

# A History of Modern Latin America

1800 to the Present

SECOND EDITION

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## 4 | Fragmented Nationalisms

From his deathbed, Simón Bolívar is said to have declared: “America is ungovernable.” Whether the Liberator’s pessimism stemmed from the remote distances that separated the population of the immense continent or from the disparate cultures, languages, ethnicities, and races of its people, or simply from the lack of political unity, is not clear. Certainly, any or all of these factors were sufficient to give pause to anyone hoping to unite the now sovereign territory. Vast expanses separated the old colonial cities, while new trading centers were geographically remote from one another, separated by impassable mountains, high deserts, and arid plains, linked by unnavigable waterways and rudimentary roads. All of these factors were to some extent responsible for the fragmented states that emerged in the wake of the wars of independence.

This chapter examines nation building during the nineteenth century, with a focus on certain influential political, economic, and cultural forces and trends. Liberating Latin America from Spain was simpler than governing the independent states. Bolívar died in Colombia before he could leave for Europe; San Martín died in self-imposed exile in Paris, never returning to live permanently in Argentina; while José Gervasio Artigas (1764–1850), a reformist general who had led an army of cowboys in pursuit of land and rights for the peasants on the Uruguay–Argentina border, died in exile in Paraguay. The pitiful disillusion the “Liberators” experienced has served as rich material for Latin American novelists, but their failures sealed the unenviable fate of the continent’s masses.

### **Searching for Political and Economic Unity**

For the countries of Latin America, as anywhere in the world, the state-building process did not proceed down a defined path nor conform to a single mold. Thus post-colonial Peru or Mexico, Argentina or Colombia were not simply failed variations of the

nation-building project long underway in Europe. Florencia Mallon notes that in Europe the concept of freedom, especially the notion of “freeborn men,” was shaped in the context of the *lack* of freedom – colonialism and slavery – that Europe had imposed on subjugated populations around the globe. If Europeans championed “universal” equality and liberty of ideas for themselves, or if they took pride in their “citizenship” as members of a nation, they barred access to freedom and democracy for much of the rest of the world, and most definitely to the people in those areas they directly controlled.

It is appropriate that students understand that many of the people from all social classes, and ethnic and racial groups who participated in the independence wars felt they were deserving of freedom, equality, and the exercise of sovereignty. Others, however, in both Europe and America, did not assume that such rights as liberty, equality, and fraternity should be extended to the masses. Thus, we cannot assume that the failure to consolidate democratic reforms in the new nations was solely the fault of their peoples. The fate of post-independence Haiti stands as a case in point, especially the disdain with which the so-called champions of Enlightenment rights in the United States and Europe showed toward the former slaves when the latter expressed the same aspirations. According to the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Enlightenment thinkers, liberty and equality were concepts reserved for Europeans, and ultimately white Americans, but denied to the majority of people of color in both North and South America. The status of elite women complicated the terms of citizenship everywhere, causing the matter of women’s rights to develop as something of a wild card. As we will see in this and later chapters, gender equality was an inconsistent and incomplete concept in independent America, just as it had been during the colonial era. White women, for example, could have great power over black slaves or matters of their own household, while at the same time have no real voice in the management of the broader society. In this regard, the case of Josefa Ortiz de Domínguez is instructive in that it proves the rule and is the exception to it. (Figure 4.1) Doña Josefa was an active participant in the Mexican independence movement: convening the meetings of the conspirators in her house, convincing her husband to support the revolution, and sneaking a warning out to the insurgents when she was placed under arrest. At the same time, she had 14 children, and one can assume she drew on maids, housekeepers, nannies, and servants of all kinds to run the house and family so that she could participate in the activities of the independence struggle. Nonetheless, she was often pregnant and faced with the tasks of mothering children, complications that did not play a role in the lives and choices of her male co-conspirators.

Economically, independence affected regions differently. Previous trade routes disappeared, and new towns in secondary regions with new population centers emerged. These areas had come into existence as a result of the encampment of roaming revolutionary armies that often included women and children, and sometimes entire communities. Towns grew up near the long supply lines stretching between pre-existing villages or from urban areas to distant front lines. Some of the recently formed towns shut down once the army left, while others hung on and morphed into new communities. European and North American demand for sugar, coffee, cacao, and hides had increased dramatically by mid-century, but it was this external trade that the new republics were most



**Figure 4.1** This statue of Doña Josefa Ortiz de Domínguez in the Plaza de Santo Domingo entitled *La Corregidora* (The Corregidora), is by the Italian sculptor Enrique Alciati. It was erected in the center of Mexico City in 1890. (Rodrigo Franco photo)

unprepared to handle. They had no ships, and port facilities were inadequate; even a supply of hard currency was hard to come by. British, and some other foreign and domestic entrepreneurs, however, were anxious to step in and supply the means to further develop Latin America's trade.

## **New World “Feudalism”**

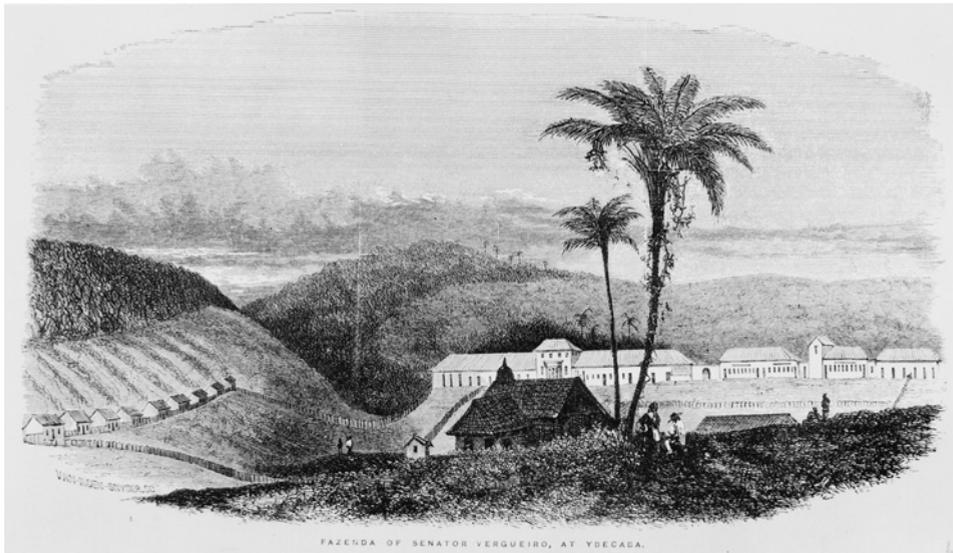
A key feature of post-colonial life that exemplified the nature of class relationships in Latin America was the progressive concentration of wealth in a few hands, especially

wealth measured in the form of land. In fact, it was in the nineteenth century that the concept of the *latifundia*, or very large tracts of land, shifted into the vernacular of the newly independent nations. In much of Latin America land tenure became even more unequal following independence. Land granted to members of the army in reward for service usually ended up in the hands of speculators and powerful local bosses. The latter operated as regional rulers and were referred to as *caudillos*, meaning “strongmen.” In the backlands of Brazil they were often called “colonels,” since they wielded the authority of military chiefs, despite their civilian status. But many *caudillos* were, in fact, former military commanders who derived their prestige and following from the independence wars and the disputes that broke out during the period of instability following the treaties that ended formal hostilities.

*Caudillo* strongmen came in many varieties. Some were more progressive than others; for example, José Gregorio Monagas (1795–1858) and his brother José Tadeo Monagas (1784–1868) alternately held the presidency of Venezuela in the 1850s and abolished slavery in 1854, more out of expediency and an (ultimately unsuccessful) attempt to win political support than from a genuine commitment to social equality. A few *caudillos* were known for their nationalist programs, building infrastructure and attempting to strengthen local enterprises. Nonetheless, the general stamp of authoritarianism marked the *caudillo* era. Just as the precise terms for large landholdings varied, so too did the extent to which the *caudillos* controlled their subordinates. In sum, uneven relations of production characterized the era: indebted laborers, called debt peons, produced goods on large rural estates, laboring under conditions more akin to feudalism than to capitalism.

Although nineteenth-century estates were self-contained, they were not necessarily self-sufficient. Inventories of haciendas in the interior of Argentina, the remote countryside of Mexico, and many places in between revealed the presence of large quantities of imported luxury and essential goods. According to Argentine historian Carlos Mayo, remote nineteenth-century *estancias* on the pampas had stocks of imported silver and linens from Europe, perfumes and soaps, furniture and household accessories, all of which had long been assumed to be present in wealthy homes in capital cities – but not on distant estates located inland. A single owner or family, employing laborers working for subsistence-level wages, controlled the archetypical estate through autocratic rule. Unlike Cuba and Brazil, labor on the large estates of most of Latin America was free in name, but seldom in practice. Together the *latifundio* system and *minifundios* (smallholdings where peasants worked their own plots and sold their produce to the *latifundista* or at local markets) kept the majority of rural people in conditions of perpetual impoverishment and created a landscape in which large-scale landowners exercised near complete control over rural resources, especially water, and the entire production process (Figure 4.2).

If a map of landholdings in mid-nineteenth century Latin America existed, it would show little or no change from the colonial period. In 1830 in Argentina, for example, 21 million acres of public land was taken over by 500 private individuals, giving them each an estate of about 42,000 acres. By the mid-nineteenth century the Anchorena family controlled 1.5 million acres. Similarly, in northern Mexico the Sánchez Navarro family



**Figure 4.2** Plantation of Senator Vergueiro with house, barns, storage sheds, and a row of slave cabins, ca. 1800s. (James C. Fletcher and D. P. Kidder, *Brazil and the Brazilians*)

consolidated and expanded holdings during the independence wars and the long period of strife that followed. By 1848 it controlled 17 haciendas encompassing more than 16 million acres of land. An English traveler to Mexico wrote in awe of the incredible wealth of local landowners:

This beautiful hacienda is 30 leagues in length and 17 in width [about 1,800 square miles], containing in this great space the productions of every climate, from the fir-clad mountains on a level with the volcano of Toluca, to the fertile plains which produce corn and maize; and lower down fields of sugar cane and other productions of the tropics.<sup>1</sup>

These immense estates became self-contained enclaves employing carpenters, blacksmiths, bakers, seamstresses, candle-makers, mechanics, and even their own priest or estate chaplain. Wealthy landowners became a fixture on the Latin American landscape, ruling entire provinces through their own personal armies, enforcing their own laws, and collecting taxes from rural peasants who were tied to the land, in debt, illiterate, and ignorant of any rights that distant constitutions might have won for them. The *caudillos* ruled as patriarchs, making all decisions, dispensing “justice,” and determining what was produced, when, and by whom. Most maintained city homes, where their wives and families lived for a part of the year and to which they made occasional trips. Alone in the countryside, far from the restraining eye of the Church, “polite society,” and their families, *caudillo* patriarchs took advantage of young women on their estates, sometimes to cook and keep house, or to serve in whatever ways they might desire.

Most workers on plantations and estates did not leave that world their entire lives. They never saw a government official, a city, a church outside the chapel on the estate;

never went to school or learned the basic rights of citizenship. Even those who had been freed as payment for serving in the independence armies were confined in a status close to enslavement in Bolivia, Colombia, and rural areas of Argentina once the revolution ended. The majority were bound to the land by virtue of debt to the *patrón*, lack of education, inability to converse in Spanish, and ignorance of life away from the estate, as well as the absence of marketable skills that would allow a worker and his family to make a living in the city. Considering that in the nineteenth century the majority of Latin America's population lived far from urban areas, such isolation was the norm for all but a comparative few. In Mexico, for example, 90 percent of the country's 8 million people dwelled in rural areas at the end of the independence wars. Cut off and ignored, the peasantry had little knowledge of, or concern for, events outside their villages, leading lives consumed by desperate attempts to find enough to eat and conserve the resources of a bare livelihood. By the end of the nineteenth century, only 10 percent of Mexican peasants were literate, and the average life expectancy of a rural worker stood at 24 years.

Much of the information we have on life in Mexico comes to us from the diaries of the Marquesa Frances Calderón de la Barca (1804–82) who traveled through Mexico in the 1840s and recorded her observations about Mexican life in both rural and urban areas. Born in Scotland, Calderón de la Barca, known as Fanny, and her family moved to Washington, DC, in the 1830s, where she met and married the Spanish Ambassador to the United States, Ángel Calderón de la Barca. She traveled with him when he became Ambassador to Mexico in 1839. Her journals and letters were compiled into a book, *Life in Mexico*, published in Boston in 1843 by author, journalist, and Mexico observer William H. Prescott. In 1861, after the death of her husband, Fanny became the governess and companion to the Spanish royal family, and was eventually given the title of *marquesa*.

One of Calderón de la Barca's comments explains the reasons why in the mid-nineteenth century many Mexicans, not just the poor, may have seemed uneducated:

There are no circulating libraries in Mexico. Books are at least double the price that they are in Europe. There is no diffusion of useful knowledge amongst the people; neither cheap pamphlets nor cheap magazines written for their amusement or instruction; but this is less owing to want of attention to their interests on the part of many good and enlightened men, than to the unsettled state of the country; for the blight of civil war prevents the best systems from ripening.<sup>2</sup>

Depending on the country, era, and/or geographic region and terrain, the center of the landed estate was the Big House, the *casa grande* or *hacienda*. It varied in size, degree of luxury, and accoutrements of wealth and fashion according to the region and prosperity of the landowner. In Brazil it was typically a two-story dwelling, but those in Mexico, Colombia, Argentina, and other places in Latin America were sometimes rambling one-story structures. The house had separate parlors to greet guests, large dining rooms and, occasionally, ballrooms. There were many bedrooms, both for the family and to accommodate travelers who came and stayed on as guests of the *patrón* and his family. The

ground floor had a pantry and a kitchen – although kitchens were sometimes separate from the house to contain the smells of butchering game and preparing food. Estates, especially those far from municipalities, often boasted their own chapel where a resident member of the clergy held services in which the family, slaves, and laborers partook according to their station. Many homes had separate or attached small houses or rooms for storing linens, kitchen supplies, and goods for furnishing and cleaning the house, as well as storage areas for food, wine, and the produce of the estate. The houses generally had a large porch or veranda from which the *patrón* oversaw his estate, greeted guests, and meted out punishment and reward to laborers. Indeed, much of the business of the estate was conducted from the veranda.

Standing amidst other buildings that serviced the estate, the Big House represented the pinnacle of power in rural society, and symbolized the authority the patriarch wielded over his environs. In stark contrast, workers were housed in small shacks near the fields, or barns behind the Big House, usually adjacent to their places of employment. Entire families lived in a single room in ramshackle buildings the workers themselves constructed and maintained with whatever scrap materials they could salvage.

While systems of production in urban areas have changed dramatically over the centuries, large landed estates and the coerced labor forces they employ have remained a permanent fixture in many countries. The legacy of the colonial and immediate post-colonial period is apparent today: 60 percent of rural Mexican households are landless, as are 66 percent of households in Colombia and 70 percent of those in Brazil. In Chile, a country that underwent a number of land reforms in the twentieth century, continuing into the twenty-first, most of the fertile central valley remains in the hands of 3 percent of the country's landowners. The *latifundistas*, whose modern-day embodiment in some areas is corporate agribusiness, have been able to influence national politics and prevent meaningful enforcement of reforms for those who work the land.

## Post-independence Politics

Political alignments and realignments left a permanent imprint on the post-colonial era. In most studies of Latin American history the post-independence decades have been viewed as a time of perpetual upheaval. As Peter Bakewell puts it in his comprehensive history of Latin America: “although it would be foolish, and wrong, to dismiss the post-independence decades as simply a period of indescribable chaos, political calm was notably absent from a time when it was much needed.”<sup>3</sup> Historically, neither the process of forging a new nation, nor that of creating a sense of loyalty to that nation – nationalism – can be seen as following a single ideological trajectory. Nationalism is at home on the left or the right; embraced by the radical freethinker or the conservative, by the forward-looking reformer or the backward-looking traditionalist. Latin American nationalism and the region's particular definition of national identity varied over time and place, rested on competing notions of power, and depended on the rights accorded

to, or taken by, Indians, blacks, mestizos, and mixed-race people. In the hands of *caudillos*, one or another racial group was restricted or promoted, and one or another conception of manliness or femininity stood as the ideal, alongside standard symbols and rituals – flags, anthems, language, and customs – that drew the community together.

An emerging authoritarianism, epitomized by the personalist *caudillos*, stamped the post-independence era as one of excessive individual greed and power, based on distrust of foreigners and foreign governments. Some *caudillos* were self-serving, backward-looking, and anti-intellectual, while others were progressive and reform-minded. Some *caudillos* abolished slavery, instituted educational structures, built railroads and other transport systems, and sought to forge economic units capable of driving hard bargains with entrepreneurs representing European and US firms. Because the *caudillos* did not fit into a single mold nor represent a single political vision, and because they tended to rise to power through networks of personal loyalty, some historians have characterized them as “populists.” Admittedly, populism is a frustratingly vague and imprecise label that has meant different things in different historical periods, but the flexibility of the term may help to define the *caudillo*. As a “strongman,” the *caudillo* tolerated little or no opposition, and relied on armed strength to maintain his power (see Box 4.1). As a “populist,” the *caudillo* drew his power from those who were loyal to him, many of whom were small producers beholden to his beneficence and the patronage he doled out to ensure their loyalty.

#### Box 4.1 Gabriel García Márquez on the ultimate *caudillo*

The Colombian novelist (1928–2014), famous for his absurdist portrayals of Latin American tyrants, refers in this excerpt from his Nobel Prize acceptance speech to the antics, and savagery, of a few leading military men:

Our independence from Spanish domination did not put us beyond the reach of madness. General Antonio López de Santana, three times dictator of Mexico, held a magnificent funeral for the right leg he had lost in the so-called Pastry War. General Gabriel García Moreno ruled Ecuador for sixteen years as an absolute monarch; at his wake, the corpse was seated on the presidential chair, decked out in full-dress uniform and a protective layer of medals. General Maximiliano Hernández Martínez, the theosophical despot of El Salvador who had thirty thousand peasants slaughtered in a savage massacre, invented a pendulum to detect poison in his food, and had streetlamps draped in red paper to defeat an epidemic of scarlet fever. The statue to General Francisco Morazán erected in the main square of Tegucigalpa is actually one of Marshal Ney, purchased at a Paris warehouse of second-hand sculptures.

From Gabriel García Márquez, “The Solitude of Latin America” (Nobel Lecture, December 8, 1982).

## Argentina and the Tyrants

The archetypical *caudillo* Juan Manuel de Rosas (1793–1877) rose to power in Argentina in 1829 and ruled until 1852, drawing his support from the *estancieros* south of Buenos Aires, the capital. Rosas began his career in the military, following a path common to many ambitious young men active in the drive for independence. Cousin to the wealthy landholding Anchorena family, Rosas's military career and influence helped to build the dynasty's resources in the province. Rosas is known for developing a mini-government and system of authority on his estate that eventually spread to the surrounding region. He demanded absolute respect, obedience, loyalty, and diligent work from the Indians, mixed-race debt peons, and *gauchos* (cowboys) in return for employment on his ranch or membership in his personal army. Rosas rejected attempts from the capital to centralize authority, modernize and build the export market, or enforce other measures intended to serve the country as a whole. Although he sometimes expressed staunch adherence to a federalized system and local control, Rosas was mostly concerned with absolute authority centralized in himself and those loyal to him. In 1828 he began a guerrilla war against the country's leadership and eventually launched a successful assault on the capital, backed by an army of *gauchos*, peasant militiamen, and assorted vagrants he had mobilized into a fighting force. By the end of 1829 he controlled the governorship of Buenos Aires province, a post he used as a steppingstone to the leadership of Argentina that he held until his defeat and exile to England in early 1852.

Over his more than two decades of rule, Rosas epitomized *caudillismo*. After using rural forces from the *estancias* to bring himself to power, he sent them back to the land from which they had come and relied instead on the regular army, paramilitaries who did his extra-legal bidding, and the police and law enforcement bureaucracy. Initially he attempted to win support from domestic enterprises and artisans by imposing strict duties on imported goods in hopes of reviving national industry. The effort failed, forcing him to lift the ban on essential imports, especially textiles, and open the door to British manufactures in order to meet Argentina's consumer demand. Rosas maintained control of the legislative branch, denying it resources and ensuring a rubber stamp for his many edicts; the legislature served mainly as window-dressing for foreign visitors and dignitaries. Rosas maintained his popularity through patronage and tight control of the press and organs of public relations, but mainly he relied on repression: jailing, exiling, or killing those who opposed him. This method, particularly his ironfisted rule over Buenos Aires, the export–import market, the police, and the military, allowed the general a monopoly hold over the seat of national power for nearly 20 years – but it did not ensure peace throughout the country.

Writer Domingo Faustino Sarmiento (1811–88) captured the rivalry and jealousy among *estancieros*, as well as the discontent among liberal, cosmopolitan urban dwellers, in the epic chronicle *Facundo*, published in 1845 and later translated as *Life in the Argentine Republic in the Days of the Tyrants; or Civilization and Barbarism*. Sarmiento used the character of Juan Facundo Quiroga as the archetypical barbaric *caudillo*. Although Sarmiento described the backwardness of the rural *caudillo*, his stereotype extended to

the landless peasant as well, casting a racist pall over the intelligence of the rural dweller in a classic “blame the victim” account. Rosas certainly derived support from fellow *caudillos* and a segment of the rural poor, but also from urban merchants and complacent legislators, who often profited from his authoritarian rule.

By the late 1840s and early 1850s Rosas’s authority was under threat from *estancieros* in other parts of the country who desired better access to regional markets and local shipping lines, as opposed to the funneling of all trade through the port of Buenos Aires. The period was almost a repeat of the call for free trade and an end to the colonial monopoly that had galvanized independence forces and local strongmen a half-century earlier. In 1852 Rosas found himself under attack politically and militarily. He lost to an invading army comprised of forces from Brazil and Uruguay and rival regional armies within Argentina itself. The British, who had benefited from Rosas’s reliance on English monetary support in return for assured British control of the export/import market, hurried him to a ship and into exile in England, where he eventually died.

### **Populist *Caudillismo*: Paraguay and Bolivia**

Rosas’s career was a case study in *caudillismo*, a phenomenon that relied on outside support from largely foreign financial and mercantile interests. It likewise illustrates that the privilege of liberalism in Europe was anchored in colonial and neocolonial authoritarianism, despite the self-righteousness and moral superiority claimed over much of the rest of the world. Nothing demonstrates that contradiction better than a comparison between the life, career, and eventual fate of Juan Manuel de Rosas and that of José Gaspar Rodríguez de Francia in Paraguay. Francia governed Paraguay from 1811 to his death in 1840, a period that coincided with *caudillismo* in Argentina and elsewhere in Latin America. Although sometimes included in the list of strongman rulers of the era, Francia used his power to attempt to establish a very different form of society, based on communal principles and local control rather than centralized authoritarianism. Sometimes counted among the dictators of his era, contemporary history has viewed Francia as an honest, populist leader, who promoted sovereign economic prosperity in war-torn Paraguay. Scottish travelers, brothers John Parish Robertson and William Parish observed that Francia, an austere, simply dressed, modest, and efficient Doctor of Theology, had the respect of all the parties; that he “never would defend an unjust cause; while he was ever ready to take the part of the poor and the weak against the rich and the strong.”<sup>4</sup>

Throughout the colonial period Paraguay was a backwater of the empire, the people there a mixture of Guaraní Indians and early Spanish settlers who for generations lived a fairly simple agricultural existence. After independence, land that had belonged to the Church and the Spanish state reverted to the government. Rather than use it for himself, as the other liberators had done, Francia established state ranches and rented out the land for a nominal fee to those willing to till it, aiming to rebuild the communal Indian society that had existed in Paraguay before the arrival of European settlers. Shunning the favors of the landed elite, the Catholic Church, and foreign investors, Francia used

his authority to rearrange society according to the demands of the poor. He nationalized the Church, abolished the tithe, declared religious freedom, and put the clergy on the government payroll. Allowing working and landless peasants the opportunity to earn a living on the state-run *estancias* angered the *estancieros*, who had long relied on local peasants as a cheap and ready source of labor. Francia also closed down municipal councils that were in the hands of the traditional landed elite, or severely restricted their authority, but allowed local councils to continue in areas where small producers, artisans, and skilled and unskilled laborers were in the majority. He established state-run iron and textile works, and livestock and small handicraft industries, from which a wide swath of the ordinary population derived a modest living.

It was Francia's disregard for wealthy landowners, merchants, and the Church, and his interference with the paternalistic, all-encompassing power of the ruling elite that sparked opposition to his policies. He was accused of anti-clericalism for curbing the absolute authority of the Church, but he actually used state funds to construct new churches, support religious festivals, and tend cemeteries. He likewise ordered a state takeover of the management of social welfare services (such as orphanages, hospitals, and care for the indigent), which had previously been under the auspices of the Church and the beneficence of the local elite. Moreover, under Francia, much to the dislike of powerful Argentine *estancieros*, Paraguay prospered. A fairly lively trade was maintained through an overland route to Buenos Aires. If the old-line Spanish elite and Catholic hierarchy denounced Francia for his dictatorial treatment of them, the majority of Paraguayans cheered his measures. Never having received any particular support or benefit from the established ruling classes, and having suffered under the burden of high tithes to a clergy that required payment for sacraments and burial plots in Catholic cemeteries, the mass of Paraguayans found in Francia a sympathetic and honest leader.

At the time of Francia's death in 1840, Paraguay's prosperity was also linked to its policy of vigilant neutrality toward its large and powerful neighbors: Argentina and Brazil. Subsequent administrations weakly followed Francia's path, expending efforts to expand railroad and telegraph lines, upgrade the educational system, and renovate the capital city of Asunción. But in a particularly ill-conceived move, Francisco Solano López (1826–70), president from 1862 to 1870, interceded on the side of neighboring Uruguay and declared war on Argentina and then Brazil. After a trip to France as a young man, Solano López apparently became enthralled with Napoleon's exploits and fancied himself the "Napoleon of South America." Both were military men, but the comparison pretty much stopped there. Solano López led thousands of soldiers to their death in a futile and senseless war against Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay, who formed what was known as the "Triple Alliance" and unleashed armies that ravaged tiny Paraguay from 1864 to 1870. This slaughter is known as the War of the Triple Alliance, or the Paraguayan War.

Britain's role in supporting the aggressors in the war is a subject of controversy. Some, mainly Paraguayan and Argentine, historians claim the British feared that Paraguayan economic independence might prove contagious. Evidence has not been strong in support of this contention. What is known is that Brazil, Uruguay, and Argentina waged a

war of extermination against Paraguay and its people, at great cost to themselves and unspeakable cost to tiny Paraguay. In six years, untold numbers of indigenous Guaraní were eliminated; more than 80 percent of the male population in the country between the ages of 14 and 65 were killed, and Paraguay lay prostrate. Any semblance of the prosperity and independence Francia had initiated was destroyed.

Some historians argue that Solano López was a David fighting the Goliath of his larger and more powerful neighbors, but most conclude that he led Paraguay into a war that it could never win, and which nearly destroyed it. Indisputably, Solano López resorted to the most brutal tactics, wiping out any sign of opposition among his countrymen, including his own family and closest advisors. Thousands died in battle, but hundreds more were tortured and killed by the dictator and his henchmen in his paranoid pursuit of personal glory. British traders probably profited from the destruction of competition from domestic producers in Uruguay, Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay as the countries squandered valuable human and industrial resources on a senseless war. In the name of economic liberalism, Britain dealt the final blow to the remnants of Francia's populism and assured for its own burgeoning working class and hungry factories on the other side of the Atlantic a ready supply of hides, dried beef, wool, and agricultural goods.

Manuel Isidoro Belzú (1808–65), who governed Bolivia from 1848 until 1855, bore some similarities to Francia. A populist *caudillo*, Belzú attempted to modernize the small country by dividing the nation's wealth and rewarding the work of the poor and dispossessed. His efforts earned him admiration from the masses and enmity from wealthy Creoles. During the seven years he held the presidency, Belzú instigated protectionist economic policies to defend small, indigenous producers and enacted a nationalist mining code that retained the nation's resources in the hands of Bolivian companies – thus provoking the ire of influential British as well as Peruvian and Chilean shipping and mining interests. Despite his popularity in many sectors, Belzú had many powerful enemies (he supposedly survived over 40 assassination attempts), many of whom wanted to destroy the state-run projects that benefited a nationalist program but likewise improved the public sphere on which the country's poor were reliant.

Like Francia, Belzú was attracted to communal, state-sponsored, social welfare projects that struck a responsive chord with Indians in particular, since communalism was more representative of indigenous values than the private property and international trade proposals favored by urban Creoles. Belzú left office in 1855, after presiding over the first civilian census in Bolivia's history. He remained abroad and out of the public limelight for several years, but began to consider returning to the presidency in 1861, only to be gunned down by one of his rivals. Francia's policies endured longer than those of Belzú, probably because those of the former were based on a more fundamental reordering of Paraguayan society. Although attempting to enact a similar program, Belzú was unable to create a lasting legacy, and his populist programs largely died with him. In the time since independence, Bolivia has lost half of its territory to neighboring Argentina, Chile, Peru, and Brazil through war and agreements reached under the threat of invasion.

## After *Caudillismo*

The personalist nature of *caudillismo* worked against the long-term social changes required to lay the foundations of a flourishing civil society for a number of reasons. First, it imposed a tradition of authoritarianism, and thereby set the stage for subsequent rebellion as the only way to eliminate powerful dictators. Whether the *caudillo* improved the lot of his people (like Francia and Belzú) or stole from and abused the people and the lands he governed (like Rosas and Solano López) he did not alter the undemocratic form of governance inherited from the colonial era. The widespread emergence of *caudillismo* postponed and prevented the construction of social institutions accountable to the citizenry and managed by capable experts – legislators, intellectuals, entrepreneurs. Thus *caudillismo* may matter as much for what it forestalled – independent democratic institutions – as for the legacy of personal strongman rule it embodied.

*Caudillismo* filled the political vacuum after colonial rule, serving as a bridge between raw military and economic power, on the one hand, and personal, kinship-based cultural arrangements, on the other. The best of the populist *caudillos*, the “good patriarch,” claimed prestige and obtained the trust of followers on the basis of his willingness to confront outsiders and anyone he perceived as endangering or exploiting the village, the region, or the entire nation (depending on the extent of his influence). Rosas, for example, opportunistically denounced British financiers and entrepreneurs as interlopers and purveyors of dangerous foreign influences, while at the same time relying heavily on support from the British government to suppress internal opposition.

Secondly, *caudillismo* existed hand in hand with regionalism, manifested in the persistence of isolated, parochial local rule. Historians speak of the *republiquetas*, or “little republics,” that punctuated the continental landscape in the nineteenth century, transforming large estates into politically autonomous entities. Geographically dispersed settlements allowed local strongmen to evolve into national leaders, establishing a pattern of rule that characterized – or plagued – much of Latin America throughout the twentieth century. The situation was far from Bolívar’s dream of a United States of South America and tragically remote from the goal of nurturing an active citizenry that would determine the course of the continent’s future. Moreover, the small size of some of the *republiquetas* made them vulnerable to the overpowering influence of foreign investors. Neocolonial economic relations were established on the foundation of local, isolated – and often, tyrannical – political formations.

Thirdly, the post-independence era witnessed important alterations in the sovereign status of indigenous communities, as well as in the demographic and cultural influence of non-whites in relation with whites. If *caudillismo* was personalist and paternal, its intersection with liberalism led to a shrinking of the safety net that had protected Indians under colonial rule. Never a consistently uniform ideology, nineteenth-century liberalism trumpeted individual choice, freedom of thought and speech, the rule of law, and adherence to a market economy. Obviously the authoritarianism of *caudillo* rule was inconsistent with many of the founding principles of liberal thought, especially free and open elections. On the other hand, liberalism favored aggressive free-market tactics

and accommodated the rugged *caudillo*, under whose rule indigenous communal towns came under attack.

Creoles and their nineteenth-century descendants asserted their power over people of color who made up the majority of Latin America's population. The percentage of white to non-white (indigenous, African and Afro-descendant, *mestizo*, and *casta*) varied widely from country to country in the nineteenth century, as it still does today. In the latter half of the century, two major social changes affected the pre-independence racial balance. On the one hand, improved living conditions in urban areas, including sanitation and health care, combined with better diet, led to population growth. On the other hand, European immigration contributed to both population increase and to *mestizaje*, or race mixture. Both of these trends are considered in more detail in later chapters where we examine changes in racial composition, the impact of the wars of independence on the racial makeup of the new nations, the role of race in the development of national identity, and changes in the racial balance of power in the new social order.

Finally, *caudillismo* exemplified classic patriarchal relations, according to which men ruled over their families and communities in a form that was elsewhere dissolving into a fraternal social contract, what political theorist Carole Pateman terms the "brotherhood of men."<sup>5</sup> In northern Europe, by the end of the seventeenth century, the rigid command of fathers over sons that had prevailed in the medieval era began to give way to a looser social contract of undifferentiated male authority (which could also include powerful female monarchs) over all institutions of the social order. Late nineteenth-century Latin America underwent a similar process; it remained a patriarchal society, especially in the countryside, where a *specific man* was all-powerful. In succeeding generations the single patriarch/*caudillo*, immortalized in the writings of Gabriel García Márquez, Miguel Asturias, Isabel Allende, Rosario Ferré, and other novelists, gave way to a restructured patriarchy in which social institutions – the economy, politics, religion, and rules governing social behavior – persisted under masculine authority. The post-independence world combined rigid patriarchy in the countryside with the emerging rule of the more modern "brotherhood of men" in urban areas. Nevertheless, it bears mention that such male domination, personalist or institutional, was, and is, complex and in no way implies that women did not on occasion play the demagogue, nor that their influence was not strong, especially as guardians of "acceptable" social conventions.

## Race, Race Mixture, and Liberalism

Liberalism and its attendant principles of free trade, political sovereignty, and protection of property had varied effects on racial balance and race relations. Latin America's population has long been divided by race and ethnicity, both of which are socially constructed categories that have undergone many definitions throughout history. Therefore, as understanding of race and ethnicity changed over time, separating people and

communities for unique and differing reasons (religion, language, physical characteristics, social conditions), the process of defining “race” became increasingly difficult. Despite the fact that terms such as “racial difference,” “racism,” “racial oppression,” and “color blindness” are widely used, it would be hard to provide a definition of race that would stand the test of historical change. The Spanish and Portuguese explorers of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries embraced the biblical premise that all people were descended from Adam and Eve and therefore comprised one race. Africans, whom the Iberians knew well from long contact with North Africa, were thought to have descended from Noah’s son Ham, and bore the curse of his outcast. In this case, scripture, not skin color, determined the difference. Some Native American groups in regions that are today part of the United States and Canada assumed that a Creator had devised different races for various parts of the universe, placing each in a specific corner of the world (or their known world), while some Mesoamerican pre-Columbian groups believed that the Creator had developed humans in a process of trial and error, with some of the “errors” taking up residence in the world as different racial types. For centuries scientists debated whether race developed as a geographical adaptation or, conversely, was an expression of pre-existing adaptations in people who had been cast asunder because of their violation of a religious doctrine, such as being cast from ancient Babel. In summary, what race actually meant in one society or another can be hard to nail down.

Nineteenth-century scientific debate revolved around the importance of natural selection, placing racial and ethnic difference within a hierarchy of fitness, and used specific characteristics such as skin color and hair texture – as opposed to height, weight, eye and hair color, or any of the hundreds of other ways people differ physically from each other – as scientific determinants of race. Perception, or what people see in one another, has also changed over time. Early in the nineteenth century, Irish immigrants to North America were considered another race, and were even seen as black. Today in parts of Belfast in Northern Ireland, Protestants and Catholics refuse to venture onto the “wrong” side of Falls Road, because the residents of each side see a difference, ascribed with racial connotations, that is completely invisible to outsiders. Hence, as notions of race have varied over time and place, people have perceived race in myriad ways. Obviously, drawing racial lines has been one of the most contortionist enterprises humans have undertaken; if it had not been so destructive, one might find it laughable. But the genocide, past and present, of native peoples of the Americas, of Jews, of Armenians, of Tutsis, and of Kurds, among others, and the ongoing strife in many parts of the world carry a racial imprint so varied, complex, and inconsistent that neither science nor social science can codify its characteristics. Therefore, although we think we know what we mean when we refer to race, racism, or racial purity, historically these terms have applied to a variety of groups, people, and events. Race and race theory rests on attempts to explain what perceived differences meant to widely disparate people in varied times and places.

Since Latin American history was from the start an encounter between assorted groups who differed by what we will call race, ethnicity, religion, and culture, two phenomena occurred quite rapidly. First, each group ascribed a value to the other, seeing the peculiarities of these strangers as “barbaric” or “uncivilized” or “unnatural,”

usually within a hierarchy capable of explaining domination. Secondly, the members of each group began to intermingle and intermix, by choice or not, immediately creating a hybrid of themselves. The intermingling of the races (which were themselves products of centuries of mixture in Europe and America) did not, however, mean that race lost its significance as a determinant of difference. If people of supposedly unlike races were intermingling and creating more and more variations on themselves, should not the original reason for seeing themselves as distinct have faded away? Perhaps so, but this was not the case; in fact, the opposite occurred. The more that Americans mixed and recreated themselves in diverse forms, the more rigidly did they define race, the more stridently did they debate its significance, and the more actively did they use it as a tool of domination and subordination.

The nineteenth century was a formative era in the development of new theories of race, most of which were extensions and variations on pre-existing notions and thus carried with them the prejudices and values used to explain difference since the beginning of time. The liberal patriots who promoted independence envisioned citizenship in the hands of the men of property and standing: educated, freeborn, and white. Although the wealth and education of some men (but never women) of color qualified them for inclusion in the upper echelon of society, commonly the new leaders were of European heritage, with little or no non-white ancestry. Interestingly, in his early writings, Simón Bolívar considered the diversity of Latin Americans as an asset, remarking that they could take pride in their mixed racial origins. That his great-grandmother was said to have been part black may have affected the optimism of his early writings. However, as he became more discouraged in the face of fragmentation and dissent among the newly independent lands, the Liberator instead argued that their “impure” origins weighted down the people and marred their future prospects. He called for rule by strong authoritative governments until such time as the descendants of indigenous, African, and mixed-race people were uplifted, educated, or otherwise “prepared” to accept citizenship.

The new ruling elite took for granted their privileged status, championing individualism and the benefits of unfettered free trade, separation of Church and state, an end to the traditional protection of Indian lands, and the abolition of slavery. Even in Brazil and Cuba, where slavery would not end until late in the century, abolitionists invoked liberal principles. For indigenous communities, however, the effect of free-market individualism was to deprive Indians of their claims to the land. Liberals heralded individual self-sufficiency, democracy, secularism, and the progressive free market as the road to prosperity and a modern economy, and claimed that Indian communal lands were an impediment to the forward march of progress. Many even considered Indians, as a people, to be an obstacle to the development of a modern state. Under the banner of liberalism, thousands of Indians were turned off their land and forced to fend for themselves in a world that made no attempt to understand their languages, disdained their culture, and offered only the most menial employment. In the name of progress, landowners laid claim to Indian lands – sometimes legally, often not. Independence was in most ways a disaster for the indigenous people of Mexico, Guatemala, Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia, where they were most heavily concentrated.

Victimized by liberal economic policy, indigenous people were penalized as well by liberal philosophy. Observers and theorists of the time embraced various brands of “scientific” racism that divided the world between greater/whiter and lesser/darker races, attributing apparent human differences to “biological” or “natural” inadequacy. Spread from Europe to the elite of much of the world through societies and publications, eugenicists diverted blame for the unequal conditions in the world away from the policies of colonialism and domination attached to the white nations and people of Europe, and toward biology – a supposedly immutable “fact of life” about which little could be done. Accordingly, they contended, Europeans and their descendants in Latin America were winners in the natural selection process while Indians, Africans, and their descendants were losers. Eugenicists in many countries, including the United States as well as Latin America, embraced a variety of policies including sterilization of people of color, the mentally disabled, and others they considered unfit; stratified educational systems based on racial criteria; and forced destruction of Indian communities and deportation of laborers to distant estates. The thinking of these various Social Darwinists and eugenicists was divided. Some argued that all non-elite men of any race, and all women, could be trained and uplifted so as to qualify for citizenship, while others felt that the poor and those deemed racially, culturally, or physically unfit would never advance, and simply had to be managed or even eliminated.

In the end, the racist premises that triumphed after independence and were integral to liberal individualism eliminated the little protection Indians had managed to hold onto for the first 350 years after the arrival of Europeans. The Indian population declined in the post-independence era, while European and mixed-race populations increased, both through waves of immigrants arriving in every country (especially Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, and Chile) and as a result of continued race mixture. As the non-white population decreased in proportion to whites, the urgency of improving the conditions of former slaves, Indians, and *castas* declined, and was, for the time, all but abandoned in governing circles.

## **Gender and Liberalism**

If only propertied men were deemed qualified for citizenship, then liberalism served to exclude women for many of the same reasons that it excluded the majority of men. Women lacked autonomy and were, like poor men, tied to the land, in debt, enslaved, or in some way not free. Deirdre Keenan, in speaking of the generations of architects of racial theory, remarks: “Whether they located racial difference in the body or in the body politic, or whether they accounted for racial difference by divine appointment or natural selection, all of these theories were created, codified, and institutionalized by men.”<sup>6</sup> Hence, it is impossible to demarcate racial boundaries apart from gender, since both rest on an explication of the patriarchal order that was such an important feature of *caudillismo* and survived, in a sometimes altered form, under liberalism.

During and after the wars of independence, patriarchy was contested in many societies. In post-independence Venezuela, civil laws governing marriage—especially as they intersected and coincided with Catholic Church doctrine—relied on a particular ideal of femininity that was restricted to wife, mother, and housekeeper, and called for general confinement to the domestic sphere. This remarkably stable construct in Venezuelan society, which lasted from independence to the early twentieth century, influenced the freedom accorded female citizens in the context of the economic and political transformation that marked the post-independence period. Whereas the Venezuelan Constitution was the first in Latin America to espouse liberal ideals of liberty, equality, individual rights, and citizenship, these rights, as was the case everywhere in the world at that time, were limited to propertied, mostly white, men. In Venezuela, as elsewhere, “the issue of women’s rights was not part of the political discussions, nor did the Constitution grant women any specific rights.”<sup>7</sup>

The new liberal doctrine ensured that women, the poor, and most people of color were excluded from nineteenth-century republicanism; however, their exclusion was played out on a field of defined masculine values that asserted male dominance and excluded female participation. Several studies of the general contours of gender relations in Latin America have concluded that women actually lost rights when the new states adopted liberal reforms. Elizabeth Dore refers to “counter-reforms” to describe what happened to women, as land was privatized and colonial law secularized in the wake of independence. As the newly formed nations sought to adopt the European model of private property and individual rights, laws promoting the break-up of communal landholdings and large estates, as occurred in Mexico under its mid-nineteenth-century *Reforma*, adversely affected women. In her study of debt peonage in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Nicaragua, Dore differentiates these forms of patriarchy as falling into two categories. She argues that “patriarchy from above” is the rule of the state through masculine authority, while “patriarchy from below” is the rule of the father over his family. Both, she shows, were detrimental to all forms of economic and political progress.<sup>8</sup> In Argentina, despite the verbal proclamations of rights and liberties, liberals used “scientific” theories to prove female inferiority. Women and girls were seen as weak of body and mind, prone to emotionalism and hysteria, and incapable of deciding for themselves and meeting the challenges of an aggressively individualist society.

The buzzword of the era was “private property,” under which guise many medium-scale landholders were able to increase the size of their estates, or to lay hold of Indian communal lands. The large estates attracted the bulk of the labor force, drawing workers away from smaller, less profitable properties. The state sought to ensure an ample supply of cheap labor for the landowners and other elites by enacting several laws that diluted parental control over children, lowered the age of majority, and relaxed restrictions on child labor. Another free-market reform was the institution of mandatory, partible inheritance, or inheritance divided among heirs. In most countries previous laws had required property transmission to favor the eldest son, or sometimes the eldest daughter if there were no male heirs, in a primogeniture system. Women were able to inherit a

small sum in this way, but their ability to manage and invest the money, buy and sell property, and so forth, was so restricted that very few women could hope to turn a modest inheritance into real wealth. Pressure on women to marry for reasons of economic security remained extreme, and their potential for earning a living outside of marriage became even more remote. The only professional job available to women in the nineteenth century was teaching, which became an important female occupation when localities determined that they could pay unmarried women less than men. The market economy thus provided some jobs and opportunities for women, but most females remained under the strict control of their husbands or other male relatives.

The new secular republics sought to break the Church's hold over all determinations pertaining to marriage, annulment, sexuality, and legitimacy of birth. Rather than a shift that would have allowed women to control their own lives, the state appropriated the Church's power over women for itself, and in turn handed that authority over to fathers and husbands. Under the banner of liberalism, patriarchy was reinforced. For example, before independence the Catholic Church had exclusive power over enforcing the sanctity of marriage and determining the legitimacy of heirs (even if the Church chose to ignore the many illegitimate offspring belonging to men of high standing). When marriage laws were secularized after independence, women did not necessarily gain greater freedom. They were still controlled by husbands who might now abandon them even more easily, since marriage was no longer, in the eyes of the state, an enforceable moral obligation; rather it was simply a legal contract. In addition, the Church always prohibited adultery by husbands or wives, since it was a sin against the sanctity of marriage, regardless of which partner was at fault. However, post-independence civil laws decreed that adultery was not illegal for men, but was a capital offense for women. In Mexico, Argentina, and Nicaragua a husband's infidelity was neither criminalized nor considered grounds for divorce unless he created a public scandal, or dishonored the daughter of a powerful family. By contrast, if a husband discovered that his wife was unfaithful, and he killed her, he could usually escape prosecution. Court cases in Brazil in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries reveal that men were seldom prosecuted for killing their wives and their wives' lovers when found in adulterous affairs. Thus the authority of the state and new liberal laws in some cases reinforced patriarchy.

There were a few bright spots for women, however. Single and widowed women were allowed authority over, and responsibility for, their children. This right was not extended to married women, since to do so would have impinged on the authority of husbands. Nonetheless, it was the first time in modern Latin American history that women were allowed control over another freeborn person. New laws also provided for female equality in primary education, prohibited violence against women and children, and laid the foundations for greater equality before the law in some civil cases. As many studies of nineteenth-century liberalism suggest, the record of equality for men and women was contradictory. Court records pertaining to women's claims of wrongful treatment at the hands of abusive, adulterous, cheating, and extortionist husbands, partners, and even parents indicate that women were empowered to object. They occasionally protested in

court and attempted to extend the rights reserved for men to themselves, demonstrating, even as their cases failed, that they were far from passive observers of the liberal order that excluded them.

## **Intersections of Gender, Race, and Class**

In some cases, during the independence wars, women who were left behind to manage estates, mines, or small plots of land became decision makers and exerted more authority; however, the shortage of men in the post-independence era was not to women's advantage. When men left to find work on distant estates and mines after losing their source of livelihood, marriage choices and marital arrangements became more complicated for the single women left behind since there were fewer choices of partners, at least among their own age group. Also, in areas undergoing a transition from one nationality or seat of power to another, as happened after the wars of independence, negotiating marriages became more problematic. For example, in the mid-nineteenth century, in the northern provinces of Mexico that moved from Spanish to Mexican to United States ownership, civil and ecclesiastical laws came into conflict as elite families sought to arrange marriages using racial and economic criteria alone, in contrast to the Church, which sought to enforce adherence to religious principles.

Arranged marriages of very young girls to much older men demonstrate the marriage mandate for both men and women that persevered among property-holding members of nineteenth-century society. Except for those entering religious orders, marriage was expected of women from the middle and upper classes – most decidedly because of the property consolidation that the marriage bond ensured. Only rarely would a member of an elite family remain single. For men, marriage choice was not a great inconvenience – even if they were less than enamored with the spouse chosen for them – since marriage, while expected, did not mandate fidelity to one's wife. Social convention allowed men to take a mistress, have a concubine, or engage in short-term dalliances. For example, it was not unusual for a planter in Brazil, Cuba, or any rural area to establish his concubine near, or even in, the family home. His illegitimate children were accorded a favored place among the retinue of slaves or peasants on a plantation and, if necessary, he would expect his legal wife to take care of his children by other women. Finally, men were even free to show their preference for a mistress over a wife, although the Church and “polite society” frowned on such behavior.

One of the main restrictions on a woman's marriage choice was the dowry. Her ability to contract a favorable marriage depended on her family's ability to offer a substantial dowry. For his part, the groom promised to meet the financial obligations of supporting his wife and family for the rest of their lives. In the late nineteenth century the process of giving dowries underwent considerable change among the elite. Dowries were smaller, less of a proportion of the parents' estate, and by the end of the nineteenth century began to disappear. Not only was the marriage of a daughter or a son no longer such a substantial investment for the wealthy family as in earlier times, but, if a dowry were

offered, it increasingly consisted of consumer goods rather than property or productive assets. Dowries were never a major concern for poor girls, just as marriage in the Church or a recognized civil institution was less common among poor, working-class whites, or among free and slave people of color, than among the white elite. The main reason was that both Church and state charged exorbitant fees for civil and ecclesiastical licenses and ceremonies. Thus many people entered into common-law marriages, which is still true in many parts of Latin America today.

According to Göran Therborn, the major Swedish sociologist and expert on family structure throughout the world, the family in twentieth-century Latin America is distinguished by the absence of officially sanctioned and sanctified marriages. He calculates that during the nineteenth century, one-third to one-half of the population of northeast Brazil never married, instead living in conjugal union. In the Rio de la Plata region of Argentina, out-of-wedlock births were four or five times as common as in Spain or Italy. In Mexico in 1900, as many as four out of five sexual unions, stable or otherwise, were maintained outside any formal marriage ceremony. Therborn attributes this astounding contrast with the rest of the world to the high cost of marriage in Latin America, especially the weighty fees extracted by the Church.<sup>9</sup>

Throughout Latin America marriage placed limitations on a woman's status and power, particularly when gender intersected with class, as it did for the most elite women, whose participation in the public arena was carefully circumscribed. But those who managed farms and small businesses with their husbands enjoyed considerable equality with men. In Mexico women sold *pulque* (a common alcoholic beverage consumed by the poor and working class), maintained stands in the marketplace, tended gardens and sold their produce. Among non-elites, women became heads of household when men died or deserted the family, often assuming the full management of businesses, farms, and even mines. A number even prospered; however, those women who found themselves alone and with limited resources faced grim prospects, including prostitution.

According to many scholars, it was during the mid-nineteenth century that the concept of male honor became associated with service to nation and work, as opposed to the narrow world of family, clan, and community. For women, denied citizenship and lacking legal rights outside the home, the concept of service to nation remained defined as service and obedience to men – father, husband, brother, cleric, and grown son. However, as civil society restrained the hold of the Church over education, charity, and public welfare, women stepped in to provide crucial service functions, including formal education of the young, and their introduction to social norms and values, including, notably, acceptance of male superiority. Upper-class women, in particular, engaged in fund-raising to support new state-sponsored and private hospitals, orphanages, workhouses, homes for “wayward” women, and a host of other educational and charitable institutions. Women increasingly inserted themselves into the broader spectrum of society's concerns, both to perform a needed service and for the example they set as virtuous representatives of republican morality.

In conclusion, a hierarchical economic and social order influenced – and sometimes dictated – the way people lived, interacted with each other, and made choices about

their own future and that of their children. Gender, race, class, and social position came together to provide the field upon which economic and political interactions and transactions were played. Nonetheless, the social norms and expectations varied among individuals, within regions, and over time. This variation left much of Latin American society twisting within a paradox. Societies sought to demarcate family lines, property holdings, racial lineage, and community ties through a complex set of rulings that restricted the social movement of individuals and families. Yet the freedom that patriarchy granted to men to produce illegitimate children increasingly blurred racial categories and dictated the passage of laws that placed the growing number of mixed-race women at the mercy of white, powerful, men. So long as the power of the wealthy and landowners remained uncontested, the patriarchal order held firm. It was reinforced in myriad institutions of elite power, including kinship, godparenthood, nepotism, and clientelism, along with dowries and arranged marriages. At the same time, the mid-nineteenth century in Latin America was the heyday of the *caudillo* – a man who epitomized patriarchal authority in an all-embracing expression of economic and political power.

## Nationalism

Little about *caudillismo* conjures up a world of high art and culture; indeed, from Domingo Faustino Sarmiento's perspective, it plummeted society to the depths of barbarism. However, counterbalancing forces in the newly less censored worlds of art, music, and literature were emerging. With independence, Latin America embarked on a new aesthetic, replacing the stultifying scholasticism of the colonial period (a dogmatic belief in the Church's revealed "truth") with romanticism in the early decades of the nineteenth century, and with realism later in the century. Romanticism, epitomized in Sarmiento's classic, *Facundo, Civilization and Barbarism*, appeared as the counterweight to the reality of disorganized federalism dominated by *caudillos*. Art and literature drew on human emotions, more understandable in the midst of a political world that lacked stable models, while architecture expressed the independent nations' fascination with European neoclassical grandeur. In imperial Brazil, the capital city of Rio de Janeiro sported new libraries, theaters, and operas in the image of Europe, while in Argentina, Buenos Aires had emerged as the most European of Latin American cities by century's end. Art, music, and architecture of the time suggested a set of nations searching for independent identity, while at the same time clinging to established forms of European civilization.

The nineteenth century swayed back and forth between romanticizing indigenous peoples and the bedrock peasantry for its oneness with American soil, and trading the integrity of America for European neoclassicism inherited from the colonial period. By century's end, realism had increasingly replaced romanticism, most apparent in the writings of Cuba's José Martí (1853–95) and Brazilian journalist Euclides da Cunha (1866–1909). Both spoke out against the legacy of dogged emulation of European and North American concepts of civilization, while searching for a genuine Latin American

identity. For Martí, Latin America's future depended on the cultural unity the nations of "our America" would forge with each other (Figure 4.3). Elaborating on a theme that Bolívar had raised early in the century, Martí strove not so much for political unity in a single federation, but for cultural unity and political and economic cooperation as a bulwark against the expansionism of North America. In his many writings from the United States, where he lived in exile for decades, Martí repeated the theme that Latin America's sovereignty rested with its ability to find its soul, define its identity, and forge its own unique community (see Box 4.2). He was killed at the age of 42 as he participated in the first battle for Cuban independence in 1895. He never saw the island liberated from Spain, nor, mercifully, did he witness its de facto colonization and subsequent humiliation at the hands of the United States at century's end.



**Figure 4.3** "Cuba and Martí Present at the Moncada" by Rafael Morante. (Courtesy Lincoln Cushing, *Revolución: Cuban Poster Art* ca. 2003)

## Box 4.2 José Martí and the American identity

This essay by José Martí has long been considered one of the most important declarations of the need for Latin America to take pride in its heritage and to take its place on equal terms with the United States and Europe. He chided the Latin American people for their inferiority and advocated the creation of a truly American sensibility and pride. The following is an excerpt of some of the essay's key concepts.

### *Our America*

In what lands can men take more pride than in our long-suffering American republics, raised up among the silent Indian masses by the bleeding arms of a hundred apostles, to the sound of battle between the book and processional candle? Never in history have such advanced and united nations been forged in so short a time from such disorganized elements. The presumptuous man feels that the earth was made to serve as his pedestal, because he happens to have a facile pen or colourful speech, and he accuses his native land of being worthless and beyond redemption because its virgin jungles fail to provide him with a constant means of travelling over the world, driving Persian ponies and lavishing champagne like a tycoon ...

And the able governor in America is not the one who knows how to govern the Germans or the French; he must know the elements that make up his own country, and how to bring them together, using methods and institutions originating within the country, to reach that desirable state where each man can attain self-realization and all may enjoy the abundance that Nature has bestowed in everyone in the nation to enrich with their toil and defend with their lives. Government must originate in the country ...

To know one's country and govern it with that knowledge is the only way to free it from tyranny. The European university must bow to the American university. The history of America, from the Incas to the present, must be taught in clear detail and to the letter, even if the archons of Greece are overlooked. Our Greece must take priority over the Greece which is not ours. We need it more. Nationalist statement must replace foreign statement. Let the world be grafted onto our republics, but the trunk must be our own ...

There can be no racial animosity, because there are no races. The theorist and feeble thinkers string together and warm over the bookshelf races which the well-disposed observer and the fair-minded traveller vainly seek in the justice of Nature where man's universal identity springs forth from triumphant love and the turbulent hunger for life. The soul, equal and eternal, emanates from bodies of different shapes and colors. Whoever foments and spreads antagonism and hate between the races, sins against humanity.

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## Conclusion

Latin America at the end of the nineteenth century was virtually independent, enjoyed trade and political relations with the world at large, and, in spite of cultural fragmentation and geographic separation, was forging a new national identity. Nevertheless, many of the same inequalities persisted that had separated people by race, class, gender, religion, culture, language, and geography at the start of the century. On the isolated highlands and vast rural plains, peasants exchanged landlords formerly subservient to Spain and Portugal for others that wielded authority as local strongmen, looking toward England and the United States for economic and, often, military support. The privileges of citizenship remained off-limits to many, probably most, of the continent's residents, while the Creole elite held firm to the reins of political and economic power. Women had little authority because they lacked the right to participate as independent actors in society – although wealthy women enjoyed the comforts and amenities of their class despite the limitations imposed by husbands, fathers, and male authority in general.

If the Creole patriots who emerged victorious at the end of the independence wars did not see themselves as particularly concerned with the plight of the humble, neither were they all complacent about the poverty all around them. The men in charge in post-colonial Latin America were a varied lot. Indeed, some were tyrants, just as Sarmiento described them; others were not, but still accepted the “scientific” theories of the era that discounted the possibility for advancement of society's poorest and most marginalized, as well as their own wives, sisters, and daughters. They trusted liberalism, championed individualism, and some even presumed that the communal-minded Indian would one day flourish as an independent farmer. While the best of the Creole elite were anxious to build prosperous independent nations, the strife of future centuries would demonstrate the shortcomings inherent in their liberal doctrine.

## Topics and Questions for Discussion

- 1 Did landholding patterns change following independence? Did ordinary laborers gain economic freedom?
- 2 Describe the importance of the *caudillo* “strongman” as a powerful figure in post-independence society. How did *caudillos* differ regionally, according to their political views, and in the ways they organized the societies they controlled?
- 3 In what ways did patriarchy control women's lives differently before and after independence? Did the move from Church authority to that of the state change the status of women?
- 4 How did her racial identity and class status affect a woman's freedom?
- 5 What was José Martí's vision for the future of all the republics of the Americas? What changes did he hope to see enacted and what institutions did he consider important for equality to flourish between the continents?
- 6 If José Martí, Josefa Ortiz de Domínguez, Juan Manuel de Rosas, and José Gaspar Rodríguez de Francia had a conversation, would their respective views of Latin America differ?

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## Notes

- 1 Frances Calderón de la Barca, "Letter the Forty-Eighth" (July–Dec. 1841), *Life in Mexico* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), p. 474.
- 2 Ibid., "Letter the Twenty-Second" (Jan.–June 1840), p. 224.
- 3 Peter Bakewell, *A History of Latin America*, 2nd edition (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), p. 411.
- 4 John Parish Robertson and William Parish, *Four Years in Paraguay* (Philadelphia: E. L. Carey and A. Hart, 1838).
- 5 Carole Pateman, *The Disorder of Women: Democracy, Feminism, and Political Theory* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1989), ch. 2.
- 6 Deirdre Keenan, "Race, Gender, and Other Differences in Feminist Theory," in T. Meade and M. Wiesner-Hanks (eds), *A Companion to Gender History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), p. 112.
- 7 Arlene Diaz, *Female Citizens, Patriarchs, and the Law in Venezuela, 1786–1904* (Omaha: University of Nebraska, 2004), p. 5.
- 8 Elizabeth Dore, *Myths of Modernity: Peonage and Patriarchy in Nicaragua* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006).
- 9 Göran Therborn, *Between Sex and Power: Family in the World, 1900–2000* (New York, Routledge, 2005).