

Disciplinary Frontier(s) Between The “Americas”

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“Latin America” has become an anachronism.
Latin America is dead.¹

People from diverse geo-political, historical, and racial standpoints understand the meaning of the word *America* in correspondingly diverse fashions. In the sixteenth century, Europeans coined the name *America* to refer to the single continent they had ‘discovered’ overseas. Since then, power relations shaped systems of knowledge that, in turn, provided a myriad of significances to the word *America*. In the contemporaneity, the term came to signify the country of the United States of America (U.S.) alone. This paper analyses the processes that transformed the meaning of America from an entire continent to one of the nations this landmass encompasses. I denounce the role that USAmerican academia played in this process of geographical and epistemological manipulation and propose a model that identifies the dismembering of the continent of America in three different stages.² Each stage corresponds to a different USAmerican project of territorial, military, political, or economic expansion and evinces specific rationales. The first stage corresponds to the *continental split*, in which North and South America were conceptualized as two different continents rather than two parts of the same continent. USAmerican intellectuals initiated this schism in the nineteenth century and cemented it in the beginning of the twentieth century to legitimize U.S. expansion towards parts of Central America, the Caribbean, and adjacent territories. The second stage is the cultural split, that ignored the previous partition of the continent into North and South America and reconceptualized it into the new categories of *Anglo* and *Latin America*. It has roots in the first decades of the twentieth century, but both academia and the general public systematically incorporated the division after World War II. The cultural split makes part of a project that isolated the U.S. as a global hegemonic power. And, finally, the third stage is the *global divide* between the ‘West and the rest,’ a product of Cold War and Area Studies that degraded Latin America to a non-Western status in the second half of the twentieth century. I argue that, while both the state and academia combined forces to achieve the two first stages, ‘Western scholars,’ mostly from the U.S., hold exclusive authorship of the third stage.³

Anglophone historiographies of the ‘Americas,’ especially of Latin America, are the basis for this paper. I focus on literature published in English for two main reasons. Firstly, because most of the discourses that produced and justified the conceptualizations of the different Americas originated in the Northern hemisphere of America and, therefore, compose the core object of inquiry of this paper.⁴ Secondly, the ultimate legitimization of these discourses depends on not only producers, but consumers. Scholarship in English, an academic *lingua franca*, is universally consumed, but literature in other languages reaches a significantly smaller audience in Anglophone countries. Many were voices in Spanish, Portuguese, or many other languages spoken throughout the continent, that tried to redress conceptualizations about the continent summarily imposed by Europe, at first, and,

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posteriorly, the U.S.⁵ Suffice it to say that, while the U.S. adopts the geographical model of seven continents, with North America and South America as distinct continents, most countries in Latin America adopt the six-continents model, in which America remains only one.⁶ This foundational discrepancy in perspectives of the world can elucidate the power of geolocation in a system of knowledge, constituting a proof for the deliberate annihilation of epistemes originating in the peripheries of the so-called ‘Western World.’

Embracing peripheral epistemes, this paper adopts the six-continental model in which America constitutes one single continent. More than a stubborn act of resistance, the adoption exposes how language affects perceptions of the territory and the artificiality and fragility of a segregation that started and developed upon a set of ideological, political and economic interests of a few statemen, tycoons, and even scholars. Likewise, in this paper, *America* does not refer to the U.S., but to the landmass that sits on both hemispheres and extends from Cape Froward in Chilean Patagonia, to Boothia Peninsula in northern Canada. By proposing the three stages of the detachment of the Americas and analyzing the rationale for each, this paper aims to contribute to ongoing debates on the importance of hemispheric histories and the role of migrations in the scholarship of America. It also urges for bringing the literature of Indigenous homeland to the fore. Above all, this paper raises questions about the future of the literature on Latin America in the U.S. and abroad. Furthermore, it exposes the appalling absence of questions about the origins, causes and consequences of the many disfigurements that America endured. Scholars have overlooked entire avenues of inquiry for more than a century because of the biases above which the scholarship of America was built in the U.S., the current epicenter of academic production.

Epistemic structures have been able, so far, to keep ‘Americanists’ and ‘Latin Americanists’ in their respective isolated departmental realms. Recent academic production, however, points to an unsustainable maintenance of these disciplinary frontiers.⁷ Latin Americanists who focus on migrations or Americanists dealing with frontiers have been making abundantly clear the obvious intertwined common history of the ‘Americas.’ Likewise, historians working on transnational narratives of processes of independence throughout America, both to the north and south of the Equator, also point to the same shared historical contexts. The studies of Amerindians and the African Diaspora also offer transnational and hemispheric perspectives that surpass present-day geographical limitations often nonexistent in the period when the stories took place. In a similar fashion, literary theorists have been expanding Hemispheric Studies in insightful directions.

An extensive list of inconsistencies marks the different ways in which America was butchered during the last 150 years. For the continental split, zero degrees latitude is not decisive when it comes to the countries that constitute each continent, despite the obvious reference to the hemispheres where the landmasses are located. Whereas North America is entirely situated in the Northern Hemisphere, South America spans the equatorial line across both hemispheres, which indicates the arbitrariness of the separation. Venezuela, Guyana, Suriname, and French Guyana are entirely located to the north of zero degrees latitude, whereas Brazil, Colombia, and Ecuador are partially located in the Northern Hemisphere. Similarly, U.S. conceptualizations of *Anglo* and *Latin America* do not correspond to any

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concise set of criteria. Latin America was a project that the French designed to compete with England and the U.S. for commercial privileges over the former Iberian colonies.⁸ Eventually, the label came to signify everything that rests to the south of the border between Mexico and the U.S. However, these territories do not share a common “heritage from the inhabitants of ancient Latium” as conceived in the nineteenth century. In Central America and the Caribbean, the legacy of former Dutch, Danish, and even English colonies was forcibly bent into the label ‘Latin,’ a categorization so problematic that Caribbeanists need to explain, in every essay, the difference between territories such as West Indies and Latin America.⁹ And last but not least, the contributions of African and Indigenous peoples were arbitrarily removed from the equation ‘Anglo – Latin’ throughout the continent.¹⁰

The validation of such unsolved inconsistencies in the division of America in the literature of Latin American Studies, namely by U.S. scholars, is telling. Instead of challenging the divisions, USAmerican academia fully adopted and even expanded these categories, creating still more frontiers, with all their irregularities, contradictions, and prejudices. More than a political divide, thus, the division of America is an incessant sequence of postulations within a context of situated knowledge and power. Insofar as the wall separating the U.S. and Mexico remains on paper (or dreams), the frontier between Anglo and Latin America belongs more to perceptions and unilateral prejudices than natural, human, or physical geographical features. However, the ethereal nature of this border is not less effectual than a material one. Ultimately, this frontier is more powerful and operative than the North and South America divide has ever been. The heritage of colonial policies and cultures, ethnic and racial conflicts and, essentially, unbalanced economic and political power determined a much more functional divide of the Americas. The hegemonic global presence of the U.S. as of the twentieth century allowed for the association of both terms - Anglo and North America - with Uncle Sam’s lands. Despite the colossal differences between North and Anglo America, the two names are often used interchangeably. North America is used to designate the U.S. in spite of this region’s original definition composed of Mexico, Canada, Central America, and the Caribbean; likewise, Anglo-America is used to designate the U.S. and Canada in spite of the French-not-Anglo part of Canada. Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean occupy the awkward position of being simultaneously part of North and Latin America.

To have an idea of how institutionalized the division is, and not only in academia, the United Nations classify territories according to the so-called “M49 Standard”. It stands for “Standard Country or Area Codes for Statistical Use” and is the list of geographic regions used by the Statistics Division for United Nations’ publications and databases. According to the United Nations, the world is divided into “Africa, **Americas**, Asia, Europe, and Oceania.” Americas, in turn, are divided up not into North and South, but into “Latin America and the Caribbean,” and the odd term “**Northern** America,” (my emphases). The institution acknowledges that the continent of North America comprises ‘Northern’ America, Caribbean, and Central America only in a footnote, while proclaiming ‘Northern’ America as the region composed by Bermuda, Canada, Greenland, Saint Pierre and Miquelon, and the U.S.¹¹ The repercussion of such understanding is enduring in any field of knowledge or governmental policy-making, in that the demographics of the planet are conceived upon this taxonomic structure. As a center of enunciation under strong influence of the U.S., the United Nations impose a particular perspective of the world that is not globally

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unanimous and, in turn, is grounded on the geographical manipulations that this paper seeks to analyze.

The institutional definitions of different regions of the Americas, therefore, are a collage of biases, racial conflicts, histories of dominance, and ideological disputes that are everything but concise. Through the cracks of the metageography of America, ideological constructs emerge in the form of spatial manipulations.¹² This paper demonstrates how US American academia became a center of observation that, by maneuvering spatial configurations of the continent, served as a key instrument in the consolidation of the U.S.’ hegemonic power.

First Stage: the continental split

The first step towards establishing the hegemony of the U.S. in America was the rupture of the continent, initiated in the nineteenth century and consolidated in the first decades of the twentieth century. US Americans clearly understood and incorporated the logic of colonialism that drove European powers, especially Britain, and converted it to its own benefit. To achieve modernity as the British did, the U.S.’ politicians and intellectuals alike were quick to perceive they needed the same tools, projecting itself as a model for others and placing the nation as a global epicenter of knowledge.¹³ Power dynamics in the continent of America, formerly polarized into European metropolises and colonies, gave way to a new composition. The U.S. maintained the old structure based on the relationship between *dominant* and *dominated*, or power differential, by ascending to the leading role that once belonged to Europe.¹⁴ The country started a process of appropriation of the epistemic base that Europeans held, and adapted it to the circumstances of the Western Hemisphere. Splitting up the continent was less a matter of geography and more of power, if not exclusively. In similar fashion, calling themselves ‘America’ was less about the name and more about the power of naming. With the consolidation of the U.S. as a new epicenter of knowledge came the authority to reshape and rename parts of the continent according to their own standpoint and interests.

After the ‘discovery’ of new lands across the Atlantic in the fifteenth century, European conquerors created a subject they named the ‘New World,’ despite the innumerable people that already lived in those lands for centuries. It took hundreds of years for European intellectuals and philosophers to absorb, understand, classify, and incorporate the new lands to their threefold continental system. The base of the European conceptualization of the world had to be revisited, including previously rooted ontological, religious, and philosophical understandings of the T-in-O model, a circle (the O) in which a contained T created three areas, each symbolizing one of the continents of Europe, Africa, and Asia. By splitting the world up into what Europeans knew – the ‘Old World’ and the ‘New World,’ language reflected Eurocentric perspectives that became standard and shaped the way humanity made sense of our planet.¹⁵ Seeking moral justification for imperial mercantilism by claiming superiority over any other civilization, Europeans imposed their language, religion, and customs in nearly every place they were able to arrive. Likewise, they believed in their divine right to subject other peoples to their will and plunder foreign territories as they saw fit.¹⁶ The very representation of Europe in the center of

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world maps was born in the period and remains the norm.

Under the European standpoint, colonialism was the umbrella under which the lands across the Atlantic Ocean were covered. The continent of America was a whole possession of Europe and the division of the territory served the only purpose of attributing ownership of each area to its respective metropole. Despite the division of the continent into English, French, Spanish, Dutch, Portuguese and Danish colonies (among others), America was seen as one of the four continents then known.¹⁷ For Europe, the criteria to compartmentalize territories in America scantily took local characteristics into consideration, despite acute differences between peoples, indigenous political divisions, or even natural and environmental features of the new lands.

In the process of independence for the European colonies in the Western Hemisphere, a strong feeling of 'new worlders' versus 'old worlders' emerged in America. Many leaders and intellectuals, namely the Creole elites, turned to the name of the continent of America to define themselves in opposition to the ideology and interests of figures of the Old World. 'America for the Americans' was a sentiment shared, although with many nuances, by people all across the continent. Figures that range from Simón Bolívar to Toussaint Louverture to Thomas Jefferson all envisioned different models for an independent America.¹⁸ It was precisely along this period of constructing national identities that the division of America came to be. Since the earliest beginnings of the US American Revolution, a 'constant invention of itself' informed continental designs from statesmen of the U.S., and it always included the annexation of Spanish American territories and subjugation of non-white people.¹⁹

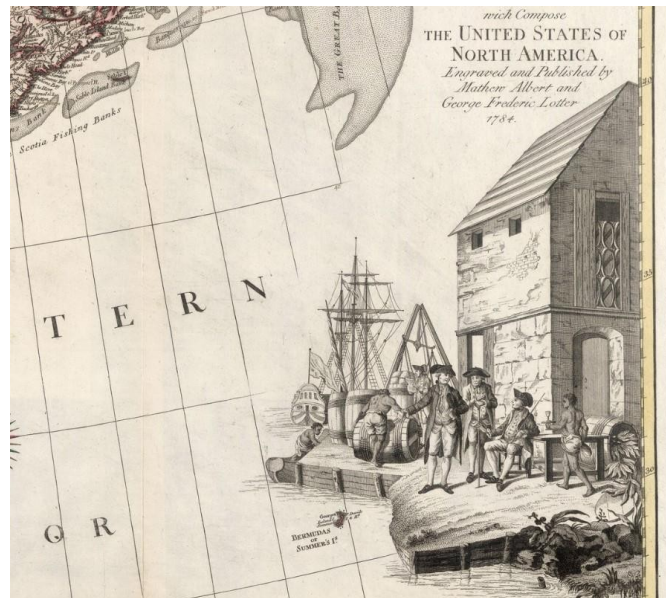


Figure 1. George Frederic, Lotter and Matthaus Albrecht, *A New and Correct Map of North America, with the West India Islands* (detail), 1784, engraving. Courtesy of Musselman Library.

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North and South America as subcontinents is not an invention of the U.S. The tradition of referring to the North and South America in cartographic documents dates to at least 1626.²⁰ But the division of America into two continents was a product of the construction of a USAmerican identity that involved strategic economic and political decisions. The origins of the ‘Great Divide,’ as economist Ricardo Salvatore puts it, has roots in the eighteenth century but flourished in the following century.²¹ A map dated to 1784, less than a decade after the independence of the U.S., is unequivocal evidence of the rationale that informed the separation of America into two distinct continents. The map, that alludes to the U.S. of **North** America (my emphasis), signals the U.S.’ efforts in the consolidation of the continent (Figure 1).²²

A few decades later, in 1823, the U.S. officially articulated their role as the new metropole of the Western Hemisphere. The idea of America as two continents was unmistakable when President James Monroe, together with Secretary of State John Quincy Adams, imposed their right to protect the Americas from European colonialism, offering military support for newly independent republics.²³ The message says: ‘The *American continents*, by the free and independent condition which they have assumed and maintain, are henceforth not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European powers.’²⁴ (my emphases of the pluralized words). And, to that, he later added that ‘[t]he political system of the allied powers is essentially different... from that of *America*’ (my emphasis), indisputably referring to the U.S (Morison, 1924, 27). The message was abundantly clear: the U.S. had appropriated the name of the entire continent for themselves and, additionally, split the continent into two halves.

Since the first half of the nineteenth century, intellectuals from both the northern and southern halves of the continent debated the invention of two discrete Americas, be it in approval or disapproval. South Americans promptly noticed and denounced what the U.S. understood as ‘America.’²⁵ But the term was more than a label that evinced embryonic imperialistic designs as early as the nineteenth century. It was an idea in which the U.S. conceived itself as an ‘island’ of freedom, democracy and wealth, the beacon of the Western Hemisphere in contrast to the tyranny, ignorance, and backwardness of the Spanish colonies, later called “the Prescott’s paradigm.”²⁶ Prevalent in the history of the ‘Americas,’ the Monroe Doctrine profoundly altered the destiny of the geography of the continent and the relationships between its different – and hereafter segregated – halves. The verbiage that president Monroe used in his historical declaration in 1823 is an unambiguous manipulation of the geographical concept of continents. Moreover, the reconfiguration of the European conception of the continent was an act of defiance. Americans defined what America is.

Constituting an artificial construct, the continental split posed the question of where to locate the dividing line between the two continents. For nineteenth-century geographers, natural features such as geological characteristics and physical formations prevailed over human geography for the definition of continents. The shifting location of the border, that migrated from the northern to the southern edge of current-day Panama, is evidence of the strong political and economic motivations that the outlining of the frontier involved. Undoubtedly, the shape of the continent contributed to the frontier’s design. Along the north-to-south direction, the isthmus of Panama corresponds to the

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narrowest mass of land in the entire continent and, on a map, looks like a natural geographical division. However, where exactly should the line be traced? The border between North and South America is an entire country, in the 400 miles (640 Kilometers) extending east-west from the border of Colombia to that of Costa Rica. The 'line' became, therefore, the political border between Panama, (the southernmost North American nation,) and Colombia, (the northernmost South American country.) Needless to say, the frontier was only established in its current location after the political and territorial definition of the region, which occurred after Panama's independence from Colombia in 1903, with active participation of the U.S.

At the speed of a signature on an independence declaration, the borderline between North and South America moved 400 miles southward. As early as 1708, maps clearly represented the frontier between the then subcontinents of North and South America in the northern border of Panama.²⁷ The fact that the border moved after the country's independence, including it in North America instead of South America, points to the imperial aspirations of the U.S. The 'naturalness' with which many see the location of this frontier, therefore, falls apart. Why did the border move to include Panama in North America? The politics involving these issues lay outside the purview of this paper. However, the case of the shifting frontier demarcating the division between North and South America reveals not only the interests of the U.S. in the longitudinal territorial expansion, but also makes evident the complicity of USAmerican scholars with this division. The fact that the U.S. managed to effectively build and control the Panama Canal after a French failed attempt is emblematic enough. Dominated by Europeans since the sixteenth century, the area had been one of the most important trade routes of the world and now, through the creation of a Canal Zone, the U.S. asserted political control over a ten-mile strip surrounding the new canal. A sumptuous engineering project and one of the seven marvels of the modern world, the canal became the very symbol of the prominence of the U.S. as a global power and represented a significant victory over the Old World's intervention in America.²⁸ Panama would not, under any circumstances, be located in the neighbor 'South America,' but under the wing of the U.S. in North America.

The U.S. wanted to secure their hegemony over the territories of Central America and the Caribbean, pursuing their expansionist destiny while compromising any project of intervention from other nations interested in the region. Expansionist policies over the continent, ever-present in the history of the U.S., were particularly acute during the presidencies of William McKinley (1897 – 1901), Theodore Roosevelt (1901 – 1909), William Howard Taft (1909 – 1913), and Woodrow Wilson (1913 – 1921).²⁹ England, France, Spain, Russia, Holland, and other European powers were ready to either maintain or reap the riches from colonies in Central America and the Caribbean. The geographical inclusion of these regions in North America, figuratively closer to the U.S., empowered the justification of USAmerican intervention over countries such as Puerto Rico, annexed in 1898, as well as the creation of USAmerican protectorates. At the turn of the twentieth century, Cuba was the first, followed by Panama, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Nicaragua (Delpar 2008, 26).³⁰ The location of protectorates in North America served to tighten their ties to the U.S. more effectively.

Only a few years after Frederick Jackson Turner's *Frontier Thesis*, in which he credited the USAmerican ideals of freedom and political equality to their unprecedented expansion to the west, the

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U.S. was seeking new frontiers for their insatiable hunger for the ‘beyond.’ With the conquest of the territories to the west completed, the alternative was to look for lands and markets to the south.³¹ The map *A Thing Well Begun is Half Done* (1899) makes evident the expansionist project of the U.S. over Central America and the Caribbean (Figure 2). In the picture, meant to represent the aftermath of the Spanish-American War of 1898, President William McKinley stands above Mexico, with one foot over recently annexed territories from that country. Assisted by Uncle Sam, who brings tools from Washington DC, President McKinley looks at the “proposed Nicaragua canal,” eager to connect the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, while a line of cargo ships, bearing ostensive USAmerican flags and loaded with “American goods for foreign countries,” await at both sides of the narrow landmass. The flags are also planted in the Philippines, Hawaii, Alaska, Cuba, and Puerto Rico, among other territories. Uncle Sam, to the front of the prominently depicted Capitol, advises: “Finish the canal, McKinley, and make our national expansion complete in your first administration” (my emphasis). The massive structure in Washington DC, therefore, provided the apparatus necessary to USAmerican expansion, while the president carved opportunities and performed the hard work.



Figure 2. Victor Gillam and Sackett & Wilhelms Litho. & Ptg. Co, “A Thing Well Done is Half Done,” *Judge Magazine* (October 7, 1899). Courtesy of Artstor.

The national expansion was strongly tied to the conquest of Middle America and the control of trade routes and export markets alike. The picture portrays President McKinley as a worker with one hand rolling up the sleeves and the other holding a pickaxe. He is metaphorically reshaping the geography of the continent and building a new commercial and political scenario for the globe. The angle used to

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represent the U.S. and their most recent conquests is also telling. South America is only scantily represented in the picture, although definitely present, while North America takes visual prominence in the south-north perspective, looking gigantic and isolated as an independent and ever-growing superpower. McKinley's sight is focused on Middle America, however, his position facing south suggests a future interest in a continued walk towards South America. The expression 'half done' of the title refers to the other half of the hemisphere.³² While the expansion over the northern half of America seems complete or, as the title asserts, 'well done,' the picture suggests the south as the next step toward USAmerican expansion in the Western Hemisphere.

Many historians acknowledge the contribution of geographers to the process of expansion of the U.S. over the continent of America from the nineteenth to the twentieth century, and not only because they physically produced cartographic documents. Academia played a key role in legitimizing this division with the 'rediscovery of South America' in the beginning of the twentieth century. The 'newly created continent' became the mecca of geographers all over the U.S., who gathered useful information about its social, economic, agricultural, commercial, and cultural tracts.³³ Under the benevolent label of Pan-Americanism, early twentieth-century geographers had a twofold utility: they worked for the USAmerican government to facilitate commercial and diplomatic relationships and assert the U.S. hegemony over the Western Hemisphere. Moreover, by turning their attention almost exclusively to South American territories, scholars dissimulated imperialist designs over Central America and Caribbean. South America was 'different,' the 'other,' the 'exotic,' whereas Middle America was just an extension of the U.S., composed of weak states that depended upon the U.S.' political and military interventions.³⁴ The *Good Neighbor Policy* (1933), promulgated during the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt, is an irony. Firstly, the policy was created to bring the two Americas closer, with the initiative of the very nation that had artificially split up what was once one continent only. And secondly, the name conjured up a subtle message that redefined the two halves in a distanced and cold relationship: the 'Americas' were not even sisters, but mere neighbors.

The continental split seems the most natural and inoffensive of the three stages of the division of America, but it constitutes the foundation for the intellectual production of the twentieth century in the U.S. The entire system of higher education was born on the base of the two Americas, North and South, meaning that departments in universities, library catalogues, museum collections, and a whole system of referentiality took off under different labels and, thus, followed distinct paths since the dawn of the twentieth century.³⁵ This was the rationale that informed scholars, from historians and literary theorists to geographers, from anthropologists and archaeologists to social scientists, since the very beginning of American-born literature. The division had long-lasting impact on scholars and lay-public alike, in that it changed the course of history in structural and ineradicable ways.³⁶

Second Stage: the cultural split

The second move in the process of affirmation of the U.S. as a global power occurred after World War II. It was an emblematic period in which shattered European powers offered little to no threat to the U.S.' hegemony over not only the continent of America, but the whole world. Through the categories of First, Second, and Third Worlds, the Cold War reconfigured the geography of the planet. The U.S.'

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concerns turned to the defense of its own model, based upon democracy and capitalism against Soviet authoritarian communism. Finally, and indisputably, in the second half of the twentieth century, the U.S. took over the leadership that once belonged to European nations, especially England and Spain. The U.S. perfected the concepts of modernity, individual liberties, and the free market that would characterize the ‘Western World.’ The ‘American way of life’ was used as propaganda and an object of desire for many other countries. On the other side of the spectrum, Latin America came to signify the opposite to USAmericans: a dystopic space acting as a counterpoint to the utopia that supposedly characterized the U.S.³⁷ Additionally, after the Cuban Revolution of 1959, the U.S. government started to picture Latin America as a hotbed of communists and, therefore, a threat to USAmerican civic values.

Academia became engaged in a ‘civilizing mission’ alongside U.S. governmental agencies. Language, not maps, consolidated the cultural split. From the 1940s on, the term Latin America started to be systematically employed, isolating the U.S. and Canada in the Anglo side, and jumbling all the other nations of the continent together in the other, the Latin side. Latin America gradually replaced the formerly mainstream terminologies *Hispanic, Iberian, or Spanish America*.³⁸ With the new design of the continent, the U.S. put more emphasis in the separation of their territory from the rest of the continent. While intellectuals focused on Latin America elaborated dependency theories, a brutal growth of higher education institutions and students’ enrollment in the U.S. allowed *Americanists* to embark on an inward crusade of extraordinarily narrow narratives about their own history.³⁹ Latin Americanists dealt with everything else in the continent. Academia, therefore, reinforced the binary of the singular ‘America,’ versus the plural ‘Americas.’⁴⁰ The grammatical number is not arbitrary nor coincidental. Whereas scholarship on the U.S. tended to emphasize the triumphs of a unique and superior society, Anglophone scholarship of the ‘Americas’ had to deal with the overgeneralization that the label ‘Latin America’ imposed.

The overwhelming percentage of doctoral students who specialized in USAmerican history in the U.S. in the twentieth century caused a deficiency of professionals in other regions of the world. The creation of Area Studies during the Cold War sought to balance the parochialism that characterized USAmerican academia and foment knowledge on foreign lands strategic to the maintenance of the U.S. hegemonic power.⁴¹ However, be it in scope or methodologies, Area Studies cemented the distinct historiographical paths that Americanists and Latin Americanists have taken since its creation, distancing the fields to a seemingly unsurmountable degree. Evidently, in the U.S., American Studies do not pertain to Area Studies, a fact that denotes the epistemic central place on which USAmerican academia has placed itself. In his 2003 work *American Empire: Roosevelt’s Geographer and the Prelude to Globalization*, Neil Smith argues that “power always expresses spatiality,” defining who sits at the center and becomes normative.⁴² Continents gave place to regions as units of inquiry in world geography, and Area Studies flourished in USAmerican academia together with the ‘cultural turn’ in the humanities. The combination of the legacy of the first wave of intellectuals working on South America and Middle America and the emergence of Area Studies significantly fabricated, imposed, and articulated differences within America like never before.⁴³

The dichotomy reached the general public during Cold War, while the frontier between North and

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South America became less and less important for USAmerican foreign policies and academics alike, accompanying the decline of geography as a discipline in the educational system of the U.S. The systematic discredit of geography was part of a project that sought to redesign the world and keep a distance from undesired influences.⁴⁴ Outside of academia, the split between Anglo and Latin America was seldom challenged, in part due to the geographical illiteracy of the general public.⁴⁵ According to any residual memory of the continents, the division between Anglo and Latin America is completely artificial. The 'physical' border lost its visual impact, and cultural features that supposedly incorporated and distinguished the U.S. from the rest of the continent, such as racial demographics and colonial heritage became the new frontier.⁴⁶ Simultaneously, a homogenizing project for the nation-state celebrating an American patriotic identity was at full steam. The flag, displayed in every classroom, countless front porches, and even the moon, became an ever-present visual element nationwide. Artists popularized the anthem in different musical genres. The English language and sports such as baseball were extolled while 'foreign' manifestations were repelled. For instance, pedagogy of the period argued that bilingualism damaged children's intelligence, contributing a 'scientific' justification to discriminate against Spanish-speakers, among other 'second-class' citizens that conserved their foreign mother-tongue on USAmerican soil.⁴⁷

The Cuban Revolution of 1959 only exacerbated the binaries between capitalism and communism in the continent of America, provoking a radical shift in the way the U.S. perceived the lands to the South of the Mexican border. During the Cold War, the division of North and South America turned out to be incapable of keeping the U.S. 'geographically isolated' from the underdeveloped countries of North America. The U.S.' way-of-life, politics, economy, religion, and, obviously, system of knowledge, should be immediately discernible from Mexican, Central American, or Caribbean undesirable characteristics. As much as Europe held the power to name the new lands to the west of the Atlantic Ocean as the 'New World' over the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the U.S. led to the split of America into 'America' and 'Latin America.' Ultimately, the new division consolidated the exceptional identity that the U.S. fabricated for itself.

Third Stage: the exclusion from the 'Western World'

The final step of the establishment of the U.S. as the hegemonic power of the 'Americas' (and the world) was the exclusion of Latin America from the so-called 'Western World.' In contrast to the first two movements, academia under U.S. leadership was the sole responsible party for this maneuver. It was up to scholars from institutions in the U.S. to create the criteria, analyze the data, and classify Latin America on a taxonomic limbo between the civilized modern realm that allegedly defines Europe and the U.S. and the supposed dark, backward, and ignorant instances of the undeveloped pockets of the planet. The stereotypes and generalizations created by these scholars grew to be normative in academia, and the rest were considered an aberration.⁴⁸

Before the final decades of the twentieth century, USAmerican and European scholars placed the 'Western World,' supposedly a reference to the lands to the west of the center of the standard world map, completely apart from the geography of the Western Hemisphere. Intellectuals such as Arnold Toynbee and Samuel Huntington conceived a different set of criteria to divide and classify world

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regions according to civilizations rather than continents.⁴⁹ By rating Latinos as a distinct civilization, this view simultaneously incorporated and legitimized the division between Anglo and Latin America. Ultimately, from their already consolidated hegemonic location within a system of knowledge, USAmerican scholars imposed a radical division of the world into the ‘West and the rest,’ excluding Latin America from ‘Western civilization.’ As a method of othering that Anglophone scholars invented, this dichotomous discourse serves no purpose other than ranking nations according to their wealth and compliance with USAmerican standards of democracy and freedom. The same set of criteria has created divisions for the last decades: First, Second, and Third Worlds; developed and underdeveloped worlds (the latter quickly relabeled as ‘developing’ or ‘emerging’ due to its unmistakably derogatory tone); core, semi-peripheries, and peripheries. The nomenclature of these labels might offer some variations, but they share the same taxonomic rationale.

Since the elaboration of these systems of classification, the U.S. replaced Europe as the exemplar epicenter of virtue, culture, and development. Although the cartographic representation of the world positioning Europe at its center in the globe’s imagery, some alternative models have emerged from newer taxonomies, reflecting current dynamics of power and wealth in the world. It is hard to ignore the centrality of the U.S. in the map *The rich world, developed world, first world or Western world by another name: the walled world* (2019). The image, published in the website Big Think, is a powerful visual message of the position that the U.S. enjoys – physically and metaphorically – in the present-day world map (Figure 3).

The theoretical absurdity that the division of the world between a supposed ‘Western World’ and whatever else there is, offers some humorous non-academic visualizations. Western Civilization Map (2019) is a diagram that circulates in many different websites and brilliantly exposes the rationale that informed such classificatory system, with the U.S. as ‘the Westest,’ Mexico as a ‘Hard NO’ and South America as ‘Not West Enough’ (Figure 4). Likewise, countries such as South Korea and Japan, The theoretical absurdity that the division of the world between a supposed ‘Western World’ and whatever else there is, offers some humorous non-academic visualizations. Western Civilization Map (2019) is a diagram that circulates in many different websites and brilliantly exposes the rationale that informed such classificatory system, with the U.S. as ‘the Westest,’ Mexico as a ‘Hard NO’ and South America as ‘Not West Enough’ (Figure 4). Likewise, countries such as South Korea and Japan, representatives of ‘The East’ for thousands of years, appear as ‘Honorary Westerners.’ In spite of the jokes the conceptualization of the ‘Western World’ inspires, a significant part of Anglophone academia takes these matters seriously. Anglophone intellectuals and theorists not only foster but legitimize the ideas that led to this map. USAmerican scholars are the protagonists that uncontestedly manufacture continental, regional, civilizational, and organizational categories to classify and divide the world.

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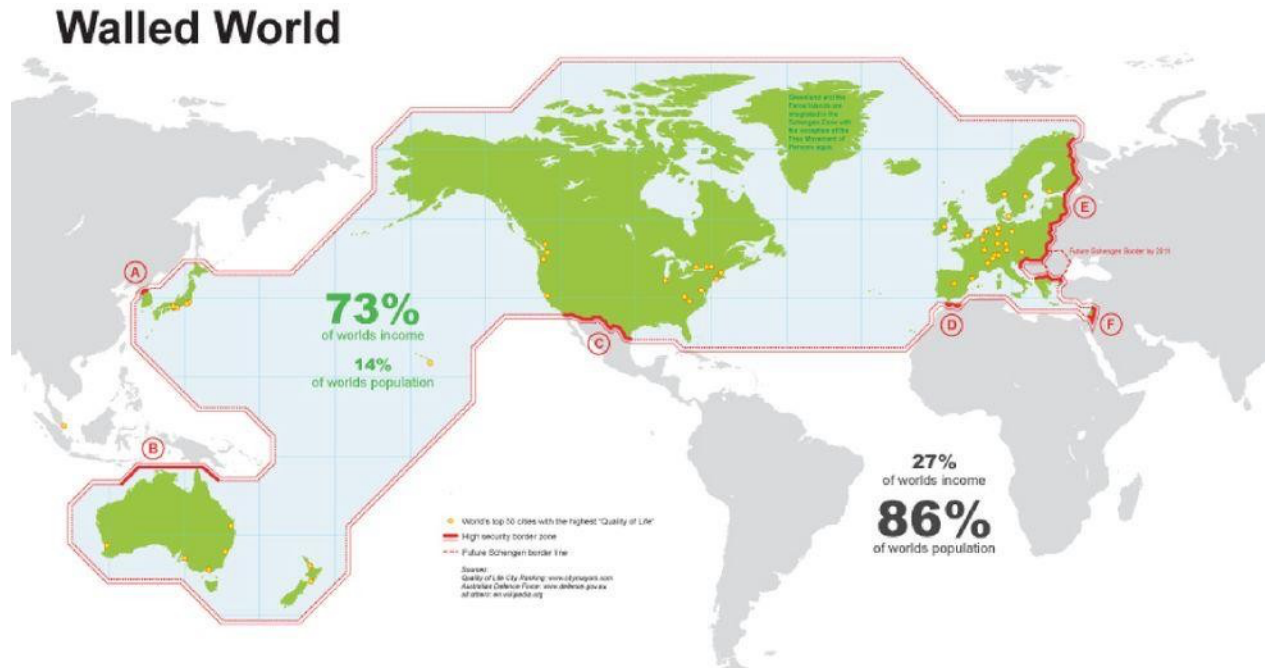


Figure 3: TD Architects, *The rich world, developed world, first world or Western world by another name: the walled world* (detail), 2019, Digital image. In: <https://bigthink.com/strange-maps/walled-world>

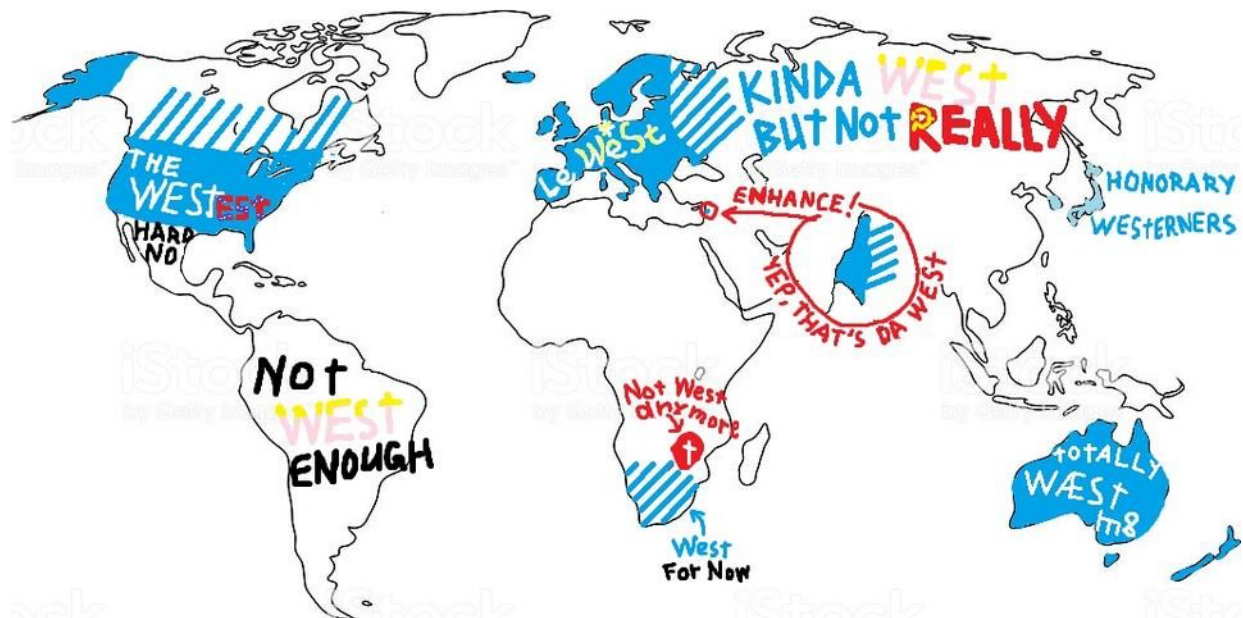


Figure 4: Unknown author, *Western Civilization Map*, posted 2019. Digital image. From: JordanPeterson, *Reddit*, https://www.reddit.com/r/JordanPeterson/comments/benp7w/western_civilization_map/.

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The theoretical absurdity that the division of the world between a supposed ‘Western World’ and whatever else there is, offers some humorous non-academic visualizations. *Western Civilization Map* (2019) is a diagram that circulates in many different websites and brilliantly exposes the rationale that informed such classificatory system, with the U.S. as ‘the Westest,’ Mexico as a ‘Hard NO’ and South America as ‘Not West Enough’ (Figure 4). Likewise, countries such as South Korea and Japan, representatives of ‘The East’ for thousands of years, appear as ‘Honorary Westerners.’ In spite of the jokes the conceptualization of the ‘Western World’ inspires, a significant part of Anglophone academia takes these matters seriously. Anglophone intellectuals and theorists not only foster but legitimize the ideas that led to this map. USAmerican scholars are the protagonists that uncontestedly manufacture continental, regional, civilizational, and organizational categories to classify and divide the world.

However, Americanists and all ‘other Americanists’ inevitably clash in their scholarly discourses. As of 2020, the Latino community corresponds to 18.3% of the U.S. population.⁵⁰ Transformed in absolute numbers, this percentage accounts for approximately seventy million people. The official projected number of Latinos will account for twenty-five percent of the U.S. population by 2050.⁵¹ Will the idea of the ‘Western World’ survive after the consolidation of the new demographics? Will Latin America survive as a label? Will Latinos and Latinas blend into USAmerican society as Irish and Italians did before them? Even though racial criteria are knowingly artificially and socially constructed, the darker complexions and the brown eyes of many Latinos and Latinas play a significant role in the process of assimilation of immigrants.⁵² At any rate, how will academia respond to the new demographic scenario?

Conclusion

In 1932, in the heyday of Pan-Americanism, president of the *American Historical Association* Herbert E. Bolton, called for a hemispheric history of the ‘Americas’ to correct the historiography of the U.S.⁵³ Even though historians largely ignored the message throughout the last decades, The Epic of Greater America still produces minor effects.⁵⁴ Bolton envisioned an intercontinental avenue of inquiry that included Latin American narratives in the history of the U.S. Four decades later, the field of Atlantic World History tickled the idea of deconstructing laudatory discourses on the U.S. history through transnational frameworks linking the territories that comprise the Atlantic basin. However, both Bolton and Atlanticists failed to effectively remove the U.S. from the epicenter of historical narratives or displace it as a center of enunciation. Bolton was interested in the different perspectives that Latin America would bring to the historiography of the U.S., and never questioned the USAmerican concept of America or showed interest in the historiography of other American nations. Similarly, Atlantic scholarly production kept the normativity of ‘The North’ untouched. The British Atlantic quickly dominated the publishing market due to the parochial profile of the Anglophone public. The very definition of Atlantic World History – the interconnected history of the ‘four’ continents situated in the corners of the Atlantic Ocean, points to a foundational segregation between the ‘Americas’ that has persisted since the eighteenth century.

The fact that the history of Europe, Africa, and the ‘Americas’ together gained the prominence that the individual history of America as a continent never had speaks volumes about USAmerican academic

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biases toward the ‘Americas.’ Historical narratives that take place before the manipulation of the continent in the nineteenth century cannot even be considered ‘shared’ history between North and South America, but one unique history. However, even pre-Colombian history was anachronistically split up in departments of American Studies or Latin American Studies. America is a continent that was undermined in its entirety by the arrival of Europeans both in its north and south shores. Following the genocide of countless native peoples, in a matter of five decades Europeans had explored a vast extent of the continent from one extreme to the other in the longitudinal direction. The whole continent experienced corresponding processes of colonization by European powers. America as a whole was the final destination for millions of enslaved Africans along centuries, participating in one of the most heinous chapters of the history of humanity. Likewise, different American nations had an indissoluble common or intertwined intellectual, political, military, and diplomatic history, facing comparable challenges and walking analogous trajectories. Peoples, goods, and ideas have been circulating throughout the north and south portions of the continent incessantly.

Scholarship would greatly benefit from epistemic revisions grounded on the awareness of the geographical manipulation of the continent of America. Theorists focused on migration already build many bridges between histories of the U.S. and Latin America, bringing enough evidence of the intertwined and shared history of the continent within the core of USAmerican identity tropes.⁵⁵ Adrián Burgos, for example, shows the pervasiveness and key role that Latinos played on the most ‘American’ of sports, baseball.⁵⁶ Publications rescuing the participation of Latinos and Latinas in the history of the U.S. since the nineteenth century is on the rise and prove that immigration is not a recent phenomenon whatsoever, despite political discourses that insist on the novelty of the issue. In 2004, for instance, the journal *Radical History Review* devoted an entire volume to discuss the concept of Latin Americanism and its future in the U.S., pointing to a growing awareness of the scholarly community on the matter.⁵⁷

According to anthropologist Eric Wolf, when Europeans first arrived in these lands, they considered the natives of America as a “people without history”.⁵⁸ Five centuries after, we remain so. A comprehensive history of the continent of America is still waiting to be written. It will happen only when scholars rescue Latin America from the linguistic confines of USAmerican academia and bridge the disciplinary frontiers that made America the ‘Americas.’

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NOTES

¹ Denise Fay Brown, “‘Latin’ America Is Dead. Long Live Nuestra América!,” *Canadian Journal of Latin American & Caribbean Studies* (Canadian Association of Latin American & Caribbean Studies (CALACS)) 38, no. 1 (May 2013): 8, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08263663.2014.883820>.

² Inspired by Vera M. Kutzinski, I adopted the terminology ‘USAmerican’ to refer to what is conventionally called simply “American.” See Vera M. Kutzinski, “Afterword: America/América/Americas,” in *The Worlds of Langston Hughes: Modernism and Translation in the Americas* (Cornell University Press, 2012). The misnomer “America” as synonymous of the U.S. is, per se, a problematic linguistic maneuver that scholars have been unfruitfully discussing throughout the twentieth century.

³ I refer to Western Academia as the scholarly community of the ‘developed countries,’ especially U.S., Canada, and Northwestern Europe. The ‘Western World’ is a contested concept significantly discussed in the literature, particularly in imperial history and postcolonial studies. See, for instance, the seminal work of Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage, 1994); Joseph Conrad, *Under Western Eyes* (Mineola, N.Y.: Dover Publications, 2003); Robert J. C. Young and Homi Bhabha, *White Mythologies*, 2nd edition (London; New York: Routledge, 2004).

⁴ As starting points for this paper, I highlight Jose C. Moya, ed., “Introduction: Latin America - The Limitations and Meaning of a Historical Category,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Latin American History* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 1–24; Helen Delpar, *Looking South: The Evolution of Latin Americanist Scholarship in the United States, 1850–1975* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2008); Ricardo D. Salvatore, *Disciplinary Conquest: U.S. Scholars in South America, 1900–1945* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016).

⁵ Cuban José Martí was one of the first intellectuals to call into question the label “Latin America” in the nineteenth century and to propose a hemispheric Latin unity he named Nuestra América. José Martí, *Nuestra América* (México: Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1945). Although relevant, the resistance of Latin American intellectuals to issues such as the misnomer “America” for the U.S., the theory of America as two distinct continents, or the label Latin America, these contributions are beyond the scope of this paper and deserve to be properly examined in other opportunities. See an example of the relevance of perspectives born in Latin America in Lucy Taylor, “Decolonizing International Relations: Perspectives from Latin America,” *International Studies Review* 14, no. 3 (2012): 386–400. For a more comprehensive list of authors from Latin America with publications on the matter, see Lester D. Langley, “Bibliographical Essay,” in *America and the Americas*, 2nd ed., The United States in the Western Hemisphere (University of Georgia Press, 2010), 327–36, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt46nk3h.17>.

⁶ “Continents - Worldometer,” accessed April 26, 2020, <https://www.worldometers.info/geography/continents/>. The seven continents school of thought understands North and South America as distinct continents. According to this model, North America comprises Canada, U.S., Mexico, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, Bahamas, Saint Lucia, Antigua and Barbuda, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Grenada, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Dominica, Belize, Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Panama, Greenland, and a number of dependent territories. South America comprehends Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, Chile, Bolivia, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, Brazil, Suriname, and several dependent territories.

⁷ Julia Suárez Krabbe, “Postcoloniality and Alternative Histories: Latin America,” in *A Historical Companion to Postcolonial Literatures: Continental Europe and Its Empires*, ed. Pierre-Philippe Fraiture et al. (Edinburgh, Scotland: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 7; Kirsten Silva Gruesz, “America,” in *Keywords for American Cultural Studies*, ed. Bruce Burgett and Glenn Hendler (New York: NYU Press, 2014); Sandhya Shukla and Heidi Tinsman, *Our Americas: Political and Cultural Imaginings* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004); Thomas H. Holloway, ed., *A Companion to Latin American History*, 1st edition (Malden, MA; Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008). The literature is abundant. On migrations, I highlight Rosina Lozano, *An American Language: The History of Spanish in the United States*, American Crossroads 49 (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2018); Adrian Burgos, *Playing America's Game: Baseball, Latinos, and the Color Line*, American Crossroads 23 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); Julie M. Weise, *Corazón de Dixie: Mexicanos in the U.S. South since 1910*, The David J. Weber Series in the New Borderlands History (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015); Greg Grandin, *The End of the Myth: From the Frontier to the Border Wall in the Mind of America* (New York: Metropolitan Books, Henry Holt and Company, 2019); Eric Hinderaker and Rebecca Horn, “Territorial Crossings: Histories and Historiographies of the Early Americas,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 67, no. 3 (2010): 395, <https://doi.org/10.5309/willmaryquar.67.3.395>. See pertinent discussions in Literary Theory in Kutzinski, “America/América/Americas,” 236–40; C. F. Levander, “Introduction: Hemispheric American Literary History,” *American Literary History* 18, no. 3 (July 12, 2006): 397–405, <https://doi.org/10.1093/alh/ajl005>; Erik Ching, Christina Buckley, and Angélica Lozano-Alonso, *Reframing Latin America: A Cultural Theory Reading of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007), <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/southcarolina/detail.action?docID=3443222>; Santa Arias, “Rethinking Space: An Outsider's View of the Spatial Turn,” *GeoJournal* 75, no. 1 (February 2010): 29–41, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10708-010-9339-9>; Kirsten Silva Gruesz and Rodrigo Lazo, “The Spanish Americas: Introduction,” *Early American Literature* 53, no. 3 (2018): 641–64, <https://doi.org/10.1353/eal.2018.0067>.

⁸ The fact that the idea of Latin America was imposed by outsiders, be them French or USAmerican, prompted successive waves of questioning, even though the incorporation of Latin values by creole elites. See Brown, “‘Latin’ America Is Dead. Long Live Nuestra América!,” 4–5; Arturo Ardao, *Genesis de La Idea y El Nombre de America Latina*, Enrique Bernardo Núñez (Caracas: Consejo Nacional de la Cultura - CONAC, 1980). See also: Walter D. Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America*, 1st edition (Malden, MA; Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005); Brown, “‘Latin’ America Is Dead. Long Live Nuestra América!,” Delpar, *Looking South*, 29–30; 50; and 134; John Leddy Phelan, “Pan-Latinism, French Intervention in México (1861–1867) and the Genesis of the Idea of Latin America,” Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1968, 21; Holloway, *A Companion to Latin American History*, 7.

⁹ An unequivocal example of the difference between Latin America and South America in the first decades of the twentieth century is the gift

of Archer M. Huntington to the Library of Congress in 1927. The generous donation specified the use of the sum for the purchase of Hispanica and Hispanoamericana that “relate to Spanish, Portuguese, and South American arts, crafts, literature, and history.” Books relating to Mexico, Central America, and the Antilles were specifically excluded. Herbert Putnam and C. K. Jones, “The Archer M. Huntington Fund for the Purchase of Hispanic Books in the Library of Congress,” *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 9, no. 4 (1929): 547, 548. See also Holloway, *A Companion to Latin American History*, 6. See also the struggles over identity of Middle America nations in Nicole Roberts, “Caribbean Identity: An Hispanic Caribbean Perspective,” *Journal of Caribbean Literatures* 4, no. 3 (2007): 29–49.

¹⁰ See an example of alternative proposals for characterizing American territories in Moya, “Introduction: Latin America - The Limitations and Meaning of a Historical Category.”

¹¹ The standard was first issued in 1970 and revised in 1975, 1982, 1996, and 1999. “UNSD — Methodology,” accessed May 25, 2020, <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/methodology/m49/>. Interestingly, in the “Questions and Answers” section of the United Nations’ website, the institution pretends to explain the difference between North and Northern America by only citing the territories that comprise North America. No justifications are presented. “UNSD — Methodology.”

¹² Metageography was postulated by Lewis and Wigen as “the set of spatial structures through which people order their knowledge of the world: the often unconscious frameworks that organize studies of history, sociology, anthropology, economics, political science, or even natural history.” Martin W. Lewis and Kären Wigen, *The Myth of Continents: A Critique of Metageography* (University of California Press, 1997), ix.

¹³ Eliga H. Gould, *Among the Powers of the Earth* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012); Eliga H. Gould, “Entangled Histories, Entangled Worlds: The English-Speaking Atlantic as a Spanish Periphery,” *The American Historical Review* 112, no. 3 (2007): 764–86; Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, “Entangled Histories: Borderland Historiographies in New Clothes?,” *The American Historical Review* 112, no. 3 (2007): 787–99.

¹⁴ For power differential – and consequent colonial difference – in America, see Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America*, 10.

¹⁵ Mignolo 2005, 22–30.

¹⁶ Karen Ordahl Kupperman, ed., *America in European Consciousness, 1493–1750* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

¹⁷ Lewis and Wigen, *The Myth of Continents*, chap. 1; W. Dirk Raat, “Innovative Ways to Look at New World Historical Geography,” *History Teacher* 37, no. 3 (May 2004): 281–306, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1555670>; Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America*, chap. 1.

¹⁸ See some nuances of processes of nation formation of the U.S. and other American countries in Grandin, *The End of the Myth*, chap. 2.

¹⁹ Grandin, 13. Specific agendas were always able to surpass North and South dichotomies, though. For instance, slavery turned USAmerican southerners’ gaze to seek for examples and references in “Latin America.” See Matthew Pratt Guterl, *American Mediterranean: Southern Slaveholders in the Age of Emancipation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013). On racial components in the creation of an USAmerican identity, see Ibram X. Kendi, *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America* (Bold Type Books, 2017); Marilyn Grace Miller, *Rise and Fall of the Cosmic Race: The Cult of Mestizaje in Latin America* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004).

²⁰ See, for example, the map “Western Hemisphere 1626 - American Geographical Society Library Digital Map Collection - UWM Libraries Digital Collections,” 16, accessed May 21, 2020, <https://collections.lib.uwm.edu/digital/collection/agdm/id/24286/rec/52>.

²¹ Salvatore conceptualizes the “Great Divide” as the geopolitical differentiation of North and South America and subsequent interpretation of both constructs by USAmerican scholars. See Salvatore, *Disciplinary Conquest*, 4.

²² George Frederic (1744 - 1801) Lotter and Matthaus Albrecht (1741 - 1810) Lotter, G3300 1784 .N5 - A New and Correct Map of North America, with the West India Islands: Divided According to the Last Treaty of Peace, Concluded at Paris, the 20th of Jan. 1783, Wherein Are Particularly Distinguished, The Thirteen Provinces Wich [Sic] Compose the United States of North America Engraved and Published by Matthew Albert George Frederic Lotter, 1784, Engraving. Special Collections and College Archives, Musselman Library, Gettysburg College, https://library.artstor.org/public/SS7730795_7730795_12999031.

²³ See the relationship between the Monroe Doctrine and the maintenance of slavery in the Caribbean in Stephen M Chambers, *No God but Gain: The Untold Story of Cuban Slavery, the Monroe Doctrine, and the Making of the United States* (London: Verso, 2017).

²⁴ S. E. Morison, “The Origin of the Monroe Doctrine, 1775–1823,” *Economica*, no. 10 (1924): 27–51, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2547870>.

²⁵ According to Armando Uribe, Chilean statesman and entrepreneur Diego Portales rose awareness of the U.S.’ intentions over the continent of America as early as 1823 by alerting that “for the Americans of the North, Americans are no one but themselves.” (*Para los americanos del norte, los únicos americanos son ellos mismos*). See Armando Uribe, *The Black Book of American Intervention in Chile* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1975), <http://archive.org/details/blackbookofameri0000urib>. See historian Clarence Haring’s assessment, dated 1927, on the role of the Monroe Doctrine in the relationship between the U.S. and other nations of America in Clarence H. Haring, “The Two Americas,” *Foreign Affairs* 5, no. 3 (1927): 364–78, <https://doi.org/10.2307/20028539>. According to him, the southern republics had misunderstood the real purpose of the USAmerican policy.

²⁶ The Prescott’s paradigm is the binary that seeks to explain, anchored in the “black legend” (Spanish Catholic backwardness), the decline of the Spanish Empire and the increasing prominence of the U.S.. Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, “Toward a ‘Pan-American’ Atlantic,” in *Puritan Conquistadors: Iberianizing the Atlantic, 1550–1700* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2006), 216. In 1809, Thomas Jefferson referred to the U.S. as the “solitary republic of the world.” Grandin, *The End of the Myth*, 34. For more about the black legend, see Steve J. Stern, “Paradigms of Conquest: History, Historiography, and Politics,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 24 (1992): 1–34.

²⁷ The limit between North and South America is unequivocally represented to the north of present-day Panama in the map of Guillaume Sanson and Peter Schenk, *L’Amerique Meridionale Dressee Sur Les Observations de Mrs. de l’Academie Royale Des Sciences & Queques Autres & Sur Les Memoires Les plus Recens Par G. Del’Isle; Chez Pierre Schenk*, map (University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee Libraries, 1708),

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American Geographical Society Library Digital Map Collection, <https://collections.lib.uwm.edu/digital/collection/agdm/id/19883/rec/3>.

²⁸ For the representational strategies of the conquest of the Panama Canal and the Canal Zone by the U.S., see Marixa Lasso, “A Canal without a Zone: Conflicting Representations of the Panama Canal,” *Journal of Latin American Geography* 14, no. 3 (2015): 157–74. See also Michael L. Conniff, “Canal Diplomacy, 1902–1919,” in *Panama and the United States*, 3rd ed., The End of the Alliance (University of Georgia Press, 2012), 63–83; Noel Maurer and Carlos Yu, “Concluding the Ditch,” in *The Big Ditch, How America Took, Built, Ran, and Ultimately Gave Away the Panama Canal* (Princeton University Press, 2011), 313–32, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt7sh42.14>.

²⁹ As early as the 1820s, Adams affirmed that the U.S. was “destined by God and nature to be coextensive with the North American continent.” Grandin, *The End of the Myth*, 41; 55.

³⁰ Delpar 2008, 26.

³¹ Turner formulated his Frontier Thesis in the paper “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” that he presented in the World’s Congress of Historians and Historical Students in Chicago in 1893. See Grandin, chap. 6. See also Marcello Carmagnani, *The Other West: Latin America from Invasion to Globalization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011); Michel Gobat, *Empire by Invitation: William Walker and Manifest Destiny in Central America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018).

³² See USAmerican ambitions of annexing Mexico in its entirety into the U.S. at the beginning of the twentieth century in Grandin, *The End of the Myth*, 151.

³³ Salvatore, Disciplinary Conquest; Mark T. Berger, “Civilising the South: The US Rise to Hegemony in the Americas and the Roots of ‘Latin American Studies’ 1898 - 1945,” *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 12, no. 1 (1993): 1–48.

³⁴ This paper adopts Middle America as the region composed by Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean, as defined by *Encyclopedia Britannica*. See “Middle America | Region, the Americas | Britannica,” accessed June 9, 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Middle-America>.

³⁵ Ricardo D. Salvatore, “Library Accumulation and the Emergence of Latin American Studies,” *Comparative American Studies* 3, no. 4 (2005): 416–36.

³⁶ Ironically, Brazilian author Joaquim Nabuco expressed, in his 1908 speech at the University of Chicago, his beliefs in a closer relationship between the “two Americas,” highlighting the key role of universities in overcoming differences and creating a “feeling of continental kinship.” João Almino, “The Earthenware and the Iron Pot: Nabuco’s Utopia for the Two Americas,” *Luso-Brazilian Review* 45, no. 2 (2008): 10, 11.

³⁷ Cañizares-Esguerra, “Toward a ‘Pan-American’ Atlantic,” 225.

³⁸ Hispanic refers to Hispania, the Roman name of the Iberian Peninsula, comprehending both Spain and Portugal. For this reason, the terms Spanish and Hispanic America refer to the once colonies of these two European countries. See, for instance, the definition in Aurelio M. Espinosa, “The Term Latin America,” *Hispania* 1, no. 3 (1918): 135–43, <https://doi.org/10.2307/331596>.

³⁹ The work of Argentine economist Raul Prebisch constitutes the basis for the “dependency theory.” Largely embraced in Latin America, the theory seeks to explain the wealth of some nations in expense of the poverty of others. It proposes that the world is organized so that capital flows from peripheries (poorer nations) to cores (wealthier nations).

⁴⁰ See the problematization of the plural “Americas” in Gruesz, “America.”

⁴¹ Thomas Bender and American Historical Association, eds., *The Education of Historians for the Twenty-First Century* (Urbana: Published for the American Historical Association by the University of Illinois Press, 2004), 56.

⁴² Neil Smith, *American Empire: Roosevelt’s Geographer and the Prelude to Globalization*, 1st edition (University of California Press, 2003), xix.

⁴³ Sophia A. McClennen, “Cultural Studies and ‘Latin America’: Reframing the Questions,” in *The Renewal of Cultural Studies*, ed. Paul Smith (Temple University Press, 2011), 188–95, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1bw1j63.24>; Kutzinski, “America/América/Americas.”

⁴⁴ Smith, *American Empire*, xviii.

⁴⁵ The worrisome (and embarrassing) lack of knowledge of geography by USAmericans in the second half of the twentieth century prompted the Association of American Geographers and the National Council for Geographic Education to launch guidelines and programs to foment a resurgence of geography in schools in the 1980s. See John J. Cogan, “Toward Global Citizenship: The Renewal of Geographic Education in the United States,” *Internationale Schulbuchforschung* 11, no. 1 (1989): 49–58.

⁴⁶ Historian of Latin America Clarence Haring defended in 1927 the idea of a “chasm” that “separates the Latin ‘psychology’ from that of the Anglo-Americans.” Among the psychological features that Latin Americans should learn from their Northern counterparts were “the meaning of fair play, of cooperation, and of subordination of the individual to the achievement of a common end.” Haring, “The Two Americas,” 367–68.

⁴⁷ For a fascinating account of the history of the Spanish language in USAmerican soil, see Lozano, *An American Language*. Many scholars regard the Spanish idiom as a de facto USAmerican language. See, for instance, Silva Gruesz and Lazo, “The Spanish Americas.”

⁴⁸ The normativity of the North raises questions about the conceptualization of Global North and Global South and the geolocation of epistemologies, as well as conflicts stemming from colonialism and imperialism. See, for instance, Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 2nd edition (London; New York: Routledge, 2004); nour dados and raewyn connell, “The Global South,” *Contexts* 11, no. 1 (2012): 12–13; Philip S Golub, “From the New International Economic Order to the G20: How the ‘Global South’ Is Restructuring World Capitalism from Within,” *Third World Quarterly* 34, no. 6 (July 2013): 1000–1015, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2013.802505>; Alexander Gallas, ed., *Combating Inequality* (Routledge, 2017); Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton,

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N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993).

⁴⁹ Lewis and Wigen, *The Myth of Continents*, 125; Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History*, 12 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1934). See also definitions of the West as multiple traditions and racial hierarchies in Samuel P Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).

⁵⁰ "U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: United States," accessed June 13, 2020, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045219>.

⁵¹ Brown 2013, 10.

⁵² For literature on the relationship between racial understandings and citizenship in the United States, see Nilda Flores-González, "Latinos as 'Real' Americans," in *Citizens but Not Americans: Race and Belonging among Latino Millennials* (New York: NYU Press, 2017); Burgos, *Playing America's Game*; Weise, *Corazón de Dixie*; Kendi, *Stamped from the Beginning*; Miller, *Rise and Fall of the Cosmic Race*; Peter Wade et al., eds., *Mestizo Genomics: Race Mixture, Nation, and Science in Latin America* (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2014).

⁵³ Herbert E. Bolton, "The Epic of Greater America," *American Historical Review* 38, no. 3 (April 1933): 448–74.

⁵⁴ See Eric Hinderaker and Rebecca Horn, "Territorial Crossings."

⁵⁵ See an eye-opening discussion among Latin Americanists about new approaches to Latin America in departments of US American academia in Adrian Burgos et al., "Latino History: An Interchange on Present Realities and Future Prospects," *The Journal of American History* 97, no. 2 (2010): 424–63.

⁵⁶ Burgos, *Playing America's Game*. In fact, historian Clarence Haring had emphasized the role of sports in the process of unification of the continent in 1927. Haring, "The Two Americas," 367–68.

⁵⁷ The volume was published in 2004, issue 89. Essays titles include Heidi Tinsman, "Introduction: Histories of Latin Americanisms," *Radical History Review* 2004, no. 89 (Spring 2004): 11–12; M. Hopenhayn, "Essential Histories, Contingent Outcomes: Latin Americanists in Search of a Discourse," *Radical History Review* 2004, no. 89 (April 1, 2004): 25–35, <https://doi.org/10.1215/01636545-2004-89-25>; R. Reguillo, "Latin America: A Story in Three Movements," *Radical History Review* 2004, no. 89 (April 1, 2004): 36–48, <https://doi.org/10.1215/01636545-2004-89-36>; A. C. Rowe, "Whose 'America'? The Politics of Rhetoric and Space in the Formation of U.S. Nationalism," *Radical History Review* 2004, no. 89 (April 1, 2004): 115–34, <https://doi.org/10.1215/01636545-2004-89-115>; P. Giles, "The Parallel Worlds of Jose Martí," *Radical History Review* 2004, no. 89 (April 1, 2004): 185–90, <https://doi.org/10.1215/01636545-2004-89-185>; P. del Real, "Nuestra América: Territory and Place," *Radical History Review* 2004, no. 89 (April 1, 2004): 199–205, <https://doi.org/10.1215/01636545-2004-89-199>; E. C. Ochoa, "Beyond the Nation-State: Teaching the History of the Americas," *Radical History Review* 2004, no. 89 (April 1, 2004): 215–17, <https://doi.org/10.1215/01636545-2004-89-215>; D. Paton, "Teaching 'The Americas,'" *Radical History Review* 2004, no. 89 (April 1, 2004): 218–29, <https://doi.org/10.1215/01636545-2004-89-218>.

⁵⁸ Eric Wolf, *Europe and the People without History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).