

Chapter 23

Historians in Spanish South America: Cross-References between Centre and Periphery

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The purpose of this chapter is to offer an overview of the historiography of Spanish South America (SSA) in the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth. It does not treat the nine countries individually but takes the region as a whole as the unit of analysis.¹ This can be done because during the period in question there emerged in this part of the Americas an intellectual common market, *la república de las letras*, which grew in size and complexity. To be sure, an interchange of ideas and intellectual products took place during the late colonial period. The density of exchanges, however, increased after independence. They dealt with a variety of subjects: political, military, economic, literary, and historiographical. This chapter will deal exclusively with the latter.

The idea of a common market in historical writing was suggested but not developed by Germán Colmenares about twenty years ago in his *Las convenciones contra la cultura: Ensayos sobre la historiografía hispanoamericana del siglo XIX* [Conventions against Culture: Essays on Nineteenth-Century Spanish American Historiography] (1987). There he writes: ‘Hispanic American historians have constantly referred to the Europeans. All of them had access to the same authors, French mostly... But there were cross-references among them as well. Ideological connections, generational affinities, exile, common experience or incompatibilities, real or imagined, permitted these references.’² More recently, Josep Barnadas has referred to these cross-references more forcefully: ‘it must be remembered’, he writes, ‘something that has been usually forgotten: that the Spanish American elites cultivated among themselves intellectual, political and

¹ The countries in question are: Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, Chile, Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, and Venezuela. I shall refer to them throughout as SSA. Their historians will be called SSA historians.

² Germán Colmenares, *Las convenciones contra la cultura: Ensayos sobre la historiografía hispanoamericana del siglo XIX* (Bogotá, 1987), 41–2, 102–3.



Map 6. Latin America and the Caribbean in the Second World War

economic relations which were far more intense than with Europe or the United States'.³ This chapter will expand and develop this idea of cross-references in order to see SSA historians in a new light.

Viewed from this perspective, *la república de las letras* in SSA was not an even field. Very early on in the nineteenth century two centres of historical production and dissemination surpassed all others: Santiago in Chile and Buenos Aires in Argentina. Although they were the capitals of two separate countries, they should be considered as a single entity because they were closely interconnected intellectually speaking. There is not enough space to explain how these links emerged in any detail. It will suffice to say that Argentinian politics forced into exile a generation of young intellectuals who found in Chile, much to their surprise, political elites successfully organizing a stable polity. Since they arrived with a high reputation, they were soon asked by the Chilean government to contribute to a variety of initiatives in the political and cultural fields. In return, their host nation allowed them not only to earn a living but also to publish groundbreaking works in politics, law, literature, and history. Throughout the 1830s and 1840s there developed a close collaboration between Chilean and Argentinian intellectuals that lasted for the rest of the century, even after the latter returned to their homeland for good.⁴

That the Southern Cone was perceived as a cultural centre is clear from the fact that men of letters from Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia converged in Santiago first and later in Buenos Aires, either on their own volition or when they were forced into exile by their respective governments.⁵ Referring to René Moreno, the most outstanding Bolivian historian of the nineteenth century, Barnadas writes: 'Chile functioned as refuge to many Argentineans, Bolivians, and Peruvians, as well as Colombians and even Central Americans; given that Moreno adopted it as his second country, we can assert that he settled in the most important cultural epicenter of the continent.'⁶ The 'centre' in the title of this chapter, therefore, is not Europe but a pole of intellectual development that created a field of force, which, starting in the 1840s, encompassed the

³ Josep Barnadas, *Gabriel René Moreno (1836–1908): Drama y Gloria de un Boliviano* (La Paz, 1988), 68. See also J. R. Thomas, 'The Role of Private Libraries and Public Archives in Nineteenth-Century Spanish American Historiography', *The Journal of Library History*, 9:4 (1974), 334–51.

⁴ Sol Serrano, 'Emigrados argentinos en Chile (1840–1855)', in Esther Edwards (ed.), *Nueva Mirada a la historia* (Santiago, 1996), 111–26. See also María Saenz Quesada, 'De la independencia política a la emancipación cultural', *ibid.*, 91–105; and Rosendo Fraga, 'Argentina y Chile entre los siglos XIX y XX (1892–1904)', *ibid.*, 143–65.

⁵ Barnadas, *Gabriel René Moreno*, 68. For the rise of the Southern Cone as a cultural centre see Daniel Larriqueta, 'Chile y Argentina: indianos diferentes', in Edwards (ed.), *Nueva Mirada a la historia*; Jeremy Adelman, *Republic of Capital: Buenos Aires and the Legal Transformation of the Atlantic World* (Palo Alto, Calif., 1999); José Moya, 'Modernization, Modernity and Trans/Formation of the Atlantic World in the Nineteenth Century', in Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra and Erilk R. Seaman (eds.), *The Atlantic in Global History, 1500–2000* (Don Mills, Ont., 2007); and Lyman L. Johnson and Zephyr Frank, 'Cities and Wealth in the South Atlantic: Buenos Aires and Rio de Janeiro before 1860', *Comparative Studies of Society and History*, 48 (2006), 634–68.

⁶ Barnadas, *Gabriel René Moreno*, 68.

whole of Spanish South America for the rest of the century and beyond. It is customary to think of centre–periphery relations as fundamentally exploitative in nature. But this does not apply here. Instead, for the most part, there were relations of collaboration. ‘Centre’, then, refers to the combined work of Southern Cone historians from the 1840s to the 1940s; and ‘periphery’ to the production of historians in the rest of SSA, to the extent that it was related in some way to historiographical developments in Santiago and Buenos Aires.

It is customary to claim two things about nineteenth- and early twentieth-century SSA historical writing. First, that it was about the powerful written by the powerful for the powerful. Second, that it was largely derivative because its intellectual frameworks were mainly borrowed from European historians.⁷ I will not dispute the first claim, though must insist on the following caveats. To begin with, this characterization applies not just to SSA historiography but also to that of Europe in the nineteenth century. Also it must not be forgotten that a few white SSA historians wrote works on Amerindians. The most scholarly and influential were Vicente López’s *Les Races Aryennes du Perou: Leur langue, leur religion, leur historie* [The Aryan Races of Peru: Their Languages, their Religion, their History] (1871) and Sebastian Lorente’s *Historia de la civilizacion peruana* [History of the Peruvian Civilization] (1879). On the whole, however, the vast corpus of existing historical writing between the 1840s and the 1940s was written in Spanish, by white authors, and reflected the *criollo* worldview.⁸

Turning to the second claim, the idea that SSA historians were ‘imitators’ of foreign models, what J. M. Blaut calls ‘European diffusionism’, reflects a deeply entrenched belief that European peoples created historical (as well as other kinds of) knowledge and that non-Europeans, including Latin Americans, merely adopted them with minor modifications.⁹ This view must be rejected. SSA historians were not just consumers of foreign ideas, they were also innovators. Besides offering an overview of historical writing in SSA, therefore, this chapter will also provide evidence to back up this contention.

⁷ See, for instance, E. Bradford Burns, *The Poverty of Progress: Latin America in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley, 1983), ch. 3; Colmenares, *Las convenciones contra la cultura*, 13, 27, 137; and, more recently, Ana Ribeiro, *Historiografía Nacional, 1880–1940: De la épica al ensayo sociológico* (Montevideo, 1994), 15.

⁸ In the first half of the nineteenth century, a handful of indigenous authors tried to put forth their own perspectives, but to the best of my knowledge there is nothing comparable for the remainder of the period. This is the main reason why works by Amerindian authors do not figure in this chapter. See Vicente Pazos Kanki’s *Memoria histórico políticas* (London, 1834) and Justo Apu Shuaraura, *Recuerdos de la Monarquía peruana o bosquejo de la historia de los Incas* (Paris, 1850). The first was a multi-volume effort that was never completed, by a Bolivian Aymara who had become a fervid republican. The second, rather than a history text, is a genealogy of Inca monarchs compiled by a priest of Inca decent. It has been suggested that his aim may have been to present himself as someone who could restore the Inca monarchy in Peru. In this connection see Catherine Julien, ‘Recuerdos de la monarquía peruana’, *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 84:2 (2004), 344–5.

⁹ J. M. Blaut, *The Colonizer’s Model of the World: Geographical Diffusionism and Eurocentric History* (New York, 1993), 8–17.

To fulfil these two goals the chapter is divided into three sections. The first section will examine three nineteenth-century debates that took place in the Southern Cone on how the history of the SSA republics should be written. Two consequences of this were the institutionalization of historical writing in the region and the assembling of a tool kit that aimed to grasp SSA historical reality in an innovative way. The second section will shift from method to content and identify the creativity of SSA historians in their treatment of their respective national histories. Finally, the third section, using Argentina as an illustration, will examine the professionalization of history began to take place in the first half of the twentieth century. What happened in Argentina happened in the rest of the region, though a little later and to a lesser extent.

HOW THE HISTORY OF THE SPANISH SOUTH AMERICAN REPUBLICS SHOULD BE WRITTEN, 1840S–1910S

The most eminent foreigner to reach Chile in the nineteenth century, apart from Charles Darwin, was Andrés Bello, a Venezuelan, who took government employ in 1829 and devoted the rest of his life to serving this country. A polymath, he reached the peak of his powers in the 1840s and 1850s and transformed Santiago into a centre for historical studies. He did so by organizing a system of education that gave importance to the study of the past, by teaching directly and indirectly the first generation of Chilean and Argentinian amateur historians, by initiating public debates on how to write the history of Chile, and by implication of the newly independent Hispanic American nations.¹⁰ These debates were highly influential in the historical writing of the entire region.

In 1844, following a directive of the Chilean government, the University of Chile, at that time under Bello's rectorship, instituted an annual contest whereby faculty members had to submit a monograph on a topic on national history. The ensuing *Memorias* [Reports], published from 1844 to 1918, were vetted fairly regularly, provoking some memorable debates.¹¹ The most memorable involved the rector of the University and José Victorino Lastarria, his disciple and a new faculty member. Addressing the question 'how should the history of Chile be written?', Lastarria submitted an essay entitled *Investigaciones sobre la influencia social de la conquista y del sistema colonial de los españoles en Chile* [Investigations on the Social Influence of the Conquest and the Spanish Colonial System in Chile] that openly challenged the rector's views on historiography. Bello responded and soon Chilean intellectual circles were ablaze with a debate that lasted for decades, first in Santiago and later in Buenos Aires. In a nutshell, the debate pitched those who promoted

¹⁰ Iván Jaksčić, *Andrés Bello: Scholarship and Nation Building in Nineteenth-Century Latin America* (Cambridge, 2001), chs. 2 and 5.

¹¹ Cristian Gazmuri, *La historiografía chilena, 1842–1920* (Santiago, 2006), ch. 4.

ad narrandum (narrative history), against those who defended *ad probandum* (explanatory history). Bello supported the first camp, Lastarria the second.

For Bello, the first task of the historian in a new country like Chile was to organize public archives and libraries and submit the collected sources to critical study. Once their authenticity had been established, the next step was to study their meaning by a variety of cognitive methods, the philological-critical method being only one of them. Only then could the historian use them in a chronological narrative, the direction of which was to be found in the documents themselves. In the meantime, whatever history was written had to be seen as provisional and subject to corrections of content and method. To communicate to the reader the importance of primary sources, he proposed inserting original documents into the narrative. For it was not just a question of truthfulness, it was just as important to get the reader to grasp the uniqueness of the moment, the lived experience. The goal was to apprehend the Chilean historical process from within, distorting it as little as possible. Only this kind of historical writing, Bello argued, could yield reliable knowledge about the Chilean people, their land, and their epoch, knowledge without which the construction of the new nation would be impossible.¹²

For Lastarria, in contrast, history was not an account of all the facts, but only of the most significant: hence the importance of having criteria to select them and use them in a general explanation. Facts were historically significant, stated Lastarria, only to the extent that they provided evidence of the march of progress. Shunning the French Romantics, he preferred the approach to history proposed by Voltaire in the previous century and by François Guizot, his contemporary. This was an interpretative history whose aim was to trace the unfolding of civilization not only in Europe but throughout the world. It was particularly relevant to Chile and to the new nations in Spanish America, Lastarria claimed, because, having destroyed the shackles of colonialism, they were all in search of a new order. Accordingly, it was not enough for history to bring to life the past in all its truthfulness and fullness; even more important was to promote a republican future, keeping in mind the advancement of humanity elsewhere.¹³

After the first round of exchanges others joined in and added nuances to the debate. Bello made a couple of additional points worth noting. First, he stated that both methods, the *ad narrandum* and *ad probandum*, have their place in a country with a well-developed historiography, but not in Chile, where the institution of history did not yet exist. In such circumstances, he insisted, the narrative method was an essential first step. Second, he advised Chilean youth against following Europe in a servile manner. ‘Young Chileans!’ he urged. ‘Learn to judge for yourselves! Aspire to freedom of thought.’¹⁴ He warned that failure in this regard would prompt Europeans to say that

¹² Andrés Bello, *Selected Writings of Andrés Bello*, ed. Iván Jaksic (Oxford, 1997), 154–84.

¹³ Gazmuri, *La historiografía chilena*, 81–5.

¹⁴ Bello, *Selected Writings*, 183.

America has not yet shaken off her chains, that she follows in our footsteps with bandaged eyes, that in her works there is no sense of independent thought, nothing original, nothing characteristic. She apes the forms of our philosophy and does not take over its spirit. Her civilization is an exotic plant that has not yet absorbed the sap of the land that sustains it.¹⁵

However, he warned against going to the other extreme and indulging in nativism because lessons could be learned from Europe: 'let us study European histories; let us observe very closely the particular spectacle that each of them develops and summarizes; let us accept the examples and lesson they contain, which is perhaps the aspect of them that we least consider'.¹⁶ But he insisted on the primacy of independence and creativity:

In every class of studies, it is necessary to change the opinions of others into convictions of one's own. Only in this way can a science be learned. Only in this way can Chilean youth take over the stream of knowledge offered it by cultivated Europe and become capable of contributing to it some day, of enriching it and making it more beautiful.¹⁷

Unknown in the early 1840s in Spanish South America, Bello and Lastarria became household names by the end of the decade.

The second debate on how to write the history of the Spanish South American republics started in Buenos Aires in the early 1860s. It was sparked by the publication of Bartolomé Mitre's *Historia de Belgrano* [The History of Belgrano] in 1859. The work of a journalist and politician who lived and worked in Chile in the 1840s, it put forward the thesis that General Manuel Belgrano was the architect and personification of the Argentinian independence movement. The implications of this position were, first, that this process had been largely accomplished by the intervention of the coastal provinces where Belgrano came from and, second, that the best way to understand Argentinian history was through the study of the life of great men rather than that of the common people.

Naturally, many Argentinians from the interior disagreed, Dalmacio Vélez Sarsfield among them. A well-known lawyer, journalist, and public figure, he took Mitre to task for the content and method of his work. Concerning the first point, he stated that the idea that Argentine independence was owed mainly to the coastal elites was 'an injurious and slanderous judgment against the peoples of the interior'.¹⁸ He then marshalled evidence to demonstrate that without the contribution of the hinterland, Argentina would not have gained her independence. Turning to method, he contended that the history of a country could not be told by singling out great men because the history of the leaders and the led was indivisible. Moreover, he went on, Mitre's *Historia de Belgrano* was based

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 184.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 182

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 174

¹⁸ Dalmacio Vélez Sarsfield, *Rectificaciones históricas: General Belgrano-General Güemes*, appendix in Bartolomé Mitre, *Estudios históricos sobre la Revolución Argentina: Belgrano y Guemes* (Buenos Aires, 1864), 218.

mainly on government official sources. As such it reflected the concerns and actions of the factions in power, the internal struggles of the upper classes, and the interests of the coast. What was absent was the history of the hinterland and the ordinary people. In the final analysis, Vélez Sarsfield concluded, Mitre's history was only 'official history', not a national one. To write a national history, he would have had to go beyond government documents and dig deeply into the sources of popular culture such as legends, customs, and the oral tradition.¹⁹

Mitre's response was immediate. It is precisely because the history of the leaders and the led are one and the same, he said, that one must privilege the former because they are the ones that mould the masses and give them a sense of direction. He mocked the idea of using popular culture as a source for historical writing because there were no known methods to assess its cognitive validity. Whereas governmental sources, printed and manuscript, could be examined by means of the critical method, oral history could not. Accordingly, only the documents that had passed truth-value tests could provide the building blocks of a trustworthy history. As for the accusation of class and regional bias, he dismissed it, since in his opinion the task of the historian was not to give an exhaustive account of all social actors but only of those with national import.²⁰ The round of exchanges continued well into the following decade and had an impact beyond the frontiers of Argentina.

The third debate also took place in Buenos Aires, in the early 1880s. It involved the third edition of Mitre's *Historia de Belgrano* published in 1877. Profiting from Vélez Sarsfield's critique in the early 1860s, Mitre revised his work extensively for the new edition. Even so, it provoked a heated and long-enduring polemic. The protagonist this time was Vicente Fidel López, an Argentinian lawyer and amateur historian who, like Mitre, had lived in Chile in the 1840s. Reacting against a work bristling with footnotes that claimed to tell the truth and nothing but the truth, López shot back and argued that a history in which every particular is true could still be false when considered in its entirety. It was not enough to look into the truth-value of individual facts and piece them together into a narrative. Even more important was to structure them into a whole whose meaning surpassed the sum of its parts. In his opinion, this could not be done with the critical method alone. What was needed was a synthetic-cum-aesthetic approach in many ways similar to that of the artist. A forerunner of Hayden White, he seemed to be proposing that the patterning of events required something like the protocols of literature. Only this kind of history, he concluded, had the capacity to capture the originality and fullness of the Argentinian historical experience and, additionally, beckon and seduce the reader, implanting in his memory the experience of things past.²¹

¹⁹ Sarsfield, *Rectificaciones históricas*, 217–62, particularly 227–88 and 233–5.

²⁰ Mitre, *Estudios históricos*, 3–16, 32–42, 47–61, 63–72, 73–85, 130–3, 139–51. For an account of this debate, see Abel Cháneton, *Historia de Veléz Sarsfield*, vol. 2 (Buenos Aires, 1937), 478–82.

²¹ Vicente Fidel López, *Debate Histórico: Refutación a las comprobaciones históricas sobre la Historia de Belgrano*, 3 vols. (1882; Buenos Aires, 1921), i. 83–112; ii. 197–263; iii. 323–50.

As on previous occasions, Mitre's response was swift. He agreed that an historical work could be true in every particular incident, but false taken as a whole. But he went on to argue that this is precisely what happened when authors like López imposed on empirical material criteria of selection and interpretation that did not flow from the documents themselves. He conceded that history was partly a work of art, but that 'the unity of action, the truth of the characters, the dramatic interest, the movement, the color of the scenes... the philosophical and moral spirit of the work' had to derive from well-vetted primary sources. To do otherwise was to allow all kinds of preconceptions to creep in and distort the authenticity of the historical narrative.²² Whereas López treated history as an art form, Mitre thought of it as fundamentally a science.

While other debates took place in the Southern Cone, these three resonated the most across the SSA periphery. Beginning with the first, if one examines the most noteworthy works that appeared in the second half of the nineteenth century in SSA, it is clear that the majority of the historians of the area opted for Bello's *ad narrandum* method. A list of the most important would include Diego Barros Arana in Chile; Bartolomé Mitre in Argentina; Gabriel René Moreno in Bolivia; Mariano Paz Soldán in Peru; González Suárez in Ecuador; and José Manuel Groot in Colombia.²³ Although a clear minority, the *ad probandum* side also had adherents: V. F. López in Argentina; Manuel Bilbao in Chile; and Sebastián Lorente in Peru being the most significant.²⁴

Unlike the debate of the 1840s, that of the 1860s over the 'great man versus the people' was not immediately influential. This is somewhat surprising since this was a time when 'democratic reforms' were being adopted by governments from Venezuela down to Cape Horn. But there is a simple explanation for it: the political turmoil of the decade made it impossible for historians to report to their desks. Once the dust settled in the late 1860s, the impact of the debate in question became noticeable. While admiring the way that Mitre handled the factual material, a distinguished group of historians in the region began to move away from a history in which individuals were the sole historical agents to one where they were collective entities: the people in general, or specific social or ethnic groups.

²² Bartolomé Mitre, *Comprobaciones históricas: Primera Parte* (Buenos Aires, 1916), 11–15, 196–208, 347–68; *Comprobaciones históricas: Segunda Parte* (Buenos Aires, 1921), 15–36, 387–90. For a fuller analysis of this debate see Ricardo Rojas, 'Noticia Preliminar', in Mitre, *Comprobaciones: Primera Parte*, pp. ix–xxxix.

²³ Their most important works were the following: Diego Barros Arana, *Historia Jeneral de Chile* (Santiago, 1884–1893); Bartolomé Mitre, *Historia de Belgrano y la independencia Argentina*, 2 vols. (Buenos Aires, 1859); Gabriel René Moreno, *Ultimos días coloniales en el Alto Perú* (Santiago, 1896); Mariano Paz Soldán, *Historia del Perú independiente* (Lima, 1868); Federico González Suárez, *Historia de la República del Ecuador* (Quito, 1890–3); and José Manuel Groot, *Historia eclesiástica y civil de la Nueva Granada* (Bogotá, 1869).

²⁴ Vicente Fidel López, *Historia de la República Argentina* (Buenos Aires, 1883–93); Manuel Bilbao, *La sociabilidad chilena* (Santiago, 1844); and Sebastián Lorente, *Historia de la civilización peruana* (Lima, 1879).

Vicente Fidel López in Argentina; Sebastián Lorente in Peru; and Gabriel René Moreno in Bolivia exemplify this trend.²⁵

Finally, the debate of the 1880s, ‘science versus art’, added a new dimension to reflection on how the history of the new republics should be written. Although its impact has not yet been studied, existing evidence suggests that it was significant. Mitre’s scientism reigned supreme until the turn of the century. From that moment onwards, however, López’s aesthetic viewpoint began to gain ground. A new generation of historians embraced this cause and developed it into a movement of cultural nationalism at the beginning of the twentieth century. Some of its initial contributors were Ricardo Rojas in Argentina; Nicolás Palacios in Chile; Ricardo Palma in Peru; and Franz Tamayo in Bolivia.²⁶

These three debates, and others that took place in the Southern Cone at the same time, engendered quasi-school alignments within SSA countries and across national boundaries, which suggests that the traditional way of classifying the work of SSA historians is insufficient. Typically this has been done in terms of ‘foreign influences’: rationalists, Romantics, positivists, Rankeans, vitalists, Marxists, and the like.²⁷ The cross-references that I have started to explore following Colmenares and Baranadas, however, suggest endogenous rather than exogenous development. It is not a question of replacing the former with the latter. Both are important. But whereas the latter makes SSA historians ‘imitators’, the former allows us to see them in their workshop engaged in a creative dialogue with their equals. That this dialogue took place, there is no doubt: Uruguayan, Paraguayan, and Bolivian historians corresponded and exchanged primary and secondary sources with their Argentinian and Chilean counterparts throughout their careers. Peruvian, Ecuadorian, Colombian, and Venezuelan historians, for their part, kept close track of the historical production in the south and vice versa.²⁸ The growth of cross-references within and between countries brought about a new intellectual sociability, which contributed to the development of historical writing in a number of ways.

During the 1840–90 period, amateur historians worked without an infrastructure and without institutional support. In the absence of archives and well-equipped libraries, they collected and organized their sources in their own homes. Again, since specialized journals did not exist, they used newspapers and generalist journals to publish their research. Lastly, because history was not yet a profession, they earned a living by working simultaneously as journalists, novelists, educators, politicians, ministers, diplomats, military personnel, and even presidents. Under these

²⁵ The most representative works of this kind have already been mentioned: López, *Les Races Aryennes du Perou*; Lorente’s, *Historia de la civilización*; and Moreno’s, *Ultimos días coloniales*.

²⁶ Ricardo Rojas, *Historia de la Literatura argentina* (Buenos Aires, 1917–21); Nicolás Palacios, *Raza chilena* (Santiago, 1904); Ricardo Palma, *Tradiciones Peruanas Completas* (Madrid, 1957); and Franz Tamayo, *Creación de la pedagogía nacional* (La Paz, 1910).

²⁷ See, for instance, Edberto Oscar Acevedo, *Manual de historiografía hispanoamericana contemporánea* (Mendoza, 1992).

²⁸ This research is ongoing. This chapter is a preliminary report of my first findings.

circumstances, SSA writers did not have the means, material or normative, to protect their work from ideological interference from their ethnicity, their class, their religion, their party, and the ubiquitous European model.

Spurred by the debates and the backing of the state, these means were invented towards the end of the century. Historians started to create a space for themselves in the form of institutes, societies, juntas, academies, and the like. To be sure, some of these organizations had appeared fairly early in the century; the majority, however, sprang up between the 1880s and the 1920s. The most important, in chronological order, include: Sociedad Chilena de Historia y Geografía (1839) in Chile; Instituto Histórico y Geográfico Nacional (1843) in Argentina; Sociedad Geográfica y de Historia (1886) in Bolivia; Academia Nacional de Historia (1888) in Venezuela; La Junta de Historia y Numismática (1893) in Argentina; Academia Colombiana de Historia (1902) in Colombia; Instituto Histórico del Perú (1904) and Academia de Historia del Perú (1906) in Peru; Sociedad Ecuatoriana de Estudios Históricos Americanos (1909) and Academia Nacional de Historia (1920) in Ecuador; Instituto Histórico y Geográfico del Uruguay (1915) in Uruguay; and Instituto Paraguayo de Investigaciones históricas 'Dr Francia' (1937) in Paraguay. Simultaneously, national archives, which had been inaugurated in the first half of the century, were revamped and new ones were organized: Argentina in 1821; Colombia in 1868; Bolivia in 1883; Chile in 1886; Paraguay in 1895; Venezuela in 1914; Peru in 1923; Uruguay in 1926; and Ecuador in 1938.²⁹

With spaces of their own, amateur historians began to build a more homogeneous scholarly community between the 1880s and the 1920s. Whereas the scholarly community of previous years had attracted literati of all kinds, the new one brought together people increasingly interested in history. One consequence of this was the emergence of agreements and disagreements over crucial issues in historical writing. There developed a fairly wide consensus concerning three principles of methodology: first, the priority of primary sources in historical narratives; second, the need to apply hermeneutical techniques such as the philological and critical methods to assess the truth-value of these sources; and third, the necessity to regard the text as open-ended, subject to constant factual and conceptual revisions.³⁰

There were also, however, questions on which amateur historians agreed to disagree. They involved the cognitive strategies to best capture the historical experience of the new SSA nations: 'narrative history versus interpretative history'; 'great man's history versus people's history'; and 'scientific history versus artistic history'. To be sure, these disagreements were also being discussed at the time in Europe and elsewhere; but this fact is not an indicator of the derivative

²⁹ For the national archives see R. R. Hill, *The National Archives of Latin America* (Cambridge, Mass., 1945).

³⁰ G. H. Prado, 'Las condiciones de existencia de la historiografía deminonónica argentina', in Fernando Devoto, Gustavo Prado, and Julio Stortini (eds.), *Estudios de historiografía argentina*, vol. 2 (Buenos Aires, 1999), 66–9. Roughly speaking, Prado's remarks about Argentinian historiography apply to the rest of SSA.

nature of the SSA engagement. Much like the debates in the Southern Cone, these discussions were grounded on local historical material and responded to local needs, which points to the fact that the most accomplished historians of the region made a concerted effort to assemble a tool kit appropriate to their most urgent need: understanding the traumatic passage from colony to nation.

This is not to dismiss or devalue the importance of foreign influences. Following Bello's advice, SSA historians made a considerable effort to learn from foreign authors. But they read selectively. Anxious to justify independence from Spain and their predilection for a republican way of life, they read the great historians of Rome such as Livy, Tacitus, Barthold Niebuhr, and Theodor Mommsen.³¹ They were also anxious about the fate of the republic in their own times, particularly the tortured experiences of the French. This is one of the reasons they turned to François-Pierre Guizot and Jules Michelet in the 1860s and 1870s, and to Hippolyte Taine later in the century.

However, for the most part, SSA historians read foreign authors for the sake of method. Since very few of them knew German, the Rankean paradigm was not known directly until the 1940s when Leopold von Ranke's works were finally translated into Spanish.³² In the meantime, different versions of it reached SSA through a variety of routes. One was French historical positivism, which took a German tinge from the 1870s onwards.³³ Another was the publication of a number of books on method that appeared at the turn of the century and which popularized a Rankean standpoint, such as Ernest Bernheim's *Lehrbuch der Historischen Method* [Textbook of Historical Method] in 1889, C. V. Langlois and C. Seignobos's *Introduction aux études historiques* [Introduction to the Study of History] in 1897, Alexandru Dimitrie Xenopol's *Les principes fondamentaux de l'histoire* [The Fundamental Principles of History] in 1899, and Rafael Altamira's *Cuestiones modernas de historia* [Modern Issues in History] in 1904.³⁴

The impact of the German paradigm, however, was short lived. In the first two decades of the twentieth century there appeared competing models in the works of Benedetto Croce, Karl Lamprecht, Oswald Spengler, Lucien Febvre, Marc Bloch, and Karl Marx, which were even more attractive. Whereas Ranke confined historical practice to political history, the other methodologies pointed towards economic, social, and even total history.³⁵ Responding to the needs of

³¹ For the intellectual formation of the first generation of Venezuelan historians see Lucía Raynero, *Clío frente al espejo: La concepción de la historia en la historiografía venezolana, 1830–1865* (Caracas, 2007). Interest in republican Rome was widespread among SSA intellectuals throughout the nineteenth century.

³² Guillermo Zermeño Padilla, *La cultura moderna de la historia: Una aproximación teórica e historiográfica*, 2nd edn (Mexico, 2004), 147–54.

³³ For example Gabriel Monod's *Revue Historique*, which was founded in 1876.

³⁴ J. H. Stortini, 'La recepción del método histórico', in Devoto *et al.*, *Estudios de historiografía argentina*, ii, 75–100.

³⁵ Mexico is the only country in Latin America where the Rankean paradigm had a lasting impact towards the end of our period. See Zermeño Padilla, *La cultura moderna de la historia*, ch. 5.

the times, historical production in SSA from the 1840s to the turn of the century had been exclusively political. This began to change in the first two decades of the twentieth century when questions of economic and social modernity became of paramount concern.³⁶

More than new genres of history, what SSA historians were really after in the first half of the twentieth century was a method of their own. In writing about the new school of historians who were beginning to make a name for themselves in the Argentina of the 1920s, Rómulo Carbia argued that ‘The aim of the New School is to create an *American* and more particularly an *Argentinean* way of reconstructing historical events, using for the purpose documentary and bibliographic research conducted in accordance with the most strict of Bernheim’s methods...and making the past come alive just like Croce wants it.’³⁷ Simultaneously, in Peru, the periphery of the region, José Carlos Mariátegui was amalgamating Marx, Lenin, Georges Sorel, and Antonio Labriola into a new interpretative framework.³⁸ According to José Aricó, in doing so, Mariátegui was not merely fiddling with the European paradigm, he was ‘refounding it’ and thus inventing ‘Latin American Marxism’.³⁹ These were not isolated creative events. Grounded on a growing intolerance of things North American and European,⁴⁰ which was accentuated by the Mexican Revolution (1910–20) and the publication of Spengler’s *Der Untergang des Abendlandes [Decline of the West]* (1918), Latin Americans in general and SSA writers in particular were eager to find their own intellectual identity from the 1920s onwards. This was not an escape to a narrow and provincial nativism. On the contrary, the explicit aim was to achieve a synthesis between a method for the particular and a meta-method containing the principles of an evolving universal discipline.

The initiatives of the New School and those of Mariátegui were not just responses to the circumstances at the time, they were also the product of a long tradition. They were a continuation of efforts on the part of Mitre, Vélez Sarsfield, and López in the 1860s and 1880s to capture the originality of the SSA historical experience. They revived Bello’s entreaties to Chilean historians in the 1840s urging them to strive for intellectual independence and creativity. They even go back to the late eighteenth century when, confronting attacks launched against the Americas by

³⁶ See, for instance, Sergio Villalobos, ‘La historiografía económica en Chile: Sus comienzos’, *Historia*, 10 (1971), 7–55.

³⁷ Quoted by Julio Stortini in ‘La recepción del método histórico en los inicios de la profesionalización de la historia en la Argentina’, in Devoto *et al.*, *Estudios de historiografía argentina*, ii, 96.

³⁸ Not an historian, but an essayist, Mariátegui tried to make sense of Peru’s past the better to understand the present and propose a plan of action for the future.

³⁹ José Aricó, ‘Marxismo latinoamericano’, in Norberto Bobbio *et al.* (eds.), *Diccionario de Política*, 6th edn (Mexico, 1991), 950. See also *Mariátegui y los orígenes del marxismo latinoamericano* (Mexico, 1978), introduction and chs. 5 and 6.

⁴⁰ The imposition of the American ‘imperialism of liberty’ on the Caribbean and Central America between the 1890s and the 1930s angered Latin Americans. The carnage of the First World War, however, convinced them that European rationality was only skin-deep.

European authors such as the Comte de Buffon, Guillaume Raynal, William Robertson, Cornelius de Paw, and others, Latin American historians wrote in defence of their land, their societies, and their distinctive culture, inventing in the process what Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra has called ‘patriotic epistemologies’.⁴¹

INVENTING REPUBLICAN NATIONS, 1840S–1910S

SSA historians learnt to write history not only by debating about method, but also by writing volume after volume about their respective nations. Since these nations did not yet exist, it can be said that they invented them and vice versa.

After gaining independence from Spain, the inhabitants of SSA opted for the creation of a new economic, social, political, and cultural order. This required the invention of new identities. During the colonial period, depending on circumstances, they had identified themselves with the Bourbon dynasty or with the Catholic faith or with America. Alternatively, they had also considered themselves members of an ethnic group (Andaluz, Vasco, Quechua, Aymara, Guarani, African, etc.), a social class, or a locality. The trouble was that none of these identities were relevant to the new nation-states. An in-between identity was required, a *patria mediana*, the size of Argentina, Chile, Bolivia, and so forth. To complicate matters, it was not just a question of magnitude. It was also one of quality: the new identity had to be republican. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, therefore, Spanish South Americans had to imagine not just a national community *tout court*, but a republican one as well.⁴² Amateur historians played a crucial role in inventing this composite self and the necessary conceptual and emotional accoutrements to go with it. Given their propensity to argue, they did so endlessly on the subject. Two sets of these debates stand out in particular. The first dealt with the question of national origins; the second with the kind of modernity they wanted for their imagined communities. Unlike the question of method, which was discussed mainly in the Southern Cone, national identity was hotly argued in every single country of the region. It is for this reason that this section will put aside momentarily the centre–periphery model and wander freely from north to south, stopping only in places where good illustrations of the kinds of identity writing that need to be focused on will be found.

Republican national origins were routinely discussed in terms of ‘time’ and ‘space’. Although these aspects often appeared together, it is useful to treat them separately because the arguments advanced in each case were different. From the

⁴¹ Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, *How to Write the History of the New World: Histories of Epistemologies and Identities* (Stanford, 2001), ch. 4.

⁴² Recent research has shown that the national and republican identities evolved at the same time in complex relationships to one another. See Anthony MacFarlane and Eduardo Posada-Carbo (eds.), *Independence and Revolution in Spanish America: Perspectives and Problems* (London, 1998).

point of view of time, the clash was over ‘rupture versus continuity’, from that of space, ‘Europe versus Spanish America’.

The ‘time debates’ had three dimensions: generational, ideological, and geographical. In the mid-nineteenth century, the first generation of SSA historians argued that independence marked the birth of a new identity. This implied putting aside the Spanish colonial past and starting anew. It also meant turning away from the Hispanic cultural tradition and following the values of the northern Atlantic countries, such as France, Britain, and the United States. In the second half of the century, this changed. The second generation of historians softened their stance towards their colonial past and favoured the idea of a selective continuity. National origins in this case could be rightfully traced back to colonial times because there were elements that could be salvaged from it. Rafael Baralt in Venezuela, José Manuel Restrepo in Colombia, and Manuel José Cortés in Bolivia are good representatives of the first generation; Diego Barros Arana in Chile, Sebastián Lorente in Peru, and Federico González Suárez in Ecuador of the second.⁴³

The ideological version of the ‘rupture versus continuity’ debate involved a clash between liberals and conservatives throughout the area. Generally speaking, the liberals condemned Hispanic values, economic, social, political, and cultural, and therefore favoured rupture. Not so the conservatives, who found them not only valuable in their own right but also essential for the organization of the new republics. This clash can best be seen in Colombia, a country where ideology played a very important role in defining identities, particularly in the second half of the nineteenth century. Witnessing the rise of liberalism in this country, José Antonio Plaza and José María Samper wrote works defending this trend and advocating the consolidation of a liberal national identity. José Manuel Groot and Sergio Arboleda objected, and denounced these histories and the ideology behind them. In lieu of a liberal national identity, they proposed a conservative one, rooted in Hispanic values and those of the Catholic Church.⁴⁴

The third and last version of the ‘time debates’ was the geographical. The protagonists this time were all liberal historians who had different takes on the subject of identity depending on from where they were writing. Those from the Southern Cone did not see the colonial period as an unmitigated disaster. To be sure, they condemned Spanish rule without reservations, but credited the colonials with developing embryonic democratic societies on the sidelines, so to speak, societies

⁴³ Works that illustrate the views of the first generation are: Rafael Baralt, *Resumen de Historia de Venezuela* (Paris, 1841); José Manuel Restrepo, *Historia de la revolución en la República de Colombia* (Paris, 1841); and Manuel José Cortés, *Ensayo sobre la historia de Bolivia* (La Paz, 1861). The equivalent for the second generation are: Mitre, *Historia de Belgrano*; Barros Arana, *Historia Jeneral de Chile*; González Suárez, *Historia de la República del Ecuador*; and Lorente, *Historia de la civilización peruana*.

⁴⁴ The works on the liberal side were: José Antonio Plaza, *Memorias para la historia de la Nueva Granada desde antes de su descubrimiento hasta el 20 de Julio de 1810* (Bogotá, 1850); and José María Samper, *Ensayo sobre las revoluciones políticas* (Paris, 1861). Those on the conservative side were: José Manuel Groot, *Historia Eclesiástica y civil de la Nueva Granada* (Bogotá, 1869); and Sergio Arboleda, *La república en la América Española* (Bogotá, 1868–9).

that began to flourish as soon as the Spanish were thrown out. Thus, for people like Bartolomé Mitre and Diego Barros Arana, there was rupture, but also continuity and the possibility of a prosperous future. In the north of Spanish South America, however, there was no redeeming the colonial past. The role played by the metropolis had been wholly negative and the colonials had been unable to work out an alternative of their own. For the liberal historians of the north, then, continuity was not an option. The future of their nationalities depended on their ability to embrace Northern Atlantic modernity and its cultural and political accessories. The best illustration of this position can be found in the works of the Colombian José Manuel Restrepo.⁴⁵

The 'space debates' provided an entirely different perspective on the question of origins. For most of the participants in the 'Europe versus Spanish America' clash, the new nations were and should be an extension of Europe, at least culturally. For a minority, however, the real cultural roots of the new countries were to be found in the SSA itself. This divergence was encapsulated in the dichotomy *Civilización versus Barbarie* (civilization versus barbarism), a formula that was used extensively from the 1840s onwards. Great defenders of the first were the Argentinian Mitre and the Chilean Barros Arana; those of the second the Argentinian Vicente Fidel López, the Peruvian Sebastián Lorente, and the Bolivian Jaime Mendoza. It should be noted that barbarism for the latter was not an innate condition but a consequence of colonial exploitation. After all, prior to the arrival of the European, several civilizations flourished in the South American region, including the Inca and the Aymaras among others. Dormant for centuries, they could at last be reawakened and incorporated into a Latin American way of life that would amalgamate in different ways the best of Europe with the best of Amerindia.⁴⁶

In the third quarter of the nineteenth century the question of origins began to fade into the background, as new concerns became more pressing. These had to do, in one way or another, with the onset of economic and social modernity throughout the region. Historians addressed these concerns in abundance.

The first encounter of Spanish South Americans with modernity took place in the first decades of the nineteenth century when they set out to organize 'the ideal republic'. They tried and tried again until the 1860s. Exhausted, in the following two decades, they put their Jacobinism aside and opted for the *República práctica*, also known as the *República posible*. What brought this change about? It was an effort to catch up with events. In effect, in the last quarter of the nineteenth century the entire region began to change economically, socially, politically, and even

⁴⁵ Mitre and Barros Arana develop their self-confident perspective in *Historia de Belgrano* and in *Historia Jeneral* respectively. For Restrepo's pessimism see *Historia de la revolución en la República de Colombia*.

⁴⁶ The idea that post-independence Hispanic America was the offspring of Europe is to be found in Mitre, *Historia de Belgrano*; and Barros Arana, *Historia Jeneral*. Their opponents in this respect were: Vicente Fidel López in *Les Races Aryenne*; and Sebastián Lorente in *Historia de la civilización peruana*.

culturally. Economically, it was now linked to the international economy. Socially, the new economies started to produce new rich, new poor, and new middle sectors. Politically, liberty was no longer at the top of the agenda, supplanted as it was by order. Culturally, in tandem with an open economy and a mobile society, the region experienced a period of intense cosmopolitanism that provoked an equally intense nationalist reaction. Within this context, an inversion of priorities took place. Between 1830 and 1870 the national projects of the area had assumed that political modernity came first, and that economic, social, and cultural progress, as well as a sense of nationality, would follow inevitably from it. In the 1880s, this sequence was reversed and economic modernity was given priority over the rest. In the meantime, since this process would take time, the state was entrusted to keep the peace with a firm hand: hence the adoption of the motto '*orden y progreso*' (order and progress) by all the countries of the region.

What form did the search for identity take under these circumstances? Given the new concerns, the question of origins was shelved and a reflection began as to the kind of national identity required by economic modernization. A number of debates flared up on this subject, the most prominent among them being those on 'liberty versus order' and 'white versus non-white'.

It has been argued that for Spanish South Americans a republican identity was just as important as a national one. Proof of this is the fierce clash in the 1890–1920 period between those who wanted order as a means to progress and those who, not yielding to expediency, defended individual rights and classical republicanism. The 'order' historians thought of caudillos and dictators as the Spanish American version of popular sovereignty. They also saw them as the necessary gendarme in a period of transition and, ultimately, as the demiurge of a new economic and social order. The 'liberty' historians, by contrast, bewailed their presence as the creators of personal and factional loyalties, which prevented the development of truly modern political, economic, and social elites. Though this confrontation took place throughout SSA, it was in Venezuela where works of regional importance were penned and published. Starting in the 1890s, Jesús Muñoz Tebar and Rafael Fernando Seijas argued in favour of the rule of law and attacked dictators such as Guzmán Blanco for making a mockery of it. Against them rose José Gil Fortoul and Laureano Vallenilla Lanz. They maintained that freedom was not something that could be attained through laws because, fundamentally, freedom was the product of social forces such as environment, race, material progress, social conditions, and cultural preferences. Harnessing the positive aspects of these forces would eventually translate into political modernity. *Cesarismo democrático* [Democratic Caesarism] (1919) by Laureano Vallenilla Lanz was the best expression of this line of thinking.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ The constitutionalists were: Jesús Muñoz Tebar, *El personalismo y legalismo: estudio político* (Caracas, 1890); and Rafael Fernando Seijas, *El Presidente* (Caracas, 1891). For their opponents see José Gil Fortoul, *Historia constitucional de Venezuela* (Berlin, 1907–9).

The 'white versus non-white' debate was a clash over the 'ideal' agents of modernity in SSA countries. For most authors, white people were the obvious 'bearers' of a modern nation. Blacks and Indians, particularly the latter, were considered an obstacle that had to be neutralized or eliminated in some way. The aim was to build European-like nations in South America, biologically and culturally. There were a few authors, however, for whom the real carriers of the national gene were the mixture of blacks, Indians, mestizos, and whites. Instead of identifying with Europe, these peoples were inventing an identity of their own that was at once Hispanic American and modern. To be sure, the 'white versus non-white' dichotomy had a different logic in each of the SSA countries, depending on their demographic mix. The Bolivian case is particularly relevant because it produced works of regional import. Tentatively at first and emphatically later on, Alcides Arguedas proposed that the Indians and mestizo were a hindrance to the consolidation of the Bolivian nation and its entry into modernity. For him, nationhood and progress could only be attained through racial and cultural Europeanization. Jaime Mendoza, a physician, lawyer, and historian, thought otherwise. Convinced that economic prosperity, political freedom, and education could revive the Bolivian Indian and energize the mestizo population, he thought of them as the principal and most promising social actors in his country. In the first two decades of the twentieth century Arguedas's point of view was dominant. It was only in the 1930s and 1940s that Mendoza's message gradually gained ground.⁴⁸

How did the writing of national histories contribute to the tool kit of the SSA historians? It did so in a variety of ways. Particularly relevant is what happened to the concept of nation. Rather than following to the letter European historicism that conceived of nations as entities internally unified, developing over time like windowless monads,⁴⁹ SSA historians came to think of them as grand projects that would eventually bring together civilizations, ethnicities, regions, and classes long in conflict in a given territory. As a result, the category invented by SSA historians had at least three dimensions. It acknowledged the existence of a radical heterogeneity from which a new entity had to be forged and the problems this posed for nation builders. It also recognized the difficulties of turning this heterogeneous mix into an object of knowledge, given the diversity of cultures, languages, and races and the variety of contradictory social relations that governed them such as slavery, serfdom, indigenous community life, republican citizenship, urban–rural cleavages, and centre–periphery relations. Last but not least, all these problems notwithstanding, the SSA concept of nation aimed to channel these

⁴⁸ Alcides Arguedas's main works are *Vida Criolla* (La Paz, 1905); *Pueblo Enfermo* (Barcelona, 1909); *Raza de Bronce* (La Paz, 1919); and *Historia General de Bolivia* (La Paz, 1922). Jaime Mendoza defended his thesis in *El factor geográfico en la nacionalidad boliviana* (Sucre, 1925); and *El macizo boliviano* (La Paz, 1935).

⁴⁹ Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, 2000), 23.

centrifugal forces towards a new normative order, which would be both republican and democratic. Whereas the historicist concept of nation looked back to its origin in search of validation and was organic in nature, the SSA version had a utopian core to it and depended openly on social engineering.

Beyond methodology, SSA historians also contributed to the actual process of national formation. Non-existent in the early 1800s, '*la patria mediana*' came into being, to a large extent, thanks to them. Historians were the ones who toiled long hours in inhospitable archives in order to determine the physical boundaries of their countries. Historians invented a collective memory replete with heroes and valorous deeds to give historical content to that particular space. Finally, by moving from political to economic and social history in the first half of the twentieth century, historians raised the 'social question', that is, the incorporation into the national fold of the poor, blacks, Indians, and other outsiders.⁵⁰

As everywhere else in the world, national history in SSA was used and abused. Caudillos of all sorts, political parties, the Catholic Church, the military, and the rich took advantage of it in their perennial struggle for power and profit. A good example of such use and abuse is to be found in Venezuela, where the dictator Juan Vicente Gomez and Vallenilla Lanz, the author of *Cesarismo democrático*, collaborated closely in the pursuit of 'order and progress' for their country.⁵¹

Ideology played a crucial role in the historical writing of the region. Indeed, it permeated all aspects of SSA life from the beginning of the nineteenth century. The dominant belief system that justified and guided the wars of independence, the process of national formation, and the search for modernity was liberalism. It is, therefore, not surprising that the vast majority of SSA historians between the 1840s and 1900 were of the liberal persuasion.⁵² Given that they were almost everywhere members of the social and political elites, it has been suggested that their work expressed mainly their class and ethnic interests.⁵³ These allegations have not yet been substantiated through scholarly analysis. In the vast majority of cases, however, this was certainly true. The fact is that at the beginning of the twentieth century the institution of history in SSA had not yet developed the necessary safeguards to protect the integrity of the historical product. It was to tackle this problem that a new generation of historians began to take necessary steps to professionalize their craft in the first decades of the twentieth century.

⁵⁰ For the role of 'social justice' in the Chilean experience see Villalobos, 'La historiografía económica en Chile', 16–32.

⁵¹ John Lombardi, *Venezuela: The Search for Order, the Dream of Progress* (Oxford, 1982), 260; and Nikita Harwich Vallenilla, 'Venezuelan Positivism and Modernity', *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 70:2 (1990), 342–4.

⁵² Juan Maiguashca, 'Latin American Historiography (excluding Mexico and Brazil): The National Period, 1820–1990', in Daniel Woolf (ed.), *A Global Encyclopedia of Historical Writing*, vol. 2 (New York and London, 1998), 542–5.

⁵³ Burns, *The Poverty of Progress*, ch. 3.

THE PROFESSIONALIZATION OF HISTORY, 1920–45

Returning to our centre–periphery model, it was in the Southern Cone, particularly in Argentina, that the first sustained effort towards professionalization took place. Referring to the general state of historical writing in this country in the first half of the twentieth century, Joseph Barager writes: ‘the development of historical scholarship in Argentina...for the quarter century after 1920, was probably not surpassed or even equaled in any other country of Latin America.’⁵⁴ My own research amply confirms this assessment with the caveat that Argentina’s professionalization effort actually started ten years earlier.

In 1908 the University of La Plata asked two well-known amateur historians, Ricardo Rojas and Ernesto Quesada, to prepare reports on the way European and American universities taught history and historical research at the advanced level. Rojas surveyed the universities in France, Germany, England, Italy, Spain, and the United States in his report entitled *La Restauración nacionalista* [The Nationalist Restoration], which appeared in 1909. Quesada, for his part, went to Germany, visited twenty-two universities, and wrote *La Enseñanza de la historia en las universidades alemanas* [The Teaching of History in German Universities] published in 1910. From this moment on, the history classroom became the centre of attention in Argentinian universities, as can be seen from the following sequence of events. In 1910 Rafael Altamira, a noted Spanish historian, introduced the teaching of historical methodology at the University of La Plata at the request of its rector. In 1912 the University of Buenos Aires created a history section within its Faculty of Arts and hired a young and promising scholar, Emilio Ravignani, to teach in it. The following year, another young and promising intellectual, Ricardo Levene, attached to the University of La Plata, published his *Lecciones de Historia Argentina* [Lessons of Argentinian History], the first meticulously researched textbook to appear in the country. Then in 1914 Leopoldo Lugones, a poet, historian, and educator, took over the National Council of Education and began to push hard for the teaching of history at all levels. Two years later, the aforementioned Ricardo Rojas, who was also a great teacher, published *La Argentinidad* [Argentinianness] with explicit pedagogical intent. Solidly based on primary sources, this work examined Argentinian history for the first time, not only from Buenos Aires but from the interior as well. The decade ended with the University Reform Movement in 1918, the main purpose of which was to modernize university teaching in general throughout Argentina. This movement spread to the rest of Latin America, particularly Chile, Peru, Venezuela, Mexico, and Cuba, and was responsible for a uniquely Latin American

⁵⁴ Joseph R. Barager, ‘The Historiography of the Rio de la Plata Area since 1830’, *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 39 (1959), 602.

institution: the autonomous status of Latin American universities. Enshrined in law, the principle of ‘university autonomy’ protected these institutions from governmental interference. Over the years, the enforcement of this principle has been a chequered one. Even so, there is evidence that, on the whole, it has safeguarded scholarly work, including historical writing.⁵⁵

By the early 1920s the teaching of history at university level in Argentina had advanced considerably. Ricardo Levene, Emilio Ravignani, Diego Luis Molinari, Rómulo Carbia, Luis María Torres, Ricardo Caillet-Bois, and others, all members of a new generation of amateur historians, took advantage of this conjuncture to launch a movement to professionalize history. La Nueva Escuela or the New School, as this group came to be known, was not a coherent group with a well-defined manifesto. Rather, it was a collection of individuals, often in conflict with one another, striving to transform history into an academic discipline each in their own way.⁵⁶ To this end, they initiated, supervised, or engaged in a wide variety of activities the most important of which were: the training of new historians by means of the university seminar and the creation of chairs of history; the transformation of regular administrative archives into historical ones; the printing and distribution of carefully annotated primary sources; the inauguration of specialized journals; and the publication of seminal works that privileged archival research. This flurry of activity was not confined to Buenos Aires, as there is plenty of evidence that the provinces joined in as well.⁵⁷

This process amounted to a qualitative change in the development of Argentine historical studies. In effect, in addition to the innovations listed above, the New School invented a scholarly community that carved for itself an autonomous space within the university and other institutions. It was a different community than the one that had come into being between the 1880s and 1910. Whereas polymaths filled the ranks of the old historical community, the new community was made up of people who considered themselves historians *tout court*. Other characteristics of the new community were a sustained effort to achieve self-sufficiency and self-regulation. As a result, universities began to pay historians for their teaching and research activities. Just as important, the new community

⁵⁵ See Leopoldo Zea, ‘La autonomía universitaria como institución latinoamericana’, in *Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México: La autonomía universitaria en México*, vol. 1 (Mexico, 1979), 317–34.

⁵⁶ For the origins of the New School see Rómulo Carbia, *Historia crítica de la historiografía argentina* (Buenos Aires, 1940), 157–65.

⁵⁷ For more information on the professionalization of history in Argentina see Fernando Devoto (ed.), *La historiografía argentina en el siglo XX*, 2 vols. (Buenos Aires, 1993–4); Devoto *et al.*, *Estudios de historiografía argentina*, ii; Nora Pagano and Martha Rodríguez (eds.), *La historiografía rioplatense en la posguerra* (Buenos Aires, 2001); Fernando Devoto and Nora Pagano (eds.), *La historiografía académica y la historiografía militante en Argentina y Uruguay* (Buenos Aires, 2004); and Fernando Devoto and Nora Pagano, *Historia de la historiografía argentina* (Buenos Aires, 2009).

began to identify the norms and rules that would assess competence in teaching, research, and other activities considered part of the new profession. In addition, the new community found the means of subsidizing their output through grants from the government or the private sector. Further indicators of qualitative change vis-à-vis the 1880s is to be found in the career of Ravignani, arguably the most representative historian of the period. Although he was a militant member of Union Civica Radical, there is no trace of his politics in his historical output. Clearly for Ravignani it was possible to be both a scholar and an advocate of a political cause, for although these two activities were related, they were not one and the same. In other words, a code of conduct to ensure professional accountability was already at work in Argentina at this time. It seemed that, here at least, the abuses of ideology had been put on a leash.⁵⁸

Unfortunately, the reign of the New School in methodological, institutional, and productive terms was short lived. Dominant in the 1930s and early 1940s,⁵⁹ it faded thereafter, sidelined by the impact of the Great Depression and the advent of political instability and dictatorship, crises that, on and off, lasted for several decades.

What happened in Argentina, both the rise of professionalism and its first crisis, took place to a much lesser extent in Chile and even less in the rest of Spanish South America.⁶⁰ The task of creating an autonomous, specialized community of historians began in earnest once again only in the last quarter of the twentieth century. By then, however, the *república de las letras* included Central America, Mexico, and the Caribbean. In this new context, two poles of growth developed: Argentina in the south and Mexico in the north. These two countries are the principal centres of historical production and distribution in Spanish America today.

In sum, what are the main traits of SSA historians between the 1840s and the 1940s? The maxims ‘imitator, laggard’ ‘translator, traitor’, which have often been used to characterize them for so long, do not apply. In view of the evidence presented in this chapter, a more accurate set of aphorisms would be: ‘imitator, creator’/ ‘translator, faithful’.

⁵⁸ Barager, ‘The Historiography’, 603.

⁵⁹ Barager writes that ‘The period 1930–1945 might well be termed the Golden Era in Argentine historiography’, *ibid.*, 606.

⁶⁰ Except in Argentina and Uruguay, the professionalization of history has not been studied yet. Dispersed information on this subject exists in the following works: for Chile, Gazmuri, *La historiografía Chilena*, vol. 1; for Uruguay, Ana Ribeiro, *Historiografía nacional, 1880–1940: De la épica al ensayo sociológico* (Montevideo, 1994); for Bolivia, Josep Barnadas, *Diccionario histórico de Bolivia*, 2 vols. (Sucre, 2002); for Peru, Manuel Burga, *La historia y los historiadores en el Perú* (Lima, 2005) and Alberto Flores Galindo, ‘La imagen y el espejo: la historiografía peruana 1910–1986’, *Márgenes*, 2:4 (1988), 55–83; for Ecuador, Rodolfo Agogliá, *Historiografía ecuatoriana* (Quito, 1985); for Colombia, Jorge Orlando Melo, *Historiografía colombiana: Realidades y perspectivas* (Medellín, 1996); and for Venezuela, Germán Carrera Damas, *Historia de la historiografía Venezolana: Textos para su estudio*, 3 vols. (Caracas, 1997). I have been unable to find a reliable source for Paraguay.

TIMELINE/KEY DATES

- 1811–30 For the dates of the independence of Paraguay, Argentina, Chile, Gran Colombia, Peru, Bolivia, and Uruguay see the map ‘Latin American and the Caribbean *c.*1830, with Dates of Independence’ (p.429 in this volume).
- 1824 Chile abolishes slavery
- 1830 Ecuador secedes from La Gran Colombia and becomes an independent nation; Colombia and Venezuela do the same
- 1833 A conservative constitution is issued in Chile establishing political stability that will last until the end of the century
- 1836–9 War between Chile and the Peru-Bolivian Confederation
- 1849 In Colombia the election of José Hilario López inaugurates a period of feverish liberal reforms that spread to the rest of Spanish South America
- 1851–4 Abolition of slavery: Colombia (1851), Bolivia (1851), Peru (1854), Ecuador (1854), and Venezuela (1854)
- 1853–1918 Adoption of universal suffrage: Colombia (1853), Venezuela (1857), Ecuador (1861), Peru (1861), Paraguay (1870), Chile (1874), Argentina (1912), and Uruguay (1918)
- 1853 In Colombia the province of Vélez briefly grants the vote to women for first time in America; Argentina issues a constitution that organizes the country politically for the rest of the century
- 1862 In Argentina, Bartolomé Mitre, a liberal historian, becomes first president of a united Argentina, ending secession of his own Buenos Aires province
- 1864–6 War of Spain against Peru and Chile
- 1865–70 War of Triple Alliance (Argentina, Uruguay, and Brazil against Paraguay)
- 1879–84 War of the Pacific (Chile against the Bolivian-Peruvian alliance); Chile establishes hegemony in the South American Pacific
- 1880s–1920s A period of relative political stability and great economic growth based on export economies known as ‘order and progress’
- 1909–35 The architect of ‘order and progress’ in Venezuela, Juan Vicente Gómez, rules that country for thirty years
- 1914 The First World War: Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, Colombia, and Venezuela remain neutral; Uruguay, Bolivia, Peru, and Ecuador break diplomatic relations with Germany
- 1915–30 ABC Pact: Argentina, Brazil, and Chile, the three most powerful countries in South America, sign a formal treaty of cooperation, non-aggression, and arbitration in order to resist US influence in the region
- 1918 The university reform movement in Argentina advocates the modernization and democratization of universities; the movement, led by student activists, spreads to the rest of Latin America

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- 1928–35 The Chaco War (Bolivia against Paraguay)
- 1929–46 Women's suffrage is granted in Ecuador (1929) and Uruguay (1932)
- 1929 The Great Depression puts an end to the export boom in Spanish South America
- 1930s–45 A period of social unrest, military governments, and the rise of populism throughout the entire region

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