

Acknowledgments

This project began in Bogotá's Biblioteca Nacional, as I read nineteenth-century newspapers for my earlier book on Colombian popular political beliefs and actions. I spent most of my time uncovering hints of how indigenous peoples, ex-slaves, and small farmers appeared in the historical record. Now and again, however, I would turn away from my intensely local pursuits and glance at the news of the world these nineteenth-century papers reported. At first, this was just a diversion, playing hooky from my real work—it was fun to see what Colombians thought about the U.S. Civil War, or Garibaldi's adventures in Italy, or Maximilian's empire in Mexico. After a while, however, I became troubled. These Colombian writers were not seeing the world in the way that I had been taught they should. They were not pining for a distant European civilization, hoping to imitate the latest fashion from Paris, and depressed about the sad state of their own barbarous republics. Instead, these writers expressed a great confidence in their own societies, the Americas as a whole, and their place in creating a new future for the world. My effort to understand this contradiction, to understand how nineteenth-century Latin Americans saw the world and their place in it, became this book.

Since this project began quite some time ago, I have accumulated more debts than seem warranted. As my partner is a librarian, I must begin by

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