

# RECENT STUDIES ON THE EMERGENCE OF A PUBLIC SPHERE IN LATIN AMERICA

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*ORDEN Y VIRTUD: EL DISCURSO REPUBLICANO EN EL REGIMEN ROSISTA.* By Jorge Myers. (Buenos Aires: Universidad Nacional de Quilmes, 1995. Pp. 310.)

*LOS ESPACIOS PUBLICOS EN IBEROAMERICA: AMBIGUEDADES Y PROBLEMAS, SIGLOS XVIII–XIX.* By François-Xavier Guerra, Annick Lempérière et al. (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica and the Centro Francés de Estudios Mexicanos y Centroamericanos, 1998. Pp. 366.)

*LA POLITICA EN LAS CALLES: ENTRE EL VOTO Y LA MOVILIZACION, BUENOS AIRES, 1862–1880.* By Hilda Sabato. Colección Historia y Cultura. (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1998. Pp. 290.)

David Hume observed in “Of the First Principles of Government,” “Nothing is more surprising to those who consider human affairs with a philosophical eye than to see the easiness with which the many are governed by the few.” Hilda Sabato cites Hume’s 1758 assertion as an opening statement meant to summarize her main idea in writing *La política en las calles: Entre el voto y la movilización, 1862–1880*. Taken literally, however, his comment is misleading as to the content of Sabato’s book because it tends to obscure a fundamental aspect that she tries to capture and analyze. As Sabato shows, the coalescing of a ruling elite in Argentina did not happen spontaneously but as the painful result of sustained and purposeful action. Nor was it a peaceful development. The definition of the modes of articulation of power relations was a highly contested process involving many different actors, projects, and agendas.<sup>1</sup>

Hume’s assertion is relevant nonetheless in illustrating the core issue that the three works under review here try to address, although this issue is only implicit in Hume’s comment. His statement raises indirectly a question prior to the issue of whether the many accept being ruled by the few: why was this situation so surprising to Hume, and how did it come to seem

1. Compare Florencia Mallon, “Introduction,” *Latin American Perspectives* 13, no. 1 (1986):1–18.

surprising at all? Hume's surprise revealed the profound cultural change that had completely altered Western modes of conceiving of political power by the eighteenth century. The fact that a few men ruled over the rest had ceased to appear to be a natural thing (or God's dictum). A new authority had emerged: popular sovereignty. This conceptual mutation in turn accompanied fundamental displacements in the modes of conducting politics. As many recent studies have recognized, the genesis of the notion of popular sovereignty was intimately associated with the emergence of several institutions that served as formal and informal means of social organization, thus constituting what was vaguely defined as "public opinion."

The three works under review here demonstrate that Latin Americans were not strangers to these transformations. These diverse works converge in analyzing the emergence in the region of so-called modern forms of social organization and the ways in which they helped broad sectors of society in exercising political influence, even groups that did not enjoy political rights. As the authors demonstrate, these organizations as a whole gave rise in Latin America to an incipient "public sphere" that effectively conditioned the action of those in power, thus determining specific political behaviors and attitudes.

#### *Public Spaces and Their Contradictions*

In fact, the three books differ greatly. *Los espacios públicos en Iberoamérica: Ambigüedades y problemas, siglos XVIII–XIX* brings together fourteen different essays on diverse regions, situations, and phenomena. Yet all the contributions expand the same line of inquiry designed by François-Xavier Guerra in his classic, *Modernidad e independencias*.<sup>2</sup> They show how the effort to look at the crisis of independence from the vantage point of the constitution of a modern public sphere in the region is shedding new light on various aspects overlooked by traditional approaches. First, analysis of the emergence of new forms of sociability reveals the ties linking the pro-independence movements in the colonies with a number of social, political, and cultural transformations that were taking place simultaneously in Spain and Portugal. This approach allows students to perceive the revolutionary movement as a single unified process that encompassed and altered the entire Iberian world. Second, this perspective reveals the profound historical rupture produced in that world in political practices and ways of linking the rulers and the ruled. Finally, it allows better understanding of the dislocations in the modes of conceiving the social body and how the transition to "modernity" resulted in the redefining of the fundamental political categories of representation, legitimacy, public opinion, sovereignty, and "the people."

2. Guerra, *Modernidad e independencias: Ensayos sobre las revoluciones hispánicas* (Madrid: MAPFRE, 1993).

Guerra synthesizes the nature of the social, political, and cultural transformations defining this transition. To the “modern” (currently familiar) idea of the people as a unified and abstract entity he opposes a specific notion of “peoples” organized around plural systems of authority lodged in society itself, peaking with the monarch. As Guerra observes, the raising of the new “abstract conception” of the people was a by-product of the constitution of modern ambits of sociability, particularly new means of producing and diffusing ideas.

Many of the essays compiled in *Los espacios públicos en Iberoamérica* underline the central role of the new “technology of the word”—the spread of journalism—in the formation of a “modern public sphere.” This development was somehow paradoxical. Far from responding to a democratic impulse, the first *gacetas* incarnated colonial authorities’ attempts to keep under their aegis the diffusion of ideas and news hitherto circulated through more informal and uncontrollable means like manuscript lampoons, rumors, and anonymous libel that bloomed during the crisis of the imperial system. In this fashion, however, they gave form to a new space for publicity, decisively undermining the principles on which the old regime rested. Even though the *gacetas* in principle merely continued the monarchical tradition of “informing” the population of the monarch’s decision (crystallized in the *bandos* and their trumpeters), they thereby opened to public debate new areas and topics. In doing so, the *gacetas* paved the way for the idea of the possible “checking” of governmental action by society.

This phenomenon was not exclusive to Latin America. It actually began and reached its peak in Spain. Contributor Richard Hocquelet shows how the fall of the monarch and the disintegration and fragmentation of the powers governing on his behalf, as manifested in the proliferation of *juntas provinciales*, pushed these powers to look for a new source of legitimacy in the will of subjects who had raised arms against the foreign occupant and therefore could no longer be ignored. At that point, official proclamations changed in tone, shifting their manner of addressing their public according to the kind of message they were trying to instill. Thus official proclamations in Spain created a sphere of opinion other than the official one. The new underground currents linking the Iberian world and unifying revolutionary efforts in the two continents began to take shape.

The extent of the novelties introduced by this new means of communication should not be exaggerated, however. As Renán Silva points out in his contribution to *Los espacios públicos*, the constitution of public opinion was determined less by the appearance of journalism than by the crisis of power created by the French occupation of Spain, which profoundly altered the conditions of diffusion and the role of these media. As Céline Desramé shows regarding Chile, their influence was actually less marked than the other authors suggest. In fact, manuscripts and oral messages continued to be the most widespread forms of communication in Latin America until at

least the middle of the nineteenth century. They were intrinsically more democratic and less hierarchical than printed periodicals in both their material forms of production and their modes of interacting with their public.

Desramé's objection leads to another issue that forms the core of the interpretive model underlying these works, one that partly contradicts her view. According to the approach used in the studies in *Los espacios públicos*, the problems and limitations in the articulation in the region of a modern public sphere had less to do with the nature of the new organs of expression than with uneven developments in the conceptual and institutional frameworks in which such practice took place. This is the second major theme orienting this collection of studies. As they show, the juxtaposition of "traditional" and "modern" elements in the public sphere determined the hybrid character of Iberian modernity and generated various idiosyncratic phenomena. This hybrid character can be traced to the ambiguities in defining the already mentioned basic political categories (representation, legitimacy, and the rest). A major contribution of *Los espacios públicos en Iberoamérica* lies in its analysis of how the meaning of these categories twisted according to the different contexts in which they appeared.

As Guerra remarks, even after independence, effective power still resided in the plural "*pueblos*," defining the new nations as "concrete" and heterogeneous political and social spaces that were hierarchically organized and held together by conventional relationships of reciprocity. Certainly, the revolutions of independence generated a new demand for constituting centralized powers. In actuality, they accentuated the tendency toward fragmentation, preventing the emergence of an individualistic social concept and a monistic perspective of power understood as the exclusive depository of legislative authority. As a consequence, the political bonds remained scattered among a plurality of instances of government, constituting a complex web of *potestades* (authorities). In this milieu, the idea of public opinion would refer to the "reputation" that a given leader enjoyed, the prestige that allowed the individual to "represent" the community and serve as the nexus with the other bodies that together formed the nation.

The hybridism of the public sphere and the persistence of corporate forms of social organization and collective (holistic) ties of subordination yielded major political consequences. The contributors to *Los espacios públicos* agree that the infeasibility of affirming a modern public sphere translated into a unanimist concept of political power, which precluded seeing differences of opinion as legitimate. Véronique Hebrard and Georges Lomné analyze this line of thinking in the discourse of Simón Bolívar. It reveals that the new revolutionary power claimed to express not the people's will but their "collective reason." The result was the inversion of the notion of "representation." Following the monarchical tradition, it was not the people who were represented in institutions but the power that represented itself before society through the symbols that made its authority manifest. But the una-



nimist concept of power could not be imposed without contradictions. For Lomné, the rebellion against Bolívar revealed the presence of mutually antagonistic “publics.” And their opposition had a material basis. As Carole Leal Curiel shows, the affirmation of modern forms of sociability systematically frustrated the unanimist vocation of those in power.

Geneviève Verdo reaches a similar conclusion after analyzing the judicial records of a case tried in Mendoza, Argentina. The accused, sued for having laughed during a mass when the priest in charge pretended to consecrate the Porteña junta, based their defense in court on the very principles established by the new power. They did so by affirming, in opposition to the unanimist tendencies emanating from the central authorities (in this case, in alliance with the local church), the rights they had recently acquired as individuals. In this fashion, opposing notions of “public” and “public opinion” converged and juxtaposed, resulting in the ambiguities and conceptual confusion that the contributors to this work find in their sources. Analyzing political journalism in Brazil in the 1820s, Marco Morel reveals the oscillations among three antagonistic notions of public opinion. In contradiction to the older (typically old-regime) idea of public opinion as “reputation” and the newer notion of it (with absolutist roots) as “collective reason,” a definitively modern concept began to take shape: the idea of public opinion as the expression of “the will of the majority.”

In sum, the emphasis in this approach on the irreversible character of the sociopolitical transformations does not prevent the contributors to *Los espacios públicos* from observing the presence of important continuities between the ideas and institutions resulting from independence and their colonial antecedents. This perspective permits describing the transition to modernity as a complex and contradictory process of coordinated transformations unfolding in diverse cultural, political, and social arenas.

Yet the heuristic framework of this approach, based as it is on binary logic, raises some conceptual questions. They pertain not to the core of the arguments propounded but to some of its problematic possible derivations. The opposition between tradition and modernity seems perfectly suitable as a categorical framework for describing phenomena associated with the crisis of independence. A restrained approach to that time period (only marginally abandoned, as in some references to Francisco Franco and the Latin American dictatorships of the twentieth century) renders unnecessary the problematizing of a theoretical grid that only subsequently revealed its inherent limitations. But when extrapolated and applied as a conceptual framework to interpret the contradictions caused by the affirmation of liberal regimes in nineteenth-century Latin America, this approach results in simplistic perspectives. Viewed from such a binary grid, every political system or mode of thinking that departed from the assumed “ideal type” of liberalism necessarily appears to be the expression of “traditionalist encrustations.” Ultimately, the implicit teleological historical model makes the idea

of antagonism as referring to contradictions inherent in all political formations unthinkable. Within this conceptual framework, the presence of “ambiguities and problems” must be interpreted as resulting from the accidental juxtaposition of elements that, when considered from a logical-historical perspective, corresponded to two different historical eras. Certainly, this teleological view prevents a more complex perception of those developments resulting from the progressive disintegration of the new national states. The strongest point of this approach—the comprehension of the revolutionary event as a single process of transformations encompassing the entire Iberian world—would thus become its major shortcoming, obscuring the peculiarities of the newly created Latin American nations that (unlike the Iberian ones) had a postrevolutionary character.

Jorge Myers raises precisely this point in analyzing the discourse of the regime of Juan Manuel Rosas in Argentina (1829–1852). Departing from the traditional perspectives of Rosismo as a kind of resurrection of a pre-modern (traditional) ideal of government, Myers’s study details the complex amalgamation of conceptual resources on which Rosas’s discourse was based as constituting a peculiar ideological formation, one that resists being reduced to the binary opposition between modernity and tradition.

### *Republicanism and Teleologism*

*Orden y virtud: El discurso republicano en el regimen rosista* is actually an anthology preceded by a long introduction by Myers. The volume recovers valuable materials (official or pro-government documents of various kinds, journal articles, decrees, public speeches, and parliamentary debates), which were obscured by the brilliance of the anti-Rosas propaganda of the Generación del ‘37 and remained forgotten. The book is divided into three sections. The first offers an overview of the juridical-institutional context in which political debate in general and journalism in particular developed under the Rosas regime. The second part, “Publicistas del rosismo,” is the most substantive, featuring excerpts from the key texts in which the most prominent intellectual figures endorsing the Rosas regime defined the basic tenets of its “official ideology.” The third part expands on the same subject, presenting the material more systematically in subsections that deal with a single topic. This part condenses the fundamental motifs that constituted the Rosista discourse, as defined in Myers’s introduction.

Taken as a whole, this material provides a key to understanding the kind of discourse formation that accompanied the first successful attempt to affirm a unified center of power in the Río de la Plata. As Myers shows in his introduction, this endeavor necessarily entailed an outcome normally ignored in traditional perspectives: the development of mechanisms for ideologically legitimizing the given political order in an incipient public sphere that had emerged after the revolution and required many years to

be eliminated by the Rosas regime. Thus by tracing the regime back to its origins in a modern public sphere, Myers completely redefines the terms of the debate over its nature, avoiding the traps of Rosista rhetoric. As he shows, the references by the Rosista ideologists to “the Colony” as an ideal of harmony revealed a clear awareness of the profound historical rupture created by the revolution of independence and the irreversible nature of the changes it had introduced. In fact, the Rosistas considered themselves the legitimate heirs of this revolution.

It should be pointed out that Myers’s objective is not a global revision of assessments of the Rosas regime but elucidation of the conditions for the emergence of a distinct Rosista discourse. Such a definition of his subject matter limits Myers’s sources to a short period, about 1829 to 1838. According to Myers, this was the time when a Rosista ideology took form. After 1838, when all opposition was silenced, the constellation of ideas surrounding the official discourse, formerly part of a substantive debate, declined and became a set of empty formulae in the official protocol. Before 1829, Myers finds, Rosas’s rhetoric was not strictly “Rosista.” It actually sprang from the conceptual universe of Bernardino Rivadavia, leader and ideologist of the Unitarian party. How this universe was skewed to serve eventually as the ideological basis of an increasingly authoritarian regime forms the core of Myers’s analysis.

Thus it can be seen that Myers’s focus in *Orden y virtud* is not really the emergence of the Rosas regime but the kind of ideology that accompanied that process. As Myers points out, although historical processes and discourses are intimately intertwined and events always occur and remain trapped in a “cell of signifiers,” it is clear that discourses do not exhaust historical processes. Nevertheless, elements of Myers’s findings make inevitable the revision of some traditional perspectives of the nature and characteristics of the Rosas regime in general. More immediately, Myers’s approach entails doing away with the simplistic view of Rosista ideology as a unified whole, whose features were completely defined from its origins and were the exact opposite of those of its contenders. Instead, the two originally were intertwined and only gradually parted ways to become mutually incompatible. Even more radical and provocative is Myers’s assertion that in the course of their diverging trajectories, the traces of their common origins were never entirely lost. The official discourse, even in its dictatorial escalation, did not abandon its republican rhetoric, thus revealing the nature of that regime. Although opposite in its political orientations, the regime was articulated according to the same kind of motifs and addressed the same questions that its opponents tried to tackle. Both Rosas and his opponents initially shared a common political language that ultimately made their mutual opposition possible. Analysis of the constituting in Buenos Aires of a modern public opinion provides the key to understanding the fundamental conditions determining the emergence of the Rosas regime, the underlying uni-

verse of problems that shaped its discourse, and its inner logic. A good example can be found in Myers's assessment of the relationship between the Rosas regime and the Argentine Catholic Church.

As Myers shows, Rosas's argumentation in favor of religion was notably secularist in content, and this apparent paradox illustrates the typically Rosista *modus operandi*. As exemplified by the expulsion of the Jesuits in 1843, the defense of religion was the Rosista way of subordinating the clergy to the political power, a remarkable achievement that its opponents, the Liberal-Unitarian party, could not ignore. In short, the general picture of Rosas's discourse resulting from Myers's analysis is far more complex than its previous image as merely a regression into colonial despotism.

Yet Myers did not draw the final conclusions implicit in his own analysis. He defines the Rosista discourse as the expression of a transactional ideology combining modern and archaic elements. But according to his own description, it looks instead like a peculiar ideological formation organized around a logic specific to it. The Rosista discourse's idiosyncratic combination of authoritarianism and republicanism made it neither an incoherent attempt to restore the ancient regime nor a failed incomplete anticipation of a liberal-republican discourse that only later would reveal itself fully. In a sense, the Rosas regime could appear to be a realization of a modern ideal of public opinion. At any rate, its ambiguities do not suggest the vestiges of a colonial past that resisted dying but rather the contradictions inherent in the modern liberal-republican discourse. As Keith Baker has pointed out, public opinion "implies acceptance of an open, public politics. But, at the same time, it suggests a politics without passions, a politics without factions, a politics without conflicts, a politics without fear. One could even say that it represents a politics without politics."<sup>3</sup>

In the end, Myers's conclusion does not do justice to the richness and sophistication of his insights. They effectively undermine the pertinence of the teleological model, implicit in the binary opposition of tradition and modernity, which conceives of nineteenth-century Latin American politics as ideally following a preestablished pattern from *la república posible* to *la república verdadera*.<sup>4</sup> Critique of this interpretive model is the central aim of the third book under review here, *La política en las calles: Entre el voto y la movilización, Buenos Aires, 1862–1880* by Hilda Sabato.

3. Keith Baker, "Public Opinion as Political Invention," in his *Inventing the French Revolution: Essays on the French Political Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 196.

4. I am borrowing this expression from Natalio R. Botana and Ezequiel Gallo, *De la república posible a la república verdadera (1880–1910)* (Buenos Aires: Ariel, 1997).

*The Public Sphere and La República Verdadera*

*La política en las calles* explores how a wide range of *asociaciones civiles* began to take shape in Buenos Aires after Rosas fell from power in 1852. Together with an active system of political journalism, these associations formed an informal network of power that Sabato (following Jürgen Habermas) views as an incipient “civil society.” This definition provides the basis for Sabato’s main hypothesis. Contradicting traditional views that consider parties and elections the fundamental factors that linked rulers and ruled, Sabato counters that the system of civil associations existing in Buenos Aires during the so-called Era de Mitre (1862–1880) was even more effective in determining political practices. Moreover, these groups expressed a concept of political representation that was—ideally if not actually—more inclusive, democratic, and modern than political representation organized around parties and other formal mechanisms.<sup>5</sup>

The first part of *La política en las calles* describes various forms of spontaneous social organization that flourished in the 1860s and 1870s. The second part analyzes political parties and elections minutely. In addition to looking at who was voting, Sabato pays particular attention to the formation and composition of *clubes*: how they formed, who were their leaders and constituencies, and how they served as a point of convergence for different social sectors of Buenos Aires. The third part of the book discusses events that illustrate how civil associations were instrumental in organizing social protest and integrating it into institutional channels. The resulting picture shows that while the political arena continued to be dominated by traditional clientelistic systems and immersed in endless (and often violent) conflicts, civil associations emerged as the basic mechanism that shaped substantive social identities and connected the governing class to sectors of the population beyond those who were formally exercising their political rights (*la república de ciudadanos*). Thus the activities of these associations distinguish this model of political organization prevailing from 1862 to 1880 from the preceding authoritarian order imposed by Rosas as well as the conservative regime that emerged in 1880, when the role of civil associations diminished.

The premise that paved the way for a perspective centering around the informal means of political participation was what Sabato calls “the explosion of the model of gradual expansion.” According to this model, progressively wider sectors of the population acquired political rights in a process culminating in promulgation of the 1912 Sáenz Peña Law, which granted universal male suffrage. As Sabato demonstrates, this widening of the political sphere was not as linear as often thought. In fact, universal male

5. For a discussion of the role of parties in nineteenth-century Latin America, see Elías José Palti, *La política del disenso: La “polémica en torno al monarquismo” (México, 1848–1850) . . . y las aporías del liberalismo* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1998).

suffrage was either implicit or explicit in most of the constitutions and electoral laws promulgated in Argentina after independence. And the fact that political participation was not extensive does not necessarily mean that the actual exercise of political rights remained a privilege of the upper sectors of society. More often than not, the lower classes formed the rank and file of both political parties and *clubes electorales*, while the middle and upper classes (the “bourgeois public”) favored less violent and more respectable means of making their voices heard: popular manifestations, journalistic campaigns, and written demands. Moreover, an expanding part of this “bourgeois public” was composed of immigrants who, although they did not enjoy political rights, constituted a significant political factor in “*la gran aldea*.” All these circumstances converged to delimit a space for public debate broader than the formal political system, a space that linked many different social actors and institutions and effectively conditioned the actions of those in power.

In providing a new perspective on a little-studied period of Argentine political history, *La política en las calles* offers a key to understanding why the Mitrista political system was not merely an incomplete and intermediary stage in progress toward a genuine republic that crystallized in the twentieth century. As Sabato convincingly argues, this system had its own definite model of the *república verdadera*, in which the ties linking rulers and ruled extended throughout the whole social body, thus exceeding the formal mechanisms of political participation and domination. In the process, Sabato raises questions and issues transcending the period analyzed. As she shows, knowledge about elections and parties does not explain how a political system actually works. More crucial is to comprehend the mechanisms in the formation of the informal social webs interconnecting the diverse instances of power (the congress, the parties, the state) and articulating their relationships with the rest of society. This insight helps explain specific aspects that determine an effective political course (such as why a law passed in congress, or how a minister was designated). And in this fashion, it broadens the scope of inquiry to encompass questions hitherto neglected by historians regarding the patterns of relations established in a given period among various social and political actors and “sectors of opinion” as well as their dynamics: how these patterns changed over time and eventually “exploded” to make room for the formation of new constellations of power.

The dynamics of the Mitrista system and how it changed over time and finally succumbed are not really examined in *La política en las calles*, except in a cursory remark stressing that the transition from a “bourgeois civil society” (which Sabato identifies with the “Age of Mitre”) to a “mass society” (as she calls the Buenos Aires society emerging after 1880) also determined the shift from a political system organized around the notion of public opinion to another defined merely as “a field for the competition among differ-



ent interests, which often adopted the form of a violent conflict" (p. 290). Sabato's neglect of the issue is partially explained by the fact that in her view, the collapse of the Mitrista system resulted from the introduction of the Liga de los Gobernadores, a factor external to that system. Yet Sabato's other remarks in connection with the debates in the Congreso Constituyente de la Provincia de Buenos Aires (1871–1873) and the Revolución de 1874 seem to suggest that at that juncture, the Mitrista system had already been undermined from within. Its strict delimitation of the ambits of civil society and party politics had begun to appear as obsolete and ultimately as conspiring against the proper functioning of the whole political system. Analysis of how the Mitrista system collapsed would have illuminated fundamental aspects of its functioning and dynamics, revealing patterns of transformation and different phases in its development that might have exposed contradictions and limitations more intrinsic to that system. At any rate, *La política en las calles* makes it clear that the exclusive focus on the formal means of political participation has led historians to miss a fundamental dimension, one without which the apparent "easiness" with which "the many" eventually accepted being governed by "the few" appears to be merely an awkward and irrational fact.

### *Public Opinion and Its Contradictions*

The three books reviewed here must be added to the series of fundamental works that, beginning with Guerra's *Modernidad e independencias*, are transforming scholarly approaches to nineteenth-century Latin American political and intellectual history and profoundly altering our views of the period. As the essays compiled in *Los espacios públicos en Iberoamérica* demonstrate, Guerra's focus on the emergence of a public sphere in Latin America has opened a new domain for students and has effectively renovated perspectives on the dynamics and structure of nineteenth-century politics in the region. Myers's and Sabato's monographs have profited from that insight. At the same time, they serve to distinguish the categories describing the phenomena associated with the opening of new modern ambits of sociability from the teleological historical perspective implicit in the antinomy between tradition and modernity. As illustrated by *Orden y virtud* and *La política en las calles*, binary opposition between these terms, while suitable for describing the process of independence, is not the only framework in which the concept of public opinion can be articulated, nor are these always the best ones for describing the subsequent formation of a public sphere in Latin America.

Myers's analysis of the Rosas regime shows clearly that not all political formations that departed from the presumed liberal ideal type necessarily fall under the label of "traditional." Sabato's discussion of the political system during the "Age of Mitre" demonstrates that the ideal type of



liberalism is not definable a priori or logically consistent. Rather, it accepts many different interpretations (many models of *la república verdadera*), all of which are in principle consistent with the liberal-republican concept despite the fact that not all of them hinge on the double equation in which true republic equals universal suffrage equals political parties. In short, both Myers and Sabato recognize the existence of different roads to modernity, revealing contradictions as not necessarily springing from the opposition between two antagonistic universes (each corresponding to two different epochs) but inherent in modernity itself. In this way, these works raise a further epistemological issue about dichotomous perspectives. As Brian Vickers has pointed out, “the speaker or writer who uses such [dichotomous] categories, intended to enhance one of the terms and diminish the other, is claiming to have superior insight or to occupy a position of privilege.”<sup>6</sup> By undermining the traditional dichotomies dominating the field, these two works not only facilitate understanding of the ways in which nineteenth-century politics worked in Latin America. They also allow scholars to become aware of and examine critically assumptions and beliefs about the modern (liberal) concept of the legal order that have been presumed to be universally valid, “defamiliarize” them, and observe the ultimately contingent nature of their foundations and rationales.

6. Brian Vickers, “The Dangers of Dichotomy,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 51 (1990):148–59, 150.



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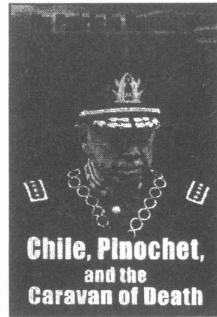
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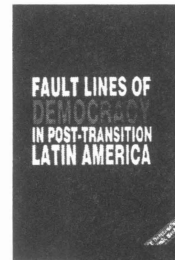
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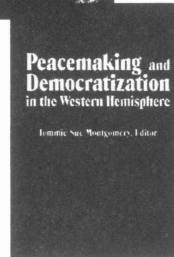
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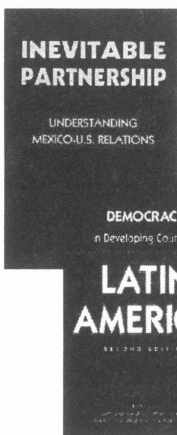
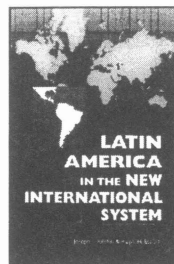
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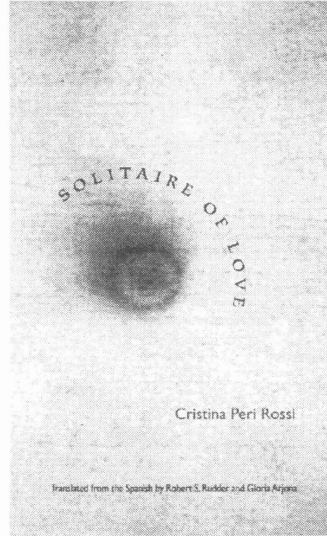
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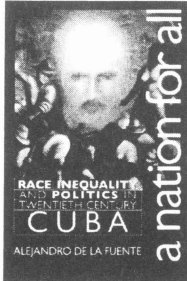


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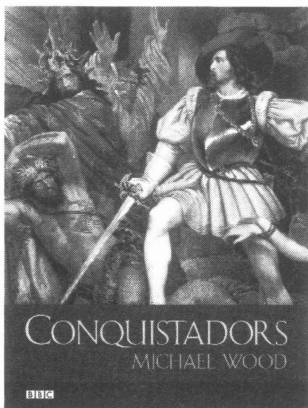
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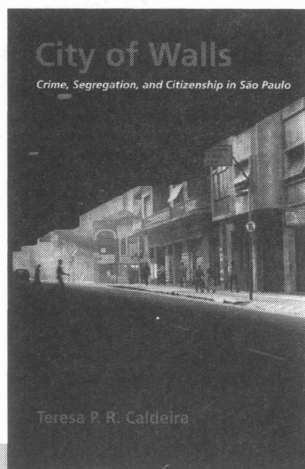
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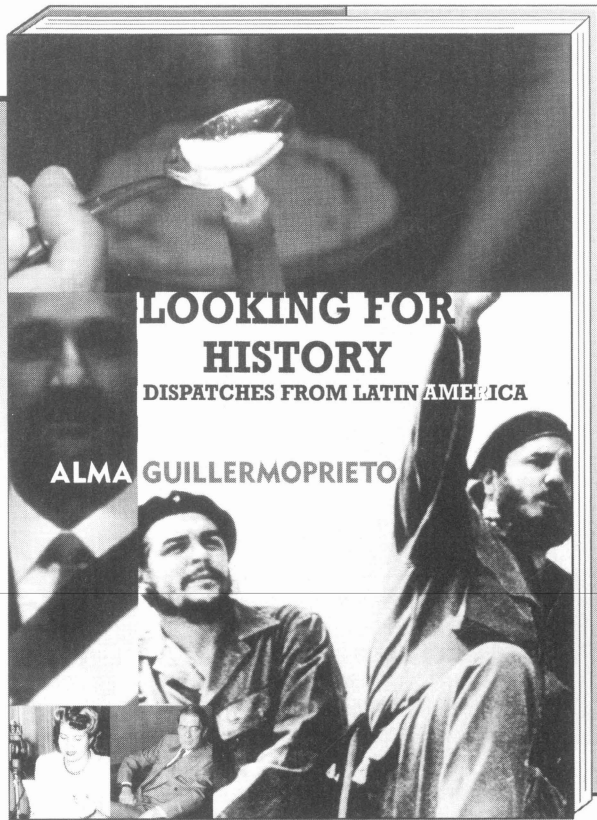
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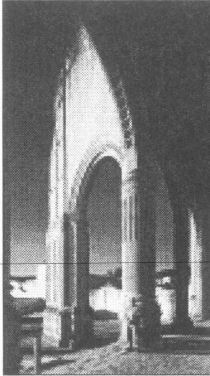
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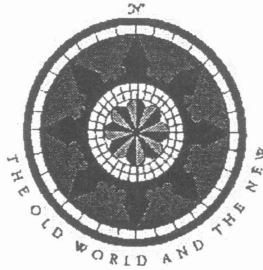
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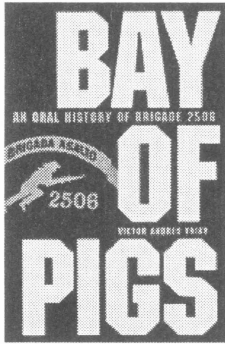
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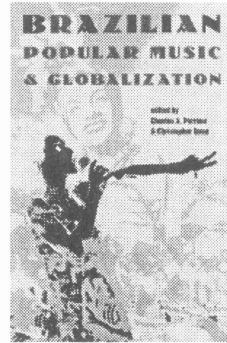
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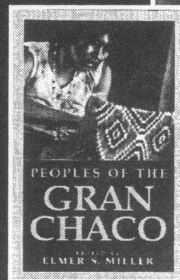
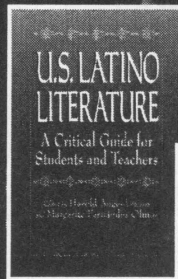
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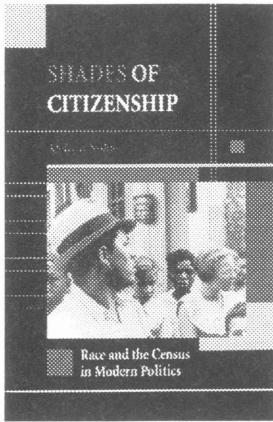
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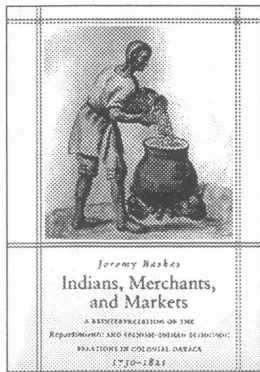
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