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Teresa Cribelli  
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## Industrial Forests and Mechanical Marvels

An account of modernization and technological innovation in nineteenth-century Brazil that provides a distinctly Brazilian perspective. Existing scholarship on the period describes the beginnings of Brazilian modernization as a European or North American import dependent on foreign capital, transfers of technology, and philosophical inspiration. Promoters of modernization were considered few in number, derivative in their thinking, or thwarted by an entrenched slaveholding elite; hostile to industrialization. Teresa Cribelli presents a more nuanced picture. Nineteenth-century Brazilians selected among the transnational flow of ideas and technologies with care and attention to the specific conditions of their tropical nation. Studying underutilized sources, Cribelli illuminates a distinctly Brazilian vision of modernization that challenges the view that Brazil, a nation dependent on slave labor for much of the nineteenth century, was merely reactive in the face of the modernization models of the North Atlantic industrializing nations.

Teresa Cribelli is an assistant professor of history at the University of Alabama.

# Industrial Forests and Mechanical Marvels

*Modernization in Nineteenth-Century Brazil*

TERESA CRIBELLI  
*University of Alabama*



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## Notes on Orthography

Titles of publications are retained in the orthography of the nineteenth century in citations and the bibliography. Personal names, places, publications, and names of institutions have been altered to conform to modern Portuguese spelling in the body of the text.

## Abbreviations

MACOP	<i>Ministério de Agricultura, Comércio e Obras Públicas</i>
JC	<i>Jornal do Commercio</i>
IIFA	<i>Imperial Instituto Fluminense de Agricultura</i>



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## Preface

Brazil was very distant in time and place for a young girl growing up in Greeley, Colorado, in the 1970s and 1980s. Everyone in my elementary school knew about the soccer sensation Pelé. I recall reading about him in my Scholastic newsletter and seeing his quick soccer moves on television. My classmates and I were also fascinated with the exotic and vibrant, but in other ways dimly imagined Amazon forest. Beyond these brief glimpses, Brazil rarely appeared in our everyday world. The first time I began to think about the possibilities of Brazil beyond what I had been exposed to in these small bits and pieces, was, oddly enough, a science fiction story about the aftermath of nuclear war in the United States that I read as a teenager in the mid-1980s. In the story, Brazil had risen to become the dominant political and technological power in the western hemisphere after the United States was destroyed by nuclear bombs. The narrative began two-and-a-half centuries after the fall of the United States when geologist Cristovão Hoffman crashed his helicopter in what had once been Los Angeles while on a reconnaissance mission to locate natural resources for the Brazilian government.<sup>1</sup> From there the story followed the romance between Hoffman and a young woman who rescued him. Though at fifteen I appreciated the tragically romantic bent of the story, the most striking aspect – and the piece that stuck with me all of these years – was the idea that a nation outside of the United States or Europe might inherit the mantle of technological hegemon. This

<sup>1</sup> Joan D. Vinge, “Phoenix in the Ashes,” in *Phoenix in the Ashes* (New York: Bluejay Books, 1985), pp. 1–34.



MAP 1. Map of mid-nineteenth-century Brazil (map design: Alana Baldwin and Alex Hauser).

book is not science fiction, but my work nods to this teenage experience through its exploration of Brazil's pathway to modernization, a nation on the periphery of the North Atlantic industrial powers that has not yet been fully recognized for its technological achievements.