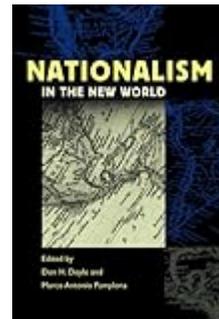




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Beyond Creole Pioneers

Nationalism in the New World grew out of a conversation between editors Don H. Doyle of the University of South Carolina and Marco Antonio Pamplona of Catholic University in Rio de Janeiro in March, 2001 about why the Americas were relatively ignored in recent studies of nationalism. Two conferences on nationalism and comparative history followed, taking place in both hemispheres, and the final results of this collaboration are the thought-provoking and rich essays that make up this substantive collection.

The nation-states created in the Americas, Doyle and Pamplona argue in their introduction, have been ignored by nationalism scholars because they do not fit the European paradigm. As immigrant nations, they lack an ancient ethnic core. Moreover, the Americas have witnessed far less interstate violence, subnational separatist movements, or border fluidity when compared to Asia, Europe, or the Middle East.

It may seem surprising for Doyle and Pamplona to claim that the Americas have been ignored after the 1983

publication of Benedict Anderson's landmark *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*.^[1] In less than twenty pages Anderson allegedly put the New World on the nationalism map. His chapter "Creole Pioneers" asked why immigrant leaders of the American colonies "developed so early conceptions of their nation-ness" *well before most of Europe*?^[2] Anderson provided two answers: administrative functionaries and print capitalism, especially newspapers. Anderson concluded that the American states created in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were "not only historically the first such states to emerge on the world stage, and therefore inevitably provided the first real models what states should look like," but their numbers and contemporary births offer fruitful ground for comparative enquiry.^[3]

All of this is quite familiar to readers of H-Nationalism. But, Doyle and Pamplona argue, in the two decades since Anderson's powerful interpretation, that fruit has not been well harvested. *Nationalism and the New World* is an effort to follow up on—and put under the

microscope—Anderson’s claim that the Americas have something interesting to offer to nationalist studies.

Craig Calhoun begins the volume with a general discussion of recent theories of nationalism. While, again, Calhoun’s survey of European nationalism and theories of civic and ethnic nationalism is quite familiar to H-Nationalism readers, it is nonetheless a compact and cogent review of the literature that students will appreciate.

T.H. Breen’s essay, “Interpreting New World Nationalism,” is the first of three essays that focus on the United States. Breen argues that the people who created a new republic in North America did not have a nationalist ideology. They had three. Over the course of the last half of the eighteenth century, Breen contends that British Americans in the mainland thirteen colonies developed three nationalist impulses: an imperial nationalism, a revolutionary nationalism, and a republican nationalism. Between 1740 and 1763 growing commercial ties with Britain and wars with France strengthened colonists’ sense that they were integral parts of the British Empire. But this sense of Americans as New World Britons was extremely short-lived as a new nationalist ideology emerged with imperial reform. Breen argues that a new nationalism that developed between 1765 and 1776, a “revolutionary nationalism” based on Lockean principles of human and natural rights, animated resistance against the British. This transitional conception was an inclusive ideology that championed equality and liberty. Independence and the need to create governments necessitated a new vocabulary, one based on republican citizenship instead of subjecthood. This post-1776 republican nationalism rejected the inclusivity of the revolutionary moment that preceded it and raised barriers against Indians, Africans, and women. Breen’s intriguing essay deserves wide readership among historians of the American Revolution and should be a point of departure for future studies of early United States nationalism.

Jack P. Greene is not convinced by Breen’s three faces of U.S. nationalism. Greene agrees that North American colonists developed a common British identity around the middle of the eighteenth century that revolved around Protestantism, liberty, commerce, government by consent, civility, and the rule of law. But, in contrast to Breen, Greene argues that these large categories masked important local fissures and regional jealousies. The revolutionaries were able to create a common cause in 1775-76, but continuing local identities quickly eroded this consensus after the war. In fact, the revolution changed quite little: many new American states retained

numerous features of their colonial charters, the national government created under the Articles of Confederation was too weak to inspire nationalism, and in general only a fragile semblance of an American national identity existed after 1783. For Greene, the fragility of nationalist sentiment in the new United States explains the Civil War and the need to reconstruct a failed union. Greene’s essay is a valuable corrective that parries the sweeping claims of Breen’s three American nationalisms, but his contention that post-revolutionary American nationalism remained “embryonic and superficial” is also a bit overstated (p. 77). After all, in 1861 both parties in the U.S. Civil War saw themselves as inheritors of the revolutionary nationalist impulse.

Greene’s central question of whether the United States was ever really “a nation” is taken up by Susan-Mary Grant in her survey of late nineteenth-century American nationalism. Looking at the period from Southern secession to America’s entry into World War I, Grant doubts whether a singular American identity had emerged even by 1917. For Grant, the military experience of the Civil War taught nationalism to millions, but peace brought a significant hiatus to this nationalist sentiment. War weariness led to a gap between the end of the conflict and the memorialization boom that grew north and south in the last years of the century. But, she argues, historians have focused on the war’s “memorial industry” too heavily. In fact, “for some the war’s impact on the debate over American nationalism was, at best, muted. Sometimes the war hardly registered at all” (p. 87). Grant extends Jack Greene’s skepticism into the twentieth century, contending that the “search for ‘Americanism’ in the post-Civil war period became itself a divisive process” (p. 96). Grant’s essay, which emphasizes the experiences of Civil War veterans, has its limitations. The newest scholarship, especially Caroline Janney’s 2007 book, challenges Grant’s notion that war weariness led to a hiatus between the end of the conflict and its memorialization.[4] Janney argues that even before the shooting stopped Confederate women rushed to reinter fallen soldiers in an effort to keep Southern nationalism alive. Also, Grant interprets the assimilation challenges facing industrial America and immigration as new wine in antebellum vessels without nodding toward scale. Still, Grant’s suggestion that historians reconsider whether a muscular, imperialistic American nationalism really did emerge in the age of Roosevelt and Wilson is a useful corrective.

Moving outside of the United States, Phillip Buckner’s strong contribution “Nationalism in Canada” shows

how the particular history of Canada makes it an especially intriguing place for nationalism scholars to investigate. Canada is unusual because nationalist scholars can have it both ways: it has groups of both ethnic nationalists and civic nationalists. According to Buckner, nearly 80 percent of people who live in the province of Quebec today are direct descendents of French immigrants who settled there from 1607-1763. This ethnic homogeneity occasionally led to subnational separatist flare-ups. On the other hand, the second, British wave of immigrants dominated the remainder of Canada, and the political and imperial connection to the United Kingdom further complicated Canadian identity. In this regard, civic nationalists who focus on the power of education, print, and state power instead of ethnic allegiance, have plenty to investigate. As Buckner points out, the distinctions between British civic nationalism, native ethnic nationalism, and French ethnic nationalism were blurred and ambiguous (p. 113). Echoing late nineteenth-century racial essentialist ideologies in the United States, Canada also restricted citizenship to natives and discouraged blacks and Asians from immigrating. Indeed, the historical problems of nationalism for Canadians provide rich opportunities for scholarly inquiry.

Jorge Myers's essay, "Language, History, and Politics in Argentine Identity, 1840-1880," begins with questions asked by Argentine intellectual Domingo Faustino Sarmiento at the end of the nineteenth century: "Are we Europeans? ... Are we Indians? ... Mixed? ... Are we a nation?" (p. 117). Argentina faced a specific set of problems in carving out a national identity. According to Myers, their difficulties arose from a failure in successful state-building after independence, the cultural divide between Buenos Aires and strong regional identities in the countryside, and, most importantly, their sparse population. Romantic writers who called themselves the "Generation of 1837" initiated the first consistent conversation about Argentine identity by counterposing themselves against Spain. Sounding little like romantics, they argued that their republican resistance against the Spanish monarchy prized liberty, modernity, and national authenticity. For these nineteenth-century writers, Argentina was "a nation without a past, rootless, even not yet fully formed" (p. 126). When immigrants began to flood into Argentina in the 1870s, this notion of "Argentina as born modern" flowered into a sense of cosmopolitanism; a pluralist civic notion fueled especially by an expansion of public education. Of course, not everyone welcomed this flood of new people and culture. By the turn of the twentieth century, some of the older

stock of creole elites resisted. It is this resistance that Jeane Delaney picks up on in her essay "Imagining *la raza argentina*." According to Delaney, the late nineteenth-century backlash against civic cosmopolitanism tended toward a romantic, primordial conception of national cohesion. Decades after the "Generation of 1837" claimed that Argentina had no past, Delaney argues, new political leaders "marshaled romantic arguments to defend what they saw as an already formed nationality against a supposedly corrosive cosmopolitanism" (p. 147). This vision triumphed in the early twentieth century and led to an elaboration of the notion of "*la raza argentina*" as a distinct ethnicity. Taken together Myers's and Delaney's essays show the two skeins of nationalist theories, civic and ethnic, as hardly exclusive but instead quite interactive and being played off of one another by contemporaries.

Hayley Froyland, writing about Columbia, reminds us that geography is destiny. The Andes mountains that divide Columbia also stymied communication, transportation, and an effective central government in the nineteenth century. In the last decades of the nineteenth century, Froyland contends, a nationalist discourse did develop around discussions of public health, morality, and religion. Conservative Columbian elites worried about the "moral question." They equated national identity with fighting prostitution, venereal disease, and poverty. For them, Froyland concludes, progress was "more moral than material" and they saw charity and morality as "essential to ... their project to create a national consciousness" (p. 178).

Although many of these essays cite Anderson and his "creole pioneers," Eric Van Young takes on *Imagined Communities* directly in his excellent contribution on Mexican independence. For Van Young, if Anderson's creole pioneers really spurred Mexican independence, what then did movement mean for six million Mexicans? How did the notion of a Mexican national identity interact with other categories of identity—religion, locality, class, gender? Van Young argues that Anderson's focus on elites and print capitalism cannot explain how Mexican independence became a mass movement. A sense of popular patriotism did emerge, he concludes, but its contours were far different from what the "creole pioneers" may have had in mind, retaining instead many localist or indigenous vestiges, including messianic or mystical visions. Van Young's excellent essay, which distills many of the themes of his 2001 book, offers a glimpse of the untapped potential awaiting nationalism scholars in the Americas.[5]

Outside explorers helped Brazilians sharpen their sense of a national identity, according to Wilma Costa. She argues that nineteenth-century European travelers, especially Auguste de Saint-Hilare in mid-century, shifted meanings of "nation," "civilization," and "colonization" for elite Brazilians. Saint-Hilare wrote that, like Argentina for the "Generation of 1837," Brazilians were a people in formation. For Costa, Saint-Hilare's book, which criticized slavery and stressed racial blending, helped provide a "lasting reference on which Brazilian intellectuals could build their own cognitive map for imagining their nation" (p. 227).

Heather Theissen-Reily's contribution focuses on the ways in which President Manuel Isidoro Belzo invented traditions and invoked the memory of Simon Bolvar in order to inculcate a sense of popular nationalism in mid-century Bolivia. By using familiar levers of state power—by creating national emblems, anthems, and coins—and by reenacting Bolvar's ascent of Sumaj Urqu (an Andes mountain over the town of Potos sacred to natives) in 1850, Belzo put forward an expansive sense of the Bolivian people, a construction that welcomed indigenous natives. Theissen-Reily concludes that Belzo's "recognition of the indigenous population and the active cultivation of their support in a project of national construction was a rare attempt in nineteenth-century Latin America" (p. 234).

The final two essays compare how different nations in the Americas dealt with slavery and race. Barbara Weinstein examines the relationship between nation formation and the decline of slavery in the New World, looking especially at the last two regimes that maintained slavery, Brazil and the Confederacy. Although Brazil was the last to emancipate its slaves, Weinstein demonstrates that the U.S. South was really the anomaly. The South's burgeoning proslavery ideology in the mid-nineteenth century—the notion that slavery was a "positive good" for slaves and masters alike—cut against the grain of the prevailing dynamic in the Americas, whereby nation-state creation undermined the institution of slavery. Brazil, on the other hand, had no proslavery publicists like the Confederacy nor did it develop a racial discourse that could be mobilized politically. For Weinstein, Southerners in the U.S. were unique in their proslavery nationalism.

Gary Gerstle, on the other hand, finds racial nationalism to be hardly exclusive to the United States. Comparing the U.S., Mexico, and Cuba, Gerstle argues that while Mexicans and Cubans may have rejected the U.S. brand

of Jim Crow segregation or the racial undertones that lay just under the surface of U.S. foreign policy in the hemisphere they nonetheless developed racialized notions of who belonged and who did not. Gerstle argues that a substantial thread running through the Mexican Revolution of 1910 was the concept that proper Mexicans were *mestizaje*. In its original form this type of racial nationalism was inclusive, a celebration of Mexico's mixed blood. But, as Gerstle adeptly shows, this too rapidly became coercive: pure blood Indians and immigrant Chinese laborers found themselves ostracized and persecuted. In Cuba, too, revolutionaries insisted that they were not like the United States. Jos Mart claimed that Cubans were raceless. Cuban independence, however, occurred near the apex of scientific racism, leading Mart and others to fear that if Cubans emphasized the African-ness of their population, then the island might be degraded in world opinion as a "black nation" like Haiti. In a stimulating essay that extends the horizons of his 2002 book *American Crucible*, Gerstle shows that although they tried to resist, Mexicans and Cubans also fell into racial conceptions of national identity in the early twentieth century.[6] The formula of race, nation, and modernity was simply too potent a force, Gerstle concludes.

Nationalism in the New World demands that students of "Old World" nationalism pay attention to the Americas. Its diversity of theoretical, methodological, and analytical approaches recommend it particularly to teachers looking to find readings for their classes on comparative nationalism or Atlantic revolutions. This diversity, though, makes the reader wish for a conclusion. Because the thirteen essays cover so much terrain, a conclusion by the editors to help pull together broad themes is conspicuously lacking. The two comparative essays that round out the book underscore this missed opportunity. Like the shared experience of slavery and race explored by Weinstein and Gerstle, nations throughout the Americas often held similar discussions about similar topics. The romantic wave of nationalism—which, admittedly, had Old World roots—washed over both American continents. Argentina's "Generation of 1837" and the Brazilian reception of Saint-Hilare's writings certainly sound like Ralph Waldo Emerson's call for the United States to declare cultural independence from Europe. In the last decades of the nineteenth century Progressives in the United States worried about the political and cultural effects of immigration and industrialism just as Argentinean elites battled against "cosmopolitanism" and Columbian conservatives took up the so-called moral question and issues of public health. Canadians encoun-

tered problems conflating race with nation just like Mexican and Cuba revolutionists. The lingering effects of regional identity and autonomy stymied nationalist discourse in the United States, Columbia, Argentina, Mexico, and Bolivia. These strands, which the authors explore singularly in their essays, are left for the reader to draw together.

This is a minor quibble. *Nationalism in the New World* is a satisfying, stimulating collection. Hopefully, when editors Doyle and Pamplona get together again—perhaps thirty-five years after *Imagined Communities*—they will marvel at the spate of new nationalism studies on the Americas sparked by their initial conversation.

Notes

- [1]. (London: Verso, 1983; rev. ed., 1991), esp. 47-65.
- [2]. *Ibid.*, 50.
- [3]. *Ibid.*, 46.
- [4]. Caroline E. Janney, *Burying the War But Not the Dead: Ladiesâ Memorial Associations and the Lost Cause* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).
- [5]. Eric Van Young, *The Other Rebellion: Popular Violence, Ideology, and the Mexican Struggle for Independence, 1810-1821* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2001).
- [6]. Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

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