

FROM COLONY TO NATION

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- Simón Bolívar: A Life.** By John Lynch. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006. Pp. 350. \$35.00 paper.
- South American Independence: Gender, Politics, Text.** By Catherine Davies, Claire Brewster, and Hilary Owen. Liverpool, UK: Liverpool University Press, 2006. Pp. 321. £50.00 cloth.
- Adventuring through Spanish Colonies: Simón Bolívar, Foreign Mercenaries and the Birth of New Nations.** By Matthew Brown. Liverpool, UK: Liverpool University Press, 2006. Pp. 266. £50.00 cloth.
- Freedom's Mercenaries: British Volunteers in the Wars of Independence of Latin America, Volume I: Northern South America.** By Moisés Enrique Rodríguez. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006. Pp. 426. \$58.00 paper.
- Freedom's Mercenaries: British Volunteers in the Wars of Independence of Latin America, Volume II: Southern South America.** By Moisés Enrique Rodríguez. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006. Pp. 524. \$58.00 paper.
- El primer liberalismo español y los procesos de emancipación de América, 1808–1824: Una revisión historiográfica del liberalismo hispánico.** By Roberto Breña. Mexico City: El Colegio de México, 2006. Pp. 580. \$37.00 cloth.
- The Conquest of History: Spanish Colonialism and National Histories in the Nineteenth Century.** By Christopher Schmidt-Nowara. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006. Pp. 296. \$39.95 cloth.
- Nineteenth-Century Nation Building and the Latin-American Intellectual Tradition: A Reader.** Edited and translated by Janet Burke and Ted Humphrey. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2007. Pp. 366. \$47.95 cloth.

What caused the Spanish-American wars of independence? Was it the philosophical influence of the Enlightenment, the disruptive impact of the Bourbon reforms, the slow development of Creole patriotism, the destabilization provoked by the Peninsular War or some combination of these and other factors? Many nineteenth-century savants were quite certain that the answer lay in the distinctive Iberian heritage introduced into the conti-

ment by its Spanish colonizers. Independence, wrote the Argentine historian-president Bartolomé Mitre, originated in the “individualistic spirit” that the conquistadors “bequeathed through their blood to their descendants, together with their instincts for independence.” Creoles, the heirs to this legacy, were therefore the authors of independence: “they invented Spanish-American independence and they alone founded the republic and alone they made it triumph,” he wrote in 1859.¹ “Intimations of our independence palpitated in the innermost desires of the first conquistadors,” agreed the Mexican scholar and politician Justo Sierra.² While the Creoles, drawing on this Hispanic essence, championed the cause of independence, other sectors of the population were declared either to have stood aloof from this apogee of national self-expression or to have supported the Spanish crown. In either case, such indifference to patriotic sentiments surely resulted from some grave defect that impeded active participation in national politics. Indians in particular had failed to play an “active and intelligent part” in the Peruvian independence process because of their “mental backwardness,” in the view of the conservative priest Bartolomé Herrera.³

Current understandings of how different sectors of society engaged with the independence process naturally eschew explanations based on mental inadequacy, and scholars have also questioned the view that non-elites viewed independence uniquely with hostility. A number of innovative works have probed the independence-era activities of indigenous villagers, free people of color, and other subaltern groups, and a growing number of studies—including one reviewed here—consider the role of women in promoting independence.⁴ The significance of the Creole elite to the independence process remains, however, undisputed. Leaders such as Simón Bolívar continue to occupy the position of honor they were accorded by nineteenth-century *historia patria*, although interpretations of their actions have altered significantly. In John Lynch’s magnificent new biogra-

1. Bartolomé Mitre, *Historia de San Martín y de la emancipación sud-americana (según nuevos documentos)*, 3 vols. (1859; Buenos Aires, 1887–1890), 1: 58–59, 87.

2. Justo Sierra, “España y América,” November 10, 1910, *Obras completas*, vol. 5: *Discursos*, ed. Manuel Ghigliazza (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1984), 278.

3. Bartolomé Herrera, *Sermón pronunciado . . . el día 28 de julio de 1846 aniversario de la independencia del Perú* (Lima, 1846), 15–16.

4. See, for example, Alfonso Múnera, *El fracaso de la nación: Región, clase y raza en el Caribe colombiano (1717–1821)* (Bogotá: Banco de la República/El Áncora, 1998); Eric van Young, *The Other Rebellion: Popular Violence, Ideology, and the Mexican Struggle for Independence, 1810–1821* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001); Aline Helg, *Liberty and Equality in Caribbean Colombia, 1770–1835* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Steiner Saether, *Identidades e independencia en Santa Marta y Riohacha, 1750–1850* (Bogotá: Instituto Colombiano de Antropología e Historia, 2005); and Sarah Chambers, “Republican Friendship: Manuela Sáenz Writes Women into the Nation, 1835–1856,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 81, no. 2 (2001): 225–258.

phy of the liberator, the origins of Bolívar's commitment to independence are located not in his innate Spanish heritage, but rather in the Bourbon monarchy's "deconstruction of the creole state" (29) and the subsequent alienation of the Creole elite. Bolívar's extensive familiarity with Enlightenment texts infused his rhetoric, but, Lynch stresses, ideology alone was not the motor that powered Bolívar's vision of an independent America. A commitment to "American" interests, combined with a powerful yearning for glory, underpinned Bolívar's extraordinary achievements. Lynch interweaves a compelling portrait of Bolívar the man with a clear account of the independence process. As we follow the vicissitudes of the insurgency from its early years to complete separation from Spain, we also learn that in 1813 Bolívar acquired a small dog that accompanied him everywhere until it died at the Battle of Boyacá; that the great liberator was a terrible shot who would "fire pistols carelessly in any direction without much regard for those nearby" (136); and that he suffered dreadfully from hemorrhoids. His life is recounted with great sympathy, in a limpid prose that makes the book a pleasure to read. Although Lynch soft-pedals historiographical debate, it is clear that his understanding of independence differs from that advanced by scholars such as Jaime Rodríguez, who stress the gradual, halting nature of the separation from Spain.⁵ Lynch instead argues that, by 1810, Creoles in a number of parts of Spanish America had embarked on a process that could lead only to independence. He also defends Bolívar's treatment of mixed-race insurgents such as Manuel Piar, insisting that it was Bolívar, not men like Piar, who advocated racial harmony.⁶

Lynch thus does not present Bolívar as a champion of Creoles but rather as an advocate of liberty and equality, tempered with concerns about social stability and order. The vision of the liberator sketched by Davies, Brewster, and Owen is instead of a man concerned with advancing the cause of his own class and sex. *South American Independence* dissects the use of gender in Bolívar's writings to argue that, for Bolívar, progress entailed "the subjugation of feminine threat to the light of male reason and action" (52). Women were moreover associated with the symbolic, whereas men were linked rhetorically to real historical space. Overall, the authors argue, writings by Bolívar worked to confine women to a symbolic sphere from which they would, for the next century, struggle to free themselves. These gendered visions of national space were not necessarily any more comfortable for the men who comprised the body of active citizens, and subsequent chapters trace the anxieties about masculine identity revealed in the writings

5. Jaime Rodríguez O., *The Independence of Spanish America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

6. For a different view of racial harmony, see Marixa Lasso, "Race War and Nation in Caribbean Gran Colombia, Cartagena, 1810–1832," *American Historical Review* 111, no. 2 (2006): 336–361.

of Esteban Echeverría and other literary figures. (Extracts from a number of these texts are reproduced in *Nineteenth-Century Nation Building*.) Later sections examine works by postindependence female writers such as Mercedes Marín, who challenged the association of women with the symbolic by inscribing historical female figures into her nation-building fiction and by making less frequent use of allegorical female figures. There is also an interesting discussion of the social significance of grammatical gender forms and the use of masculine and feminine nouns in Spanish. This analysis is contextualized by historical chapters that sketch the participation of women in the independence movement and offer a case study of the epistolary production of the Carrera family in Chile.

South American Independence is less concerned with tracing the changes in women's status from the late colonial era to the advent of the nation-state—issues that lie at the core of works such as Sarah Chambers's *From Subjects to Citizens*—than with exploring the construction of the category of women in both late colonial and early national Spanish America.⁷ The focus on literary production provides a simultaneously heterodox and coherent body of material for analysis but, of course, limits the book's ability to illuminate the impact of gendered nationalism on the illiterate and, to some extent, on the lived experience of individual men and women. To be sure, the prevalence of allegorical female archetypes in the *imaginarios* of male political leaders reflects their understanding of national space. Did these images radiate outward to other corners of daily life? To what extent were these archetypes deployed in, say, legal disputes and other court materials? Studies have, for example, shown both continuities and changes in the workings of honor in nineteenth-century Spanish America; republicanism seems to have broadened the category of men who successfully claimed honorable status, whereas changes in understandings of women's honor are less evident.⁸ And to what extent were indigenous peoples and other nonelite women included in the category of "women" in the first place? There is a substantial body of research on the intersections of racial and gender ideologies in the United States that stresses the extent to which whites often excluded enslaved women, in particular, from the increasingly idealized category of female.⁹ The question, fundamentally,

7. Sarah Chambers, *From Subjects to Citizens: Honor, Gender and Politics in Arequipa, Peru, 1780–1854* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999).

8. See, in addition to *From Subjects to Citizens*, Christine Hunefeldt, *Liberalism in the Bedroom: Quarrelling Spouses in Nineteenth-Century Lima* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000); Tanja Christiansen, *Disobedience, Slander, Seduction, and Assault: Women and Men in Cajamarca, Peru, 1862–1900* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004); and Arlene Díaz, *Female Citizens, Patriarchs, and the Law in Venezuela, 1786–1904* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004).

9. For examinations of the relationship between gender and race in the United States, see, for example, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White*

concerns the degree to which our category of women matches that of the nineteenth-century figures examined in this study. Beyond such large interrogatives, *South American Independence* argues convincingly that gender is a key variable underpinning republican discourse.

Matthew Brown's work on the British and Irish adventurers who enrolled in the patriot army also examines ideologies of gender. The larger story of these men is recounted in Brown's engaging group biography, in which he dispels many of the myths that surround the British Legion. For example, he demonstrates that the majority were not soldiers left unemployed by the defeat of Napoleon: only one-third had any verifiable prior experience in the British armed forces. Brown also shows that many joined recruiting expeditions in the hope of receiving land grants, not because they were professional mercenaries. The fate that awaited them was often grimmer than the optimistic recruiting propaganda suggested. Excluding those who returned to Europe immediately on arriving in the Americas, more than half of these men died during the course of conflict. This discouraging statistic, however, reveals that British troops enjoyed a much higher survival rate than did the Spanish force sent in 1815, which suffered almost total annihilation. Presumably the shorter period that the British spent in the Americas accounts for the discrepancy. Overall, Brown provides a clear account of the experiences these men faced, and of the distinctive military subculture they created, in which drinking and dueling featured prominently. Engagement with colonial society and culture was, it seems, erratic, although some adventurers did remain in South America after the cessation of hostilities. Cultural exchange was in any event surely impeded by the fact that few of these men spoke Spanish when they arrived in the Americas; Bolívar's famous secretary Daniel Florencio O'Leary apparently distinguished himself from many of the recruits by making a concerted effort to learn the language. Clearly it paid off. Brown also reproduces a delightful pencil drawing by an unknown Briton that shows insurgent officers attending mass. Bolívar, kneeling in the front row, reads a large newspaper while O'Leary sips coffee. As Lynch argued, religion played little role in Bolívar's personal life.

I was not entirely convinced by Brown's larger claim that the participation of these Britons in the independence process "had important repercussions for the identities of the new republics" (1), but his account of the tensions between locals and adventurers certainly highlights some of the differences between British and Colombian visions of masculinity,

Women of the Old South (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988); Victoria Bynum, *Unruly Women: The Politics of Social and Sexual Control in the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992); and Kathleen Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race and Power in Colonial Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

race, and other issues related to honor. It would, indeed, have been interesting to learn more about the recruits' attitudes toward race, in particular. Nonetheless, this analytical and theoretically informed study greatly advances our understanding both of the men who comprised the British Legion (and its cognate units) and of their place within the broader independence process. Those wishing to read an entirely narrative account of the experiences of individual adventurers may turn to Moisés Enrique Rodríguez's two-volume description of British volunteers in the wars of independence, which covers not only the troops recruited for Bolívar but also individuals such as Lord Cochrane, whose field of action extended farther south. The author, who describes himself as "an incorrigible Anglophile" (2), notes accurately that there is little overlap between his narrative and Brown's analysis.

British enrollment in the insurgent ranks was conducted under the fig leaf of neutrality that the British government maintained throughout the conflict between Spain and its colonies. Spanish officials were nonetheless outraged by the presence in an ostensibly neutral country of insurgent recruiters, who were tolerated by British ministers. Even worse in the eyes of the absolutists who returned to power in the Peninsula after 1814 were London-based exiled Spaniards such as José María Blanco White, whose thoughtful essays on Spanish politics annoyed Ferdinand VII's government throughout the period of conflict with the Americas. The attitudes of men such as Blanco White toward the developing revolt in the New World points to the profound connections between political events in Spain and the insurgent process, particularly in the years between 1808 and 1812. Scholars such as François-Xavier Guerra have stressed the importance of the new political forms introduced by the Cádiz Cortes in transforming public space in the Americas, and many works now emphasize the complex interplay of liberalism, elections, and colonialism that characterized Spanish–New World relations during the Peninsular War.¹⁰

Roberto Breña reviews a substantial part of this historiography in his 550-page study whose title accurately describes the book's content and purpose. Written in jaunty prose, the book advances several central arguments. Firstly, Breña is concerned to reject interpretations that perceive independence as a struggle between Spanish absolutism and American liberalism. Liberalism, he argues, was a significant force in Spain, but its significance in shaping the American independence movement has, in his

10. See, for example, François-Xavier Guerra, *Modernidad e independencias: Ensayos sobre las revoluciones hispánicas* (Madrid: Editorial MAPFRE, 1992); François-Xavier Guerra, Antonio Annino, and Luis Castro Leiva, eds., *De los imperios a las naciones: Iberoamérica* (Zaragoza, Spain: Ibercaja, 1994); François-Xavier Guerra, *Mémoires en devenir: Amérique Latine. XVIe–XXe siècles* (Bordeaux, France: Maison des Pays Ibériques, 1994); and François-Xavier Guerra and Antonio Annino, eds., *Inventando la nación: Iberoamérica siglo XIX* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2003).

view, been greatly exaggerated. Indeed, he maintains that ideas or ideologies of any sort played only the most minor role in provoking revolt in Spain's colonies. In his view, political actors generally use ideas "to justify positions, actions or programs that originate in their particular needs and circumstances. . . . Both in the Peninsular War and in the American emancipation movements, ideas and intellectuals responded to events more often than they provoked them" (58). Rebellion in both regions, he argues, was a response to the political vacuum provoked by the French invasion rather than a reflection of the influence of liberalism, the Enlightenment (whose impact in Spanish America in particular he regards as extremely limited), or political philosophies of other sorts. The anti-French war of independence in Spain and anticolonial American uprisings were fundamentally pragmatic rather than ideological. Evidence for this view comes in part from a careful reading of secondary literature and in part from a dissection of the writings of individuals such as Blanco White, Camilo Torres, and Servando Teresa de Mier. At the same time, Breña's purpose is to elucidate the characteristics of early Spanish liberalism, even as he denies that it helped fuel insurgent ideology. The book thus combines a review of the historiography on Spanish liberalism and its links to independence with a genealogy of liberalism in Spain and America. Breña is therefore less concerned with exploring the particular impact of, say, the Cortes of Cádiz on political space in New Spain than with determining the extent to which the revolutionary process in the Americas was prompted by a specifically liberal vision.

Breña aims particularly to dethrone older nationalist historiographies that present independence as an enlightened and modern American response to Spanish absolutism. Given the focus of his study, he is naturally less interested in the origins and evolution of this unsatisfactory older historiography, but such issues are central to the growing number of works that examine the development of *historia patria* and its significance to the nation-building process.¹¹ The celebration of independence as a fundamentally liberal action opposed to Spanish obscurantism—the interpretation criticized by Breña—rubbed shoulders as the nineteenth century advanced with an increasingly *hispanista* vision of the continent and its history, which stressed not the differences between the two hemispheres, but rather their underlying similarities. By the late nineteenth

11. See, for example, Nelda Pilia de Assunção and Aurora Ravina, eds., *Mayo de 1810 entre la historia y la ficción discursivas* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Biblos, 1999); Beatriz González-Stephan, *Fundaciones: Canon, historia y cultural nacional: La historiografía literaria del liberalismo hispanoamericano del siglo XIX* (Madrid: Iberoamericana, 2002); Mark Thurner and Andrés Guerrero, eds., *After Spanish Rule: Postcolonial Predicaments of the Americas* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003); and Sara Castro-Klarén and John Charles Chasteen, eds., *Beyond Imagined Communities: Reading and Writing the Nation in Nineteenth-century Latin America* (Washington, DC: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003).

century, as I suggested at the start of this essay, elite writers often viewed independence as the culmination of a process initially started by the conquistadors themselves. Moreover, this interpretation of independence as a triumph of Latin America's Spanish heritage was widely shared in Spain itself. Christopher Schmidt-Nowara's study of Spanish colonialism and national histories examines the importance of the colonial past to national identity in both Spain and the Antilles. As was the case during the liberal *trienio* discussed in Breña's work, in the late-nineteenth-century Hispanic world, "nationalism and colonialism exist in uneasy and unpredictable tension, not to the exclusion of one another" (13), according to Schmidt-Nowara. One of this work's real strengths is that it sets historical writings from the colonial Caribbean alongside Spanish historiographical traditions. Schmidt-Nowara is concerned particularly to counter the claim that the Americas came to play an important role in the construction of Spanish identity only after the loss of its remaining Caribbean colonies in 1898. On the contrary, he argues, Spanish scholars even before the Spanish-American War viewed colonial history as part of the broader history of Spain. At the same time, both colonial and precolonial history came to play an important role in the construction of a distinctive elite Antillean identity. Figures such as Christopher Columbus and Bartolomé de Las Casas were thus interpreted in significantly different ways by Spanish and New World scholars, but both groups agreed on the centrality of American colonization to their respective patrias. Archaeology, in turn, yielded an alternative source of identity for Caribbean patriots seeking to distance themselves from Spain. Spanish and colonial histories were thus in tension throughout the second half of the nineteenth century: "Spanish nation builders defined their sense of self and nationhood by persistently trying to break down the barriers of languages, sources and symbols that colonial patriots erected in their own nation-building efforts," Schmidt-Nowara argues (193–194).

Although Schmidt-Nowara examines the place of historical writing in the construction of Antillean nationalism, it is evident that a concern with history characterized nation-building efforts across Latin America. Nationalist writers from Mexico to Argentina discussed the importance of history to the development of patriotic sentiment, debated the proper characteristics of historical research, and exhorted governments to fund both primary and university education. *Nineteenth-century Nation Building and the Latin-American Intellectual Tradition* provides an invaluable collection of writings on these and other topics by some of the most distinguished *pensadores* of the nineteenth century. Some of these texts will be familiar to readers and already exist in English versions. Domingo Faustino Sarmiento's *Facundo*, an extract of which is contained in this reader, was first translated into English in 1845. It is nonetheless inconceivable that a reader on nineteenth-century nation building aimed at undergraduates not include

an extract from this important work. Other texts are here made available in English for the first time. The collection includes selections from José Victorino Lastarria's debate with Andrés Bello about the nature of historical research, Echeverría's *Dogma socialista*, Juan Bautista Alberdi's *Bases y puntos de partida para la organización política de la República Argentina*, Soledad Acosta de Samper's essay on the female writer, and a wealth of other materials that will make it much easier to incorporate nineteenth-century primary materials into teaching undergraduate history.

Read together, these texts reveal certain commonalities. The weight of the classical tradition, and of European history more broadly, in structuring discussion of Latin American history is striking. References to Solon, Pericles, Livy, Lucretius, Cicero, and others, litter the discussion of New World history, and the essays contain many epigrams in Latin (the editors provide helpful footnotes decoding this material for the reader). In his address at the inauguration of the University of Chile, Andrés Bello explained clearly the importance of the classical world for civilization not only in Europe but also in the Americas: "To what do we owe this progress of civilization, this yearning for social improvement, this thirst for liberty? If we desire to know this, let us compare Europe and our fortunate America with the gloomy empires of Asia . . . or with the African hordes . . . Who in enslaved Europe set off the first sparks of civil liberty? . . . Was it not the intellectual heritage of Greece and Rome?" (53).

Beyond this, it is clear that European history provided the touchstone against which New World experience was judged. The many attempts to embed the continent's history within the framework provided by European scholarship testify to the need to dignify the Americas with a history worthy of the Old World. This is as true of the authors who discussed the preconquest era as it is of those concerned uniquely with colonial or postindependence history. As José Victorino Lastarria noted in 1844: "America knows Europe, studies it unceasingly, follows it step by step, and imitates it as its model" (91). Equally noteworthy is the virtually uniform dismay expressed by these writers at the continent's mixed race and indigenous population. "Had indigenous blood not predominated here," noted Alcides Arguedas in 1909, "the country would have been able to give conscious direction to its life from the beginning, adopting all manner of improvements in the material and moral order, and would today be at the same level of development as many peoples more favored by streams of immigrants from the old continent" (345). Patriotic celebration of the preconquest past of the sort discussed by Schmidt-Nowara was one thing; actual living Indians were another proposition altogether.

To return, by way of conclusion, to the question posed at the start of this essay, these works do not revolutionize our analysis of the causes of the independence movement. Lynch's biography of Bolívar is concerned essentially with understanding this compelling individual; the broader

interpretation of the wars of independence that he offers does not differ dramatically from that advanced in previous works.¹² Breña argues that liberalism did not play a major role in motivating insurgents in Spanish America, but his account of what did provoke rebellion—namely the Peninsular War—is not particularly nuanced. *Adventuring through Spanish Colonies* is not concerned with explicating the causes of revolution in the first place. Rather, the merits of these several works lie, first, in their ability to elucidate the complex intertwining of politics, cultural practices, intellectual traditions, and warfare that characterized the independence era. Second, they illuminate some of the processes that contributed to the articulation of distinctive identities, separate from those of Spain, in the decades after independence. In the Antilles, as Schmidt-Nowara demonstrates, the prequest past was literally dug up to prove the distinctiveness of Creole identity. Other writers struggled to situate their nations within the broad framework of Europe's cultural legacy at the same time that they charted the particular features and qualities of the patria and its inhabitants. The place of women and nonwhites within the new national space aroused multiple anxieties, which were reflected not only in works explicitly devoted to issues of political participation but also in lyric poetry and travelogues. Together, these studies demonstrate the complexity of both the independence process and the efforts at nation building undertaken during Spanish America's long nineteenth century.

12. See John Lynch, *The Spanish American Revolutions 1808–1826* (New York: Norton, 1986); and John Lynch, ed., *Latin American Revolutions, 1808–1826: Old and New World Origins* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994).