

Introduction

I am not sure exactly when or where the term “Latinamericanism” (or, as it is more usually written, “Latin Americanism”) originates. But its current usage is almost certainly a consequence of Edward Said’s *Orientalism*, which was originally published in 1978. Alberto Moreiras—whose own book on Latinamericanism, *The Exhaustion of Difference*, I take up in chapter 3—claims that the first use of the term in a sense coincident with Said’s comes in two essays by Enrico Mario Santí from the early 1990s, just as the implications of the postcolonial turn, cultural studies, and multi-cultural identity politics began to percolate into the Latin American field.¹ The first book-length articulation of the term that I am aware of is Román de la Campa’s book *Latin Americanism* (1999), which I am indebted to in several ways here—indeed, this book could be considered an updating, or reframing, of some of its major concerns. There (with, however, only a passing reference to Santí) de la Campa describes Latinamericanism as “a community of discourses [about Latin America] that has gained particular force during the past few decades, mainly in the United States, but also beyond.”² Moreiras himself defines what he calls “Latin Americanist reflection” as “the sum total of academic discourse on Latin America whether carried out in Latin America, the United States, in Europe, or elsewhere.”³

The word *Latinoamericanismo* appeared prominently in the title of an influential 1998 collection on these issues published in Latin America, *Teorías sin disciplina: Latinoamericanismo, poscolonialidad, y globalización en debate*.⁴ In 2002, the Centre for Latin American and Caribbean Studies at

the University of Manchester sponsored a conference on “The New Latin Americanism,” presumably to distinguish it from a bad, old kind.⁵ From the perspective of postcolonial studies Walter Mignolo interrogated both historically and conceptually “the idea of Latin America” in a book of the same title (2004), noting that in its current articulation that idea “is believed to provide a unified front to confront the growing military, economic, and technological invasion coming from the United States. Black and Indigenous communities are fighting for the same cause. . . . ; but they are not doing it in the name of ‘Latin’ America, since ‘Latin’ Americans have also been their exploiters” (129–30). Neil Larsen indicted harshly what he calls a “Latin-Americanism without Latin America” based in the U.S. academy and the humanities–cultural studies side of Latin American studies.⁶ As if in response to both Mignolo and Larsen, Eduardo Mendietta speaks of “Latinamericanisms,” arguing that “Latinamericanism is plural because it has been about how Latin America has been portrayed by at least four major agents of imagination: Latin America itself; the United States, Europe, and, most recently, Latinos. . . . The four types of Latin-americanism register not just a particular chronology but also the shifting of the location, or geopolitical place, of the imaging agent.”⁷

These examples could be easily multiplied. They serve only to delimit a certain range of usage of the term in critical discussions of the last fifteen years or so. The latest significant engagement with the idea of Latinamericanism is perhaps Jon Beasley-Murray’s *Posthegemony: Political Theory and Latin America* (2010), whose argument I take up in passing at several points in this book (Beasley-Murray was one of the organizers of the conference on the New Latin Americanism mentioned above). I would like to consider in some greater detail here, however, Santí’s foundational articulation of the idea of Latinamericanism, which he evokes in rough analogy to Edward Said’s concept of Orientalism. Like Orientalism, Santí argues, Latinamericanism produces an “interested *image*” of its object from a distance still defined by an essentially colonial relation:

By invoking the discourse of Latinamericanism I am merely restating one of the fundamental principles underlying all knowledge regarding Latin America, perhaps regarding the entire so-called third world—namely, the mixture of a Western language and imagination with physical and cultural realities that are only marginally Western. . . . We know many facts about Latin America, but we know little or at least much less about the use

to which the West puts those facts in the construction of a certain interested *image* of Latin America, an image often at odds with the reality from which those facts are derived. (*Ciphers*, 219)

For Said, Orientalism was basically a form of philology; similarly, for Santí, philology, as an academic practice involved with the recuperation or construction of a literary and cultural past, often “national” in character, is the core practice of Latinamericanism. That makes Latinamericanism a discourse formation centered on the humanities, rather than, as in the dominant paradigms of area studies, the social sciences (though it does not exclude the social sciences). Santí’s claim is that the discourse of Latinamericanism involves what he calls—borrowing the term from Geoffrey Hartmann—a “restitutional excess”: the recovery of the past in the name of a present moral, intellectual, and/or ideological imperative. “Rather than represent the past in its irreducible otherness, philology translates and reinvents it in the name of mastery of the present Self” (*Ciphers*, 90). That “mastery of the present Self” is in turn connected to the assumption that the recovery of a (previously fragmented or misunderstood) past involves also righting a wrong. That is why it is “restitutional.” “A branch of learning with its own specific object, nineteenth-century philology had an additional ideological mission of its own: to overcome alienation and restore wholeness and harmony, viewing the past not merely as an antiquarian object but as broken pieces of a past whose reintegration into present life would restore a continuity between past and present” (90). Contemporary Latinamericanism takes the form of a project of “sympathy”—to use Santí’s own word (others might say “solidarity”)⁸—with Latin America (if the project is undertaken from outside Latin America itself), or of nationalist affirmation (if undertaken within Latin America). In both cases, the restitution is “excessive” because it seeks to “compensate” in its restoration or creation of the past some lack, wrong, or alienation that is contained in that past or has been inflicted on it. Santí writes that, “as a critical practice, restitution is supplementary in character—in compensating for a previous lack it exceeds rather than simply restores the original” (*Ciphers*, 87).

Said meant by Orientalism the representation by the European academy and high culture in the nineteenth century (but also before and after that century) of an Islamic or Asian colonial or semicolonial other. Santí articulates, in his idea of Latinamericanism as a discourse founded on a

perhaps well-meaning but ultimately paternalistic sense of “sympathy,” a similar sense of Latinamericanism as an “interested” discourse about Latin America from Europe or the United States. But, for Santí the relation between Latinamericanism and its object is not as one-sided as Orientalism—which, as Said went to some pains to explain, itself involves complex relations of knowledge and authority between metropolitan and local intellectuals. This is for two reasons: first, Latinamericanism is not only the discourse of a metropolitan European or Anglo-American academy *about* a geopolitically peripheral, at one time colonial and now still dependent or subordinate object of study, Latin America; it is also a set of discursive positions and practices internal to Latin America itself, developed in the Latin American public sphere, university knowledge, disciplinary trajectories, art, literature, literary criticism, and cultural debates. Santí’s model case of “restitutional excess” is precisely Octavio Paz’s famous reading of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz’s renunciation of literature, under pressure from her Church superiors in the late seventeenth century. Santí argues that Paz, in effect, imposes on Sor Juana a framework of choice between authority and the autonomy of the writer and literature that more properly belongs to the debates of the Cold War (for example, in the context of postrevolutionary Cuba) about communism and artistic freedom. In other words, the problem of the “orientalization” of a Latin American subject exists for Santí not only in the philological relation between a metropolitan subject that seeks to “know the other” and a semicolonial or peripheral culture or cultures; it also exists as a problem of “internal colonialism,” to use a term that is somewhat out of fashion these days (and that Santí himself does not use): that is, in the relation of the Latin American “lettered city” to its own societies and history.

Where for Santí “restitutional excess” indicates (to use Paul de Man’s term) a certain “blindness” in the project of Latinamericanist discourse—whether this is articulated *in* or *about* Latin America—he also understands this excess is also the place where the possible *political* articulation of Latinamericanism, including its implications for the project of the Left (which must take the ideological form of establishing or restoring a reign of justice), reside. And it is that connection between Latinamericanist theory or discourse and liberal or left-wing politics in particular that Santí wants to question. Santí’s critique of Latinamericanism as “restitutional excess” is closely connected in particular to the related critique of identity politics in the U.S. academy.⁹ For Santí, both Latinamericanism

and identity politics could be said to involve a self-satisfied but misguided academic liberalism or “leftism,” usually tarred with the charge of “political correctness” (from the right) or of “essentialism” (from the left). The perspective of this book, by contrast, is that there is no clear line of separation between identity politics—and I understand Latinamericanism to be a form of identity politics—and politics. To put this another way, “restitutional excess,” which is linked to the affirmation of “identity” (personal, ethnic, racial, class, gender, civic, national, etc.), might be said to be the form of the political as such. So it is not enough simply to point to or “deconstruct” its presence, as Santi does. The question is not whether Latinamericanism is “in” ideology, but rather what kind of ideology is being proposed under that rubric.¹⁰ The chapters in this book have to do with how Latin America itself has become a politically volatile signifier in the new context of globalization, not just a kind of misnomer that never really named its object adequately in the first place. A theme that runs through them is the failure of a certain project of modernity in Latin America, and consequently the need to reimagine Latin American nation-states, societies, cultural identity, and politics at a moment in which not only communism but also a capitalist-neoliberal model of modernization have entered into crisis. At the level of what Walter Benjamin would have called “the experience of the poor,” that crisis is registered for me in two recent works of Latin American cultural criticism, Ileana Rodríguez’s *Liberalism at Its Limits* and Hermann Herlinghaus’s *Violence without Guilt: Ethical Narratives from the Global South*. Both of these texts have to do with the collapse of even imperfect, unequal (but functional) forms of sociality and governmentality in Latin America under the pressure of neoliberal economic restructuring, particularly in the 1990s (it is not by accident that they both center on the question of the U.S.–Mexico border and the violence associated with narcotraffic and the wave of killings of women—the so-called *femicidio*—in Ciudad Juárez). That collapse forces criticism to think from or about a situation of disaster; but, dialectically as it were, it also raises what Herlinghaus calls “the possibility of criticism in its contamination by the immanence of life itself” (2009, 203). I would hope that this book involves in some small measure that possibility. However, I should also note that my approach here points in a somewhat different direction.

The “text of violence” has become a major trope in Latinamericanist literary and cultural criticism in recent years for reasons that are not hard

to comprehend (they are in the latest headlines about the atrocious death toll of the Mexican drug wars or the counterrevolutionary violence in rural Colombia, for example). But I think there is the risk of representing Latin America as essentially violent and ungovernable. I want to indicate here also what seems to me promising or hopeful in the immediate horizon of Latin America's becoming. In particular, I am trying to register what I think is a shift in circumstances—it might be useful to characterize it as postneoliberal—that may warrant new theoretical and critical approaches. This is in part what I mean by a Latinamericanism that is *after* 9/11. Let me explain.

Why, if my point is to write about something that has to do with Latin America, do I choose as a title *Latinamericanism after 9/11* (9/11 being an event particular to the United States), rather than something like *Latinamericanism and the Bicentennial*, invoking thus the anniversary of the first formal declarations of independence from Spain of different regions of Latin America in 1810? It is a commonplace that everyone had the thought on 9/11 that things would never be the same again. By “after 9/11,” then, I mean to indicate the sea change in everything from geopolitics to the individual psyche that occurs in the wake of the terrorist attacks on that date. In terms of the relation between the United States and Latin America in particular, 9/11 could be said to inaugurate a double movement that comes not only “after” but also to some extent *because* of the effects of 9/11 and its aftermath. Before 9/11, and especially during the Clinton presidency in the 1990s, geopolitically the United States and the neoliberal assumptions of the so-called Washington consensus were hegemonic in every sphere of Latin American life. After 9/11, that hegemony begins to fade. The United States turns increasingly in a right-wing direction, leading to, externally, the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan and the War on Terror, and, internally, the process of deregulation that culminated in the economic crisis of 2009. A significant part of Latin America, on the other hand, begins to shift away from identification with U.S. power post-9/11. The strong disinclination of Latin American governments (with one or two exceptions) to send troops to the Coalition of the Willing in Iraq and Afghanistan marks one of the first breaks since the 1970s from the model of regional economic and geopolitical integration under U.S. auspices represented by NAFTA and the Washington consensus.

More specifically, however, what the phrase “after 9/11” is meant to in-

voke is the appearance in the last decade or so of a series of new governments of the Left in Latin America of a very varied character: the “Pink Tide” or *marea rosada* that has engulfed the whole continent. The roots of the *marea rosada* are in the bloody urban upheaval that took place in Venezuela on February 27, 1989 (the “Caracazo”), and the subsequent emergence of Hugo Chávez as a political leader, then the sharp economic crises in the late 1990s and early years of the new century, including notably the Brazilian devaluation of 1999 and the economic collapses of Ecuador in 1999–2000 and of Argentina in 2001. In electoral terms, the first instance of the *marea rosada* is the Chávez government of 1998. But as a general movement or trend, it certainly comes into its own in the years after 9/11, when the United States turned its attention away from Latin America, and Latin American states began to shift away from an identification with both the geopolitical and economic frameworks of the Washington consensus.

Whatever its eventual outcome (does it herald a more general and deeper radicalization, or is it forced by its own self-imposed reformism to be a kind of Latin American capitalism with a human face?), the *marea rosada* has the character of what the French philosopher Alain Badiou calls an “event”: that is, something unexpected, unpredicted, radically contingent and overdetermined, but which, in that very contingency and overdetermination, opens up a new, unforeseen, and unforeseeable series of possibilities and determinations. Let me be clear that this is not a book about the *marea rosada* as such. It is however a book founded on the assumption that the *marea rosada*—whatever its outcome—has shifted the grounds of Latinamericanist thinking in a significant way. It has done so, in the first place, by giving a new ideological and geopolitical force to the idea of Latin America itself.

The governments of the *marea rosada* are of a very heterogeneous character, but in spite of their ideological and at times economic points of difference and conflict, they share a common political identity as governments of the Left (they are perhaps more accurately center-left governments, but the shift in what the idea of “Left” means is itself part of the dynamic of the *marea rosada*),¹¹ and a project (postneoliberal regional economic cooperation and affirmation). At moments of crisis—for example, the attempted putsch by reactionary groups in the province of Santa Cruz in Bolivia in 2008—they support each other, often via newly created regional deliberative bodies like UNASUR (the Unión de Naciones

Suramericanas) or the ALBA (Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América). Though sometimes they have roots in popular insurrections, such as the Caracazo in Venezuela or the indigenous blockades in Ecuador and Bolivia, they work effectively and comfortably within the framework of constitutional democracy and electoral politics, which they accept. Where existing constitutional provisions represent an impediment to their political and social projects, they tend to avail themselves of the device of the constitutional referendum, with, in general, success. They see the horizon of socialism as essentially a *democratic* one, and their aim is to deepen democratic participation among sectors of the population marginalized or excluded from formal political dialogue.

I do not wish to minimize the fact that the *marea rosada* involves many ambiguities, contradictions, and uncertainties. Its very nature seems to make it open to both ideological and strategic pluralism. Like any human enterprise it is subject to failure or to the perversion of its goals. Indeed recent events, like the coup in Honduras, the attempted coup in Ecuador, or the election of right-wing candidates in Chile and Colombia, suggest that the “tide” may in fact be ebbing, and that a reactionary axis is beginning to take shape in Latin America. And many readers will find the *marea rosada* altogether too “reformist” or “populist” for their taste in any case.¹²

Nevertheless, it seems worth remarking that today, some twenty years after the collapse of the Soviet Union and “actually existing socialism,” a majority of the population of Latin America lives under democratically elected governments that identify themselves as “socialist” in one way or another. To put this another way, the only place in the world today where socialism, even as a rhetorical possibility, is on the agenda is Latin America. What “socialism” means in this case is subject to debate, but that of course was true in the cases of both communism and European social democracy too.

The events of 9/11 followed by only days the meeting of the Latin American Studies Association in Washington, D.C., in which the disbanding of the Latin American Subaltern Studies Group was announced publicly (those participants in the conference who stayed on in Washington for a day or two afterward would have witnessed the attack on the Pentagon). My own work up to that point was tied closely to subaltern studies. This book is not only “after 9/11,” then, it is also in some ways postsubalternist. This is indicated particularly by the attention given here to the question of the state. The paradigm implicit in subaltern studies (and in postmod-

ernist social theory in general) was that of the separation of the state and the subaltern. The intention was to recognize and support both previously existing and newly emergent forms of resistance that did not pass through conventional historical narratives of state formation and statist forms of citizenship and political or social participation. We are now confronted paradoxically in some ways by the success of a series of political initiatives in Latin America that, speaking very broadly, corresponded to the concerns of subaltern studies. In a situation where, as is the case of several governments of the *marea rosada*, social movements from the popular-subaltern sectors of society have “become the state,” to borrow a phrase from Ernesto Laclau, or are bidding to do so, a new way of thinking the relationship between the state and society has become necessary.

The project of Latin American subaltern studies developed in a close, one might say “fraternal” relation with deconstruction—in fact, we were sometimes taken to task for this by historians such as Florencia Mallon. We wanted to say “from the left,” so to speak, the same thing that Santí was saying “from the right”: that a certain cultural discourse of Latin American modernity and identity had reached, with the waning of the revolutionary impulse of the 1960s and 1970s, a kind of limit. In assembling the material for this book, however, I have become aware that this identification of subalternism, leftism, and deconstruction has become problematic for me. My sense is that deconstruction is yielding diminishing and politically ambiguous returns, and that this has something to do with the way in which both 9/11 and the emergence of the *marea rosada* have shifted the grounds of theory and criticism in our time.

So what? Is there in any case any really meaningful connection between the discourses of academic Latinamericanism and politics on the ground? The answer I offer in these chapters is not much (and it is important to understand why that is the case), but some, enough to make a difference sometimes. The golden age of academic theory is rapidly fading, if not already past. So much so, that what is presented here may simply be the ashes of a fire that has already been extinguished. Moreover, as Santí asks, hasn’t all the fuss about theory—even in nominally postcolonial forms—been mainly a case of U.S. and European intellectuals (or Latin American intellectuals in the U.S. or European academy) speaking to each other *about* Latin America?

Let me offer in response to both of these issues—that is, the question of “bringing the state back in,” as the current phrase has it, and the

question of the waning of theory (or its impertinence with respect to Latin America)—a small, and probably inadequate anecdote. It concerns the current vice president of Bolivia, Álvaro García Linera. In the 1990s García Linera was associated with an academic collective in Bolivia called Comuna, which resembled in some ways both the South Asian and the Latin American Subaltern Studies Groups. It was in part out of the work of Comuna that key features of the ideological and political project of the MAS (Movimiento al Socialismo) evolved, particularly around the question of how to articulate hegemonically the heterogeneous or “motley” (*abigarrado*), multicultural character of the Bolivian popular sectors.¹³ Two Bolivian academics who were close to but not formally part of Comuna, Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui and Rossana Barragán, translated and published in Bolivia a selection of texts by the South Asian group, including Gayatri Spivak’s well-known essay “Deconstructing Historiography.”¹⁴ They saw this gesture as involving a “South-South” dialogue that explicitly cut out U.S.-based Latinamericanism as an interlocutor. I think it is fair to assume that García Linera probably read this collection or parts of it, and almost certainly knew of it. If that is true, then subaltern studies itself has become—oxymoronically—part of the state.

There is no clear lesson here: Comuna itself recently split, and there has been a parallel polarization within the MAS government around the role of García Linera. But my anecdote does suggest that theory can have consequences. Those consequences can be enabling for political practice: as in the case of Comuna and García Linera, one can claim that the interaction between theory and Latinamericanism “opens up” new spaces and new forms for the articulation of the Left that were not available in the previous period of radicalization in the 1960s and 1970s. On the other hand, theory that has become outdated or missed its mark, as I have come to think is the case with deconstruction, can also lead to errors or impasses in political practice.

Because it is also part of what “after 9/11” encompasses, let me remark briefly on the relationship between the United States and Latin America—a repeated concern in these chapters. President Obama promised what he called a New Partnership with Latin America, a sort of neoliberalized version of the Good Neighbor Policy. Some—I include myself—may have even imagined for a moment that the election of Obama and the extent of the economic crisis heralded a political shift in the United States itself that would be syntonic in some ways with the *marea rosada*. But, with the

exception of some very welcome new initiatives (in the matter of U.S.-Cuban relations, for example), there is more continuity than change in Obama's Latin American policy. Its ultimate goal appears to be to continue to affirm or reaffirm U.S. regional hegemony. If this reading is correct, unless there is a significant shift of direction, the Obama administration will seek, rather than a relation of mutual sympathy with the *marea rosada*, a strategy to limit it within a framework acceptable to established U.S. interests. Hugo Chávez has remarked that Obama remains a "prisoner of empire." A harsh judgment, but one that is hard to avoid, however much one wishes Obama well.

Obama and his people have been guided in their approach to Latin America by what has come to be known as the doctrine of the "two Lefts." As enunciated by Jorge Castañeda in an influential article in *Foreign Affairs*, the resurgent Latin American Left is seen as divided between "a modern, democratic, globalized, and market-friendly left" and "a retrograde, populist, authoritarian, statist, and anti-American left."¹⁵ The task of U.S. policy toward Latin America should be to encourage the first and discourage the second. (It could be argued from that premise, for example, that what made the coup in Honduras finally acceptable to the Obama administration was that it was directed against a president, Zelaya, who was seen as having close ties with Chávez. Zelaya, in other words, belonged to or was seen as moving in the direction of the "retrograde Left"; if he had been of the "moderate Left," on the other hand, like the former president of Chile, Michelle Bachelet, the coup would not have been tolerated.)

There are indeed many, and often deep, differences among the new governments of the *marea rosada* in Latin America, but they do not resolve themselves into Castañeda's neat dichotomy, which has at best the character of a self-fulfilling prophecy. Even if there were something more to the dichotomy than simple wishful thinking, should the Obama administration in any case commit itself to a policy that puts it on a collision course with democratically elected governments in Brazil, Bolivia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Paraguay, Argentina, El Salvador, Uruguay, Guatemala, and Nicaragua? There are no doubt authoritarian "tendencies" among Chávez and perhaps other leaders of the *marea rosada*, but on the whole the Tide has been a democratic one, whereas the efforts to stem it—like the failed coup against Chávez, or the coup against Zelaya in Honduras and the attempted putsch in Santa Cruz, or the militarization of the Colombian countryside—have not been.

Behind the retrograde/modern, hard/soft Left dichotomy is a premise that the “market-friendly” good guys on the Left are those still willing to work within a framework conforming to the existing structure of international trade and markets, whereas the bad guys question that framework and are looking for ways to get out of it (by, for example, repudiating foreign debt). The most expansive and influential presentation of this argument, which is the corollary in the field of political economy of the doctrine of the “two Lefts,” is Michael Reid’s *Forgotten Continent*, which centers on “the battle for Latin America’s soul” supposedly being waged today, Reid believes, largely out of sight of the rest of the world, because Latin America dropped off the geopolitical screen after the end of the Cold War and the shift of U.S. policy in particular toward the Middle East after 9/11 (Reid is the Latin American correspondent for *The Economist*). It is a battle between the “democratic reformism” exemplified by countries such as Chile or Brazil and a state-driven “populist autocracy” represented by Chávez or Morales. There remain great problems in Latin American societies, above all poverty and inequality, Reid admits. But these will be best addressed by a process of institutional reform within the free market and existing political structures, rather than by a return to the state-centered recipes of the past. In particular, the populist edge of the *marea rosada* represents a politically dangerous and in economic terms potentially disastrous trend, which must be contained and reversed. Reid’s conclusion is that Latin America should essentially return to a new, softer version of the Washington consensus, now modified in the direction of providing greater financial stability and addressing pressing social demands.

But that way of formulating the choice that faces Latin America, like Castañeda’s idea of the “two Lefts,” has the character of a self-fulfilling prophecy. Reid questions this assumption, but most people think that the resurgence of the Latin American Left may be attributed largely if not exclusively to the enormous social problems created by the neoliberal economic policies dominant during the 1980s and 1990s, problems that were also behind the waves of immigration to the United States, and within Latin America itself, during those years. (Another way to put this is that the crisis of the neoliberal model was experienced in Latin America about a decade or so before it was felt in the United States and Europe in 2009, especially in the economic collapses of 1999–2002.) The strategies for responding to these problems may differ from country to country, de-

pending on degree of industrialization, energy requirements, local political considerations, relations with external markets, trends in prices of raw materials, and the like, but there is no doubt that *all* the new governments of the *marea rosada*, of whatever character, understand the need to move beyond the Washington consensus.¹⁶

The book that, from the Latin American side of things, could be said to coincide in some ways with Castañeda's idea of a U.S. foreign policy that favors the moderate Left and challenges the "populist" Left and with Reid's prescription for a return to the Washington consensus, is Jorge Volpi's *El insomnio de Bolívar*, a kind of panorama of the situation of Latin America on the eve of the Bicentennial of its independence.¹⁷ Volpi is a talented writer, and he offers a fresh, humorous, sharp-eyed, but also, it needs to be said, deeply reactionary view of Latin America today, of the *marea rosada* in particular, and of the possibility of anything like an affirmative Latin-americanism, whether this is populist-nationalist or the good-hearted but paternalistic liberalism of "sympathy" critiqued by Santí. He addresses himself in particular to the new, post-leftist generation (his own) of the educated middle class that has come of age in Latin America in or since the 1990s and that is anxious to be rid of what might be called the "Oedipal" burden of both an immediate and a deep Latin American historical past, and the set of literary and cultural markers associated with that past, including among other things the "magic realism" of the novels of the Latin American Boom. One has the sense that Volpi is bidding to be something like the Latin American Flaubert.¹⁸

His book centers on a strikingly provocative question in that regard:

Preguntémonos entonces, otra vez, ¿qué compartimos, en exclusiva, los latinoamericanos? ¿Lo mismo de siempre: la lengua, las tradiciones católicas, el derecho romano, unas cuantas costumbres de incierto origen indígena o africano y el recelo, ahora transformado en chistes y gracejadas, hacia España y los Estados Unidos? ¿Es todo? ¿Después de dos siglos de vida independiente eso es todo? ¿De verdad? (85)

[Let us ask ourselves, then, once again, what do we Latin Americans share in particular? The same things as always: the language, Catholic traditions, Roman Law, a few customs of uncertain indigenous or African origin, and the resentment, now transformed into jokes and witticisms, of Spain and the United States? Is that all? After two centuries of independence is that all? Truly all?]

The answer Volpi offers is equally striking: “Quizá la única manera de llevar a cabo el sueño de Bolívar sea dejando de lado a América Latina” (148) [Perhaps the only way to realize Bolívar’s dream is to abandon Latin America]. In a comic-prophetic “Cronología del futuro” at the end of his book, Volpi envisions the following sequence of events: the disappearance of his own country, Mexico, via its incorporation into the United States; then the division of the continent in two more or less cohesive regions, North and South America, with Central America and the Caribbean negotiating between them; in 2035 the creation of an “Alliance of the South” and in 2044 of a “North American Union”; war between the two entities in 2049; a gradual period of détente, leading to the formal proclamation in 2098 of something called los Estados Unidos de las Américas, the United States of the Americas; a subsequent period of civic turmoil similar to that which preceded the ratification of the Constitution in the United States; then, finally, in 2110, the emergence de facto of the new entity. That chronology is in fact the scenario of Bolívar’s last *insomnio*; with its completion, he can finally sleep: “Una América unida, menudo disparate. Sabe que el fin está cerca y de pronto se siente tranquilo, en paz. Casi sonríe mientras su semblante se llena de luz. Al fin podrá dormir” (259) [A single, united America: what a crazy idea. He knows that the end is near and suddenly he feels tranquil, at peace. He almost smiles as his face fills with light. Finally he can sleep].

As for the *marea rosada* in particular, it is an illusion:

El anunciado—y para muchos temido—despertar de la izquierda en América Latina es un espejismo o un malentendido. Cada país mantiene una dinámica propia y, más allá de la contaminación entre unos gobiernos y otros—y el errático internacionalismo de Chávez—, el triunfo o el avance de los partidos o líderes de la izquierda obedecen más a tensiones sociales y económicas internas que a una suerte de epidemia regional. . . . No existe, para decirlo llanamente *una* izquierda latinoamericana. (133–34, 135)

[The announcement—feared by many—of the awakening of the Left in Latin America is an illusion or a misunderstanding. Each country has its own dynamic and, beyond the contamination between one government and another—and the erratic internationalism of Chávez—the triumph or the advance of parties or leaders of the Left obeys more internal social and economic tensions than a sort of regional epidemic. There does not exist in fact *a* Latin American Left.]

There is in Volpi's proposal an understandable desire on the part of a younger generation in Latin America to be rid of the weight of ossified discourses and expectations, but also something old and not all that unfamiliar after all. I refer to the "annexationist" strain in certain strands of nineteenth-century Latin American liberalism that saw integration with the United States as the best course for the future. There are unexpected points of coincidence between my argument and his (for example, we both believe the war against drugs should be ended and drug use decriminalized), but I think it would be fair to say that *El insomnio de Bolívar* represents the most explicit alternative to the "Latinamericanism" or "Latinamericanisms" that are in play, often in debate with one another, in the pages of this book. What Volpi means by a "regional epidemic" is essentially what I mean by "Latinamericanism after 9/11," that is, the possibility of articulating together new positions in academic theory with new possibilities for political and social change. However, *El insomnio de Bolívar* is also a text of Latinamericanism, just as much as, say, *La unidad latinoamericana*, a recent collection of the speeches of Hugo Chávez, who is, it goes without saying, the nemesis of everything Volpi stands for. Each text is marked from opposing sides of the Latin American political and social divide by its own version of "restitutional excess."

Volpi raises the question of the massive waves of Latin American immigration to United States, which implies for him that his own country, Mexico, is now being absorbed de facto into the United States and Canada. But there is the other side of that: that is, what is happening when, with a Hispanic population currently estimated at forty-five million and rapidly growing, the United States is on the road to becoming in the next ten years or so, after Mexico, the second largest nation of the Spanish-speaking world, surpassing Spain itself in that regard. It is not surprising that in his final book *Who Are We?*, Samuel Huntington saw the "clash of civilizations" as *internal* to the United States, arguing that Hispanic immigration, rather than radical Islam, would be the greatest threat to the future of the United States as a nation-state. By the same token, many Latin American intellectuals have tended to see the growing demographic presence of immigrants from Latin America in the United States and the corresponding rise of new forms of Latino culture (and speech) as a question of immigrant assimilation and acculturation to U.S. norms, rather than as an extension of the possibility of Latin America itself. Like Huntington, but from the other side, they are concerned to police the

border between North and South. But the reality on the ground is that the border is an increasingly anachronistic and violent fiction. Some ten to twelve million Hispanics in the United States are undocumented immigrants. The question of what to do with them is the most intractable issue in U.S. politics today. But they are not going to go away, nor can they be repatriated en masse. Nor can the United States effectively check further immigration, even with very heavy policing such as that portended by the new measures adopted by the state of Arizona. Nor can the Hispanic population, both citizens and permanent residents and the undocumented, be integrated via the previously powerful forces of immigrant acculturation. Indeed, Alejandro Portes and Alex Stepik, writing about Miami, speak of Hispanic immigration and demographic growth as producing an “acculturation in reverse.”¹⁹

It follows then that, obliged by the demographic reality of its actual population, the United States will have to become as a nation something other than it is (or imagines itself to be) today, something perhaps not all that different from what the Bolivians had in mind when in the 2009 constitutional referendum they redefined Bolivia as a plurinational state, *un Estado Plurinacional*. This is a way of saying that there is not a clear line of distinction between a new Latinamericanism and a new Americanism, and therefore that the issues discussed here also pertain in some ways to the possibility of creating a new discourse of the Left in the United States.