



STUDIES OF THE AMERICAS

WHEN WAS LATIN AMERICA MODERN?

Edited by

Nicola Miller and Stephen Hart



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Studies of the Americas

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James Dunkerley
Institute for the Study of the Americas
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Introduction

Interdisciplinary Approaches to Modernity in Latin America

Nicola Miller

The question was designed to provoke, and indeed it did. Debates at the interdisciplinary event behind this book turned not so much on any putative answers but on the validity of the question itself, the criteria for addressing it, and whether the concept of modernity could be given any meaningful analytical content at all. The strongest case against the term was made by anthropologist Peter Wade, for whom modernity's connotations of teleology (the inevitability of the grand march of progress) and scaling (modernity as the big picture, with everything non-modern diminished to the small and insignificant) were too inescapable to make it useful or acceptable as a tool of analysis, even in the variant of "multiple modernities." Most of the participants, however, ultimately declared in favor of retaining the term and debating strategies for endowing it with analytical substance, although the range of referents in this collection of essays (from Enlightenment to ephemerality) is in itself testimony to the problems involved in trying to do so.

Latin America's experience of modernity has been the subject of much academic attention over the past two decades, both from Latin American scholars and from other Latin Americanists. Interest has arisen at least partly in response to debates about the relevance of postmodernism and the impact of that constellation of changes customarily referred to as "globalization" (e.g., Quijano 1990; Rincón 1995; Sáenz 2002, among others). The question of modernity has been especially prominent in the field of cultural studies, but many historians, social scientists, and specialists in film, the built environment, and the visual arts have also organized their work around the theme of what it meant to be modern in Latin America. The resulting

literature on the topic is rich, but it is also—as Latin America’s modernity itself is often claimed to be—fragmented. Scholars from different disciplines (and, indeed, within each discipline) have taken widely varying positions on fundamental issues such as the chronology of modernity, its character and its agents. It would be impossible to review the whole of this literature here, but a rapid sampling of key works from Latin Americans who have worked on “modernity” over the last decade or so should convey a sense of the variety of views in play.

When was Latin America modern? If we take the question literally, the case has been made for the late fifteenth century, with the onset of European imperialism (mainly by philosophers, e.g., Quijano 1990; and Dussel 1995); the early nineteenth century, with the independence struggles (mostly by historians, such as Guerra 1992, 1995; and Uribe Urán 2001); the late nineteenth century, with integration into the international economy and the emergence of *modernismo* (the focus of literary and cultural studies: see, e.g., Rama 1984; Ramos 1989; Jade 1998; Geist and Monleón 1999); the mid-twentieth century, with the spread of mass technologies (social scientists such as Brunner, 1995); and the late twentieth century, with neoliberalism and democracy (political scientists and economists too numerous to list), not to mention several other periods in between.

To an extent, of course, the divergence of views about Latin America’s modernity is only one manifestation of the lack of consensus about when a consciousness of modernity in general emerged: many scholars, particularly historians, gravitate toward the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (the impact of Enlightenment models of rationality coupled with the ascendancy of capitalist practices; see, e.g., Geras and Wokler 2000; Bayly 2003), but others have made valid arguments about the seventeenth century (the Reformation and the scientific revolution), and as early as 1200 has been proposed (Hardt and Negri 2000). However, such widespread uncertainties about the history of modernity still have less immediate political significance in countries widely regarded as already being modern (even if this is a condition that needs constant vigilance to maintain it), than in countries that are not regarded thus. Renato Rosaldo has commented upon the “absolute ideological divide” between so-called modernized and non-modernized nation-states, noting that in the United States issues such as high infant mortality rates among African Americans “are treated neither as signs of underdevelopment nor as failures of uneven modernization (as they conceivably could be in principle and no doubt would be in Latin America)” (“Foreword” to García Canclini 1995: xiii–iv). The oft-heard propositions that Latin America has had modernism without

modernization, or modernization without modernity, or an experience of modernity that was no more than a pseudo-modernity, are all based on what Mark Thurner has called “the metanarrative of the deficient,” that is, the persistent sense that Latin America’s distinctive history of early decolonization and early experience of neocolonialism is somehow lacking because it does not correspond to patterns discerned elsewhere. Partly to counter such assumptions, there have also been several variations on the theme that Latin America has developed an alternative modernity, which, it is increasingly claimed, has sustained the original emancipatory impulse of the independence wars and offers a model for contending with twenty-first-century change.

It was in order to debate the variety of views outlined here and the theoretical and methodological issues surrounding them that we convened an interdisciplinary workshop, which was held in February 2005 at the Institute for the Study of the Americas in London. Bringing together scholars from different disciplines to discuss a topic of common interest is both fashionable and hazardous. Interdisciplinary events are looked upon favorably by funding bodies and attract a lot of interest in the academic community: there is a widespread—albeit vague—sense that they are a good thing. But they do not, as Barthes put it, offer “the calm of an easy security” (1977, 155), at least not if they actually achieve their objective of stimulating people to engage with the contributions of other disciplines (and many academics are all too familiar with attending events where the historians comment only on the history papers, the anthropologists only on the anthropological papers, and so forth, and each discipline sails serenely on its way, wholly unperturbed by the shock waves of other epistemologies, but given a fair wind by the satisfaction of having been dutifully “interdisciplinary”). Even when engagement does take place, as it did on this occasion, connections between disciplines can prove elusive, and it is often the differences not only between disciplines but also within them that come to the fore. Or it transpires that some connections are made but not others: historians are often willing to learn from political scientists or geographers, but find it harder to appreciate the relevance to them of cultural studies; anthropologists and cultural studies people tend to find a lot in common (partly because many of them are drawing on a common body of theoretical literature; and at least some of them share a basically ethnographic methodology), but both find it difficult to contend with the residual positivism of even the most theoretically aware historians.

To a greater or lesser extent, all of the aforementioned tensions were evident at the “When Was Latin America Modern?” workshop.

Thus, the following collection of essays has a strong thematic integrity, but also illustrates the dramatic variety of approaches to the question of modernity. There are also absences (unavoidable for logistical reasons): we had no papers by philosophers, art historians, or economists, to mention only the most obvious of the other disciplines that could have been involved. Even so, the editors of this volume maintain that the exchanges from that encounter ultimately succeeded in doing more than providing the always-valuable incentive for disciplines to reflect critically upon themselves. In what follows, I identify some of the convergences that could create a basis for rethinking approaches to Latin American modernity in the light of interdisciplinarity. First, though, I outline the chapters, which are presented in two parts: I. Views from the Historical and Social Sciences (chapters 1, 2, 3, and 4); and II. Views from Literary and Cultural Studies (chapters 5, 6, 7, and 8).

Outline of the Chapters

Chapter 1 by Sarah Radcliffe, “Geographies of Modernity in Latin America: Uneven and Contested Development,” shows how rich a perspective the discipline of geography, informed by social theory and cultural studies, can offer. Keenly sensitive to the normative implications of the term modernity, she begins with an overview of geographical approaches to the topic, drawing out a critique of the existing literature in order to develop a new framework for understanding Latin American modernity. She goes on to illustrate this with case-study evidence from Ecuador. Starting from the premise that modernity is a concept with inescapably geographical connotations, she argues that even so it does not necessarily entail either Eurocentrism or diffusionism. Adopting Pred’s and Watt’s concept of “multiple reworked modernities” (1992), she emphasizes that acknowledging that European versions of modernity have historically been the dominant form does not necessarily mean that they have to be regarded as a universal standard. Breaking down the monolith of modernity to establish an analytical framework of project, discourse, and experience, she argues that the key question is not “when was Latin America modern?,” which will deterministically confine the inquiry to a teleological, normative approach, in which Latin America can only be seen as a late arrival at modernity’s ball, but rather “in which spaces was Latin America modern?” She invokes the metaphor of the fulcrum to capture the shifts in interconnectedness and differentiation, solidarity and hierarchy, all of which are components of the constructions of

modernities in specific times and spaces. Neither of the two main forces conventionally seen as driving modernity—capitalism and the nation-state—are monolithic, she emphasizes. There is no predictable or regular link between modernity and development: reverses can occur, as Latin America's experiences during the 1980s showed all too acutely. Radcliffe's work makes a compelling case for the significance of geographies—both territorial and imaginative—in the construction of modernity, and for taking into account the bodily aspect of the experience of modernity as well as the mental processes that so often absorb the attention of historians and cultural critics.

For Peter Wade, Latin America has always—or never—been as modern as anywhere else. His radical doubts about the analytical value of the term modernity stem from his concerns about the persistence of dualistic ways of thinking in Western social science, particularly within his own discipline of anthropology. For him, as discussed in chapter 3, "Modernity and Tradition: Shifting Boundaries, Shifting Contexts," the workshop's question entailed the assumption of a historical narrative dominated by a Western modernity that blazed the trail of progress and prosperity, leaving all other societies limping along haltingly in its wake, and determining the context in which Latin America defines itself and is defined by others, both temporally and spatially. He discusses two commentaries on García Canclini's *Hybrid Cultures* (1992) in order to illustrate how difficult it is to eliminate an underlying teleology and a scaling effect in which modernity is writ large scale and global while tradition is rendered small scale and local. Even though he takes the view, contrary to some critics, that García Canclini's text does destabilize both "tradition" and "modernity," he notes that the very possibility of the hybrid implies that we know what was traditional and what was modern in the first place (just as *mestizaje* is dependent upon a notion of racial purity, as Wade has argued elsewhere). More optimistically, he argues that anthropology can also offer ways to undo these dualisms and their underlying Eurocentrism. Drawing on the biological concept of natural selection, he suggests that a model of complex networks, involving nonlinearity and internally generated organization, can act as a source of inspiration for thinking in non-scalar and non-teleological ways, even though social scientists would have to find some way of accounting for human agency. He goes on to offer a series of examples of how approaches placing more emphasis on multilateralism and mutual exchange might work in particular analytical contexts. In his own research, particularly on music in Colombia, he found that the supposedly traditional—a category to which great significance was

attached by all those involved—was often as hybridized and as modern as the modernity with which it was forming hybrids. Overall, Wade's radical skepticism about the analytical value of the term modernity acts as a compelling reminder that even though academics now make ritual obeisance to the idea that our categories of analysis, such as global and local, modernity and tradition, are ways of reading and construing processes of change rather than objective realities in themselves, in practice it is not always easy to keep this in sight.

Historian Guy Thomson starts chapter 4, "Mid-Nineteenth-Century Modernities in the Hispanic World," by discussing a historical example of precisely what Wade was talking about: the construction of categories by anthropologists to suit their own ends. In rural Mexico during the 1920s, U.S. anthropologists built models of cultural change based on a conception of modernization as inevitable, but in the process they gathered much empirical evidence about the presence of "modern" practices and goods. Drawing not on their analytical model but on the kind of evidence about subjective and cultural experience that lay behind it, Thomson adopts a similarly local-level perspective to compare two regions in Mexico and Spain where, he argues, a consciously experienced modernity was felt in the mid-nineteenth century. Thomson goes on to discuss the potential strengths and weaknesses of comparative history as a methodological approach, taking as a case in point C. A. Bayly's *The Birth of the Modern World 1780–1914* (2003). Bayly's premise was that being modern was at least partly a process of self-definition; therefore, evidence about subjective experience had to be taken into account—an approach that Thomson found inspiring. Yet supposedly "global" histories are necessarily selective. The Hispanic world is largely omitted from Bayly's book, and when it is mentioned it is invariably in stereotypical terms that are bound to strike any Latin Americanist as astounding, especially given the author's sensitivity to comparable situations in Asia. In this respect, Bayly's approach illustrates the force of Wade's points about the dangers of retaining perspectives of teleology and scaling, even when it is resistance to the dominant model that is being privileged in the discussion. Thomson then goes on to demonstrate, in his own carefully documented reconstruction of everyday life in Puebla Sierra and the Málaga-Granada highlands from the 1850s to the 1870s, how comparative history can give very precise content to a concept of modernity. For Thomson, whose approach integrates economic, political, social, and cultural factors, modernity entails a culture of consumption, secular associational life, and the politicization of traditional solidarities around democratic ideals. His evidence

about the presence of civic associations and democratic practices in public everyday life is supported by Carlos Forment for Mexico and Peru, and prospectively for Argentina and Cuba too (Forment 2003). Thomson's chapter, which has the advantage of comparing a Latin American and a non-Latin American example, provides ample evidence of the limitations of any teleological model—movements toward modernity can go back as well as forward, as was shown by events in Mexico after the restoration of the Republic in 1867, when the previously increasing belief in democracy and economic progress was tempered by authoritarian reaction. A culture of consumption had been created without a corresponding culture of citizenship. Thomson's case studies illustrate the possibilities of thinking non-teleologically, but whereas Wade's logic leads him to jettison the concept of modernity altogether, Thomson strives to give it specific content within a comparative framework.

Chapter 5 by Alan Knight, "When Was Latin America Modern?: A Historian's Response," directly confronts the conceptual difficulties attendant on the question "When was Latin America Modern?" and comes to a skeptical conclusion as to its validity as a heuristic device (although granting it an instrumental value in stimulating debate). The focus of his concerns is different from Wade's, however. From his point of view, careful attention to historical process can counter the dangers of teleology and scaling (which are inherent in many of the concepts historians habitually use); the real problem with the term is that it is very difficult to give it any meaning that is both consistently applicable and rigorous. He draws attention to the valuable distinction (drawn from linguistics via anthropology) between the "emic" and the "etic," or how concepts are understood by actors in a specific historical context and how they are used by social scientists in their analyses of those actors. He argues that the term "modernity" was not used in Latin America until the late twentieth century (and then primarily in academic discourse). In addressing the issue of the specific analytical content of the terms "modern" and "modernity," however, he challenges those who see modernity in Latin America as primarily alien and imported, arguing that any such model both "neglects multiple invention and discovery" and denies Latin America any "autonomous capacity to generate its own modernity" (p. 98). If modernity means anything, he suggests, it refers to the package of ideas and assumptions known as the European Enlightenment. Even then, the situation is far from clear, for in many parts of Europe itself, let alone in other parts of the world, the history of the spread of those ideas is "one of selective appropriation, distortion, and repudiation"

(p. 101). It is possible, he suggests, and possibly even useful, to trace manifestations of these ideas in various regions of various countries of Latin America, at various times. To go further, however, to try to determine when Latin America became modern, is, he concludes, to apply an ill-defined concept to a necessarily limited set of data.

Chapter 6 by William Rowe, "When Was Peru Modern? On Declarations of Modernity in Peru," displays the insights that can be gleaned from taking up the challenge to escape the confines of linear thinking. The narrative of progress has been so unquestioned an assumption of post-Enlightenment intellectual models, he suggests, that "to think temporal heterogeneity requires an act of will" (p. 140). As José Carlos Mariátegui famously argued, the Eurocentric Marxist framework of history in stages, progressing from feudalism to capitalism to socialism, could not meaningfully be applied to Peruvian realities: the only way to overcome the view of Peru's history as lacking was to redeem the past by a willed projection of it into the future. Identifying a correspondence between Mariátegui's ideas about history and Walter Benjamin's discussion of the possibilities for reading the relationship between the past and the present, Rowe develops a critique of conventional historical method, with its adherence to sequential narrative. To do so, he explores various scenes, from nineteenth- and twentieth-century Peruvian literary and historical texts, in which various recognizably modern senses of temporality are constituted. His idea is that the sections of his chapter, each of which evokes one particular scene of modernity, can be read in any order: they are conceived as a constellation, not as a continuum. The presentation of the material thus—negating seriality and sequentiality; bringing together temporality and spatiality—both enacts and illustrates his main argument that a nonlinear approach is necessary to understanding the idea of modernity in Peru. Historicity matters, but so does cultural distinctiveness. Images of modernity are generated not only at a particular time but also in a specific space. It may be, he implies, that the only way to approach modernity in Latin America is to retain a keen sense of awareness that there will always be a gap, an insufficiency in what can be known. Peru has been "simultaneously modern and non-modern," (p. 130) and anyone who analyzes the country's history needs to find a heuristic device sufficiently flexible and self-critical to encompass that multiple reality.

Instead of focusing directly on the value of modernity as an analytical term, João Cezar de Castro Rocha approaches the problem from a different angle, discussing it in what Alan Knight calls "emic" terms, that is, how it was understood in the specific historical context of late

nineteenth-century Brazil. Then and there, one key component of modernity, along with economic progress and social justice, was the desire to be up-to-date with the latest trends in the central powers. Just because elements of teleology and scaling were thereby embedded in the emic experience, however, does not mean that they are necessarily carried over into the “etic” analysis, as chapter 7 by de Castro Rocha, “Belatedness as Critical Project: Machado de Assis and the Author as Plagiarist,” shows. In discussing how the major Brazilian novelist Machado de Assis responded to modernization, de Castro Rocha also offers an analytical approach to modernity that helps to go beyond the fact that teleology and scaling tend to be built in to projects of modernity themselves, thereby making it even harder for the would-be analyst of modernity to shed those assumptions. What his case study shows is that even what might appear to be highly constrained circumstances—in this instance, the effects of traumatic modernization in the context of what has always been read as the oppressive historical bind of civilization versus barbarism—can actually produce radically different outcomes. While not denying that a fatalistic response engendering pessimism and/or repression was and has remained a major factor in Latin American cultural politics, de Castro Rocha illustrates how Machado de Assis developed a response that was optimistic and creative. Rather than seeing the impossibility of originality as disempowering, Machado explored the idea that it was in practice the opposite because it liberated him from relating himself to any particular tradition and opened up the possibility of appropriating any and every tradition. In other words, he accepted his location as always already behindhand, but reinterpreted it as an advantage not a hindrance. Thus, by adopting a strategy that de Castro Rocha calls “belatedness as critical project,” Machado becomes a conscious plagiarist, undermining existing (especially Romantic) concepts of authorship, drawing attention to the extent to which all writers, everywhere, are first of all readers, and demonstrating the inadequacy of analytical frameworks of Latin American culture based on the “anxiety of influence.”

Julio García Espinosa, in chapter 8 “Cuban Cinema: A Long Journey Towards the Light,” brings a cinematographer’s eye to the issues, looking at modernity through the frame of Cuban film, in which, as is well known, he himself has played a highly significant role as a pioneering director and a joint founder (with Tomás Gutiérrez Alea) of the Cuban Film Institute (ICAIC). His account of the rise and development of Cuban cinema from virtual nonexistence before the Revolution to playing a key role in making not just Cuba but also

Latin America as a region *visible* is yet another telling instance of how close historical analysis can illuminate the importance of a convergence of conditions in bringing about modernity. He and Gutiérrez Alea, returning to Cuba from Rome in the mid-1950s, fired up by their studies of Italian neo-Realism and full of enthusiasm for creating a Cuban film industry, rapidly found themselves imprisoned by the dictator Batista for their first short documentary. It was only after the Revolution that there was any real possibility of realizing a national cinema in Cuba. Thus it was a particular combination of individual technological expertise, acquired through a temporary migration, along with a specific set of political circumstances—a government committed to establishing autonomy for Cuba—that created the potential to effect a “definitive emancipation” through cinema. The mutual dependence of autonomy and authenticity is yet again confirmed. The case also illustrates how, in the ductile history of modernity, no particular factor has any inevitable value attached to it: the international context of the Cold War, which in the 1950s had acted as a constraint, had by the 1960s turned into an opportunity, and García Espinosa notes 1989 as a turning point (and mostly a negative one) in the history of Cuban cinema. He ends by emphasizing that the full emancipatory promise of film has not yet been realized because of the success of commercial filmmakers in replacing the “aura” of a work of art with the charisma of the film star. Suggesting that film festivals should award prizes to the “best character” rather than the “best actor,” or the “least alienating film,” García Espinosa develops a distinctively Latin American (which is specifically not national) version of modernity that retains and revives the original emancipatory promise of Enlightenment ideas, complemented by a commitment to overcoming the alienation dwelt upon by European modernists through social solidarity and ethical responsibility.

Néstor García Canclini opens chapter 9, “Culture and Communication in Inter-American Relations: The Current State of an Asymmetric Debate,” by pointing out that many of the conventional debates about modernity in Latin America—exuberant modernism versus deficient modernization; the persistence of the traditional in a context of modernization—were all conceived within a national context. His main concern, now that the nation is no longer the main backdrop against which modernization occurs, is to analyze the effects on Latin America of a shift he identifies in recent decades from “Enlightenment modernity” to “neoliberal, globalised modernity.” During the same period, the United States has displaced Europe as Latin America’s main referent for modernity. In the context of these two phenomena,

and building on earlier work (2002), García Canclini brings together analysis of socioeconomic transformations (particularly shifts in patterns of migration) and of social imaginaries. He argues that, while cultural exchange between “North” and “South” America does work both ways, the main point to emphasize is that it is asymmetric. This can be seen particularly clearly, he notes, in the contradiction between the U.S. embrace of social multiculturalism (affirmative action policies and so forth) and its concurrent marginalization of cultural goods—notably films—from outside its own territory. Thus multiculturalism—“the simple legitimacy offered by differences” (p. 188)—can function as a smokescreen. A crucial first step on the route to promoting the interconnectedness between the Americas, tolerance of difference and solidarity with subalterns that multiculturalists claim to seek, is to analyze the growing inequality created by the persistent asymmetrical power relations that ensure that the emancipatory promise of modernity is still not open to all. His analytical framework, seeing modernity in terms of the migration of people, goods, and ideas, is potentially applicable to earlier periods.

Divergences and Convergences

As will be evident from what has just been said, the contributors to this book take different positions on certain central problems of the topic: notably (1) the relationship between the objective and subjective aspects of modernity, and the related question of sources and their status; (2) the issue of whether modernity was imported, adapted, or invented and, if it came from abroad, whether it did so in successive waves or in one big bang (if so, which one?); (3) the role of ideas and intellectuals; and (4) the value of the term “modernity” in itself, either because of worries about its normative implications and/or because of concern that the category has to be bent so far in order to accommodate the varieties of experience that it had become meaningless and, therefore, analytically redundant. An emphasis on the constructedness and contestedness of modernity was enough to save the term for some (Radcliffe, Rowe), but not for others (Wade, Knight).

More unexpected is the degree of convergence on certain issues. First, there is broad consensus on the need to complement temporality with spatiality. Although those who focus on texts tend to think more about time, and those who focus on material culture tend to place more emphasis on space, all the contributors work on the basis that both should be taken into account. Sarah Radcliffe’s reformulation of the question as “In which spaces was Latin America modern?”

won broad acceptance. Had the conference been entitled “Where was Latin America modern?” however, it is likely that “where” would have been interrogated as much as “when,” and the need for a supplementary question along the lines of “in what domains?” or “in what spheres?” would have been identified. Second, all the contributors operate on the basis that the postcolonial paradigm is inadequate, especially in relation to Latin America, above all for its eternal return to the colonial encounter as the source of everything, including explanation. Even though historians of the region have tended to play down the changes brought about by the wars of independence (arguing for a periodization from 1750 to 1850), there is (as Radcliffe argues) a need for more work on the discontinuities between colony and independence, not least on the effects of the wars themselves in bringing about a fast-forwarding toward modernity (now an emerging area of historiography). Moreover, there is no automatic overlap between colonial/colonized and modern/non-modern or traditional, and indeed it is analytically crucial that all such dualisms be carefully historicized. Third, the two main avatars of modernization in the region, capitalism and the nation-state, were neither monolithic nor omnipotent. Indeed, as Radcliffe emphasized, drawing on David Harvey’s work, capitalism operates precisely by exploiting existing variations in wealth. The nation-state is widely seen as a vehicle for modernity, but as much of the evidence presented here shows, cultural conceptions of the nation often won out over political ones. The emancipatory potential of the imagined community was thereby constrained as a gap opened up between a national ideal based on sovereignty and equality and the realities of arbitrary state power and dependency. As Claudio Lomnitz has argued elsewhere, the “resulting hybrids” have often been “interpreted as a manifestation of the resilience of national culture” so “the failure of modernizing projects is itself used to construct the national subject which is meant to be liberated by the nation-state” (Lomnitz 2000: 239). On the other hand, there is plenty of evidence, both in this volume and in the broader literature (Quijano 1990; Lomnitz 2001; Sáenz 2002), that the emancipatory promise of the modern has been remarkably persistent in Latin America.

Conclusion

The issues are not so much terminological as methodological. Some Latin Americanists argue for multiple modernities, arguing that such a framework allows for historicization as well as recognition of alternatives and challenges (Roniger and Waisman 2002; Whitehead 2006; and

conclusion to this volume). Others resist what they see as an “easy pluralism” that “conceals” the history of imperialist domination and exploitation behind the constitution of modernist values (Sáenz 2002: viii). It is not easy in practice to shed assumptions about teleology and scaling, especially when they are built in to the emic usage of the concepts discussed. Moreover, as Radcliffe notes, modernity’s power has operated historically precisely through its practices of privileging certain historical changes over others, and a strong analytical model of modernity would be able to take this into account. Although much useful work has been done on circuits of exchange of ideas and the reciprocity of constructions of self and other, in all of it there is a danger, as García Canclini reminds us, of eliding the enduring asymmetry of power relations between, say, the United States and any Latin American country. No single term or model in itself enables us to escape Eurocentrism, and anyway we all tend to classify those values we do not like as Eurocentric (often, individualism and free markets) and those we do (such as solidarity and autonomy) as subaltern. And often we take inordinate trouble to differentiate carefully in relation to Latin America whilst cavalierly dismissing the complexities of a “Europe” that has repeatedly produced strong internal critiques of its own values (as has the United States). The substitution of “multiple modernities” for “modernity” will not *in itself* secure the avoidance of determinism or condescension. In this collection, Rowe, whose chapter is the most radical in enacting, rather than merely proposing, a new methodology, retains the concept of modernity, albeit defined in the subjective, experiential terms that in themselves make it easier to accommodate difference. The “new analytical language” that is often called for (Sáenz 2002: x) is not enough on its own: it is also a matter of new questions, new sources and new perspectives, above all of preserving a constant state of awareness that outcomes could have been different, that processes interact with events in unexpected ways, and that language matters. That said, as Laurence Whitehead argues in his wide-ranging concluding chapter to this volume, the “multiple modernities” framework is potentially strong enough to accommodate these challenges.

In developing new approaches, we suggest that interdisciplinarity, for all its potential pitfalls, is not only desirable but fundamental. As discussions at the workshop showed, historical evidence (nowadays drawing on an increasingly wide range of sources) reminds us of the inadequacies of teleology. Literary and cultural studies’ attention to language, textuality, and meaning draws attention to the aspirational aspects of modernity, to the recurrent idea that the modern is always

elsewhere (or, if the argument is taken to its extreme, as in Bruno Latour's *We have Never Been Modern*, nowhere). In other words, modernity is best seen not as an achieved state, but as endlessly deferred by definition. Literary history also highlights that the modern by no means always moves from centre to periphery: after the First World War, "avant-garde movements appeared simultaneously in the margins and in the center" (Geist and Monleón 1999: xxx). The social sciences compel us to attend to the implications of the analytical terms we choose.

Thus, in thinking about the role of external models in the creation of Latin American modernity, it is possible to see European experiences as historical precedents without necessarily seeing them as normative. Historically, a variety of experiences not only from Europe and the United States but also from many other places (notably Japan, China, the Soviet Union, Australia, and New Zealand) did indeed function as guides in Latin America—although often as to what *not* to do. Work on the historical reconstruction of how external ideas were assimilated, adapted, challenged, and appropriated in Latin America has supplied ample evidence that in itself challenges normative assumptions, although there is far more to be done in this area. It was not always the case that outside models were well received in Latin America and contested only by difficulties of implementation. At least from the early twentieth century onward, critiques and alternatives were proposed from within the region, responses that cannot be adequately understood if conceived in terms of resistance to the modern. Although it seems to be the case that the term "modernidad" only became current in Latin America in the context of recent debates about postmodernity, "moderno" and "lo moderno" was certainly used, for example, in the titles of popular magazines, from the early twentieth century onward. The key question is how external models were mediated, which was far more varied than has always been acknowledged.

In this respect, the way forward seems to lie in an analytical approach that enables us to leave behind the argument about whether ideas or material forces are the prime agents of history. Surely, as Charles Taylor has argued, human practices are always to some extent, even when "coercively maintained," based on "self-conceptions, modes of understanding," whereas "ideas always come in history wrapped up in certain practices, even if these are only discursive practices" (Taylor 2004: 31 and 33). His model of the social imaginary, or "what enables, through making sense of, the practices of a society" (Taylor: 2), is one proposal for going beyond this false dichotomy, and

also offers a way of giving social depth to a topic that is all too often analyzed in relation to elites. Radcliffe's conception of modernity in terms of discourse, project, and experience might usefully be extended to include historical consciousness, which would allow for the incorporation of the argument that modernity entails a particular consciousness of time, denoted especially by anticipation of a progressive future and a sense of accelerating change (Koselleck 2002). In any case, it seems important to find a model of modernity that can incorporate both objective and subjective elements, rather than seeing it either as an outcome of measurable historical processes or as a nebulous cultural project. Modernity is perhaps best seen as a cluster concept, as a set of aspirations and potentialities, any of which can be emphasized, reinterpreted, criticized, celebrated, or marginalized in any particular historical situation, but none of which can be entirely discarded if a state of "modernity" is to command widespread recognition. In sum, we suggest that both the humanities and the social sciences need to find room for the kind of question that is not cognate either with value-laden terms such as "happy" and "good" (chapter 4 by Alan Knight, p. 91) or with the more readily verifiable "literate," "urban," or "industrial": a question like, for all its flaws, "when was Latin America modern?"

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