

bre genérico de *realistas*. La inexactitud tiene su origen en el título mismo, y se repite invariablemente a lo largo y ancho de toda la obra;⁷ se habla indiscriminadamente de comandantes realistas, economizando en la explicación, por demás pertinente, de que los realistas, más precisamente *fieles realistas defensores de Fernando VII*, eran un cuerpo armado específico, parte de los cuerpos al servicio de la causa del rey.

François Dosse asegura en sus reflexiones acerca de la biografía que “se reescriben constantemente las mismas vidas, vuelven a analizarse las mismas figuras, porque siempre surgen lagunas documentarias, *nuevas preguntas y nuevos enfoques*”.⁸ De ese modo, esta obra se enmarca en las pautas historiográficas actuales, donde enfoques y preguntas nuevas nos obligan a hacer una revisión de los mismos temas, tratando de satisfacerlas de un modo innovador. Al fin “no se trata de regresar a los viejos temas con los viejos enfoques, simplemente hay que completar el panorama”,⁹ donde estén las mayores lagunas, y esta obra abona a ese fin.

Jaime E. Rodríguez O., *“We are now the true Spaniards”: sovereignty, revolution, independence, and the emergence of the Federal Republic of Mexico, 1808-1824*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2012, 520 p.

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It would be fair to say that Jaime E. Rodríguez believes *We are now the true Spaniards* to be his *magnum opus*. As he states in his presentation,

⁷ Esta repetida generalización está presente en la inmensa mayoría de la historiografía al respecto. Un ejemplo puede verse en la frase siguiente, donde el autor está refiriéndose a problemas económicos: “la reimposición de un tributo tan poco político provocaría un aumento en las desertiones de los ejército realistas, cuyas filas estaban integradas por los antiguos causantes de este tributo, y de los realistas fieles, que eran voluntarios de las provincias”. Hamnett, *Revolución y contrarrevolución*, p. 114 (cursivas del autor).

⁸ François Dosse, *El arte de la biografía*, México, Universidad Iberoamericana, 2007, p. 15 (las cursivas son mías).

⁹ Alfredo Ávila y Virginia Guedea, “De la Independencia nacional a los procesos autonomistas novohispanos: balance de la historiografía reciente”, en Manuel Chust y José Antonio Serrano (ed.), *Debates sobre las independencias iberoamericanas*, Madrid/Frankfurt am Main, Asociación de Historiadores Latinoamericanistas Europeos/Iberoamericana/Vervuert, 2007, p. 276.

the text is a reflection on his forty-years of scholarship on Mexican history (p. XIII). It is a revised translation of a work he published in Spanish in 2009,¹ and as such represents the most extensive reiteration of the hypothesis that he has been developing since the 1990s, mostly notably in works such as *The Independence of Spanish America*,² “*Rey, religion, yndependencia y union*”: *el proceso político de la independencia de Guadalajara*,³ and *La revolución política durante la época de la independencia: el reino de Quito, 1808-1822*.⁴

Rodríguez’s work seeks to place the development of independent government in Mexico and the former Spanish America within the wider context of the Spanish political world. According to his analysis, the history of Mexican independence, the political system and practices Mexico adopted after 1821 and the creation of the first Federal Republic in 1824, can all be traced directly back to this and the political revolutions of the Spanish monarchy in the first decades of the nineteenth century. As he states unequivocally on the first page of the text:

Mexico’s experience was unique amongst the nations of the Hispanic World. Not because of its great insurgencies, but because, alone amongst all the kingdoms of the Spanish Monarchy, including Spain itself, it remained true to Hispanic juridical and political culture. Indeed, the charter of the Mexican Federal Republic, the Constitution of 1824, constitutes the culmination of the great Hispanic Revolution that erupted in 1808.

He uses this argument to reject any suggestion that Mexican federalism was forged using the US system as its mould. For Rodríguez, the only model for Mexico’s 1824 Federal Constitution was the Hispanic Constitution of 1812 (p. 332).

1 ‘*Nosotros somos ahora los verdaderos españoles*’: *la transición de la Nueva España de un reino de la monarquía española a la República Federal Mexicana, 1808-1824*, 2 v., Zamora, El Colegio de Michoacán/Instituto de Investigaciones Doctor José María Luis Mora, 2009.

2 Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998.

3 Mexico City, Instituto de Investigaciones Doctor José María Luis Mora, 2003.

4 Quito, Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar/Corporación Editora Nacional, 2006.

With this argument, Rodríguez disputes the central place the insurgency period has commonly had in Mexican historiography as the harbinger of independence. Instead, he puts forward the idea that “the political transformation within [...] the Spanish Monarchy [...] was the fundamental revolution” (p. 1). Moreover, he argues that Mexican insurgents did not actively desire full separation from the Spanish monarchy, but rather autonomy within the monarchy itself. Thus, in his analysis there was no meaningful independence movement before 1821, but rather “a series of disconnected movements [...] ancillary to the political process” (p. 2).

As a result, Rodríguez’s text defends Hispanic political culture and rejects of any suggestion that Spanish or Mexican ideas were derivative of Anglo or Francophone thought. Indeed, in Chapter One, he clearly demonstrates the centrality of Hispanic political thinkers –like Francisco Suárez– and Hispanic seats of learning –like the University of Salamanca– to the development of *jusnaturalist* thinking in Europe and to the subsequent spread of the Enlightenment. In this chapter, he is also at pains to point out that New Spain was far from being the educational backwater it has often been painted, isolated from the outside world and its thinking. Rather, he argues that “New Spain possessed one the most intense and diverse networks of educational and scientific institutions in the Western world”, which meant that:

Educated novohispanos, like their Spanish counterparts, were modern, enlightened individuals who were well prepared to address the complex problems of their age. They were well versed in contemporary political thought which emphasized liberty, equality, civil rights, the rule of law, representative constitutional government and *laissez faire* economics [p. 16-17].

Rodríguez’s insistence on the domestic origins of the Hispanic revolutions after 1808 is a reply to the pejorative historical narrative popular in the twentieth century which insisted that liberalism and constitutional government in Latin America were foreign imports doomed to failure because of the backward nature of its political culture: its predilection for strong autocratic leaders and for armed rebellions rather than elections and continued citizen engagement in public life.

Even so, Rodríguez's desire to laud Hispanic culture and its political revolution leads him to indulge in inexact hyperbole on a number of occasions. For example, when he discusses Hispanic print culture and newspapers, he asserts that "The *Diario de Madrid*, founded in 1758, became the first daily newspaper in Europe" (p. 13). In fact, the first UK daily paper –*The Daily Courant*– circulated almost half a century earlier in 1702. Equally, when discussing the 1812 Cádiz Constitution, he makes the claim that this charter was the most "radical of the nineteenth century", a claim that does not hold up to scrutiny if we consider the fact that the Constitution did not abolish slavery nor grant citizenship to those of African descent, nor did it create equality for all before the law (it preserved ecclesiastical and military *fueros*) or establish religious toleration. However, all these things would be constitutionally provided for in Mexico, for example, before the end of the nineteenth-century.

It is true that the 1812 Charter was one of the most radical of its political context. As Rodríguez points out, it establishes one of the most generous definitions of citizenship in the Atlantic world, even if (as he fails to mention) its use of indirect elections proved to be a very effective filter, concentrating the real decision-making in the hands of a reduced elite. Even so, it compares somewhat badly with the insurgent Constitution of 1814, which despite adopting the same indirect electoral system gave citizenship to "all those born in America" regardless of their race (art. 13) and abolished military and ecclesiastical *fueros* by declaring the equality of all inhabitants before the law (art. 19).

Furthermore, his refusal to entertain the idea that Spanish and Mexican constitutionalism bore any relation to their European and North American neighbours' political systems flies in the face of much recent scholarship. The French constitution of 1791 has long been recognised as an important point of reference to the liberal elements of the Constituent Assembly of Cádiz, most recently by Ignacio Fernández Sarasola.⁵ Moisés Guzmán has demonstrated the familiarity of New Spain's insurgents –especially Miguel Hidalgo– with US political tracts and state constitutions.⁶

⁵ *La Constitución de Cádiz. Origen, contenido y proyección internacional*, Madrid, Centro de Estudios Políticos y Constitucionales, 2011.

⁶ Moisés Guzmán Pérez, *Miguel Hidalgo y el gobierno insurgente en Valladolid*, Morelia, Universidad Michoacana de San Nicolás de Hidalgo, Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, 2011, especially chapter 3: "Hidalgo y los Estados Unidos". Also see, Moisés Guzmán, "¿Mo-

For my part, I have studied the importance of British constitutional thinking for Independent Mexico's politicians. Such studies do not indicate that Hispanic or Mexican nation-builders jettisoned their identities and inheritance in favour of foreign models. Instead, they show that the various Constituent Congresses in Mexico and Spain acted just as their counterparts in the former British colonies or France did before them: they studied the available examples and options before negotiating their own settlement in response to their particular circumstances.

Rodríguez's text does not acknowledge the existence of this scholarship. It also fails to note the developments in Spanish legal historiography regarding the idea of the 1808 political revolution and the origin of the Cadiz Constitution. This is surprising because the most important hypothesis to emerge from this school is that Spanish constitutionalism in the early nineteenth century reformulated pre-existing institutions. Carlos Garriga and Marta Lorente, for example, maintain that the Cadiz assembly acted in consonance with Spanish constitutional tradition, not against it.⁷ They state that the Constitution merely dressed old institutions and concepts in new "constitutional clothes" and thus giving them new legitimacy. Including some debate of these ideas would have surely strengthened Rodríguez's arguments and certainly aided his understanding of Hispanic constitutional history.

A further inexplicable absence in Rodríguez's text is any serious discussion of the insurgency's political aims in New Spain. He repeatedly argues that New Spain's insurgents sought autonomy within, rather than independence from, the Spanish Monarchy and this assertion underpins his hypothesis that the insurgency had little or no role to play in the independence process. In fact, he has made this argument in all his texts since publishing *The Independence of Spanish America* in 1998. Since then, this hypothesis has been challenged on numerous occasions. Various historians have pointed out that while autonomy was certainly the aim of many from 1808 onwards, there were also insurgents who argued for the cutting of all political

narquía, república o imperio? La independencia de la Nueva España y el dilema de la Constitución política de la Nación, 1810-1821", *Espacio, Tiempo y Forma, Serie V, Historia Contemporánea*, 22, 2010, p. 79-105.

⁷ Carlos Garriga and Marta Lorente, *Cádiz, 1812. La constitución jurisdiccional*, Madrid, Centro de Estudios Políticos y Constitucionales, 2007.

ties –that is to say, independence as we understand it today– throughout this period. Indeed, Ana Carolina Ibarra’s 2007 study of the uses of the word “independence” in New Spain between 1808 and 1821 affirms quite forcefully that it is not advisable to simply “translate independence as autonomy”, since within New Spanish “discourse the term has a contradictory and complex use”. In her text, she notes examples of the word being used to describe plans for New Spain’s autonomy and to denominate complete independence from Spain.⁸

Other cases studies prove Ibarra’s point: Virginia Guedea’s study of Bernardo Gutiérrez de Lara’s insurgency efforts in Texas shows that the constitution he published in Béjar in 1813 established the independence of the Mexican republic.⁹ Jesús Hernández Jaimes’s text about *pardo* and *mulato* involvement in the events of 1808 in Acapulco demonstrates their leaders’ wish for complete self-governance.¹⁰ This idea is also present in the work of Alfredo Ávila, who argues that although Morelos may have originally recognised Ferdinand’s sovereignty when he joined the insurgency, he quickly abandoned this position. He notes that by 1812, for example, Morelos openly opposed including any reference to Ferdinand in the constitutional plan being drawn up by Ignacio Rayón.¹¹

Finally, it cannot go unremarked that Carlos Herrejón, who has spent many years studying New Spain’s political and religious discourse, has been arguing for many years that insurgent leader Miguel Hidalgo was very clearly in favour of New Spain’s complete independence from Spain and the Spaniards:

8 Ana Carolina Ibarra, “El concepto de *independencia* en la crisis del orden virreinal”, in Alicia Meyer (ed.), *México en tres momentos, 1810-1910-2010: hacia la conmemoración del bicentenario de la Independencia y del centenario de la Revolución Mexicana: retos y perspectivas*, 2 v., Mexico City, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2007, v. I, p. 267-279.

9 Virginia Guedea, “Autonomía e independencia en la provincia de Texas. La Junta de Gobierno de San Antonio de Béjar”, in Virginia Guedea (ed.), *La independencia de México y el proceso autonomista novohispano, 1808-1824*, Mexico City, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México/Instituto de Investigaciones Doctor José María Luis Mora, 2001, p. 135-184.

10 “Cuando los mulatos quisieron mandar. Insurgencia y guerra de castas en el puerto de Acapulco, 1809-1811”, en Tomás Bustamante Álvarez and José Gilberto Garza Grimaldo (eds.), *Los sentimientos de la nación. Entre la espada espiritual y militar, la formación del estado de Guerrero*, Mexico City, Instituto de Estudios Parlamentarios Eduardo Neri, 2001, p. 141-173.

11 Alfredo Ávila, *En nombre de la nación. La formación del gobierno representativo en México*, Mexico City, Centro de Investigaciones y Docencia Económicas/Taurus, 2002, p. 154-156.

There is no basis whatsoever for attributing [to Hidalgo] the [cry of] “Long Live Ferdinand” in the *Grito* [de Dolores]. On the other hand, once in Guanajuato, [Hidalgo] banned people from talking to him about the king and did not want to mention him in any of his proclamations, nor in those he instructed others to write [...] [I]n Guadalajara he ordered the portrait of Ferdinand to be taken away from his canopy; he replaced all mentions of “royal” with “national”, even in the oath of loyalty for officials: now they had to swear loyalty to American rights rather than to the king. He explicitly declared rebellion against a despotic king a legitimate act and repeatedly talked of independence, which according to Mariano Jiménez [one of his trusted lieutenants] was absolute independence.¹²

A year after the publication of Rodríguez’s work in Spanish in 2009, Herrejón published a study of the insurgent newspaper, *El Despertador Americano*, from which Rodríguez copied the “We are now the true Spaniards” quote. In this he took issue with the use of this phrase, which he claims is taken “out of context”. According to Herrejón, the quote is taken from a text addressed to the English and arguing for an alliance with England. He argues that by appropriating the title of “true Spaniards” and declaring themselves “the legitimate successors” of their subjugated rights, the author –Francisco Severo Maldonado– is asserting the insurgents’ assumption of the right to independence. To understand Herrejón’s point better it is helpful to confront the original Spanish with the translation Rodríguez offers in his text:

Nosotros somos ahora los verdaderos españoles, los enemigos jurados de Napoleón y sus secuaces, los que sucedamos legítimamente en todos los derechos de los subyugados que ni vencieron ni murieron por Fernando.

¹² Carlos Herrejón Peredo, “Tradición, modernidad y los apremios del momento: *El Despertador Americano*”, in Brian Connaughton (ed.), *Religión, política e identidad en la Independencia de México*, Mexico City, Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana-Iztapalapa/Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, 2010, p. 216-217.

We are now the true Spaniards, the sworn enemies of Napoleon and his lackeys, the legitimate successors of all the rights of the subjugated [Spaniards] who neither won [the war] nor died for Fernando [VII].

Rodríguez's translation shows he takes the subject of "subjugated" to mean the Spaniards oppressed by Napoleón. Herrejón argues that the real subject is actually the insurgents themselves, understanding their oppression to derive from Spanish government.¹³

Apart from one lonely footnote, Rodríguez's text makes no effort to engage (or indeed even mention) with arguments showing the existence of support for full independence amongst insurgent leaders. The footnote in question, number 58 in Chapter 3, makes oblique reference to it, in the sense that he recognises that many insurgent documents called for "independence". In response he says that this word was used "in a variety of ways", before going on to cite Nettie Lee Benson's appreciation that the Spanish called the war against the Napoleonic invaders their war of independence, and that Mexican documents referring to independence, meant "*independence from the French*" (his italics) (p. 363). This quote comes from a text that was published in 1976 and can hardly be understood to answer the arguments of more recently published work.¹⁴

To conclude, "*We are now the true Spaniards*" is probably the most extensive expression in English of Jaime Rodríguez's ideas on Mexico's independence and the origins of its first government. Disappointingly, his text repeats much of what he has already published on the subject. It fails to engage with the most recent developments in historiography and, in some cases, opts to ignore those which dispute his hypothesis. As a consequence, his arguments about the centrality of the Hispanic Revolution as the principal cause of Mexican independence remain unproven.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 218.

¹⁴ Nettie Lee Benson, "Comparison of the American Independence Movements", in *Dos revoluciones: México y los Estados Unidos*, Mexico City, Jus, 1976, p. 117-127.