

Introduction

During the era of mass transoceanic migrations, between the midnineteenth-century and the Great Depression, more than 4 million Spaniards came to the New World. Their major destination was Argentina, especially Buenos Aires, where a third of those who settled in the country stayed.¹ According to Argentine statistics, 2,070,874 Spaniards entered the country between 1857 and 1930. Some returned after stays of varying lengths, others went back and forth, but more than half (54 percent) remained permanently. Even the net immigration surpassed that of all the conquistadors and settlers who came to Spanish America during the entire colonial period.² In fact, by the eve of World War I there were more Spaniards in the city of Buenos Aires (306,000) than there had been in all of the Spanish colonies at any given time before the Wars of Independence. More Spaniards lived in the Argentine capital then than in any Spanish city except Madrid and Barcelona. They formed one of the largest immigrant urban communities in the world and helped turn Buenos Aires into the second largest city on the Atlantic seaboard (after New York City) and the largest south of the equator. Yet, although volumes on the conquistadors fill shelves, not one scholarly book has been written about the experiences of these more recent and numerous newcomers to Buenos Aires.³

Several factors account for this neglect. An obvious one is that the immigrants' experiences, though intensely and intriguingly human, included no mythical conquests of empires, no brave and bloody battles. And if they lacked the mantle of masculine bravura and heroism that could have dazzled traditional, and predominantly male, historians, they also lacked the aura of "otherness" or subjugation that could have attracted more progressive Western scholars. North Americans and western Europeans, for instance, have penned forty-one volumes on the Yanomami (all published)

but only two on Spaniards in postindependence Latin America (both on Mexico and both unpublished).⁴

A related reason for this scholarly oblivion is the fact that although Spaniards formed the fifth largest numerical group of European emigrants, relatively few headed for the United States or other eventually "developed" countries where social history first appeared and flourished. Although European emigration to the United States (32.6 million between 1820 and 1930) outnumbered that to Argentina (6.5 million) by a ratio of 5 to 1, studies on the former surpass those on the latter by a ratio of 26 to 1. The Argentine inflow exceeded Canada's and almost doubled Australia's. But Argentine immigration studies amount to 16 percent of Canada's and 42 percent of Australia's. Similar figures could be found among the sending countries. Spain's exodus quadrupled that of Sweden, but studies of Spanish emigration amount to only two-thirds of Sweden's.⁵ Clearly, "historical significance" forms an arbitrary concept defined less by the number of people affected than by economic power and academic resources.

The development of immigration history may have also been retarded in both Spain and Argentina by the repressive atmosphere of right-wing dictatorships, by the fact that when these fell the scholarly revival concentrated—quite naturally—on political issues, and by a strong orthodox Marxist tradition that favored the study of class and labor over immigration and ethnicity.

Yet the lack of attention to Spanish immigration on the part of Argentine historians cannot be fully attributed to these factors. It is true that Italian arrivals, at 45 percent of the total Argentine inflow, surpassed the Spaniards, who made up one-third of the total. But studies on the former by Argentine professional and amateur historians (44) quadruple those on the Spaniards (11). The Spanish inflow, in turn, was ten times greater than the German and Jewish ones and dwarfed Welsh immigration. But studies of Germans in Argentina by Argentines (23) more than double works on Spaniards; those on Jews (156) are fourteen times more numerous; and those on the Welsh (13) surpass them.⁶

Here too, the Spanish immigrants were not "other" enough. They were, to use the apt title of Charlotte Erickson's compilation of letters from English immigrants in nineteenth-century North America—"Invisible Immigrants."⁷ As the title of this book suggests and its last chapter illustrates, ambivalence consistently marked the host country's attitudes toward the Spaniards. They represented the "charter group," the bestowers of the original culture, "cousins" but also "uncultured" new arrivals, foreigners, "strangers." It is precisely this ambiguous attitude, however, that

makes their study an ideal vantage point from which to examine the process by which notions of alterity are formed. Their "dual personality," after all, manifested not some static essence but a historical construction in a constant process of definition. This also makes their study relevant to that of similarly situated immigrant groups such as the Portuguese in Brazil, the British in the United States, and the French in Quebec.

Invisible or not, the Spaniards in Argentina were, above all, immigrants. As the rest of this book demonstrates, in terms of their immigration and adaptation patterns, their experiences resembled—and of course diverged from—those of other newcomers in Argentina and elsewhere in the world. This study, therefore, aims not simply to illuminate the history of a key but previously unstudied group. It also attempts to contribute to a better understanding of the immigration experience in general. In order to do so, it searches not for ad hoc explanations of the process but for recurrent and recognizable immigration and adaptation patterns; compares them to those of other immigrant groups throughout the world; and inserts empirical findings and theoretical insights within the general scholarly literature on immigration. The text, and particularly the notes, contain a thorough overview of this literature. Only this comparative approach, I believe, can advance the field toward more general, inductive theories.

Although not among my original intentions, the book also offers some insights into the historical formation of modern Argentina as it examines the transformation of Buenos Aires' social ecology, spatial and occupational mobility, women's work, the formation of its class structure, and the evolution of a nationalist discourse. Given the prominent role of the capital, where one-third of Argentines lived, these findings are inescapably relevant for an understanding of the country.

The book's organization reflects both the immigration-adaptation process as it unfolds and the study's principal assumptions and analytical framework. There are scholarly works that concentrate on the migration side of the process, that study it as a demographic phenomenon and analyze the determinants of population movements. Others focus on the adaptation side, examining how the newcomers form neighborhoods in the host city, their occupations and mobility, institutions, and so forth. A basic assumption of this book, however, is that one cannot be understood without the other; or, at least, that adaptation cannot be understood without reference to the Old World background.⁸ The presumption that one can represents little more than an unfortunate legacy of North American "exceptionalism," of the notion that the new country's superiority and the

assimilating power of its environment made pre-arrival traits more or less irrelevant. Most histories of immigrant communities continue to pick up the story only after the arrivals step off the vessel. But since at least the 1970s, the best in the field have rejected this environmentalist approach and the notion that immigrants are blank slates to be colored by North American culture. Political disillusionment with this culture in U.S. academic circles during that decade at times led some to dismiss the assimilationist melting-pot concept and replace it with a pluralistic paradigm that stressed the continuities of pre-arrival ways. As the trend matured, a more balanced approach began to emphasize the complex interplay between the premigration heritage and the host environment, between continuity and change.⁹

The notion that adaptation was shaped by the interplay between pre-arrival traits and the host environment formed an a priori position of this study. My findings have proved it correct but have also shown that immigration patterns themselves were an important explanatory variable; that the way people came (in terms of auspices, numbers, rhythm and timing of the flow, and so forth) would greatly influence the way they adapted to the host city.

Another assumption reinforced by early findings is that the nation-state may provide the best unit of analysis for studying emigration or immigration policy but a poor one for examining the actual process. Spanish emigration, after all, was not a national phenomenon but part of a global one that took more than 50 million Europeans across the Atlantic during the period. On the other extreme, emigration originated not in a nation (indeed, for much of the period most of the peninsula did not participate) but in particular localities and villages. Traditional wisdom notwithstanding, the vantage point for studying the process lies not in the middle but in the extremes or, more precisely, in the meeting of the extremes: of global forces and local conditions, of the world and the village.

The analytical framework of this study is, therefore, macro-micro and dialectical. It examines how the interaction between macrostructural forces and microsocial networks shaped emigration and adaptation patterns. It also examines how this interaction formed early molds that themselves became independent variables which would partially explain subsequent developments. Initial empirical findings demonstrating the importance of these early molds encouraged me to push back the starting date of this study to 1850 from the originally planned 1880–1930 period (the conventional time span of most studies of southern and eastern Euro-

pean emigration, since the bulk of the flow took place during this period). The effort proved worthwhile because it allowed a more accurate examination of continuity and change, showing that key features of the mature immigrant community originated in patterns set in its infancy rather than in contemporary events.¹⁰

Another dialectical aspect of this study centers on its combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis. The former relies on linked databases with information on more than 60,000 individuals culled from a variety of manuscript sources in Buenos Aires and various Iberian localities; the latter, on anything from the ethnic and working-class press to interviews, poetry, plays, and jokes (for more on sources, see the appendix). This methodological combination tries to prevent the partial or even erroneous conclusions that relying on only one type of documentary evidence can lead to. It also aims to uncover past social realities and perceptions, and the relationship between the two, rather than just to analyze texts and public discourse—as in much intellectual and cultural history. This does not represent a purely materialistic approach, but it does assume that social realities are more than mere cultural constructions forged *ex nihilo* and that at times the latter can actually dim or misrepresent the former.

A different sort of assumption in this book relates to the connection between structures and individual agency. Perhaps the most distinguishing characteristic of recent studies of immigration lies in their homocentric nature. They have questioned deterministic theories that portray immigrants as helpless pawns moved from one place to another to satisfy the needs of impersonal world systems or classes. Instead, these studies have elevated the status of the immigrants to that of active participants in the process. They present emigration as the accumulation of thousands of personal decisions taken in the face of other options. After all, only a minority of people faced with similar circumstances chose to emigrate. This study finds itself in full accord with this trend. Yet, as time went along, I became less interested in stressing the immigrants' role as volitional actors in the drama and more intrigued by how structural parameters limited and shaped that volition; by the intersection and tension between individual agency and larger historical forces. It became increasingly apparent that emigration represented more than the sum of personal decisions. Departures did not peak in Spain when they did simply because people decided to leave.

The first chapter of the book examines precisely the larger context within which these decisions were taken. It tries to explain why Spain be-

came a country of emigrants when it did, not by listing personal motives, not by resorting to the "push" of ills that existed well before the outflow began, but by revealing the global forces that spread the phenomenon throughout Europe in a recognizable pattern. It also tries to ascertain the relationship between rural impoverishment and emigration by comparing the areas that sent their inhabitants overseas with those that did not and by comparing those who left with those who stayed behind.

The second chapter explains how the same global forces that made Spain—and other European countries—exporters of people turned Argentina into a country of immigrants. It is shorter than the others because it merely provides the broader Argentine context and leaves specific aspects of the host city to the pertinent places in the second part of the book.

Chapter 3 shifts from the macrostructural context of population movement to its microsocial mechanisms and examines how the interaction of the two created particular emigration patterns. Whereas the previous two chapters set the larger stage and explain emigration *a grosso modo*, this one uncovers its internal workings. It does so with a microhistorical approach that focuses not on Spain, or even its regions, but on specific towns, villages, and kinship networks. At the same time it ties local trends to the larger forces previously examined to explain why people left some areas and not others; why those who left headed for certain destinations and not others; how the departures from various localities differed from one another in terms of social background and position within the family structure; and how emigration "fever" spread from a few original foci to the rest of the peninsula.

Whereas the first three chapters center on the migration aspects of the process, the next three deal with adaptation. The term is here defined as the process by which newcomers adjusted to their new environment, settled in the host city, found jobs and ways to improve their material conditions, and developed an organized community. The term assimilation, on the other hand, is rather murky. It often includes these themes but has a wider meaning relating to the adoption of new loyalties, identities and cultures.¹¹ It is also a longer-term process that goes beyond the second and subsequent generations and whose outcome or end is in no way predetermined. I examine the issue in the last sections of the last two chapters. But because this book covers only the pre-1930 period and the immigrant generation its focus will be on adaptation, on process rather than outcome.

The same dialectical macro-micro framework used to examine migration (expanded to include Buenos Aires' physical and class structures among the first set, and the immigrants' social networks and cultural

background among the second) also provided the best approach for analyzing the lives of the newcomers in their adopted city. Chapter 4 examines how this interaction (plus migration patterns themselves) influenced the residential choices of the Spaniards in Buenos Aires. Although it finds the Chicago school model and the concept of chain migration limiting in themselves, it combines the two to analyze the changes and continuities in the city's social ecology, the issues of spatial centralization and segregation, how immigrants formed neighborhoods, why they settled where they did, the relationship between occupational and geographical mobility, and why home-ownership rates varied among the arrivals.

Chapter 5 describes Buenos Aires' labor market, the Spanish community's occupational distribution, and how it differed from that of other nationalities. It then compares the occupational status of the different Iberian ethnic and hometown groups, looking at pre-arrival traits, emigration patterns, and what I termed invisible skills to explain divergences in it. Linking data on Buenos Aires' immigrants with that on their parents in Spain, it measures the degree of transatlantic social continuity. It also evaluates the role of gender, marital status, length of residence in the country, and age in terms of occupation; and it employs various methods and sources to measure socioeconomic mobility.

Chapter 6 examines the formation and function of community organizations, from the first ones to appear in 1852 to the huge institutional structure of the twentieth century, which included everything from the two largest mutual-aid societies in Latin America and the largest private bank on the continent to a plethora of hometown associations. It also analyzes the sources of contention in the community (class, regionalism and ethnonationalism, and conflict ideologies, particularly anarchism) and the mechanisms that attenuated those conflicts.

The last chapter shifts the focus from adaptation to an intellectual history of the continuities and changes in the host society's attitudes toward the Spaniards and in the latter's actions and responses. It employs the same macro-micro framework but translates it so that general Western ideological trends and local conditions form the two elements of analysis. It demonstrates how the interplay between the two shaped the definition of Spaniards' dual personality as "cousins and strangers."

Although this book deals with Spanish immigration to Buenos Aires in general, its micro-macro approach demanded that some villages and towns be chosen for more intensive study. Because no single locality could be

representative of a country as varied as Spain, the method followed consisted in selecting as wide and dissimilar a variety as possible. The towns and villages chosen for analysis do indeed cover a wide spectrum in many respects. The four major ethnic groups in the peninsula and in Buenos Aires are represented: Galicians, Basques, Catalans, and Castilians. The sample includes areas of early, middle, and late emigration; cities and hamlets; industrial, proto-industrial, and administrative towns; agricultural and fishing villages; localities on the coast and in the interior; and various types of economies. In other words, the issue of representativeness was resolved in a way by having as many "unrepresentative" cases as feasible.

The localities are in six areas listed below (see also Map 1). Populations in 1900—and, where applicable, areas in square kilometers—are in parentheses, and numbers of immigrants in the sample are in brackets:

1. Ferrol (32,794) [714], a port town in the Galician province of La Coruña, had some shipbuilding, a canning industry, and a long tradition of emigration.

2. The county of Corcubión [618], also in the province of La Coruña, some seventy kilometers west of Ferrol on the European continent's northwestern corner, includes the coastal municipalities of Corcubión (1,551; 7.6), Finisterre (4,708; 29.6), Cee (4,060; 55.2), Mugía (6,542; 120.6), and Camariñas (4,153; 51.8); and the interior municipalities of Dumbria (3,526; 120.2), Vimianzo (8,637; 186.9), and Zas (5,621; 132). This was a rural area, with fishing and maritime villages on the coast and agricultural ones in the interior. As in most of Galicia, handkerchief-sized plots dotted the landscape. Each municipality had a main village of 500 to 1,400 inhabitants, with the rest of the population dispersed in dozens of smaller units throughout the area.

3. The neighboring municipalities of Caldas de Reyes (7,505; 65.4) [497] and Cuntis (5,866; 79) [342] and, immediately to the south, the three adjacent municipalities of Cambados (8,520; 23.5) [117], Rivadumia (3,057; 19.6) [206], and Meis (3,740; 51.8) [73], all in the Galician province of Pontevedra, just north of Portugal. This was also a zone of *minifundios* (small farms) and dispersed settlements, often with a main valley village surrounded by miles of green, rolling hills and scores of brownstone hamlets.

4. The village of Val de San Lorenzo (1,720; 62.1) [128] in the so-called Maragato district of the interior province of León. The zone formed part of the large, semiarid, cereal-producing plateau of Old Castile. Wool

Regions:

1. Andalusia
2. Aragon
3. Asturias
4. Basque Country
5. Catalonia
6. Extremadura
7. Galicia
8. León
9. Levant
10. New Castile
11. Old Castile



Map 1. Regions and provinces of Spain. Regions: 1) Andalusia; 2) Aragon; 3) Asturias; 4) Basque Country; 5) Catalonia; 6) Extremadura; 7) Galicia; 8) León; 9) Levant; 10) New Castile; 11) Old Castile.

washing and weaving, and the trade of muleteers, furnished the other main source of income in the village. This is an area of late emigration, as most of the Argentine-bound villagers left after 1900.

5. The coastal town of Mataró (19,704) [97], in the northeastern province of Barcelona. In an area often called "the Manchester of Spain," this was a growing and prosperous manufacturing town (except at times of industrial crisis) with a long tradition of emigration to the River Plate.

6. The province of Navarre (307,669) [3,120], in northern Spain. Navarre includes the administrative city of Pamplona (made famous outside Spain by Ernest Hemingway and the annual running of the bulls); four towns with more than 6,000 inhabitants (Corella, Estella, Tafalla, and Tudela); and hundreds of smaller population centers. The province was chosen, in part, because of its contrasts. Ethnically and linguistically, its northern Pyrenean valleys form Basque bastions, and the southern lands, along the Ebro River, are quasi-Castilian. Likewise, the north was characterized by farmsteads and dispersed settlements; the south, by concentrated population centers, similar to Mediterranean agrotowns.

Discussing all of these towns and villages in every chapter would run the manuscript into the thousands of pages. I have, thus, used them selectively, to examine the micro-scale aspects of migration and their interaction with macro-scale forces and to compare the contrasting or similar patterns that this interplay produced.