politics to economics and technology. This is not to say that politics disappears entirely; far from it. But modernity is not "simply" political. In fact, the transformations associated with modernity and modernization affect almost every area of life. Modernity is not just a way of thinking; it is also a way of being.

Arguably, modernity begins as early as the fifteenth century: perhaps with Johannes Gutenberg's invention of the printing press in the 1440s; or even with the "discovery" of the New World in 1492. And it was the early seventeenth century that saw, in France, the so-called "Quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns," in which the Classical heritage of antiquity, so long thought the gold standard of wisdom and culture, was put on trial. One might even say that there are various different modernities, not all of which are necessarily compatible.

But for our purposes, let us define modernity and modernization in terms of the rapid development and spread of industry, urbanization, and capitalist social relations through Europe from the late eighteenth century, and in Latin America from the late nineteenth. This was the era of steam engines, railways, electricity, the telegraph, dynamite, rifles, barbed wire, photography, typewriters, pasteurization, and much more. It was also the time of the rise of cities such as Manchester, Berlin, New York, Buenos Aires, where modernity's products were variously made, put to use, and put on display. Factories, stations, office blocks, tenement houses, hotels, and department stores marked this new urban fabric. And we see also the rise of new occupations (machinist, engineer, boilerman, chimney sweep, bellhop, shop assistant, and so on), and more generally the growth of both a working class of factory workers and labourers on the one hand, and a middle class of office workers, service workers, and managers on the other, displacing the earlier division between landowners and peasants.

The pace of change was often felt to be very rapid, and getting more so. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels wrote of a "constant revolutionising of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation. [. . .] All that is solid melts into air." But these developments took time, and they seemed to be taking more time in Latin America. We have seen how, in the early nineteenth century, a writer

such as Esteban Echeverría felt frustrated that his country (Argentina) was somehow held back, not advancing at the rate that it should. Yet by the end of the nineteenth century, or the beginning of the twentieth, most of the region--at least, most of its major cities--could boast of the trappings of modern development, from cafés and billiard halls to broad avenues and sewer systems.

We should be wary, however, of describing modernization as a straight line or linear history, along which all societies follow the same path, from primitive to advanced, so long as they put in the required effort. Such a teleology, by which I mean a movement towards a pre-ordained goal, may be implicit in the very concepts of modernity (always opposed to an ancient that came before it) or of "development" (for which social history is often implicitly seen as analogous to the biological transition from child to adult). In truth, things are more complex.

We come back to the realization that modernity comes at the very least in different flavors or forms. It is not a process that affects all societies in the same way, or even all parts of the same society equally. And again, we return to the notion that the past is not fully past, but now with the added complication that the future sometimes comes early, and is sometimes delayed. The British theorist Raymond Williams explained all this in terms of the notion that all societies have elements that are either "dominant," "residual," or "emergent": the "dominant" logic that structures the way things are is always mixed with (and sometimes resisted by) "residual" traces of the way things once were, as well as "emergent" signs that things might be different one day. In Latin America, this mixture has been (and still is) particularly complex, in large part because of the region's relationship to the rest of the world.

But let us pause here to think about examples of these categories: dominant, residual, and emergent. How would you place in them institutions and practices that you run into in daily life? The university, for instance, or the family? The high street or the Internet: are they dominant, residual, or emergent? Or might they be a bit of each? What do you see around you that is a holdover of a past that refuses to go away? What seems to define the way things are? And what might constitute signs of what is to come? Stop the video and

take a note of your answer. While you are doing that, I'll have a mug of milk. But I'll be right back.

[. . .]

How did you answer my questions about the dominant, residual, and emergent? It is not always easy to decide. Cheap air travel, for instance, might once have seemed a sign of the future; but with our current pandemic, it almost seems to be already in the past. Is the Internet a sign of what is to come, or is it just today's dominant technology, that will sometime be superseded? As we will see when we come to discussing this week's reading, an article from the turn of the twentieth century that confidently predicts Mexico's future, it is easy to miss the way history is going.

I said that modernity in Latin America is particularly complex, and that this had to do with the region's relationship to the rest of the world. This is because the dominant logic has come from outside, and Latin American economies and polities have serviced a modernity of which they were key components, but without seeing many of its potential benefits.

Take Potosí. This is a small and picturesque city, 4,000 meters high in Bolivia's southern altiplano, full of colonial-era architecture but out of the way and off the tourist trail. Yet from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries it was one of the busiest and most important cities in the Americas, if the not the world, thanks to the "*cerro rico*" or "rich hill" that looms over it, from which thousands of tons of silver were mined, mostly by indigenous peasants subject to forced labor, to be transported by mule and then galleon to Europe, where these riches helped to fund the industrial revolution.

Or take the plantations of the Caribbean, a vital node of the triangular transatlantic trade by which slaves brought from Africa cultivated sugar or tobacco and other mono-crops, to be processed and exported to New England or France, Holland, the UK. There, cigarettes and sugary tea (or distilled spirits such as rum) came to be necessities for an expanding working class, which was manufacturing goods that both were exchanged for

more slaves abroad and enabled the rise of new, consumer lifestyles in metropolitan centers such as Boston or Paris, Amsterdam or London.

Potosí is now one of the poorest cities in the poorest country in South America. Haiti, the Caribbean nation that was once the most productive of France's colonial possessions, is by many measures the least "developed" country in the Western hemisphere. Global modernity would have been unthinkable without such places, and yet it can seem to have passed them by; their "underdevelopment" at the periphery has been the price paid for the global "center" to advance.

At best, Latin America has often managed only a distorted version of modernity, a modernity that is strangely superficial—all "look and feel" in Alexander Dawson's words---and that benefits the few rather than the many. Even today, in countries such as Brazil, Colombia, or Peru, riches and advanced technology sit side by side with slums, vast regions all but abandoned by the state, and shocking indices of avoidable disease and infant mortality.

This is a modernity that has come in bits and pieces: in Dawson's terms, innovation without emancipation, or secularization without universalism. Institutions inherited from the colonial period, such as the church or the semi-feudal *latifundio* or *hacienda* system, lost much of their grip (without disappearing; they long remained an important residual presence), and yet they were slow to be replaced, and then only fitfully, by more modern institutions such as universal education or a functioning welfare state.

James Creelman's 1908 article, "Porfirio Díaz, Hero of the Americas," captures a moment in Mexican history when at least some of the profits of an export-oriented economy seemed to be retained and invested in updating and improving the country's infrastructure. An image of modernity has been established, at least in (some parts of) the capital city and other urban centers. The future seems finally to be on its way, and Creelman's hagiographic sketch of Mexico's president calls him "the foremost man of the American hemisphere [. . .] the hope of the Latin-American republics." While acknowledging the fact that the country was far from enjoying the political rights and freedoms that since (say) the American and French Revolutions have usually been seen

as part of the modern social contract, the article lauds Díaz as an "enlightened" despot, that contradiction in terms that has been the fantasy of United States foreign policy in regions they rely on for raw materials and primary products such as silver and sugar, lithium and oil.

But there is another emergent logic in Mexico at the time, which Creelman cannot or would rather not acknowledge, and it will erupt in the Mexican revolution that breaks out a mere two years after his article is published. The future can be hard to see, even when it is close at hand.

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8. “Signs of Crisis in a Gilded Age”

Last time, we looked at the peculiar, even distorted, form that modernity has often taken in Latin America. We saw that modernity is not one single thing, but many. If we define modernization in terms of industrialization, urbanization, and so on, its effects were spread unevenly across the world such that (for instance) peasant miners in Bolivia or slaves on Caribbean plantations were vital parts of a networked process that produced “development” in the global center at the same time as it ensured “underdevelopment” at the periphery. Against the views of nineteenth-century liberals such as Esteban Echeverría, then, modernization and “civilization” did not necessarily march hand in hand; indeed, modernity produced pockets of “barbarism” all of its own.

We also noted that countries such as Mexico, Peru, or Brazil might get modernity in bits and pieces: innovation without emancipation; secularization without universalism. Likewise, the fruits of modernity were very unequally distributed within such societies, and precariously established. Not only did residual institutions and forces (such as the church or the landowning class) often maintain surprising power, the elites benefitting from a “dominant” logic whose center was elsewhere were vulnerable to “emergent” alternatives that suggested potential futures different from the one envisaged by a linear narrative of historical development.

Hence Alexander Dawson refers to the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, at first sight a period of growth and prosperity for much of Latin America, as a “gilded,” rather than a “golden” age. This was a form of modernity that tended to be superficial—a matter of “look and feel.” Under the surface, trouble was brewing, and the signs of crisis soon became evident everywhere from Argentina to Mexico, Nicaragua to Peru. This led to a period of turbulence and transition, in which distinct visions of the future emerged and entered into conflict.

The USA Flexes its Muscles

It was also a time at which the center of the "dominant" logic of global history was moving, from Europe to the United States. This process would take some time to complete, but as Spain lost its final colonial possessions in the hemisphere (the Caribbean islands of Cuba and Puerto Rico), with the Spanish-American War of 1898, the USA increasingly flexed its muscles in what it regarded as its "back yard." Just as the region was trying to define itself beyond the legacy of European colonialism, new threats (and perhaps new forms of colonialism) made Latin Americans uneasy.

We have seen some of that uneasiness when, several weeks ago, we discussed José Martí's essay, "Our America" ("Nuestra América"), of 1891. Martí was a Cuban patriot, who died in the effort to liberate his country from the Spanish yoke. But when, in one of his many somewhat florid metaphors, he refers to "giants in seven-league boots" that "crush" a "prideful village" underfoot, he is thinking of North (Anglo) America, rather than Europe, as the new colossus overshadowing the region.

"To Roosevelt"

The Nicaraguan poet Rubén Darío's poem, "To Roosevelt" ("A Roosevelt"), addresses this same conjuncture. It was written in 1904, the year that the United States showed its willingness and ambition to reshape the continent's political and natural geography by splitting off what became Panama from Colombia and embarking on the construction of a canal to link the Atlantic to the Pacific, a project that the US took over from the French, in another symbol of the transfer of global dominance from the Old World to the New.

Stop the video, and read Darío's poem—it is quite short, so should not take you long. Then I have two questions for you. First, in Darío's depiction, what emotions or affects does the United States provoke? Perhaps fear, awe, sadness, rage? What else? Jot down some thoughts. Second, what are the poem's key lines? If you were to pick a line or two that sum up the essence of the poem, which would you choose? While you think about that, I need an energy drink. But I'll be right back.

[. . .]

So what are the affects of Darío's poem? I suggest that we see a complex set of responses to growing US dominance.

There is certainly a measure of awe and respect: "You are strong, proud model of your race; you are cultured and able"; the US President Roosevelt is compared to the great emperors of the Ancient World, such as the biblical Nimrod and Nebuchadnezzar, and to Alexander the Great, whose military campaigns conquered territory that stretched from Greece to what is now India. Note that the Roosevelt of the poem is Theodore, rather than Franklin Delano—FDR held office later, during the Second World War. Theodore Roosevelt was famous as a rancher and a hunter of big game (he wrote books with titles such as *The Wilderness Hunter*), as well as for his exploits heading a regiment of volunteer cavalry known as the "Rough Riders" that fought in Cuba during the Spanish-American war. In Darío's poem, he exemplifies a more general US will to power that is perhaps unaware or careless of the consequences of its actions, but which is undeniably impressive. The United States can do great things.

Darío suggests that Latin America's initial reaction to this "grand and powerful" United States is a visceral fear: "a profound shudder runs down the enormous backbone of the Andes." The region is physically moved by the expression of a US prowess that is material and economic ("joining the cult of Mammon to the cult of Hercules") as well as cultural and political. When the poem mentions "Liberty [. . .] rais[ing] her torch in New York," the reference is both to the idea of freedom and to its physical incarnation in the statue (donated by the French) that guards the harbor off Manhattan. The ideas and ideals driving the United States take concrete form, tangible shape, larger than life like the Statue of Liberty itself.

Yet if Latin America's backbone "shudders" whenever the United States makes a move, at least the region, in the poet's view, *has* a backbone. Another affect traversing the poem is pride, as Darío invokes an indigenous counter-tradition to offset and even confront the line that leads from Alexander to Roosevelt. For "our own America" (and the resonance with Martí is evident) "has had poets since the ancient times of Nezahualcóyotl; [. . .] and

has lived, since the earliest moments of its life, in light, in fire, in fragrance, and in love—the America of Moctezuma and Atahualpa, the aromatic America of Columbus." Darío draws on this other lineage, opposing "Catholic America, Spanish America" to the protestant, Anglo America of the North. He may be awed by the USA, but he is not over-awed, and the poem even ends with something of a threat: "Be careful. [. . .] A thousand cubs of the Spanish lion are roaming free." There are other freedoms, other liberties, and Roosevelt is warned not to impinge upon Latin America's.

There is then plenty of ambivalence in Darío's poem. It is neither simple condemnation nor unalloyed praise. And this ambivalence shapes the form or style that Darío's writing takes. To be heard, Darío recognizes that he must in some sense adopt the language of the USA: "The voice that would reach you [. . .] must speak in Biblical tones, or in the poetry of [the great nineteenth-century US poet] Walt Whitman." And yet part of what makes Latin America different and distinct is that it speaks its own language (or languages), with their own history and traditions. Darío has both to translate his critique of the United States into terms that someone such as Roosevelt would understand, and at the same to resist such translation, for fear that his voice will simply be subsumed within the newly dominant idiom of bombastic ambition.

So if *I* had to pick a line that captures the poem's essence, I might choose the shortest line of all: the single word "No" that ends the second stanza. The poem turns around this declaration of difference and disagreement. "No," says Darío. The future is *not* "wherever your bullet strikes." Other futures are imaginable. Yet it is also surely significant that this is the one line that reads the same in English as in Spanish. The "no" is a point of intersection, a moment of protest that can be understood by South and North on equal terms. It is the point at which these two discourses, Darío's and Roosevelt's, diverge and come together at the same time.

Mythologies of Reconciliation

"To Roosevelt" ends with an invocation of religion or spirituality: "Though you have everything, you are lacking one thing: God!" This notion that Latin America had some kind of spiritual advantage over Anglo America was a common one at the time (and in

some ways its legacy persists to this day). We can see it also in the Mexican José Vasconcelos's essay, *The Cosmic Race* (*La raza cósmica*), published a couple of decades after Darío's poem. "The mestizo, the Indian, and even the black," Vasconcelos tells us, "are superior to the White in a countless number of spiritual capacities" (162). The end of white supremacy is therefore at hand, to be superseded by a "cosmic race," the "final race," incarnated in the multiple mixtures embodied in Latin America, mixtures that (we saw a few weeks ago) caused the Spanish colonial project such anxiety.

Vasconcelos's strange combination of philosophy, biology, and epic history can seem off-putting. His writing is infused with racist stereotypes that assume that blacks and indigenous people are inferior and need somehow to be "redeemed" (161). Ironically, however, he invokes such stereotypes as part of an argument that, unlike other brands of scientific racism from much the same period, praises mixture over purity, "miscegenation" over extermination, and (unabashedly) "fantasy" over reason. He argues against "scientific eugenics," but in the name of a truly "mysterious eugenics of aesthetic taste" (160). Yet for all its strangeness, Vasconcelos's vision was hugely influential; as Mexico's Minister for Public Education, he helped shape his country's very particular vision both of the past and of the future.

This narrative, which emerged from the Mexican Revolution (of 1910-1920), sought to erase the tensions and contradictions that had become manifest in the revolution itself. As the Zapatista "Plan de Ayala" indicates, the revolution had been a messy affair, in which diverse interests and visions of the future surfaced, only for many of them to be put down by force or by their erasure through mythic tales of national unity such as Vasconcelos's. The revolution was a result of the explosion of crises that had only superficially been obscured by an uneven modernity that benefitted the few rather than the many. It was, among other things, a rebellion of the countryside against the city, the landless against the landed, liberals against conservatives, nationalists against a cosmopolitan elite. But eventually, under the auspices of the "Institutional Revolutionary Party" that would go on to govern the country until the year 2000, it generated its own mythology of reconciliation and progress.

Elsewhere in Latin America (Argentina in 1919, for instance; Central America in the 1930s), discontent also made itself felt. The fact that many decades later, insurgent movements such as the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (in Mexico) or the Sandinistas (in Nicaragua) named themselves after revolutionary leaders from the first few decades of the twentieth century shows that the crises of this period never really went away, but were only displaced to a later date. By then, however, any such protests had also to confront, more or less directly, the power of the United States, which increasingly came to intervene in regional affairs, much as Martí and Darío had feared.

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9. "Commerce, Coercion, and America's Empire"

Last time, we talked about the transitional moment at the dawn of the twentieth century, when the cracks in Latin America's modernization process became evident, as Europe's influence waned and the United States became the dominant power in the region. We looked at narratives produced by *modernista* writers such as Nicaragua's Rubén Darío, Cuba's José Martí, and Mexico's José Vasconcelos. These writers projected images of Latin America's distinctiveness (an answer to the perennial question of Latin American identity) that often drew on the colonial heritage, now re-evaluated as a source of spiritual and aesthetic superiority to a supposedly crassly materialist USA. Yet the ways in which such intellectuals frame their arguments often reveal a deep ambivalence, and an acknowledgement that if the United States got its way in the region, it was not through force alone. To many Latin Americans there was something admirable, even seductive, about their neighbour to the north.

Meanwhile, new forms of discontent surfaced, most obviously (but not only) with the Mexican Revolution of 1910-1920. Radical ideas flourished, in some places thanks to the growth of an organized working class (and sometimes imported ideologies, such as Marxism and anarchism), elsewhere as a result of new tensions in the countryside as residual powers such as large landowners struggled to maintain their hold. The sources of such protests could not be entirely ignored, and they were both acknowledged and displaced. In Vasconcelos's hands, for instance, the post-revolutionary Mexican government peddled a myth of harmonious mixture or *mestizaje* to account for but also disarm difference. Next week, we will look at the rise of populism, a not unrelated political strategy that pins the blame for social tensions on national and international elites, to whom the ideal of a unified "people" is opposed.

Global Interconnectedness

As we will see, populist rhetoric (and often its economic policies) stress national autonomy and self-sufficiency. But we have often noted that it is not so easy to demarcate

and disentangle Latin America from the rest of the world. Indeed, arguably the worldwide interconnectedness that we now call "globalization" began back on the mythic date of 1492. Since that moment, the region has always been a key node in a network of global flows of travel and trade, capital and labor, raw materials and commodities, ideas and representations, without which the modern world would be unimaginable.

During the colonial period, these flows were primarily organized and channeled by the colonial powers, above all (for Latin America) Spain and Portugal. They sought as far as possible to ensure a monopoly on the trade and profit from extraction of the region's resources. This monopoly was often contested—the history of piracy is the story of attempts to intercept and reroute such flows from their "legitimate" trajectories—and in the end the tensions and perceived injustices of colonial regulation in the Americas North and South (for the United States, think of the "Boston tea party") helped motivate local elites to fight for political independence.

The nineteenth century, then, saw the growth of free markets and the arrival of new agents, such as the British capitalists, merchants, and engineers who built much of the railroad infrastructure of a country such as Argentina—and who incidentally also taught South Americans to play football, an innovation that England football fans might later have cause to regret, seeing the national team humiliated by the likes of Maradona and Ronaldinho. So here, too, economic (as well as military and political) transactions were always accompanied by, and often inseparable from, cultural exchanges with sometimes unpredictable consequences.

Enforcing an Informal Empire

For the twentieth century, similarly, the fact that certain countries developed a passion for baseball over football reveals that they have been impacted by the United States with particular intensity, whether through economic activity (Venezuela), occupation (Puerto Rico, Panama), military intervention (Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic), or a combination of the three (Cuba). More generally, US cultural products from Hollywood film to fast food, rock'n'roll counterculture to name-brand drinks and, as Alexander

Dawson documents, cigarettes and so on all came to saturate the Latin American marketplace. Not to mention automobiles, televisions, hi-fis, white goods, and other accoutrements of the consumer lifestyle to which even the poorest often aspire. Commerce, coercion, and (we should add) culture went hand in hand in the growth of a US "informal empire" throughout the hemisphere.

This empire may have been informal, and its guiding principle may have been the free market, but it was enforced through violence when necessary. Dawson notes the many direct US interventions in the region: thirty-two separate occasions over the six decades from 1898 to 1958, mostly in Central America and the Caribbean: Cuba (repeatedly), Nicaragua (also repeatedly), Panama, El Salvador… and perhaps most notoriously, Guatemala in 1954, when the CIA leveraged a coup against the democratically-elected reformist government of Jacobo Arbenz, at the prompting of the United Fruit Company (a corporation still in business, after various mergers, as Chiquita). In short, where the United States felt that its political or commercial interests were in jeopardy, it was quick to send in the Marines or otherwise wield a big stick, to maintain order on its own terms.

Nor did this pattern end in the 1950s. The USA continued to back undemocratic and/or oppressive governments in the region, with a rationale reminiscent of Franklin Roosevelt's (apocryphal) comment on Nicaraguan dictator Anastasio Somoza: he "may be a son of a bitch, but he's *our* son of a bitch." The US also intervened covertly, and often in breach of not only international law but its own laws, too, to try to bring down governments with which it disagreed. In some instances the details are murky, and the precise facts or extent of the United States role subject to dispute. But examples range from the failed "Bay of Pigs" invasion of Cuba in 1961 to CIA support for the 1973 coup in Chile, and from the "Iran Contra" scandal of the 1980s, when funds from the secret sale of weapons to Iran were funneled to a motley bunch of rebels in Nicaragua, to the full-scale invasion of Panama in 1989, not to mention more recent (and more controversial) possible involvements in regime change or attempted regime change in Honduras in 2009 and Venezuela throughout the past two decades.

All this is reprehensible, of course. Which is not to say that such escapades did not have their defenders, including within the region. Equally, I do not want to imply that all US

citizens agreed with their government's activities, when there have often been vocal protests and impressive movements for solidarity with victims of US foreign policy. The discipline of Latin American Studies itself, though it is (like other Area Studies) in part an outgrowth of US Cold War anxieties, has also been a vehicle for such solidarity, as well as for putting the record straight about abuses of power within the region.

But it is not enough (nor is it very productive) merely to reprehend. The relationship between the United States and Latin America is more complex than simply that of a schoolyard bully with his victim, and it has gone through different phases over the years.

"Good Neighbour" Films

US media representations of Latin America can be seen as attempts to negotiate, rethink, and think through the complexities of this relationship, in ways that often reflect back on US sensibilities in uncanny ways. Take the films of the so-called "Good Neighbour" period, when (leading up to and during the Second World War) the bid to secure Latin American markets and raw materials, as access to European markets grew more precarious, led to a charm offensive aimed to influence public discourse and attitudes in the US and Latin America alike.

Busby Berkeley's *The Gang's All Here* of 1943, for instance. The movie opens in apparently realistic mode: a ship, the S S Brazil, docks in New York, and passengers and goods are unloaded. The passengers include businessmen and well-dressed young women. Another posse of young women, excitedly waving handkerchiefs, run up to greet the new arrivals. We see dockworkers transporting bags of coffee and sugar. Slowly, a still more exotic cargo descends from above: an enormous mass of tropical greenery, vegetables, and fruit. The camera zooms in and pans down this cornucopia, to reveal a woman who seems to be wearing the entire unwieldly consignment as a fantastically extravagant hat.

Somewhere between merchandise and passenger (such that it is hard to tell the difference between the two), this is the Brazilian/Portuguese actor Carmen Miranda, at the time a bona fide superstar—soon to be Hollywood's highest-paid entertainer, and indeed the number-one earning woman in the entire United States. She joins in the song that has

been playing in the background, singing (in Portuguese) what has become a Brazilian classic, the patriotic samba "Aquarela do Brasil" ("Watercolor of Brazil")—a song made famous by another Good Neighbour movie, Disney's *Saludos Amigos* of 1942, and which has since been covered by everyone from Frank Sinatra to Kate Bush to Arcade Fire. Miranda herself may be largely forgotten now, but the cultural imports with which she is entangled endure.

As soon as Miranda arrives on the scene, the pretense to realism fades away. We are on a stage set, in a night club. All this is self-consciously spectacular, an extravagant and over-worked fiction, albeit grounded on a real relationship. A car-horn interrupts the music, announcing a new figure—a top-hatted dignitary accompanied by a marching band—who offers Miranda the freedom of the city, but not before half-whispering to her: "Any coffee on you?" A new song strikes up, "You Discover You're in New York," whose premise is that, at least at times and in certain places, Latin and Anglo America are now practically indistinguishable: "You hear a tropical drum, You drink a tropical rum, You're in a tropical spot, And yet, you really are not [. . .] And you discover you're in New York." What was once out of reach is suddenly close at hand.

I will let you watch the rest of the scene. You might also want to view other performances by Carmen Miranda or other snippets from Good Neighbour movies. Check out Betty Grable and Don Ameche singing "Down Argentine Way," Donald Duck in *Saludos Amigos*, or Bing Crosby and the Andrews Sisters performing "You Don't Have to Know the Language" in *Road to Rio.* These are all easily found on YouTube. Here are some questions to consider as you do so… What is being exchanged here? Is it an equal or an unequal exchange? What if any claims to truth do these movies make? What if anything do they tell us about either Latin America or the United States? While you think about that, I need a rum myself. But I'll be right back.

[. . .]

There is a lot to say about these films. Dawson suggests that, in them, "particular cultures and individuals [are] flattened into a single image of Latin American sensuality for a global audience" (195). I see that, but I also think that these movies are more knowing

and self-conscious than this implies. See for instance how quick-witted and alive Miranda is at her best, or how the movies wink at us to say "We know all this is ideology, and we are not fooled, but let's enjoy it while it lasts."

Dancing with the USA

In short, if these are stereotypes (and they are), they go both ways. If this is exoticization (and it is), Latin America is also tangible and close at hand. If the whole scene in *The Gang's All Here* is unrealistic (and it is), it is the movie that reveals that everything is staged for our benefit, and that revels unabashedly in the surreal fantasy it portrays. If the performance is premised on cynical economic self-interest (and it is), the film scarcely hides that point. And if Miranda is the butt of the movie's jokes (and she is), she gives as good as she gets, plays her role with detached amusement, and pockets a fat paycheck.

The dance between Latin America and the USA has been a *pas de deux,* a collaboration in which often both sides freely acquiesced, and in which it is not always clear who has the upper hand. The seduction has been mutual. This is not to say that the relationship is characterized by equality, or that there have not been gross abuses. Far from it. But just as Argentines rejoice when they get the chance to put England out of a Football World Cup (most famously in Mexico in 1986, with Maradona's cheeky handball and magnificent goal), there are always opportunities for a spot of symbolic revenge.

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10. "Power to the People"

Last time, we looked at the role of the United States in Latin America during the twentieth century. We talked about the way in which the USA enforced its "informal empire," both through military interventions and in a complex dance of mutual seduction in which the power imbalance between North and South was not always as simple as it seems. The "Good Neighbour" films of the 1930s and 1940s stage the fantasy of what we could call "hegemony" (a mode of dominance that relies on consent as much as coercion) at the same time as they reveal that it is no more than that: a fantasy. They show us the spectacle *and* what lies behind it, daring us to suspend not so much our disbelief in the fiction they serve up as our *belief* in the economic and social realities that the fiction only ever half-obscures. Everyone knows, after all, that the American Dream is just that: a dream. But we all, and perhaps Latin Americans more than anyone, act as if it were otherwise. Hence perhaps the power of the US imaginary, even when it is inverted and the USA is portrayed as the bogeyman supposed to be the source of all the hemisphere's discontent.

But Latin Americans are also quite capable of putting on their own spectacles, constructing their own mythologies that are almost convincing enough for those caught up in them to suspend all belief. And there is no more powerful or persistent spectacle in Latin American political history than populism, which stages an entire people.

Defining the Undefinable

In recent years, around the world, there has been a lot of talk about populism,. Once you start looking for them, populist politics and politicians seem to turn up everywhere. Figures from the Left and the Right, from Donald Trump to Bernie Sanders, Boris Johnson to Vladimir Putin, the Philippines' Rodrigo Duterte to the Spanish Socialists of Podemos, and many others, have all been described as populist leaders (or would-be leaders). Sometimes it feels as though a term that can be attached to so many diverse individuals or movements has lost all meaning. If everyone is populist now, then surely nobody is?

Part of the problem is that the label "populist" has also simply become a term of abuse: an insult to sling at your political enemies, to indicate that your opponent (or the object of your critique) is some kind of demagogue, who whips up popular emotions rather than presenting coherent policies. On the campaign trail and in the press, this means that the term has become fuzzy indeed. (And ironically, of course, calling someone else a populist can itself be a populist gesture, a shorthand rather than real analysis.)

But even among political theorists and historians, there has been dispute over what populism actually is. In fact, the fuzziness of the term and even of the category itself is as much a feature as a bug. Part of populism's power is that it is not easy to pin down, that it resists precise definition. We might even say that this indefinition, the slipperiness of the concept, is its calling card, and that a workable definition will have to account for the fact that populism always escapes any attempt to define it, that our definition will soon become unworkable.

The People and its Enemies

Another way of looking at the problem is to think less about what populism is, and more about what it does. Populism aims to construct a people, while denying that that people has to be constructed, in other words while denying that this is what it is doing. For populism takes for granted that the people already exists, and it does everything it can to project that notion of this prior existence, the notion that the people is the bedrock of politics rather than its effect. In fact, we all already know—populism tells us—who or what the people are, so it is not populism's job to articulate that knowledge with any great clarity. If pressed to answer who are the people, populism's response is that "we" are the people, and who are you (who are *they*) to question us?

A better question, then, might be to ask who are *not* the people. Populism has an answer to this, as slippery as all populism's answers: *They* are not the people. And "they" are those who question the people, who do not trust the people, who go behind the people's backs, who swindle the people, who have got the people into the mess that they find themselves now. "They," in short, are the elite, who come in many shapes and forms: the financial elite, the political elite, the cultural elite; Wall Street, the Church, the

universities, the Arts, Hollywood; bureaucrats, foreigners, liberals, experts, scientists, businessmen, investment bankers, politicians; hypocrites, liars, idlers, dandies, oligarchs, traitors, and so much more. Pick the right elite, and you have picked your flavor of populism. But in each case, the elite are those who guard their secrets, who are not what they seem, unlike the good old, plain old, honest and hard-working people.

Populism, to put this another way, trades in obviousness, in what we take for granted, in what everybody knows. This is why it is so hard to disagree with populism. For who in their right mind could find fault in what we already know to be true? But what it misses (or what it denies) is that what we take for granted is in fact the last thing we should take for granted; obviousness has first to be produced, and this construction of the plain and simple is the always unspoken (unspeakable) work of populism.

In sum, populism is a gesture that divides the social world into two: the people and the elite. And it identifies wholeheartedly with the people, a collective subject in the first-person plural ("we") that is the origin and foundation of society, but which for some reason has been denied its rights by *them*, by that illegitimate and untrustworthy elite. Then populism tells us it will put things back in their rightful place.

Populism and Latin America

Now we might understand why populism has been so attractive in Latin America. For we have noted over and again that representation and identity are a problem for the region, which even lacks a proper or convincing name for itself (what is Latin America?). The populist gesture resolves that problem at a stroke, by denying that it even exists: "we" are who "we" are, it tells us tautologically, and that is not up for scrutiny or discussion. For these are questions that only "elites" are tempted to ask.

It is no surprise, then, that Latin America does populism well. However much the rest of the world may be becoming populists now (perhaps because the contagion of doubt over representation and identity has spread), Latin Americans are the past masters of populist politics. And among Latin Americans, none do populism better than the Argentines.

Politics without People

But before we move to discuss populism in Argentina, I have a couple of questions. First, given that the idea of the "people" is so engrained into political discourse, I wonder what it would take to imagine politics without it. What is politics without a people? And second, in that we assume that the people always already exists, it can be hard to think about the past without them. What would history, or the writing of history, look like without a people to fill it? Pause the video, and I will leave you pondering on that while I open an Irn Bru. But I'll be right back.

[. . .]

I asked about politics and history without a people. In part, I want to leave these questions hanging, for us to return to later. One possibility is that what we will describe as "neoliberalism" is an attempt to remove the people from politics, to replace them with either markets or technicians, both of which offer their own forms of obviousness, brooking no debate. But perhaps this is not even politics; perhaps "neoliberal politics" is a contradiction in terms. We will come back to this. As for a "people-less" history, you might say that this is the traditional narrative of "great men" (less often, women), the Monarchs, Presidents, Statesmen, Generals, Explorers, Philosophers, Inventors whose names parade through old-fashioned school textbooks. And you might think that a "people's history" is a welcome corrective to all that. Maybe, but we would also have to track how peoples are first invented and constructed, consolidated and rendered eternal (outside of history) as well as the moments at which they (threaten to) fall apart.

There is no better chance to observe a moment at which a people is both constructed and falls apart than the so-called "Renunciamiento" of Evita Perón, on August 22, 1951.

Evita's Renunciamiento

Once a minor film starlet and radio personality, Evita was the wife of the Argentine president, Juan Perón. Perón, an army colonel, had been a member of a military government that had taken power in a coup in 1943. Assigned the position of Head of the

Department of Labor, he had cultivated the growing Argentine working class, which was increasingly important as the country industrialized, urbanized, and accepted tens of thousands of migrants, mostly from Southern and Eastern Europe, who were drawn to the factories and meat-packing plants of Greater Buenos Aires and environs. The more authority Perón accumulated, the more he was perceived as a threat by the rest of the military junta, who in October 1945 arrested and imprisoned him. In response, a massive and more or less spontaneous demonstration rallied in his support, with thousands of workers crowding the central square in front of the presidential palace in downtown Buenos Aires. The government backed down in the face of this pressure, and released Perón, who went on to win with ease the elections organized for early the following year.

But it was less the election than the mobilization on the streets and in the plaza, of October 17, 1945, that was Peronism's founding moment. It was the point at which the people apparently came together and became visible, clamoring for Perón as their representative.

With Perón in power, such mobilizations were regularly and ritually re-staged as part of Peronism's effort to recreate and re-constitute the collective subject that gave the regime legitimacy. Every year, October 17, for instance, was a "day of loyalty," "*un día peronista*," as was May 1, the day of the workers, on which multitudinous rallies were held, from which the people were to emerge, their bond with the leader cemented and confirmed. In these re-stagings, Perón's wife Evita had a starring role, modelling the intimate and indissoluble relationship that the people were to have with their president. From the balcony, but also part of the crowd, she anchored the "we" that gives populism meaning. She both bridged and maintained the distance that separated the Peróns from the multitude down below, giving this mass of humanity form and name, and ensuring the mechanism of representation on which the regime's power depended.

The mass mobilization of August 1951 was, then, another instance of this compulsion to repeat the primal scene of the people made visible, legible, and comprehensible—literally comprehended, bounded by the populist *mise en scène.*

A huge stage had been set up across the Avenida 9 de Julio, one of the widest streets in the world. An excitable crowd of up to two million thronged the boulevard. Enormous

portraits of Perón and Evita graced the screen above, on which the people were to project their hopes and desires. But on this occasion, the spectacle began to break down, the people began to fall apart—not out of indifference, on the contrary, but as the multitude made demands on Evita, that she run as vice-presidential candidate in the forthcoming elections, to which she could not respond. Overwhelmed, as the afternoon faded to dusk and then night, and as the raucous crowd continued to chant "Evita con Perón," "Evita with Perón," the first lady could no longer hold the spectacle together, as she could no longer maintain the separation required for the mechanism of representation to operate. Deferring, postponing an answer, she refused the immediacy demanded of her.

Peronism had hit its limit. Nine days later, on the radio, Evita formally turned down the vice-presidential nomination. Within a year, she was dead, aged 33, of ovarian cancer. In 1955, Perón was brought down in a military coup. But in death, during the long period of exile that followed, while Perón promised all things to all men if only he could come back to save the country from its woes, Evita was able to accomplish what she no longer could in life: make the mythical concept of the Argentine people cohere, because nobody would ever pin her down again.

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10a. "A Decade of Revolution in Cuba"

Last time, we talked about populism, the slipperiest of political concepts but also a phenomenon that increasingly seems to surround us, wherever we look. Defining populism, we first noted that its resistance to definition, to being pinned down, seems to be one of its essential characteristics. We added that populism is a gesture that deflects criticism or questioning, trading instead in obviousness and what we take for granted—for who could possibly question that? Above all, what populism assumes is that we are the people, and that the people are the ground of politics, even as its (unspeakable) work is to create that effect as its presupposition. Populism bids to represent that people in the face of its enemies, an elite that can take various forms depending on the flavor of the populism in question, but that is always presented as having somehow distorted or subverted the natural (obvious) state of things. The populist leader reluctantly agrees—reluctantly, because he (less often, she) is only responding to the people's demands—to put everything back in its rightful place.

Peronism and its Discontents

To illustrate this mechanism, we looked at Argentine Peronism. If Latin Americans do populism well, Argentina does it best of all. We saw how Peronism constructs a people, positing its emergence in the fateful demonstration that first brought Juan Perón to power, and then re-stages that primal scene through successive mobilizations until, finally, it reaches a limit with Evita's "renunciamiento" of 1951. Not that this puts an end to the Peronist project. In some ways, quite the reverse: Argentina's current government is (once again) Peronist; and ultimately, for vast swathes of the population, Peronism does become naturalized, taken for granted. There is a wonderful moment at the end of Argentine author Osvaldo Soriano's novel, *No habrá más penas ni olvido* (translated as *A Funny Dirty Little War*), when one of the characters says he "never meddled in politics" because he was "always a Peronist." The ultimate success of any political program comes when it seems no longer to be political, but merely a matter of habit and common sense.

But not everyone buys into populism. Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber's rock opera, *Evita* (for which Madonna played the titular role on film), has a figure shadowing Eva Perón throughout her rise and fall. He is perennially present, but almost always at a distance. In the crowd cheering beneath the balcony of the presidential palace, he is the only one not to be caught up in the moment; as the anthem "Don't Cry for Me, Argentina" sounds out, he shakes his head and turns from the spectacle. Later, in a dream sequence as Evita sickens, he and the first lady sing (and dance) a confrontational waltz: "How long do you think this pantomime can last?" he asks her. "Go, if you're able, to somewhere unstable," she responds. "Whip up your hate in some tottering state, but not here, dear. Is that clear, dear?" Played by Antonio Banderas, it is not immediately clear in the movie who Evita's symbolic antagonist might be.

Evita's shadow is in fact supposed to be Che Guevara. And though his role in the musical flies in the face of the historical record (Che was barely twenty-four years old when Evita died, and never had any opportunity to meet her), it makes some sense to pair these two Argentine icons as contrasting political visions or imaginaries: Eva Perón, the populist figurehead dressed to the nines and surveying the crowd in the Plaza de Mayo at the center of Buenos Aires, versus Ernesto "Che" Guevara, the die-hard socialist in combat fatigues, traipsing with a small guerrilla cohort through rugged countryside in a foreign land.

Che Guevara

Che was born in the city of Rosario to a middle-class family and studied medicine before embarking on extended travel, first around Argentina and later (by motorcycle) through much of South America. In 1954, he was in Guatemala, where he witnessed first-hand the CIA-sponsored coup to overthrow democratically-elected president Jacobo Arbenz. This cemented his view that armed struggle was the only way to ensure the changes that he now believed the region required. In 1955, in Mexico City, Guevara met the young ex-lawyer Fidel Castro, already a seasoned rebel in his native Cuba, who was plotting to bring down the US-backed dictator, Fulgencio Batista. Pledging himself to Castro's cause, Che crossed the Caribbean with him the following year, in a decrepit yacht with eighty or so other would-be revolutionaries. In the subsequent guerrilla campaign in the Sierra

Maestra mountains, Guevara distinguished himself for his organizational skills, tactical intelligence, and occasional ruthlessness, and he rose up the ranks. He was in charge at the final strategic battle that saw Castro's forces take the town of Santa Clara in December 1958, and he entered Havana on January 2, 1959, ahead of Castro himself, securing the capital the day after the deposed despot had abandoned the city and fled into exile.

In the new, revolutionary government, Guevara took up a series of positions over the next few years, from commanding a prison where he supervised tribunals that led to dozens of executions, to heading a national land reform initiative. He served as Finance Minister and President of the National Bank. But it was not for what he did in these roles (where his achievements, as Dawson details, were decidedly mixed) that he gained fame as figurehead for the revolutionary and decolonizing spirit that was sweeping much of the Third World. That had much more to do with his writing.

Guevara was an inveterate reader and writer, who wrote and published diaries of his travels and military campaigns. He put out a manual, *Guerrilla Warfare*, that elaborated "*foco*" theory, which held that the key to a successful revolutionary uprising was the work of a small group of committed men establishing bases in the countryside, providing a model and inspiration to the local population to rise up with them. He also wrote letters, articles, and speeches that he delivered around the globe, from Cuba and elsewhere in Latin America, to conferences in Asia and Africa, to the General Assembly of the United Nations in New York, where he also gave interviews and established contact with like-minded activists. Through these appearances, and the imagery and press attention that they brought, as well as through the spread of his words themselves, Che established himself as a cogent and charismatic theorist of revolutionary change.

The New Man

Different political imaginaries are distinguished, among other ways, by the kinds of subject or agent that they produce or project. Liberalism, for instance, envisages the basic social unit as the individual, abstract and equal in the eyes of the law, equipped with rights and responsibilities. Populism, as we have seen, stages the people as always already the bedrock of politics, even though that people is as much a product as a

prerequisite of such staging. Other imaginaries put (say) family, clan, community, nation, race, gender, or class front and center as forms of subjectivity that determine the course of history. For Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles" (*The Manifesto of the Communist Party*), and it is the working class or proletariat that are to be the "gravediggers" of bourgeois society. But in less industrialized societies, where the proletariat is neither numerically large nor politically significant (and this was still the case in most of Latin America), revolutionary Marxism runs up against a problem: without sufficient gravediggers, who gives capitalism the burial it deserves?

Guevara's letter to the Uruguayan journalist, Carlos Quijano, outlines the birth of a new subject, the "new man." Unlike other candidates for subject of history, this is also for the most part a future subject, whose arrival is still to come; this is a "21st Century Man," who will put behind him the "decadent and morbid" twentieth century (268). Indeed, there is something messianic about this figure, who will one day redeem a fallen history much as the Judaeo-Christian Messiah is foreseen as both judging and putting an end to a world contaminated by original sin.

But let us pause here. Take a look at Guevara's letter, and identify some of the characteristics of this "new human being" that Che believes is being forged in the fires of revolution. What is this new man like? How does he differ from what is (presumably) the "old man" we see around us? Then one more question: Would we welcome him even if he were to turn up? How much do we want to share Guevara's utopian vision? While you think about that, I will have a Cuba Libre, that classic mix of Cuban spirit and US pop. But I'll be right back.

[. . .]

So what did you find? First, it may seem to go without saying that the new man is, after all, a *man*. Yes, fifty or sixty years ago it would have been more common (in both English and Spanish) to use the word "man" ("hombre") to refer to men and women alike, but there is little doubt that this is a gendered subject, whose purported virtues tend to be those traditionally associated with masculinity. There were women who achieved

prominence within the Cuban revolutionary struggle (such as Haydée Santamaría), or who fought with Che in his other campaigns ("Tania the Guerrilla"), but for the most part they were praised to the extent that they shared these same masculine virtues, such as physical endurance, or a willingness to give up family or personal ties for the sake of the greater cause. And however much the Revolution empowered women—in terms of educational opportunities or reproductive rights, for instance—it has seldom challenged traditional, even *machista*, visions of masculinity, as is evident in the regime's ambivalent (at best) attitude to homosexuality. The new man, even if she is a woman, is male and militant along the lines of a military vanguard or an army's shock troops.

Second, then, the new man is also characterized by sacrifice. He is an ascetic, who forgoes "the temptation to follow the beaten paths of material interest" (263), just as the revolution's leaders "pay a price for the heroic fact of constituting a vanguard as a nation" (271). In fact, the new man should renounce all temptation, for he is a moral subject as well as a political one, and indeed the revolution itself is as much about morality as it is about politics. After all, in Che's letter, the debased present that the new man will redeem is condemned more for its "decadence" than for its injustice or oppression.

Third, the new man is motivated by love; "it is impossible to think of an authentic revolutionary without this quality" (270). Indeed, despite the emphasis that Guevara puts on education and ideology ("society as a whole must become a huge school" [263]), his revolutionary vision is not only more moral than it is political, it is also more affective than it is cognitive or intellectual. The new man is redeemed and redemptive less because he thinks differently from contemporary man, than because he *feels* differently. The revolution has done its work when it has become a matter of "habit" (264), taken for granted, perhaps little different from populism. It is less concerned to instill a capacity for critique.

Surely there are other characteristics of the new man (that he is an unfinished subject, for instance; or that he is prefigured by the guerrilla combatant). And we may want to add an attribute of our own: that he is unrealistic or unlikely to arrive. This is certainly Dawson's criticism of Guevara's promotion of "moral" rather than material rewards—that they simply do not work—though he himself also notes how many Cubans *were*

prepared to put up with the sacrifices asked of them, so long as "it would lead to a better world" (255). But we might better ask if we would *want* to live in a world populated by "new men" (and women). For this would be a world of sacrifice even once such sacrifice were no longer necessary, a world in which moralism displaces politics, and in which love is recast as a form of duty. Like the story—or myth (and the two can hardly be separated)—of Che Guevara himself, it would be perhaps equal parts admirable, equal parts tragic and sad.

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11. "The Terror"

Last time, we discussed Cuba and the Cuban Revolution. We focused on Che Guevara and his vision of a new social subject that was to be forged in the fires of revolutionary combat and struggle: the "new man" of the twenty-first century, heroic and self-sacrificial, motivated by love. For Guevara, the revolution was less a singular event that could be assigned a date (January 1, 1959) than an ongoing process whose endpoint could not be predicted and might never come. For Guevara, the process was everything, which may be one reason why he abandoned his relatively comfortable life as a politician and bureaucrat in Havana, to plunge back into the fray with clandestine military campaigns in first the Congo and then Bolivia. The Bolivian expedition, however, was to be Che's last.

Che Guevara: Death and Legacy

The theory was that a guerilla "*foco*," a small band of committed insurgents (new men *avant la lettre*), could inspire an oppressed rural peasantry to rise up against the state. But less than a year after entering the country, Che and the final sixteen fighters still under his command, their numbers reduced by desertion, capture, ambush, and sheer mishap, found themselves in a remote and rocky ravine surrounded by US-trained Bolivian Rangers. The guerrillas were filthy and bedraggled, lacking supplies and wracked by sickness, demoralized and staring defeat in the face. They had failed to recruit a single peasant to their cause. In the ensuing firefight, Guevara's carbine was hit by a bullet and rendered useless. He was quickly captured. The following morning he was executed in the one-room schoolhouse of the nearby hamlet of La Higuera. His body was then helicoptered to the town of Vallegrande, where it was displayed, draped over the sinks of the hospital laundry, to curious locals as well as representatives of the world's press. Many people have commented that the photographs of the dead Che look like images of a martyred Christ. His messianism had found its Messiah.

If Guevara's own revolutionary adventures ended with an abject failure, this did not mean that he was no longer viewed as an example to follow. On the contrary. Even today, the sites in southern Bolivia where he met his end draw pilgrims and tourists; the walls of the laundry in Vallegrande are covered in graffiti that extol Che and his philosophy. And in the decades following his death, guerrilla insurgencies erupted around Latin America, from Mexico to Argentina, Central America to Colombia, Peru, Brazil, Venezuela. Often, Che's image and words accompanied them.

Guevara himself may have viewed the Cuban Revolution less as an event than as a process, but for the region as a whole it was an event of the highest order. For much of the Left, the overthrow of the Batista dictatorship and the Castro regime's subsequent resilience in the face of constant US pressure (ranging from attempted invasion or covert dirty tricks, to diplomatic isolation and economic embargo) demonstrated that other options were possible, that alternative social and political models could survive if not always thrive. Reciprocally, for the United States and ruling national elites Cuba served as an affront and a dire warning that their dominance might be more precarious than they hoped. Whether celebrated or censured, Cuba manifested the power of an exception.

All this fed and was exacerbated by Cold War tensions, as Castro (against Che's own preference to stress solidarity with the Third World) came to rely on Soviet assistance. Things came to a head with the Cuban missile crisis of October, 1962, when the USSR's deployment of nuclear warheads on the island almost led to direct and disastrous confrontation between the two superpowers. But even once that tension was defused (the Russians withdrew their weapons, and the USA stood down its blockade of Cuban ports), Latin America continued to be the site of conflicts that were framed as proxy wars between East and West, between Communism and the so-called "free world."

The Military Takes Centre Stage

Justifying their actions in terms of the need to keep the peace and to prevent "another Cuba," though often also falling into the pattern of violent repression that dates back to the colonial period, states increasingly resorted to force to put down incipient protest, armed or otherwise. Throughout the region, and mostly with the approval if not always

the direct connivance of the United States, the military took center stage, bringing down civilian governments and ushering in a reign of state violence and terror with the aim of securing social order and warding off the specter of revolutionary change.

In 1964, amid economic crisis and fears that the president was becoming too friendly to Cuba, Brazilian generals removed democratically-elected leader João Goulart, installing a military regime that would continue until 1985. In October, 1968, police and soldiers fired on unarmed student protestors in Mexico City, killing up to 300 in the "Tlatelolco Massacre." In 1971, General Hugo Banzer took power in a coup in Bolivia. In June, 1973, in Uruguay, in the wake of activities by the Tupamaro guerrillas, President Juan María Bordaberry closed parliament and initiated a "civic military dictatorship" that would last for another twelve years. On September 11 of the same year, in Chile, General Augusto Pinochet led an uprising that brought down the "Popular Unity" government of Salvador Allende, sending planes to bomb the presidential palace in downtown Santiago. And in March, 1976, in the context of rising violence from both the Right and the Left, the Argentine military overthrew Juan Perón's widow, Isabel Martínez de Perón, who had been in power since her husband's death two years previously.

Much of Latin America (Paraguay, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Haiti, for example) already had what were effectively military or at least anti-democratic regimes of long standing. Now they were joined even by countries that had prided themselves on their liberal and democratic credentials. By the late 1970s, authoritarianism was the norm rather than the exception from Tijuana to Tierra del Fuego, San Salvador to Salvador da Bahía.

Trauma and Narrative

Moreover, many of these regimes were exceptionally bloody and brutal in their repression of basic human rights. Censorship and surveillance were routine. Labor unions and left-wing parties were particular targets, and were proscribed, disbanded, and their members persecuted. Students, peasants, journalists, and intellectuals were under suspicion, but bad luck or being in the wrong place at the wrong time could make you a victim without recourse to appeal. Clandestine detention without trial was commonplace, often in secret prisons and camps where abuse was systematic.

In Chile under Pinochet, tens of thousands were imprisoned and tortured; up to 5,000 were killed or forcibly "disappeared." In the Argentine "dirty war," right-wing death squads and the state combined to murder up to 30,000, some of whom were drugged and then dropped, still alive, from planes over the South Atlantic. In Guatemala, highland villages were razed and well over 150,000 people, mostly indigenous, were killed in a campaign of genocide that had begun back in the 1960s. In El Salvador, in the context of a civil war fought against the FMLN guerrilla, the armed forces repeatedly violated protocols of legitimate combat; more than 800 civilians were killed in a single day in the village of El Mozote in 1981; priests associated with "liberation theology" were subject to death threats and assassination; the archbishop of San Salvador, Monseñor Romero, was shot dead while saying mass. Up and down Latin America, hundreds of thousands sought refuge and fled into exile—at one point, one in five Uruguayans had left their country—and many more were homeless and internally displaced. Not that fleeing necessarily brought safety: on the frontier between El Salvador and Honduras, Honduran troops colluded with the Salvadoran army by turning back refugees and enabling the "Sumpul River Massacre," in which hundreds were slaughtered; in the Southern Cone, governments secretly collaborated in "Operation Condor," to pursue their enemies beyond national borders.

It is time to take stock. Such lists of atrocities and statistics of abuse can numb the senses. They call out for but also overwhelm sentiments of sympathy and solidarity. This is no doubt why the same period saw the rise of *testimonio* or testimonial narratives in the region: stories of individuals who both suffered and resisted state terror in the region, who give a human face and dimension to a trauma that is almost beyond imagination. Through such stories we learned of Rigoberta Menchú, a Guatemalan indigenous woman and peasant activist whose father was killed in a protest at the Spanish embassy, and whose brother was murdered by the army before her eyes; and of Alicia Partnoy, a prisoner in an Argentine detention center nicknamed the "little school." But there is a limit to what such narratives can tell. And doubt came to haunt some of these stories, above all Menchú's. It is not clear, for instance, that her brother was killed quite as she says he was. So even *testimonio* fails to give us access to the brutality of the terror.

But perhaps the numbers are the point. Perhaps, as with other historical traumas (slavery, the Holocaust, for example, but also "smaller" traumas that similarly escape measurement), we are left with the incomprehensibility of what happened, with the way in which they challenge our understanding. This week, I have no questions, as they would suggest that you (or I, or anyone) could provide answers that would be anything but glib. Or rather, all we have are questions, as we reach the limits of any explanation or narrative. Whatever words we offer are shadowed by absence. Pause the video here, and try to listen to that silence. I am not thirsty right now, but I'll be right back.

[. . .]

Silence is one, quite appropriate, response to terror. But it is also the response that terror desires. After all, terror is an assault on language; this is why it seems to render words useless. Terror encourages a form of silence that is complicity: not simply by making us fearful to speak out, but also (and more insidiously) by making us think that there is no point in doing so; that there is nothing to be said, nothing to be done. And while many responded in this way to state terror in Latin America, not everyone did. Next week, we will look at (and hear from) those who spoke out.

Terror as Counter-Revolution

Moreover, we should be wary of the notion that terror is simply stasis, paralysis; or that it is merely reactive, merely negative. The "states of exception" that governed so much of Latin America during the 1970s and 1980s did not seek only to destroy their perceived enemies (however they pictured them—as Communists, subversives, terrorists, or whatever). Rather than seeking to turn the clock back to some imagined golden age of harmony that might have existed before the "cancer" of the Cuban Revolution spread, they advanced a new socio-political and economic project for the region. In its way, indeed, their impact was almost as revolutionary as that of the left-wing agenda that they thwarted and feared. The terror ushered in what Italian theorist Paolo Virno describes as a "counterrevolution" in the sense of a "revolution in reverse," "an impetuous innovation of modes of production, forms of life, and social relations that, however, consolidate and set again in motion capitalist command" (241). In the words of Canadian activist Naomi

Klein, it was the "shock doctrine" of authoritarianism that brought us what we have come to know as neoliberalism.

We will return to neoliberalism later. For the moment, note that the Argentine military dictatorship called itself a "Proceso de Reorganización Nacional," a wholesale "Process of National Reorganization." Or read Alberto Fujimori's statement, suspending Congress and the constitutional order in Peru, in which he outlines a profound transformation, "planting the seeds of a new nation and leaving behind the fetid ruins of the old order" (314). Fujimori and Che Guevara may have agreed on little else, but they coincide in their disdain for the status quo, and in their ambition to change it.

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12. "Speaking Truth to Power"

Last time, we looked at the rise of military and authoritarian regimes during the 1970s and 1980s. In itself, dictatorship was nothing new for the region: in some ways the regimes installed by Augusto Pinochet et al were simply a continuation of the *caudillo* tradition of the nineteenth century, which in turn drew on a sadly familiar story of violent and anti-democratic rule inherited from the colonial era. But in other ways, these dictatorships were different.

In the first place, they employed new tactics of terror and intimidation, systematic and unsparing. The practice of forced disappearance became their hallmark, leaving victims' relatives in the dark as to whether their loved ones were alive or dead. Combined with the use of censorship, secret police, clandestine detention centers, and paramilitary death squads, these states of exception traded in uncertainty and doubt. And as the exception became the norm, doubt led to a climate of impunity and complicity. Neighbours and friends of the detained and disappeared could shrug their shoulders and mutter "*por algo será*": "There must be a reason"; no smoke without fire. Everyone was under suspicion; nobody was to be trusted.

In the second place, the dictatorships ushered in an unexpected (and perhaps inadvertent) revolution. Rather than simply trying to turn back the clock to some imagined golden age, they ended up fundamentally remodeling Latin American societies, in a process that had global repercussions. The region's authoritarian regimes provided a testbed for neoliberalism, which transformed economics (by giving markets free reign), politics (by promoting technocracy over debate), and everyday life (by fostering atomized individualism). And from Latin America, this drive to restructure social relations spread, from New Zealand to Canada, from the United Kingdom under Thatcher to Reagan's America. We are all living with its consequences now.

New Forms of Struggle

The dirty and civil wars of the second half of the twentieth century were partly prompted and certainly exacerbated by Cold War rivalries—West versus East, inspired by or as a response to the perceived threat of the Cuban Revolution. But by the time the last of the dictatorships and proxy wars eventually came to an end (Argentina's military regime ended in 1983, and Brazil's in 1985, but Augusto Pinochet remained in power in Chile until 1990; peace accords were not signed in El Salvador until 1992, in Guatemala until 1996, and in Colombia as recently as 2016), the Soviet bloc was history.

Another consequence, then, of this long period of internecine strife was a reconceptualization of what it means to struggle for liberty and equality, against exploitation and oppression. This was partly a function of the effects of that oppression, and also of the ways in which exploitation itself, and its attendant violence, took on new forms over time. For we should not assume that the celebrated "transitions to democracy" of the 1980s and 1990s in fact ushered in anything like real peace or real freedom for the majority of Latin America's population. Indeed, many parts of the region (Central America and Mexico, for instance) have seen *more* violence since the coming of democracy and/or the end of organized hostilities than they did before.

Authoritarianism was particularly brutal towards traditional left-wing political actors and their forms of association. As well as seeking to eliminate armed groups, the military targeted political parties and labor unions. The state came down hard on student activists, intellectuals, peasants, the organized working class, and even priests or churches that were suspected of spreading "subversive" views such as liberation theology.

Protest and resistance therefore had to express itself in other ways, and often came from (or helped to produce) new political actors. The Argentine Madres de la Plaza de Mayo, for instance, were women who entered the political stage accidentally and reluctantly, compelled to do so in the search for their missing sons, daughters, or husbands. Dressed conservatively, with white headscarves, they fit the image neither of the traditional male militant, nor of the radicalized feminist. Indeed, their premise was the traditional ideals of maternal love and family integrity that the military regime (allied with right-wing

Catholicism) had pledged to uphold. And they turned these values against the dictatorship. Their protest was dignified and often non-confrontational, as befitted the role that they performed, as guardians of propriety. They appropriated the symbolic power of the central square at the heart of the capital city, Buenos Aires, making public their private grief and anger in front of the cathedral and the presidential palace. And they tapped into the capacities of the photograph (and photographic enlargement and reproduction), by carrying black and white images of their missing loved ones, rendering visible the unspeakable void that structured Argentine society under the military regime. In turn, these portraits were repeated in the international press, giving faces to the victims of repression and establishing networks of outrage and solidarity.

Similar tactics were adopted by other groups of relatives up and down Latin America. In Chile, women took a traditional folk dance, the *cueca*, normally danced in pairs, and performed it alone, making evident the absence of partners disappeared by the military. Pinochet's regime had promoted the *cueca*, in 1979 declaring it to be the country's national dance, and now his opponents turned it against him. It was also taken up by the British musician Sting, whose 1987 song "They Dance Alone" depicts this form of protest. In October 1990, only a few months after the resumption of civilian rule, Sting played Santiago's National Stadium, once used as a torture center. He brought on stage representatives of the families of the disappeared, who carried placards with photographs and the question "*¿Dónde están?*" ("Where are they?"), as he sang this song, in Spanish. The search for justice continued (and continues) long after the end of authoritarianism. In 1998, while visiting London, Pinochet was arrested and in a landmark case faced extradition to Spain to answer charges of torture and assassination. Though the ex-dictator was eventually allowed to return home (on health grounds), a precedent was set in international law that nobody should be immune to prosecution for such crimes against humanity.

Reconciliation and Impunity

It would be nice to tell a story of just desserts and punishment for those guilty of abuses during the dirty wars. But the very fact that Pinochet had to be arrested in England (rather than Chile) indicates that the reckoning with the past has been patchy at best in Latin

America. Truth commissions were launched in several countries, some official and some unofficial, and they issued reports with titles such as *Nunca más* ("Never Again") in Argentina, *Nunca mais* in Brazil. These investigations collected individual testimonies and also tried broadly to establish what had happened and who had been responsible during the years of civil war and dictatorship. But such reports did not necessarily put an end to violence: in Guatemala, Bishop Juan José Gerardi, who had led the Catholic church's Recovery of Historical Memory project there, was killed just two days after presenting its final report, *Guatemala: Nunca más*, in 1998. More generally, transition to democracy often involved a trade-off whereby reconciliation seemed to demand impunity and even amnesia.

Sometimes such unsatisfactory outcomes were baked into the very protests that helped to oust authoritarianism. Take the Chilean plebiscite to decide the future of the dictatorship in 1988. As Alexander Dawson notes, the coalition of parties opposing Pinochet harnessed the power of television and marketing with "a brilliant campaign that took the regime by surprise" (330). Against expectations, in a country governed by fear, censorship, and intimidation, they won, with over fifty-five per cent of the vote, preparing the way for the return of civilian rule. They did so by presenting a negation—"No"—as an affirmation, with upbeat music and images of rainbows and smiles, musicians and mimes, dancing and joy. In place of a critique of the present or of the past, they offered a positive but vague, and almost entirely contentless, vision of the future. Achieving consensus required a certain complicity with repression, in so far as the trauma of the preceding years had to be denied.

Technologies of Protest

It would also be nice to tell a story of blundering authoritarians facing ever more sophisticated opponents. From this distance at least it may be easy to make fun of heavy-handed military rulers. And no doubt it is true that, as Dawson suggests, "the proliferation of digital technologies" (343), from the Internet to smartphones, puts new resources for resistance and organization in the hands of ordinary people, making it more difficult for centralized states to control the historical and political narrative. Just as Argentina's Madres used photography and the Chilean coalition for "No" realized the

possibilities of commercial television to build alliances and make dissidence visible, so also the Mexican EZLN (Zapatista Army for National Liberation) were a guerrilla force very different to their predecessors. From their emergence, in 1994, their masked spokesman, Subcomandante Marcos, sent out regular email communiqués that circulated worldwide via discussion lists and electronic bulletin boards. Other rebels, such as Che Guevara, may also have been writers, but Marcos's texts were playful and knowing, particularly suited to the new medium, while the Zapatistas' military capacity is miniscule—sometimes they have even paraded with wooden guns. Here everything was performance, a nimble play of appearances that repeatedly wrong-footed the Mexican state. But one might ask how much the state is truly the enemy today.

I have two questions, then, about the changing landscape of power and resistance, in Latin America and around the world, over the past twenty-five years. For this has been a period that has seen the rise of commercial operations, many linked to hi-tech (Apple, Google, Facebook), others to the manufacture and distribution of illegal substances (the Mexican cartels), that, if they have nothing else in common, similarly deal in sums of capital and cash that would be the envy of many governments, and similarly seem to escape or evade state regulation. Does the main threat to freedom (and, in Latin America, personal security) really come from the state, or from private enterprises? Second, then, can we still be as sanguine about the potential of technology to empower us, rather than to exploit us in ever new ways? Pause the video here, and write down some answers. The nights are drawing in, so I will have a hot chocolate. But I'll be right back.

[. . .]

During the 1970s and 1980s, the fundamental opposition in Latin America was sometimes cast in terms of (civil) society against the (dictatorial) state. Since then, both with the rise of neoliberalism, whereby the state abdicates key elements of what were once thought to be its social role, and with the increasing prevalence and strength of non-state or para-state actors from corporations to gangs, power can seem to be more dispersed and conflict more complex. I suspect that most people in the region would no longer believe the state to be the main threat to their liberties. In fact, in the early 2000s, with the so-called "Left Turns" that saw the election of (more or less) left-wing governments from Argentina to

Venezuela, Ecuador to Brazil, many people were calling for the (re)establishment of a social contract with the state at its center. We will examine this phenomenon next week.

¡Que Se Vayan Todos!

These left-wing governments were also a response to or effect of the emergence of new forms of social protest, some of which drew on new technologies, but most of which did not. The first of these was perhaps the *Caracazo*, a large and mostly spontaneous uprising in the Venezuelan capital in February, 1989, in the wake of the introduction of a packet of neoliberal policies by President Carlos Andrés Pérez. Pérez was recently reinstalled after a previous mandate, back in the 1970s, when he had governed as a populist, flush with the profits of a thriving oil industry. In 1989, however, he preached austerity. When that translated into something as apparently trivial as increased bus fares, it lit a powder keg of discontent. Riots and looting shook Caracas (and other major cities) for days, until ham-fistedly suppressed by the security forces at the cost of hundreds, perhaps thousands, of dead and injured.

Then at the turn of the millennium, in Bolivia, protests erupted over other aspects of the neoliberal agenda. In the city of Cochabamba, in 2000, a wave of demonstrations reversed the privatization of the municipal water supply. In 2003, further unrest around the country centered on the exploitation of natural gas reserves, and strikes and road blockages led to the resignation of President Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada; when two years later his successor, Carlos Mesa, refused to approve a new hydrocarbons law, he too was forced to stand down.

Most dramatic perhaps were the events in Argentina of late 2001. Here, in the context of economic crisis (with foreign debt, devaluation, capital flight, and a run on the banks), widespread urban protest, some of it violent, resulted in a succession of resignations and unprecedented instability as the President had to be helicoptered out of the presidential palace, and his successor lasted barely a week before he, too, fell on his sword. In all, including interims and caretakers, Argentina went through five presidents in less than a fortnight. The slogan of the multitude on the streets, tired of the failures of an entire political class, was "*¡Que se vayan todos!*"; "Throw them all out!"

We see a similar exasperation in Javier Sicilia's Open Letter to Mexico's Politicians and Criminals: "We have had it up to here with you, politicians" (351). Or in the editorial published by the *Diario de Juárez*, which likewise rails against "the incompetence of authorities who have failed to do their job" (351), but which questions whether the politicians are even in charge any more, turning instead to the *narcotraficantes* to ask "what is it you want from us" (347). By the beginning of the twenty-first century, distrust and doubt were rampant throughout Latin America (and also elsewhere), and the stage was set for a last gasp of something like populism, but also the invention of more radical alternatives. And that, perhaps, is where we still find ourselves now.

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13. "Towards an Uncertain Future"

Last time, we covered the various forms of opposition to military rule, and their long-term legacies. We saw that one consequence of the internecine strife of the 1970s and 1980s was a reconceptualization of what it means to struggle for liberty and equality, against exploitation and oppression. Protest and resistance had to express itself in new ways, and often came from (or helped to produce) new political actors. We looked at the Argentine Madres de la Plaza de Mayo, who turned the values that the dictatorship claimed to uphold against it. We also looked at how new technologies (from the photocopier to the Internet) fed into and enabled new forms of dissent, giving palpable form to structuring absences or opening up transnational circuits of solidarity and exchange.

At the same time, we noted the failures and disappointments of pacted transitions to democracy, when such pacts involved a trade-off whereby reconciliation demanded impunity and even amnesia. We are still a long way from a full reckoning with those years of violence. And today when the consensus on silence fractures, some rather dirty little secrets can become public. For instance, the maverick Brazilian politician Jair Bolsonaro is fond of breaking the taboo on discussing his country's 1964-1985 military regime. In 2008, he commented that "the error of the dictatorship was that it tortured, but did not kill"; in 2016, as congressman, he dedicated his vote in the impeachment of left-wing President Dilma Roussef to an army colonel, Carlos Alberto Brilhante Ustra, who was notorious for his role in the torture of detainees during the 1970s. In 2018, Bolsonaro (who has also spoken disparagingly of women, of gays and lesbians, of indigenous people, and of environmentalism) was elected President of Brazil.

Yet we also considered the changing landscape of power and resistance over the past twenty-five years. For this has been a period that has seen the rise of commercial operations, many linked to hi-tech, others to the manufacture and distribution of illegal substances, that deal in sums of capital of which many governments would be envious, and that seem to escape or evade state regulation. We asked then how much the state is

truly the enemy today. Or perhaps it would be better to say that sovereignty, defined as the power to rule over an exception that is increasingly the norm, now takes new forms.

Indeed, at times it can seem that the major problem that Latin America faces—still faces, even, after all this time—is the weakness of its state institutions. As Alexander Dawson notes, "Latin American states are weak." Perhaps counter-intuitively, the authoritarian regimes of the 1970s and 1980s were the proof, rather than the disproof of this: states resort to violence when they lack other resources or strategies to maintain their position and establish social control. As Dawson puts it: "Weak [states] must buy the loyalty of their allies, and brutalize their enemies, perceived and real" (324). But ultimately, terror, too, failed to generate coherent national projects, as the ongoing violence merely sapped what little legitimacy such regimes had.

The states that emerged from the dark years of dictatorship and civil war were weaker than ever. They had succeeded only in spreading distrust and cynicism, in promoting the notion that (to quote British Prime Minister, and friend of Pinochet, Margaret Thatcher), there is "no such thing as society," only "individual men and women and [. . .] families," and that "people must look after themselves first" in a generalized, low-level war of all against all.

What changed, then, under the neoliberal order that was first pioneered in Latin America and then taken up enthusiastically by politicians such as Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, was that state weakness became ideology. Neoliberals believed the state was constitutively incapable of achieving the goals it had set for itself; they argued therefore that it should not even try, that it should leave things instead to the "invisible hand" of market mechanisms which, they contended, were always more efficient and reliable.

So during the 1980s and 1990s, around the world states retreated from or even abdicated wholesale roles that they had assumed in previous decades. In a wave of privatizations, public enterprises and utilities from oil companies to airlines, car manufacturers to electricity generators, banks to broadcasters, postal services to telecommunications, were all sold off to private investors, often at discount prices. Governments also renounced other forms of intervention into the economy, by removing tariffs, abolishing subsidies,

lowering tax rates, letting currencies float, and streamlining regulations or other bureaucratic obstacles to what they saw as free competition. They came together to create Free Trade Blocs such as Mercosur (founded by Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay in 1991) or to negotiate free trade agreements, such as the North American Free Trade Agreement, NAFTA, between Canada, the USA and Mexico, which went into effect in 1994, with the goal of ensuring frictionless commerce across international borders. They also outsourced or reduced investments in social services and welfare, public amenities and benefits, from pensions to prisons, education to healthcare, housing to libraries, waste collection to old people's homes.

Moreover, when Latin American governments were reluctant to implement these changes, they had their arms twisted by international bodies such as the International Monetary Fund, which imposed "reforms" and austerity before they would pay out loans to alleviate the debt crisis that rocked the region in the 1980s. But often enough politicians needed little persuading, and enthusiastically applied the "shock doctrine" that was touted as a panacea for all social ills.

Neoliberalism affected everyone, rich and poor. The wealthy, for instance, felt the need to invest in private security (such as guards for increasingly fortified homes in walled or gated communities), to protect themselves and their possessions and to distance themselves from a society with which they had less and less in common. But they at least had the resources to opt out in this way. The poor, especially new arrivals to the ever-expanding metropolises, were often already living precarious existences, sensitive to small modifications in their everyday conditions. Hence sometimes the seemingly excessive reactions to apparently small changes, such as the transport price hikes that triggered Venezuela's *Caracazo* in 1989 and the widespread protests in Chile as recently as 2019.

The middle class, meanwhile, was split: some benefited from lower taxes and the increased availability of consumer goods, for instance; others, not least public-sector employees thrown out of work, found themselves only tenuously holding on to a standard of living that they had once taken for granted. So new alliances emerged, fragile but powerful, as in the Argentine uprising of late 2001 when middle-class savers, unable

to access their now devalued nest eggs, joined forces on the streets with the long-term unemployed known as *piqueteros* to bring down the government with the cry of "*¡Que se vayan todos!*"; "Throw all of them out!"

These protests, and others—in Bolivia, Ecuador, and elsewhere—led, in the late 1990s and early 2000s, to a widespread political crisis, but also to innovative new forms of communal self-help on the part of an increasingly mobilized citizenry. In Argentina, for example, a barter economy sprang up as the money supply dwindled, and workers took over and ran factories that had been abandoned by their owners. In Brazil, some municipal councils, run by the left-wing Workers' Party, experimented with forms of participatory budgeting, which enabled ordinary people to have a say in their communities' financial priorities. In Bolivia and Ecuador, indigenous movements gained prominence and sought a measure of autonomy from the state.

This crisis of political representation also opened up space for new or previously marginalized political actors to take up the reigns of state power. In short order, in a series of sweeping electoral victories that became known as a "pink tide" or "left turn," left-wing governments were installed in Venezuela (in 1999), Brazil (in 2003), Argentina (also 2003), Bolivia (in 2006), Ecuador (in 2007), Paraguay (in 2008), Uruguay (in 2010), and elsewhere. Their leaders were often figures from outside the ranks of the traditional elite—former steelworker and union leader Lula in Brazil, for instance; indigenous coca farmer Evo Morales in Bolivia; ex-guerrilla José Mujica in Uruguay—and their charisma and sometimes fiery rhetoric could lead to comparisons with old-style populism.

By far the most controversial of these new Latin American presidents was Venezuela's Hugo Chávez, an army captain who first came to public attention as head of a failed coup attempt back in 1992, but who proved a skilled political campaigner (winning handily at the ballot box and increasing his majority with every re-election). Benefitting from high prices on international markets for the oil that is the mainstay of Venezuela's economy, Chávez poured money into social welfare programs, while denouncing his opponents as "*escuálidos*" (squalid), making him a lightning rod for poor people's hopes and rich people's fears in an ever more divided society, and variously a source of inspiration or consternation to observers elsewhere.

But beyond these policies of redistribution, and this rhetoric of antagonism towards an elite that had, for forty years, conspired to exclude radical politics from power, Chávez (correctly) interpreted this as a constituent moment: a chance to remake Venezuelan society in a new image, and to rewrite the rules of participation and politics. Hence his party was called the "Fifth Republic Movement" (*Movimiento Quinta República*), and one of Chávez's first steps as president was to establish a constituent assembly by popular referendum, charged with rewriting the country's constitution. Ratified by over 70% of voters (albeit on a small turnout), the resulting document renamed Venezuela a "Bolivarian Republic," in homage to the liberator Simón Bolívar, from whom Chávez claimed to take inspiration. The point of this gesture was to suggest a new beginning, a re-set that challenged the country's entire post-independence history.

Similarly radical moves were underway elsewhere. Bolivia, for instance, likewise set up a constituent assembly to write a new constitution. There was some opposition to the process, but it was passed in 2007. Ecuador did the same, though less contentiously: its new constitution won almost 64% of the popular vote in a referendum in 2008. In both cases, the approved texts enshrined key objectives of the social movements that had arisen in the preceding years. The new Bolivian constitution, for instance, reserves particular rights for indigenous peoples as part of what it defines as a "plurinational" state. It declares that the country's natural resources are "the property of the Bolivian people and shall be managed by the state." The Ecuadoran constitution, meanwhile, was the first in the world to recognize "rights of nature," urging "respect for all the elements that form an ecosystem." The Ecuadorans also include the right to food and recognition of same-sex partnerships among their new core principles.

Of course, the fact that a value is enshrined in a nation's constitution does not necessarily mean it is respected in practice. See the "Lago agrio" dispute, in which the oil company Texaco (by this point bought by Chevron) was in 2011 ordered by an Ecuadoran court to pay $18 Billion to compensate for the environmental impact of decades of its operations in the north-east of the country, an Amazonian region with a high proportion of indigenous inhabitants. But this judgement was then subject to further litigation (in New York) and arbitration (at the Permanent Court of Arbitration in the Hague, Holland),

which overturned the Ecuadoran decision. Here, an entire nation's legal system was effectively itself put on trial (and convicted) in international courts.

More generally, the law has always been something of a fiction in Latin America, from the colonial period when a popular saying was "*obedezco pero no cumplo*" ("I obey but I do not comply") to the present when scandals such as the Odebrecht affair, and others uncovered by Operation Car Wash in Brazil, Peru, Panama, and elsewhere, reveal the level of corruption infecting both business and politics throughout the region. In Brazil, the Car Wash ("*lava jato*") investigation was intensely politicized and in 2014 led to the impeachment of Lula's successor, the Workers' Party's President Dilma Roussef, in what many have described as a judicial coup d'état.

By this point, left-wing governments were in trouble throughout the region, though their downfall took different shapes: in Chile (in 2009) and Argentina (in 2015), they were voted out of office (though the Argentine left won again in subsequent elections); in Venezuela, Chávez's death (of cancer, in 2013) plus an oil price crash and economic mismanagement has made for protracted crisis and mass migration; a coup brought down the Honduran president, Manuel Zelaya, in 2009; in Bolivia, in 2019, accusations of electoral fraud plus police defections forced Morales, the last of the original Left Turns leaders, to flee for Mexico, his place usurped by right-wing senator Jeanine Añez.

Today (in 2020), the situation in Latin America is murkier than it has been for some time. The past year or so have seen (in no particular order): massive social protests in Chile and Colombia, continued drug trade violence in Mexico, controversy over Latino representation in the USA, the rise of Bolsonaro in Brazil, wildfires in the Amazon, the return of the left in Argentina, the naming of an opposition politician as shadow (but widely recognized) president in Venezuela, a former president's suicide amid a corruption probe in Peru, a coup in Bolivia, and of course the Coronavirus pandemic, which has hit the region particularly hard and exposed many of its frailties. If you detect a pattern in all that, then good luck to you.

Overall, this volatility may be a sign that, as with climate change (itself an ever more pressing issue for Latin America, as it is for us all), we can speak less of linear narratives

than of the way in which the unexpected is increasingly to be expected, "outlier" events are more often the norm. Who or what can rule over such exceptions? It is harder than ever to represent tendencies in the region with the broad brush-strokes with which we have been dealing throughout the semester.

And yet the course is now almost over. You may remember that, in my very first video, I pointed out that you arrived already with *some* idea as to what you might be getting yourself into. And I asked you to play a game by writing down three words or phrases that you associate with Latin America. I want you to play the same word association game, twelve weeks later. This is not a test (there are still no right answers). Don't think about it too hard. The point is to flesh out what your idea of Latin America looks like *now*. So I say "Latin America" and you say...

Pause the video and write your answers. I reckon I deserve a beer. But I'll be back.

[. . .]

I wonder what words you wrote down that you associate with Latin America. Before, I suggested you might have included sun and salsa; football or fajitas; maybe narcotraffic and nationalism. You may well still make some of the same connections now. The point of this course was not necessarily to turn *all* your preconceptions upside-down.

But you should have some new associations. Perhaps Evita or Che Guevara. Casta paintings or *caudillos*. Slavery or "The Slaughterhouse." Good Neighbour films or poems "to Roosevelt." Populism or neoliberalism. Liberals or Left Turns. You may even have been struck by ideas such as the crisis of representation or the making of new social subjects, the place of affects or the relationship of words to things. But I hope that you recognize that even these new associations are (inevitably) inadequate, and that you are now inspired you to learn *more* about the region, its history, its peoples, their struggles and achievements, and its possible futures.

I expect, in short, that your idea of the place has changed, at least a little. More importantly, you can now reflect on your ideas, and on the ideas of others (in the region

and outside it) that collectively contribute to the construction of this concept we call Latin America. In fact, perhaps you are a little *less* sure about what (or where, or when, or how) Latin America is than you were when you began. For learning is also *un*learning: it involves recognizing the complexities of what we are studying and the inevitable limits of our knowledge. It is less about finding the right answer than about coming up with the right questions.

I hope that this course has been difficult, where necessary. And fun, where possible. And I hope it has given you a sense of what Latin American Studies could and should be.

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Index

Adorno, Theodor, 44
Arbenz, Jacobo, 60, 72
Argentina, 3, 5, 31, 38, 39, 42, 44, 46, 51, 56, 59, 63, 67, 68, 70, 71, 72, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 92, 94, 95, 97, 98

Banderas, Antonio, 72
Banzer, Hugo, 80
Barnet, Miguel, 39
Batista, Fulgencio, 73, 79
beer, 99
Belize, 5
Berkeley, Busby, 61
Bolívar, Simón, 24, 25, 26, 30, 96
Bolivia, 6, 31, 47, 51, 78, 79, 80, 90, 95, 96, 98, 100
Bolsonaro, Jair, 92, 98
Brazil, 3, 5, 6, 18, 31, 32, 38, 39, 40, 48, 51, 61, 62, 79, 86, 88, 90, 92, 94, 95, 97, 98
Brilhante Ustra, Carlos Alberto, 92
Bush, Kate, 62

Canada, 10, 32, 83, 84, 85, 94
Castro, Fidel, 26, 72, 73, 79
Charles I, King, 17
Chávez, Hugo, 25, 26, 29, 96, 98
Chile, 31, 39, 40, 60, 80, 81, 86, 87, 88, 94, 97, 98
Christ, Jesus, 35, 78
coffee, 4, 62
Colombia, 6, 10, 30, 31, 48, 52, 79, 86, 98
Columbus, Christopher, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 23, 30, 38, 54
Costa Rica, 8
Creelman, James, 48, 49
Cuba, 2, 3, 4, 6, 18, 40, 52, 53, 58, 59, 60, 71, 73, 76, 78, 79, 80
Cuba Libre, 75

Darío, Rubén, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 58
Díaz, Porfirio, 48, 49
Dominican Republic, 6, 59
Duterte, Rodrigo, 65

Echenique, María Eugenia, 41
Echeverría, Esteban, 33, 34, 37, 46, 51
Ecuador, 3, 6, 31, 90, 95, 96, 100
El Salvador, 60, 81, 86
energy drink, 53
Engels, Friedrich, 45, 74
Erauso, Catalina de, 21

Falkland Islands. *See* Islas Malvinas
Falklands. *See* Islas Malvinas
Ferdinand, King, 17
France, 4, 5, 7, 9, 24, 30, 31, 45, 48, 49, 52, 53
French Guiana, 5, 7
Fujimori, Alberto, 83

Gerardi, Bishop Juan José, 88
Grable, Betty, 62
Guatemala, 6, 38, 44, 60, 72, 80, 81, 82, 86, 88
Guevara, Che, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 78, 79, 83, 89, 99
Gutenberg, Johannes, 45
Guyana, 5

Haiti, 24, 25, 30, 37, 40, 48, 80
Hobbes, Thomas, 31
Honduras, 61, 81
Horkheimer, Max, 44
hot chocolate, 89

Irn Bru, 68
Isabella, Queen, 17
Islas Malvinas, 5, 9, 31

Johnson, Boris, 65
juice, 27

Klein, Naomi, 83

Las Casas, Bartolomé de, 13, 17
Lincoln, Abraham, 40
Lloyd Webber, Andrew, 72
Lula, 95, 97

Madonna, 72
Maradona, 59, 64
Marcos, Subcomandante, 89
Martí, José, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 52, 54, 56, 58
Marx, Karl, 45, 74
mate, 5, 39
Menchú, Rigoberta, 82
Mexico, 3, 5, 6, 18, 19, 31, 33, 47, 49, 51, 55, 56, 58, 63, 72, 79, 80, 86, 91, 94, 98
milk, 47
Miranda, Carmen, 62, 63
Mohammed XII, 16

Morales, Evo, 95, 98
Mujica, José, 95

Nebuchadnezzar, 53
Nezahualcóyotl, 54
Nicaragua, 3, 51, 56, 58, 59, 60, 61, 80
Noah, 34

Panama, 52, 59, 60, 61, 97
Paraguay, 6, 31, 80, 94, 95
Partnoy, Alicia, 82
Pelliza de Sagasta, Josefina, 41, 42
Pérez, Carlos Andrés, 90
Perón, Evita, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 99
Perón, Isabel Martínez de, 80
Perón, Juan, 68, 71, 80
Peru, 3, 6, 9, 18, 19, 25, 31, 48, 51, 79, 83, 97, 98
Pinochet, Augusto, 40, 80, 81, 85, 86, 87, 88, 93
Puerto Rico, 4, 52, 59
Putin, Vladimir, 65

Quebec, 7
Quijano, Carlos, 74

Reagan, Ronald, 85, 93
Rice, Tim, 72
Romero, Monseñor Oscar, 81
Ronaldinho, 59
Roosevelt, Theodore, 52, 53, 54, 55, 60, 99
Rosas, Juan Manuel de, 34
Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, 24
Roussef, Dilma, 92, 97
rum, 7, 48, 62, 63

Sanders, Bernie, 65
Santamaría, Haydée, 75
Sarmiento, Domingo, 35
Schwarz, Roberto, 32, 33
Shakespeare, William, 27
Sicilia, Javier, 91
Sinatra, Frank, 62
soda, 19
Somoza, Anastasio, 60
Soriano, Osvaldo, 71
Spain, 7, 13, 16, 17, 19, 30, 52, 59, 87
Sting, 87
Suriname, 5

Tania the Guerrilla, 75
tea, 5, 12, 48, 59
tequila, 7
Thatcher, Margaret, 85, 93
The Beatles, 39
Todorov, Tzvetan, 12, 13, 21
Trudeau, Pierre Elliott, 39
Trump, Donald, 65
Túpac Amaru II, 25

Uruguay, 31, 80, 94, 95
USA, 6, 7, 18, 20, 24, 30, 32, 37, 40, 49, 52, 53, 54, 56, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 65, 79, 80, 94, 98

Vasconcelos, José, 55, 56, 58
Venezuela, 30, 59, 61, 79, 90, 94, 95, 96, 98, 100
Virno, Paolo, 83

water, 33, 41, 90
Whitman, Walt, 54
Wilberforce, William, 40
Williams, Raymond, 46

Zelaya, Manuel, 98