

## **THE BIRTH OF THE MODERN WORLD, 1780-1914, AND LATIN AMERICA?**

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*Resumen:* El artículo examina por qué los historiadores británicos se equivocan tanto cuando tratan sobre América Latina en sus historias universales, lo que se analiza a través del reciente libro de C.A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914: Global Connections and Comparisons* (2004) y el tratamiento que él brinda sobre América Latina. En este trabajo no sólo evaluó ciertos temas de relevancia para los latinoamericanistas, sino que también me interrogo acerca de si el desinterés de Bayly por el continente latinoamericano puede explicarse por la ausencia de una historiografía latinoamericanista en su bibliografía, o bien si acaso Bayly tiene razón al adscribir a América Latina un rol puramente periférico (y a menudo ni eso) en el “nacimiento de mundo moderno”. En la conclusión sugiero que historiadores del imperio británico todavía ven a América Latina como una zona de recreo y aventura sin mayor conexión al resto del mundo, igual como lo veían sus antepasados en el siglo diecinueve.

*Palabras clave:* América latina; Historia; Historiografía británica, Bayly

*Abstract:* The article provides a general introduction to C.A. Bayly's *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914: Global Connections and Comparisons* (2004) and its treatment of Latin America. I draw out general themes of relevance to the Latin Americanist, and ask whether Bayly's relative neglect of the continent can be explained purely by the absence of recent Latin Americanist literature from his bibliography, or if

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he is correct in ascribing Latin America a purely peripheral role (and sometimes not even that) in the 'birth of the modern world'. I conclude that historians of Britain's empire continue to see Latin America as an adventurous playground unconnected to the rest of the world, just as their forebears did in the nineteenth century.

*Key words:* Latin America; History; British historiography, Bayly

In his 2004 novel *The Way to Paradise* [*El paraíso en la otra esquina*] Mario Vargas Llosa traces the links, similarities and discontinuities between the travails and struggles of the idealistic, often utopian, urges of the painter Paul Gauguin and his grandmother, the Franco-Peruvian traveller and social campaigner, Flora Tristán<sup>1</sup>. Their stories unfold in America, Europe and the Pacific islands: specifically in Peru, France and Tahiti. Vargas Llosa, like C.A. Bayly in *The Birth of the Modern World 1780-1914: Global Connections and Comparisons* (Blackwells, 2004) sees the birth of the modern world –in which he posits Gauguin and Tristán as prime movers– as embracing and being informed by the whole globe and its peoples, rather than spinning out from Europe to the rest as was the conventional narrative of modernity.

Unlike Vargas Llosa however, Bayly does not afford a prominent situation to Latin America in his excellent book. Vargas Llosa is of course partial because of his Arequipan birth (the Peruvian city where some of the book's best scenes are set). Bayly's previous scholarly productions have been important contributions to a historiography that has gradually wrenched British imperial history away from its metropolitan centre and towards its 'imperial meridian'<sup>2</sup>. In one such work he quoted John Stuart Mill's dictum that 'those Englishmen who know something about India, are even now those who understand Ireland best' in order to emphasise the connective and comparative dimension of the history of empire<sup>3</sup>. In the course

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<sup>1</sup> Mario VARGAS LLOSA, *The Way to Paradise*, translated by Natasha Wimmer, London, Faber and Faber, 2003, originally published as *El paraíso en la otra esquina*, Madrid, Alfaguara, 2003.

<sup>2</sup> C.A. BAYLY, *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World 1780-1830*, London, 1989; BAYLY, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870*, London, 1996.

<sup>3</sup> C.A. BAYLY, 'Ireland, India and the Empire 1780-1914', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 2000, pp. 377-397.

of this paper I will suggest that the unstated implication of Bayly's account of the birth of the modern world could be formulated, with apologies to Mill, as 'those who know something about Honduras and Chile can add very little to our understanding of Holland and China'.

This 'masterpiece of distance annihilating synthesis' which 'at a stroke [means that] all other general histories of the nineteenth century have become parochial'<sup>4</sup> relegates Latin America to the fringes of the periphery in its discussion of the 'multi-centred' birth of the modern world. C.A. Bayly's *The Birth of the Modern World* is an outstanding piece of scholarly work, an excellent, theoretically acute and clearly-written account of the interactions between world regions in the long nineteenth-century. It should be essential reading for any Latin Americanist interested in the place of the continent in the world in this period. This paper and this panel do not wish by any means to detract from Bayly's excellent publication. Instead, they hope to complement it, providing a nuanced and detailed Latin American dimension, the omission of which is one of the principal flaws of an otherwise exhilarating and stimulating work.

The key questions that we hope to answer are these: is the neglect afforded to Latin America in Bayly's book (relative to Europe, to North America, to China, South-East Asia and to Australasia) justifiable? Why, despite the substantial efforts of Latin Americanists over the past decade to trace the very 'multi-centred networks' in which Bayly is interested, should the region remain on the bottom layer of the periphery of such a multi-centred and multilayered account of the rise global modernity?<sup>5</sup> Can we argue for Latin America's re-insertion into the narrative of the birth of the modern world or should we acknowledge the continent's location on the periphery of the important changes and movements in the global nineteenth century? Has the surge in monographs on localities, regions and nations, alongside the overturning of the dependency school, been a cultural cul-de-sac for Latin Americanists, one which threatens to be a pointless fad leaving little impression upon the wider historical profession of which Bayly is only the current representative?

There are three possible explanations, I would suggest, for Bayly's relegation of Latin America to the very fringes of his account:

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<sup>4</sup> Niall Ferguson, blurb on back jacket of *The Birth of the Modern World*, paperback edition.

<sup>5</sup> C.A. BAYLY, *The Birth of the Modern World*, , p. 3 notes that he is writing a 'reflection on', rather than a 'narrative of', the birth of the modern world. Oxford, Blackwell, 2004.

- a) Bayly's perspective is sound, and Latin America barely contributed to the birth of the modern world in the long nineteenth century.
- b) Bayly's account is misguided, largely because he is unaware of the existing Latin Americanist literature which could have informed his account.
- c) Bayly's treatment of Latin America is partly justified, and partly ill-handled.

In this paper, I will do three things as a means of exploring these three possible explanations. Firstly, I will provide a brief historiography of the 'Birth of the Modern World' and other accounts of the coming of modernity to Latin America. Secondly, I will introduce the general themes and arguments of Bayly's book, and outline what I see as its most basic omissions and weaknesses regarding Latin America. Thirdly, I will attempt to reconcile Bayly's principal themes – the global consequences of local and regional events, the relative strengths of states, empires and nations, the advent of liberalism and its international repercussions for commerce, the rise of 'new-style' religion, the reconstitution of social hierarchies, and the destruction of native peoples and ecological depredation – with the most prominent and influential work in this field for Latin America.

## **The Birth of the Modern World**

Tracing the history of the birth of the modern world (rather than of a particular country or region) is an ambitious project attempted by few in recent years. Nevertheless it is a project to which Latin Americanists have begun to call attention. This call is timely. Paul Johnson's *The Birth of the Modern: World Society 1815-1830* (1991) concentrated on just fifteen years in an attempt to pinpoint the age in which world society 'became' modern as a result of the thoughts and actions of great statesmen, writers, warriors and thinkers. In Johnson's world, Latin America was a region to which 'European' ideas of Enlightenment, Romanticism and Liberty were transported and where they were often deformed by obstacles posed by geography, climate, population and barbarism<sup>6</sup>. Unlike Bayly, Johnson used Latin America as an allegory for the birth of the modern world elsewhere. 'What

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<sup>6</sup> Paul JOHNSON, *Birth of the Modern: World Society 1815-1830*, New York, Harper Collins, 1991.

happened south of the Rio Grande in the years 1815-1830 epitomised all the hopes and fears, but above all the ambiguities, of the modern world which was being born<sup>7</sup>. But in the world according to Johnson the ‘modern world’ could not include Latin America because of its ‘savagery’. Indeed, this was the region’s tragedy. It was largely ‘savages’ who fought for Hispanic American Independence from Spain, and Simón Bolívar was continually thwarted because he ‘had no proper maps, only Indian guides’<sup>8</sup>.

The latest contribution to the genre, which aims to provide an economic history counterpoint to Johnson’s book without reference to Bayly or his like, is William Bernstein’s *The Birth of Plenty: How the Prosperity of the Modern World was created* (2004)<sup>9</sup>. Bernstein’s book is unashamedly euro-centric, dismissing any claims to a contrary perspective in his preface, arguing for the uniqueness of the ‘modern Western trick of continuously and permanently raising its citizens’ standard of living’. Bernstein states his belief that ‘the four factors responsible for modern wealth—property rights borne on the common law, scientific rationalism, advanced capital markets, and the great advances in transport and communication—were largely European in origin’<sup>10</sup>. Bayly’s chief merit is that he completely supersedes and parochialises this genre that sees the birth of the modern world emanating solely from Great Britain, the Netherlands, Germany and France. His is the only account of the birth of the modern world that does aim at being a truly global history.

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 628.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 651, p. 627, p. 701.

<sup>9</sup> William J. BERNSTEIN, *The Birth of Plenty: how the prosperity of the modern world was created*, New York, McGraw-Hill, 2004. Searching COPAC for titles including the words ‘birth’, ‘modern’ and ‘world’ also brings up a few unlikely bedfellows for globalists like Bayly, Bernstein and Johnson, for example Ian CHRISTIE, *The last machine: early cinema and the birth of the modern world*, (London, BBC/BFI, 1994); Elizabeth DRAPER, *Birth control in the modern world: the role of the individual in population control*, (Harmondsworth, 1964); Simon WINCHESTER, *The map that changed the world: William Smith and the birth of modern geology*, (New York, 2001); Jonathan BAILEY, *The First World War and the Birth of the Modern Style of Warfare*, (Camberley, 1996).

<sup>10</sup> BERNSTEIN, *The Birth of Plenty...*, *op. cit.*, preface.

### **C.A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World***

Bayly attempts 'to explain how and why there occurred over little more than three generations a worldwide shift to political and cultural uniformity accompanied by the emergence of more complex and recognisably modern social and economic patterns'. He defines an 'essential part of being modern' as 'thinking you are modern. Modernity is an aspiration to be "up with the times"'. It was a process of emulation and borrowing<sup>11</sup>. His argument 'gives prominence to the rise of European dominance across this world, while at the same time acknowledging the multi-centred origin of the shift towards this common, yet fiercely contested, modernity'<sup>12</sup>.

The book has four parts. The first charts the links between the old regimes, archaic globalisations, and the new 'great domestications' and 'industrious revolutions' of 1780-1820. The most profound of these changes generally took place far away from Latin America, generally in Northern America and Northern Europe, as well as China and some parts of Asia. Part 2 examines 'The Modern World in Genesis', focusing on the period 'between world revolutions 1815-65', then Industrialisation and the New City, followed by an examination of 'Nation, Empire and Ethnicity c.1860-1900'. This section, in particular, fails to fully incorporate Latin American experience in anything more than a superficial manner, yet its themes: 'the wreck of nations', 'wars of legitimacy', 'problems of hybrid legitimacy', 'race and class in the new cities' could have been taken from any study of Latin America in the period. Part 3, 'State and Society in the Age of Imperialism' looks at the way the state triggered and resisted changes in Liberalism, Science and Religion. Here he argues that liberalism, socialism and science were 'potentially revolutionary sets of ideas' that enabled young people across the globe to 'wake up and see their situation afresh' but which were 'dramatically recast as they passed from continent to continent, often losing their revolutionary character'<sup>13</sup>. Again, this will sound familiar to Latin Americanists. Part 4, 'Change, Decay and Crisis', considers the wreckage of the nineteenth century from the perspective of indigenous peoples and ecology. The final section, 'The Great Acceleration of 1890-1914', attempts to tie up loose ends and draw some over-arching and general conclusions. Bayly's conclusions as to whether the period under discussion saw

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<sup>11</sup> BAYLY, *The Birth of ...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 10-11.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 27.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 284, p. 295.

continuity or change are mesmerising. Resistance to imperialism was both a catalyst and retardant of change. 'It was the growing sophistication and coherence of movements of resistance to Western domination in the non-European world which created a new, contentious phase in European history'<sup>14</sup>. Bayly argues that 'old supremacies bent in the face of these [social] changes and reconstituted themselves in relation to it. Paradoxically, therefore, these continuities were empowered by change itself'<sup>15</sup>. The surge in the speed of international communication after 1900 led to what Bayly calls 'the great acceleration' at the beginning of the twentieth century. Both reactionaries and, especially, radicals, were empowered by these technological changes that enabled them to meet at global conferences and to 'make analogies between their own plight and that of other nations'<sup>16</sup>. In this period the 'rapidity of political and social change was throwing governments off balance more and more often'<sup>17</sup>. Porfirio Díaz (mentioned just the once by Bayly) could certainly attest to that.

### **Towards a Latin Americanist critique of Bayly**

Bayly's standpoint is strong and forceful. His proposition that 'national histories and "area studies" need to take fuller account of changes occurring in the wider world' is well-made and particularly acute for Latin Americanists such as ourselves. 'Ideas and political movements "jumped" across oceans and borders from country to country'<sup>18</sup>. He notes as an example of this, that 'US liberals in 1865 supported Benito Juarez from French pressure; Mexican radicals had already received enthusiastic support from Garibaldi and other revolutionary heirs of 1848'. He could also have noted, of course, that Garibaldi himself had won his revolutionary spurs (and his wife) as an adventurer in Brazil in the 1820s, and that he went on to become a revolutionary icon in Mexico itself post-1910<sup>19</sup>.

Bayly balks at the idea of a 'prime mover' in these changes. He cautiously asserts that 'in the broadest terms, then, historical development seems to have

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 472.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 431.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 432.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 467.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 3.

<sup>19</sup> Guy THOMSON, "Mid-nineteenth-Century Modernities in the Hispanic World", p. 14

been determined by a complex parallelogram of forces constituted by economic changes, ideological constructions, and mechanisms of the state<sup>20</sup>. He sees three principal motors of change: ‘the rise and decline of “industrious revolutions” across the world; the effects of the “great domestication” or settlement of the world to peasant production; and, thirdly, the great expansion of seaborne commerce which linked together these discrete phenomena over the oceans<sup>21</sup>. Bayly baulks at promoting any Euro-exceptionalism but confides in his conclusion that ‘some differences were truly irreducible. Many societies and states were “exceptional” to some degree. Some intellectual constructs were unique to particular societies and particular periods. The point is to find out why these special circumstances existed, and not merely base judgements of exceptionalism on assumptions or prejudices<sup>22</sup>.

This is indeed what *The Birth of the Modern World* does. Rather than focusing on the ideologies and actions of states or empires as motors of changes, he focuses on ‘the concatenation of changes produced by the interactions of political, economic, and ideological change at many different levels<sup>23</sup>. As Bayly himself notes, ‘one aim of a world history such as this book ... is to clarify and to probe those connections and analogies between the histories of different parts of the world<sup>24</sup>. He is absolutely correct in asserting that ‘all historians are world historians now, though many have not yet realized it<sup>25</sup>. Due to the variety of foreign influences that shaped Latin America in the nineteenth century, it could be argued that Latin Americanist historians realized that they were world historians some time ago.

Bayly is cautious about many of the methodological and theoretical enthusiasms that have swept up many scholars, Latin Americanists included. He is cautious about the dangers of the view of James Scott and the ‘new imperial history’ that ‘sees the state as a homogenous and all-seeing entity<sup>26</sup>, instead arguing that ‘local political accommodation and conflict’ were obscured in the historical records by

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<sup>20</sup> BAYLY, *op. cit.*, *The Birth of ...*, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 473.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 469.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 475.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 469.

<sup>25</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 252.

‘a thin patina of state power’<sup>27</sup>. He is careful to shy away from dismissing postcolonial and postmodernists ‘trends’, allowing that ‘History has always flourished when different types of historical writing are available on the same bookshelf’<sup>28</sup>. Nevertheless, he stringently rejects ‘the view that any type of contradiction exists between the study of the social fragment or the disempowered and the study of the broad processes which constructed modernity’<sup>29</sup>. Bayly accepts the idea that ‘an essential part of being modern is thinking you are modern’<sup>30</sup>. On this basis alone it could be argued that Latin Americans certainly did not form part of the modern world in the nineteenth century, given that they spent so much of that time actively striving for, rather than enjoying, their modernity. It is a debate – whether striving to be modern can actually make you modern – which Latin Americanists have engaged with in some detail (see below, 3c). However, this definition is not enough for Bayly who goes further in his definition of the modern world, and as such implicitly includes Latin America in his world:

... contemporary changes were so rapid, and interacted with each other so profoundly, that this period could reasonably be described as “the birth of the modern world”. It encompassed the rise of the nation-state, demanding centralisation of power or loyalty to an ethnic solidarity, alongside a massive expansion of global commercial and intellectual links. The international spread of industrialisation and a new style of urban living compounded these profound developments. The merging of all these trends does point to a step-change in human social organisation. The scope and scale of change broadened dramatically. Modernity, then, was not only a process, but also a *period* which began at the end of the eighteenth century and has continued up to the present day in various forms<sup>31</sup>.

In other words, how did we start to get like we are now *so quickly*? It is a question which historians like Mark Thurner are also asking, and explicitly wondering why Spanish America has not been embraced by global theorists. Thurner notes that ‘dissonance looms not only in the suspicion that Spanish America’s and Spain’s old clothes do not match very well with the latest postcolonial wardrobe (although black never goes out of style); lurking in our entrails is a

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 283.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 8.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 9.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 10.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 11.

deeper apprehension that globalising the postcolonial so as to include Spanish American historicities would only contribute to a nauseating universalisation or normalisation of a postcolonial panopticon, thus closing the very critical slit that an edgy postcolonial heterodoxy from the fragments cut open in the first place' (p. 17). Dissecting this statement, I take it to mean that the postcolonial baby should not be thrown out with the bathwater, even if it crying and sometimes doesn't wash.

Bayly's approach to the exercise of a narrative of global history, therefore, is admirable; well-conceived, finely explained and all in accordance with historiographical tendencies. The weaknesses with regard to Latin America are largely in execution rather than the conception. The first and principal weakness is bibliographical. Above all, Bayly relies overwhelmingly on Peter Bakewell's *A History of Latin America: Empires and Sequels 1450-1930* (1997), a fine general introduction to the continent but not renowned for its synthesis of the scholarly literature on the continent's nineteenth century. As Will Fowler commented when reviewing for the *Journal of Latin American Studies* it is 'quite blatantly that of a specialist in early colonial Mexico', and dedicates just 46 pages (out of 520) to the nineteenth century, as opposed to the 349 pages on the 'more interesting and more important' sixteenth century<sup>32</sup>.

The only other Latin Americanist texts that Bayly references more than once are Alan Knight's *The Mexican Revolution* and David Brading's *The First America*. Whilst the references to Knight are generally sound, the reliance on Brading masks the vast array of work on the Latin American nineteenth century which Brading himself admits in the preface to *The First America* that he did not consult<sup>33</sup>.

The other Latin Americanist books referenced by Bayly in his principally English language bibliography are as follows:

Duffy, Michael, *Soldiers, Sugar and Seapower. The British Expeditions to the West Indies and the War against Revolutionary France*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987.

Frank, Andre Gunder, *Mexican Agriculture 1521-1630*, Cambridge, 1979.

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<sup>32</sup> See Will FOWLER, Review of Bakewell, *A History of Latin America*, in *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 30 (1998), pp. 641-642.

<sup>33</sup> David BRADING, *The First America: The Spanish Monarchy, Creole Patriots and the Liberal State*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993 (Preface).

Freyre, Gilberto, *The Masters and the Slaves: A Study in the Development of Brazilian Civilisation*, New York, 1963.

Graham, Richard, *Britain and the Onset of Modernisation in Brazil, 1850-1914*, Cambridge, 1972.

Hall, Catherine, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination 1830-1867*, London: Polity, 2002.

James, C.L.R., *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*, London, 2001.

Knight, Franklin, *Slave Society in Cuba during the Nineteenth Century*, Madison, Wisc. 1975.

Pagden, Anthony, *The Lords of All the World: Ideologies of Empire in Spain, Britain and France c.1500-c.1800*, New Haven, 1995.

Saiz, M.C.G. *Las castas mexicanas: un género pictórico americano*, Mexico City, 1989.

Thomas, Hugh, *Cuba: Or the Pursuit of Freedom*, London, 1971.

There seems to be little logic to such a choice of material. I do not detect a pro-Oxbridge partiality. There is just one text in Spanish, and none in Portuguese. Yet more fruitful than speculating over Bayly's choice of Latin Americanist literature is to investigate the consequences of such a selection allied to an explicit reliance on encyclopaedias and other reference works.

Firstly, in some cases Latin America is omitted from even the most basic narratives and tables. For example, in Table 5.2 'Population of some major countries (millions)', figures are provided for the population of Great Britain, France, Germany, United States, Ottoman Empire, China, Japan, India, and Latin America in the years 1750, 1800, 1850 and 1900. The only figure for Latin America is that of 12 million for 1800. The other fields are left blank without explanation<sup>34</sup>. Elsewhere Latin American examples are omitted from even the most obvious cases. The occasional references to Knight tend to be on general factors and the Mexican Revolution is barely mentioned, unlike other contemporary global revolutions. These oversights contribute to veering the book's conclusions off course. An example: 'Outside Japan, it was some years beyond the terminal date

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<sup>34</sup> BAYLY, *op. cit.*, *The Birth of ...*, p. 181. Based on figures compiled by the *United Nations World Population Prospectus 1998 Revision*, figures for Latin America are estimated at 1750: 16 million; 1800: 24 million; 1850: 38 million; 1900: 74 million. Taken from: [www.ocn.ne.jp/~aslan/pfe/pop.htm](http://www.ocn.ne.jp/~aslan/pfe/pop.htm) after a cursory Google search.

of this book that this European dominance began to flake and decay over much of the colonial world. It did not really happen until the 1930s in India and China, the 1950s and 1960s in Africa, and the 1980s in the Soviet Empire and the Latin American world, as native and indigenist movements began to emerge<sup>35</sup>. With regard to ‘the Latin American world’, this statement makes little sense, seeing as Creole leaders had overthrown Spanish rule in the 1820s in most of the Hispanic American mainland, Cuba and Puerto Rico had gained independence in 1898, and ‘native and indigenist’ movements were still hard to perceive in much of Latin America in the 1980s, let alone any ‘flaking and decaying’ that they might have encouraged.

Secondly, and perhaps most excusably in a work of synthesis aimed at non-specialists, is the recurrence of the same old staples of Latin American history to provide some colour for a narrative with its interest and focus elsewhere. This is certainly the case of Antonio Santa Anna’s leg, dragged onto the scene to illustrate a period of political instability<sup>36</sup>. Otherwise, Latin America is predictably used to provide a colourful example taking trends or characteristics to their extremes. When discussing labour conflicts and organised resistance in the first decade of the twentieth century, South America is wheeled out as an example where ‘labor conflicts were particularly violent’. This claim is justified by the following evidence: ‘In 1906, the Chilean authorities put down labor disputes in the coastal town of Antafagosta [sic], killing hundreds. In 1907 alone, 231 strikes took place in Buenos Aires. Such people were jostling for advancement, like their European contemporaries, rather than harbingers of social revolution<sup>37</sup>. This extract brings out all the perils of relying on general works for specific information. ‘Jostling for advancement’ may well have applied to Buenos Aires strikers, but the Antofagasta miners? Such comparisons are meaningless and only confirm Latin America’s position in the narrative as peripheral and unconnected to the birth of the modern world. *Caudillismo* (mentioned only in passing by Bayly<sup>38</sup>) –and the ample scholarly literature it has generated– illustrates the ways in which conflicting levels were often joined together, linking local, regional and national economic and social processes to produce a cultural phenomena. Elsewhere there are simple mistakes.

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<sup>35</sup> BAYLY, *op. cit.*, *The Birth of ...*, p. 476.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 147.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 193. Data taken from Bakewell, *A History of Latin America*, p. 427.

<sup>38</sup> BAYLY, *op. cit.*, *The Birth of ...*, *op. cit.*, p. 474.

Slavery was not still ongoing in 1898 in the Spanish Caribbean, but had been abolished in Spain and its colonies (including Cuba and Puerto Rico) in 1886<sup>39</sup>.

Thirdly, there are many occasions when an opportunity to inform the narrative by means of use of the literature on Latin America is passed up. It is accepted by early modern historians that the import of vast amounts of American silver was one of the contributory factors, if not the principal reason behind, Europe's spurt in industrious and financial revolutions in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries<sup>40</sup>. In the nineteenth century French colonialism and then expansionism repeatedly met their Waterloos in the Americas, first in Haiti (1791-1804) and then in Mexico (1866-8). As Philip Curtin (1989) observed, throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries military adventure in the Caribbean continually depleted European armies and caused long-term reformulations of military strategy and re-assessments of what it meant to be French, British or Spanish. The second-half of the nineteenth century saw Latin America further integrated into the international economy, essentially as a producer of raw materials but also as part of increasingly complicated and sophisticated commercial, cultural and political networks. The extent to which these trends culminated between the two world wars is exemplified by two events: the staging of the first Football World Cup in Uruguay in 1930, and the assassination of the Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky in Mexico City in 1940. A couple of detailed examples from the text should suffice here (more are examined in Section 3): in the section on 'State and Society in the Age of Imperialism', we learn that 'The French Republic and the new Italian regime introduced state education to limit the power of the Catholic Church'<sup>41</sup>. The example of Latin America and its nineteenth century disputes and conflict over Church patronage of education and land would have added some nuance to this picture. In the same period, the examples of French and British imperial mapping and 'the progress of the survey through the countryside represented the triumph of Western science and technology and the final establishment of [imperial] dominion' are sound. Yet the mapping expeditions in

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 398. On p. 405 he has the correct date.

<sup>40</sup> Kirti CHAUDHURI, 'World Silver Flows and Monetary Factors as a Force of Intenational Economic Integration 1658-1758', in W. FISHER, R.M. McINNIS and J. SCHNEIDER (eds.), *The Emergence of a World Economy 1500-1914*. Paper of the IX International Congress of Economic History, Weisbaden-Stuttgart; 1986; Part 1: 1500-1850, pp. 61-82.

<sup>41</sup> BAYLY, *op. cit.*, *The Birth of...*, p. 273.

Latin America, such as Codazzi's in Colombia, were carried out not in the name of empire, but in order to mark out the territory of new nations, a process omitted from Bayly's narrative and which would have served perhaps to complicate his picture of the growth of nations in the extra-European world in the nineteenth century (see below)<sup>42</sup>.

On occasions the use of Latin American examples to provide colour and justification to an argument explored fully elsewhere is indeed successful. Discussing the way that the ideas of liberalism and improvement were co-opted and applied in the non-European world, Richard Graham's *The Onset of Modernisation in Brazil* is used to supply the information that the abolitionist Joaquin Nabuco once stated that 'I am an English liberal ... in the Brazilian parliament'<sup>43</sup>. From Brading, Bayly cites the Mexican radical Ignacio Altamirano urging his countrymen to 'love the patria and consecrate themselves to science'<sup>44</sup>.

Similarly, the example of Latin American elites' adoption of the ideas of Auguste Comte in order to 'break the chains of the old thinking' is useful and enlightening. For Bayly though it was merely 'ironic' that it was 'the notion of scientific and technical modernisation which was the cherry that Latin American leaders picked from Comte's basket. Several of them went on to become, or support, modernizing military autocrats in the later nineteenth century'<sup>45</sup>. There is no mention of the scientific racism and whitening processes undertaken by these elites and their leaders.

Despite Bayly's neglect of the region, the place of Latin America within 'Atlantic networks' has been underlined by historians over the last quarter century. As Latin Americanist historians are increasingly vocal in pointing out, taking the Atlantic as an area of study must mean much more than simply tracing links between Europe and North America, if only because historical reality did not adhere to such arbitrary distinctions. Africa and Latin America, too often absent from discussions of Atlantic trends and processes, were always important in initiating, shaping and identifying events. As Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra has argued, following Mary Louise Pratt, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries travellers

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<sup>42</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 275.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 296.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 296.

<sup>45</sup> BAYLY, *The Birth of the Modern World*, p. 308, taken from Bakewell, *A History of Latin America*, pp. 420-422.

and travel writing in the Southern half of the Western Hemisphere reinvented relations between the Old and New Worlds<sup>46</sup>.

Bayly does include a good section on how the consequences of the Haitian Revolution were a classic example of ‘bounce back’ of causes and effects to Europe<sup>47</sup>. However, like the work of Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker on the ‘many-headed hydra’ of sailors, slaves, commoners who criss-crossed the ocean seeking revolutionary ideas of freedom and communal landownership (2000), Bayly neglects the Latin American literature and therefore largely ignores Latin America’s involvement in these Atlantic networks.

Bayly’s take on nations and nationalism is frequently contentious with regard to Latin America. While his synthesis of the generalist literature, ‘where we stand with nationalism’<sup>48</sup> is succinct and compelling, it lacks any engagement with the vast array of work on the subject by Latin Americanists. The categories of race, gender, state and class have been incorporated into analyses of the Latin American nation in the nineteenth century, to such an extent that recent trends suggest that they are beginning to beyond to move ‘beyond the nation’ in their studies of the period<sup>49</sup>.

Bayly, however, dismisses the fruits of Latin American independence, in line with his reading of Brading, as ‘pseudo-nations’<sup>50</sup>. The new Creole rulers who sought to ground national identity in pre-Columbian societies are ‘bizarre’<sup>51</sup>. Post-independence depictions of national heroes are reduced to clumsy and implausible renderings of Napoleon Bonaparte<sup>52</sup>.

Bayly still has interesting comments to make about nations, however. He asserts that Benedict Anderson’s concept of ‘imagined communities of print’ is useful

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<sup>46</sup> Jorge CAÑIZARES-ESGUERRA, *How to Write the History of the New World: Histories, Epistemologies, and Identities in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World*, Stanford University Press, 2001.

<sup>47</sup> BAYLY, *The Birth of ...*, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 218-219.

<sup>49</sup> ‘Beyond the Nation’ was the title of an Institute of Latin American Studies conference in London in 2003. Contributors were many of the leading figures in this field, and proceedings are due to be published shortly. See also Naro 2002, Konig 1994, McFarlane 1999, Jaksic 2003.

<sup>50</sup> BAYLY, *The Birth of ...*, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 142.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 376.

‘not so much in creating nationalism as in spreading and generalising it’<sup>53</sup>. In many ways the sophistication of the literature on Latin American nations, which has long engaged with Anderson’s theorising in some detail, would have proved useful. Without it, Bayly’s attempt to create a straw man looks simplistic and outdated. He writes that ‘nationalism was not simply a sentiment forced on hapless and naïve peoples by wicked power-brokers or greedy capitalists’<sup>54</sup>. The studies of Florencia Mallon, Claudio Lomnitz, Tamar Herzog and many others have demonstrated this<sup>55</sup>. Bayly’s vaguer generalisations about ‘the people’ would benefit, for the Hispanic American case, from the work of Francois-Xavier Guerra<sup>56</sup>.

Bayly’s wider recommendations have much to recommend them to students of Latin American nations. He observes that ‘global history... reveals a pattern of causation invisible to national or regional specialists’<sup>57</sup>. Nevertheless, by the end of the book, when Bayly describes the period after 1890, he seems to have allowed Latin America to slip from his thoughts. 1890-1914 is the era in which ‘non-European nationalisms seemed finally to be making their long-heralded breakthrough’<sup>58</sup>.

Throughout the nineteenth century the increasingly widespread ‘foreign-local’ encounters across the imperial world were fundamental in shaping regional and national identities across the globe. Catherine Hall, whose work Bayly briefly mentions, has explored the way that colonial Jamaican and metropolitan British identities were moulded by their transatlantic relationship and by the experience of those Britons who travelled to and lived in Jamaica before returning to Britain to tell their stories<sup>59</sup>. Many scholars have worked in a similar vein to trace the development of identities, projects and processes in Latin America across the nineteenth century<sup>60</sup>.

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 211.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 281.

<sup>55</sup> MALLON 1983, 1995; LOMNITZ 2001; HERZOG 2003. More recently see CENTENO 2002; APPELBAUM, MACPHERSON and ROSEMBLATT 2003; CASTRO-KLARÉN and CHASTEEN 2003.

<sup>56</sup> BAYLY, *The Birth of ...*, *op. cit.*, p. 106; François-Xavier GUERRA, *Modernidad e independencias*, Madrid, MAPFRE, 1992, summarised in English in Guerra 1994 and Guerra and Quijada 1994.

<sup>57</sup> BAYLY, *The Birth of ...*, *op. cit.*, p. 333.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 451, also p. 455.

<sup>59</sup> Catherine HALL, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination, 1830-1867*, Cambridge, Polity Press in association with Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 2002.

These concerns grew out of sophisticated analysis of the ‘encounter’ between New and Old Worlds during the conquest and colonisation of Latin America in the early modern period<sup>61</sup>.

The work of Karen Racine uses prosopography and biography as a means of illustrating the transatlantic and global travels that connected the birth of the modern world (and Latin America) in the nineteenth century<sup>62</sup>. Racine’s study of Francisco de Miranda provides ample ‘colour’ for this period, showing how Miranda became aware of his Latin American identity and his ‘destiny’ as its liberator, in his travels through Europe and Russia and in contact with many of the principal figures of the period. London in particular was the ‘crucible’ of Latin American identity, providing a meeting point for disgruntled Latin American intellectuals and curious travellers such as Miranda, Andrés Bello, Simón Bolívar, José de San Martín, and Bernardo O’Higgins. (Other research traces the other side of this transatlantic relationship, exploring the role of European mercenaries in the Wars of Independence conceptualised and fought by Bolívar et al in Latin America) and the subsequent period of national identity formation<sup>63</sup>.

Similarly, the travels of Simón Bolívar throughout Europe, his celebrated pledge in 1805 to bring ‘liberty’ to his *patria*, famously made upon the summit of Monte Sacro near Rome, provide a startling illustration of the exact ways in which Latin Americans re-interpreted new modern ideals of freedom and identity, picking and choosing and re-fashioning from experience during their travels<sup>64</sup>. Just like the Indian reformer Raja Ram Mohun Roy, described in detail by Bayly, Bolívar

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<sup>60</sup> See contributions to Joseph et al 2000, particularly Steve J. Stern’s article which sets out the theory behind many of the essays. Consequent to the publication of *Close Encounters* similar themes were continued at the 2001 Commonwealth Fund conference at University College London, 29-30 June 2001.

<sup>61</sup> See for example Peter HULME, ed., *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean 1492-1797*, London, Methuen, 1987; Stuart B. SCHWARTZ, ed., *Implicit Understandings: Observing, Reporting and Reflecting on the Encounters Between Europeans and Other Peoples in the Early Modern Era*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994.

<sup>62</sup> Karen RACINE, *Francisco de Miranda: A Transatlantic Life in the Age of Revolution*, Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2003.

<sup>63</sup> Matthew BROWN, *Adventurers in Gran Colombia: The Birth of the New Nations in their Atlantic Context*, forthcoming Liverpool University Press, 2006.

<sup>64</sup> See Tomás POLANCO ALCANTARA, *Simón Bolívar*, and David BUSHNELL, *Simón Bolívar* for interpretations of this pledge.

saw his cause in parallel with those of other ‘subjected’ peoples across the globe. Amongst his extensive letters can be found correspondence with Daniel O’Connell, the Irish ‘Liberator’ from whom he took his epithet, and Lafayette of France. After Bolívar’s death, Giuseppe Garibaldi visited Manuela Sáenz, Bolívar’s lover, in her Peruvian exile<sup>65</sup>.

In contrast to these perspectives on the multiple natures and consequences of the foreign-local encounter, the reader of *The Birth of the Modern World* takes only the most simple and stereotypical examples of Amazonian Indians “who had had little contact with outsiders over hundreds of years, and for whom ‘first contact’ with whites or other settlers in the nineteenth century represented an extraordinary cultural trama”<sup>66</sup>. In his section on the ‘destruction of native peoples’ Bayly uses the example of ‘successive governments of Chile’ who ‘did their best to clear their central tracts of the so-called Araucanian Indians, tough mobile farmers and fishermen who resisted the pressure to “improve” their agriculture’<sup>67</sup>. Otherwise South American indigenous peoples are cited as commonplace examples of groups who were ‘even’ reached by the large-scale processes most frequently detected elsewhere<sup>68</sup>.

## Conclusions

Latin America was certainly better integrated to the birth of the modern world than is made clear in Bayly’s *The Birth of the Modern World*. The key question is which merits more research and discussion is, ‘How?’ An ample literature shows that Latin America is an integral part of the Atlantic world and that the birth of Latin American nations in the 1810s and 1820s was a path-breaking and original direction for the modern world to take, with repercussions for policy and geopolitics in Europe and beyond. Therefore, is it far to imply that Latin America was always receiving trends from outside, no matter of the amount of adaptation and resistance they received? In conclusion, the tentative answer must be ‘No,

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<sup>65</sup> Eduardo POSADA, *Apostillas*, (Bogotá, 1978), first edition Imprenta Nacional, 1926, p. 41.

<sup>66</sup> BAYLY, *The Birth of ...*, *op. cit.*, p. 433.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 440.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 480 for the example of the rise of spiritual movements at the end of the nineteenth century.

not quite'. Scholars like Bayly see Latin America as occasionally 'ahead of its time' in some trends but refuse to contemplate the possibility that the continent might have had some influence in the opposite direction, let alone across the Pacific. It is the intention of this panel – and they signs are positive judging by the breadth and ambition of the papers – to see if any argument can be made for asserting Latin America's position in any narrative of the birth of the modern world.

In the words of Guy Thomson, with the aforementioned absence of Latin America from Bayly's book, 'any closer look at nineteenth-century Spain and Latin America is bound to yield surprising glimmers of modernity'<sup>69</sup>. As a means of conclusion, it is worth referring to the recent best-selling work on the birth of the modern world written by one of Bayly's admirers: Niall Ferguson's *Empire: How Britain Made The Modern World* (2003). The only insightful allusion to Latin America in Ferguson's book (aside from when rhapsodising on the activities of pirates like Henry Morgan and Francis Drake) comes in the introduction, where Ferguson casually tosses Latin America into the basket labelled 'informal empire' which will not assist his argument at all:

Thanks to the British Empire, I have relatives scattered over the world –in Alberta, Ontario, Philadelphia and Perth, Australia. Because of the Empire, my paternal grandfather John spent his early twenties selling hardware and hooch to Indians in Ecuador [Ferguson's footnote: Not a colony of course, but part of Britain's 'informal' economic empire in Latin America] I grew up marvelling at the two large oil paintings he brought back of the Andean landscape, which hung luminously on my grandmother's living room wall; and the two Indian dolls, grim faced and weighed down with firewood, incongruous beside the china figurines in her display cabinet<sup>70</sup>.

This comment –and the accompanying lack of analysis– reveals that way that Latin America is presented as an adventurous cul-de-sac of global history by many British historians. Processes, ideas and movements *reach* Latin America but they are barely deemed worthy of inclusion in studies of global connections. The continent is a Wild West adventure playground, where 'hooch' is drunk and from where indigenous artisan products are brought back to sit 'incongruously' alongside

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<sup>69</sup> Guy THOMSON, "Mid-nineteenth-Century Modernities in the Hispanic World", Workshop: "When was Latin America Modern?", Institute for the Study of the Americas.

<sup>70</sup> Niall FERGUSON, *Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World*, London, Penguin, 2003, p. XIII.

products from elsewhere. Bayly is certainly much better informed than Ferguson, but even his account would benefit hugely from a better integration of Latin America into his consideration of the birth of the modern world.

As Vargas Llosa's narrator comments to Flora Tristán in *El paraíso en la otra esquina*, 'real history was a hideous mess, and written history was a maze of patriotic trickery'<sup>71</sup>. It is to Bayly's credit that he negotiates a path through this mess and trickery, but it is our job to complement his work so that Latin America is re-integrated to the global networks of which it forms part, and so that the continent is not reduced to a neglected cul-de-sac off a fork in a Borgesian garden.

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<sup>71</sup> Mario VARGAS LLOSA, *The Way to Paradise*, p. 231. There is an interesting possible link here to another Peruvian novelist of the late twentieth-century, Bayly's namesake Jaime Bayly, chatshow host and author of the best-selling, tragic-comic coming-out autobiography *No se lo digas a nadie* (1998). It is to be presumed that the two are not directly related despite sharing a surname. The conclusion of *The Birth of the Modern World* would be, presumably, that C.A. Bayly of Cambridge owed very little to his colourful Peruvian cousin (but, perhaps, not vice versa).