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**Lester D. Langley**. *America and the Americas: The United States in the Western Hemisphere.* Second Edition. The United States and the Americas Series. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010. xxiv + 349 pp. $69.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8203-2888-1; $24.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8203-2889-8.

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**An Exceptional Hemisphere: Putting the United States into the Americas**

The first edition of Lester D. Langley's *America and the Americas: The United States in the Western Hemisphere,* published in 1989, inaugurated an influential series, The United States and the Americas, on U.S.-Latin American political, economic, and cultural relations that has grown to include some eighteen volumes. Langley's long familiarity with the region and his positioning of the United States as part of a whole rather than the only actor on the stage firmly embeds U.S. history into developments taking place throughout the Western Hemisphere. This reflects his commitment not only to comparative history but also to "hemispheric history," an approach that he pursued in *The Americas in the Modern Age* (2003). This integrative framework has the welcome effect of making the United States less exceptional and Latin America less other. Seen side by side, Langley notes, both Franklin Roosevelt and Mexico's nationalist president Lázaro Cárdenas were "saving the capitalist system and asserting control over increasingly militant labor unions" (p. 141). Langley's portrait of Mexican independence leader Benito Juárez emphasizes parallels to Abraham Lincoln in their twin challenges to the established order and their efforts at federal unification. He points out that the conclusion of the U.S. Civil War was "less a triumph for the kind of republic imagined by the founders than a recognition that the United States was but one of several hemispheric countries that had rid itself of slavery and divisive federalist wars" (p. 71).

Beyond this integrative and refreshingly nonnationalist approach, this second edition brings the keystone in the series up to date by incorporating new material on migration, the North American Free Trade Agreement, and twenty-first-century conflicts. The most striking change in the new edition is to bring Canada into the story through its complex relation with its most powerful southern neighbor. (As the title conveys, it is not an account of Canadian relations with Latin American countries.) Other new contributions include attention to U.S. efforts to build cultural exchanges with Latin America during World War II, the debates over economic development and modernization theory during the Cold War, and changes in immigration patterns and their impact on U.S. politics.

*America and the Americas* is a fluid synthesis, not a textbook. The reader is assumed to have basic familiarity with the events that Langley rapidly summarizes, so that the book's rewards go not to the uninitiated student but to the educated reader interested in sound judgments and deft interpretations that appear on almost every page. Where a textbook would name and quote from the Monroe Doctrine, Langley's discussion does not actually refer to the Monroe Doctrine until several pages after he begins a careful weighing of competing interpretations of how James Monroe's unilateral message came into being. A textbook would list the terms of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and name President James K. Polk's mutinous emissary Nicholas Trist. Langley does neither; instead, with his marvelous prose and the authority gained from a lifetime of study, he provides insightful sketches to those already equipped with enough facts so they can appreciate such lines as "a band of gloating Democrats and disconsolate Whigs joined to approve a peace treaty negotiated on the Mexican plateau between a disowned U.S. emissary and a peace delegation with no precise authority to deal with him" (p. 52). If that brings a knowing smile to your lips with appreciation for how neatly the author captured the irony of the moment, you are the ideal reader.

The book demonstrates a mastery of inter-American political dynamics and intimate familiarity with the key characters who made U.S. policy. It also repeatedly acknowledges the importance of cultural relations for their

impact on state-to-state relations, although it does not follow current trends in that regard by delving deeply into specific examples or taking the "cultural turn" in the style, for example, of many of the innovative monographs and collections edited by Gilbert Joseph for Duke University Press.[1] Langley finds gendered analyses a distraction from race- and class-based threats to order. He is clearly interested in the fates and decisions of ordinary people, while he narrates the acts of those closer to power.

Canada usually appears in the new edition in one of two ways. At some points, it is one more country in the Western Hemisphere with which the United States interacts, typically added at the end of a section. For example, beside accounts of filibustering expeditions to the Caribbean and Central America, the reader discovers lesser-known episodes in which Canadian secessionists found haven and sympathizers in New York and returned for cross-border intrigues. Secondly, Canada also functions usefully as a point of contrast. Since it shares many commonalities with the United States, divergences can be illuminating. Both countries featured westward settlement in stages by white migrants encountering indigenous populations. During these parallel processes "the U.S. Army fought a thousand military engagements with western Indians; their Canadian counterparts, seven." How can one explain the disparity? "Canadians are quick to point out that in the United States the people got to the West before the law, but in Canada the reverse was the case. In truth, Canadians placed far greater emphasis on controlling the behavior of white immigrants" (p. 78). Some of the rewards of the inclusion of this bilateral relationship await the reader of the footnotes, as when Langley observes that when the U.S. War Department was preparing its filing-cabinet plan for a possible invasion of Canada in the 1930s, it issued a request for maps of western Canada to the Canadian authorities. (Presumably, the request did not include the rationale.)

Langley has never played the hanging judge of history, and he maintains his equanimity when assessing U.S. policy with a mixture of critique and understanding. This results in analyses that are richer and more interesting than determinist versions. Woodrow Wilson intervened in the circum-Caribbean "in the service of laudatory causes," although the Progressive presidents held "ideas infused with strong racialist notions" (pp. 112, 110). U.S. economic expansion was "not a simple Marxian evolution of the dollar following the flag (or the flag in supportive pursuit of the dollar) but, more precisely, the parallel endeavors of private and public economic interests" (p. 119). A book that covers so many incidents in the course of more than two hundred years is bound to yield interpretations with which another scholar may differ. I have disputed the view that Dwight D. Eisenhower's Secretary of State John Foster Dulles obtained inter-American endorsement for the coup against Guatemala in 1954 when a version of his resolution was adopted at a conference in Caracas. Where Langley finds that most Latin American nations "went along," I argue that they successfully opposed and then transformed the U.S. resolution from one endorsing intervention into a document prohibiting intervention.[3] And there is perhaps insufficient credit given to internal Latin American developments and actors in crediting the origins of democratization processes in the 1980s "not to [Ronald] Reagan primarily but to the human rights activism of [Jimmy] Carter in Latin America" (p. 252). Far more often, I found myself nodding in agreement as Langley dispatched one controversy after another with fairness and hard-won wisdom.

The epilogue introduces some of the main issues in contemporary U.S.-Latin American relations, including drug trafficking, the rise of leftist governments, and migration. Newspaper readers watching the two major U.S. political parties strategize to take advantage of the growing number of Latino voters will recognize the significance of what Langley calls the "Latin Americanization" of the United States that has helped make the United States by population "the fifth largest Latin American nation in the world" (pp. xvi, 289). Scholars, graduate students, and other readers trying to make sense of the growing transnational character of the Americas in the twenty-first century will benefit greatly from reading this account of how those ties developed over the preceding two centuries.

Notes

[1]. See, for example, Gilbert Joseph, Catherine LeGrand, and Ricardo Salvatore, eds., *Close Encounters of Empire: Writing the Cultural History of U.S.-Latin American Relations* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998); Greg Grandin and Gilbert Joseph, eds., *A Century of Revolution: Insurgent and Counterinsurgent Violence during Latin America's Long Cold War* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010); and the more than fifty publications in the Duke series launched in 1998 that Joseph edits with Emily Rosenberg, American Encounters/Global Interactions.

[2]. Max Paul Friedman, "Fracas in Caracas: Latin American Diplomatic Resistance to United States Intervention in Guatemala in 1954." *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 21, no. 4 (2010): 669-689.

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