

The Bolivarian Moment: Neoclassicism and the Creole Political Class

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Fresh from witnessing Napoleon's coronation in Paris, the young Simón Bolívar and his mentor Simón Rodríguez wandered between Europe's glittering capitals in a state of restless disillusionment. When they reached Rome, it is said that Bolívar fell to his knees upon the Sacred Mount, where the ancient plebeians first rose against their patrician rulers, and vowed that he would not rest until he had liberated South America from Spain. If the crown Napoleon donned in 1804—in Bolívar's words, "a miserable, gothic thing"—signaled the death of the revolutionary dream in Europe, then it was all the more glorious and necessary to pursue that dream in America.¹ Surrounded by majestic Roman ruins, the future *Libertador* declared that the Old World had "given examples for everything: the harshness of antiquity, the austerity of republics, the depravity of emperors...great historians, distinguished scientists, illustrious warriors...celebrated virtues and vulgar crimes." Everything, he concluded, "but the cause of humanity." The "great problem of human freedom," with which European civilization had struggled for millennia, was "a mystery to be solved only in the New World."²

This pronouncement, known as the Oath at Rome, would become one of several key episodes in the semi-legendary biography that Bolívar's contemporaries had already begun to compile during his lifetime. The scene, as related by Rodríguez to biographer Manuel Uribe Ángel, retroactively cast the twenty-two-year-old dandy on his Grand Tour of Europe as an Aeneas-like figure of historical necessity, already burdened by the knowledge of his future greatness. Indeed, the oath reads like a soliloquy by Virgil's Trojan hero, using the genre conven-

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¹ Luis Perú de Lacroix, *Diario de Bucaramanga*, (Caracas: Ministerio del Poder Popular para la Comunicación y la Información, 2009), 75.

² Manuel Uribe Ángel, "El Libertador, su ayo y su capellán," in *Homenaje de Colombia al Libertador en su Primer Centenario, 1783–1883*, ed. M. Ezequiel Corrales (Bogotá: Medardo Rivas, 1884), 73–4. Bolívar himself recalled the event in a letter to Rodríguez as a defining moment of his life. Simón Bolívar to Simón Rodríguez, January 19, 1824, Archivo del Libertador (Caracas), Sección O'Leary, tomo 45, fols. 289–290. Estante C, Cuerpo 2, Tramo IV. Transcribed in La Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes: <https://cervantesvirtual.com/nd/ark:/59851/bmc1v5f1>.

tions of classical epic to formulate a utopian panamericanism that was itself thoroughly modern. The text invoked the ancient notion of *translatio studii et imperii* (the transfer of knowledge and power) which was the central theme of Virgil's *Aeneid*. Just as the mantle of destiny had followed Aeneas from Asia Minor and the East to Italy and the West, it would now pass from the Old World to the New World.³



Figure 1. *Juramento del Monte Sacro*, by Tito Salas, ca. 1931. From the ceiling of the Panteón Nacional de Venezuela, Caracas, among other murals depicting the life of Bolívar. Here, Bolívar and his mentor Rodríguez overlook the ruins of the Roman Forum as Bolívar vows to liberate Spanish America.

Between the 1770s and the 1830s, a wave of independence movements

³ Elise Bartosik-Vélez, "Simón Bolívar's Rome," *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 25, no. 4 (2018): 337-39.

largely succeeded in wresting control of the Western Hemisphere from Europe. These movements took place over vast territories, involved millions of participants, and produced copious literature explaining and justifying themselves to the world. They established a series of precarious and dubiously democratic republics, which were nonetheless among the world's first modern nation-states, and which present some of the earliest examples of political cultures structured by mass media and mass participation. And they were led by a class of men of which Bolívar himself was perhaps the quintessential example: the American-born creole elite.

As Caroline Winterer has observed, classical learning became increasingly secularized and politicized in British America during the second half of the eighteenth century, as universities began to produce fewer clergymen and more classically educated professionals, especially lawyers.⁴ Victor Uribe-Uran points to a similar group of doctors, lawyers, and college-educated *letrados* as leaders in the development of a public sphere in late-colonial Spanish America. These armchair revolutionaries hatched a number of abortive, small-scale republican plots in the decades preceding independence, though at first their subversive activities rarely extended beyond discussing Enlightenment science and republican political theory within their network of *tertulias* (the rough Iberian equivalent of the French *salon*).⁵ It was the members of this professional class who would go on to organize inchoate political parties, and to fund an explosion of partisan newspapers, first to serve the cause of independence, and later to facilitate their feverish machinations against one another. Defensive of their rustic American homeland, anxious of their status relative to Europeans, hopeful and fearful of the masses below them, and increasingly persuaded of their own special historical destiny, the creole professional class cast themselves as the modern vindicators of a long-lost Roman republican dream.

In its efforts to resurrect the old Republic in a New World, this rising political class found itself at the crossroads of ancient and modern political dilemmas. Traditional republican theory held that a Caesar figure would inevitably arise, that the Republic would always give way to the corruption of the Empire, as the example of Napoleon seemed to confirm. The question for Bolívar, and his peers throughout the hemisphere, was how America might succeed where Europe had failed. The answer, they decided, was in America's hybrid nature: its special inheritance of both European and Native American legacies, and its potential to

⁴ Caroline Winterer, *The Culture of Classicism: Ancient Greece and Rome in American Intellectual Life, 1780–1910* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 16–7.

⁵ Victor M. Uribe-Uran, “The Birth of a Public Sphere in Latin America during the Age of Revolution,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 42, no. 2 (2000): 425–57.

provide the final synthesis of world history in the form of the seemingly oxymoronic Republican Empire.

Throughout his career, Bolívar remained preoccupied with matters of political style; while he lamented Napoleon's betrayal of the French Revolution, he admitted in the same breath to admiring *L'Empereur's* singular panache.⁶ In an effort to strike a tone that was both properly republican and suitably grandiose, he repeatedly returned to the image of America as a modern-day Rome, built on the soil of the Inca and Aztec Empires. "We are not Europeans, and we are not Indians," he would tell the Congress of Angostura in 1819, "but a middle kind (*una especie media*) between the Natives and the Spaniards."⁷ The heroic image of America against the backdrop of globalized classicism had both intellectual and political utility. It was not only a reflection of how independence leaders saw themselves, but also of their efforts to represent a new, synthetic kind of nation-state, to interact with a new kind of public, and to navigate a new media environment. With one foot in a civic republican tradition dating back to Machiavelli, and another in the emerging realities of modern mass politics, creole patriots developed a unique symbolic framework for interpreting American Independence, its place in world history, and its confrontation with the problems of republicanism. A unique creole classical aesthetic, which combined Greco-Roman and indigenous American iconography, provided the rhetorical, visual, and ritual vocabulary of this paradigm-straddling creole ideology.

As political thinkers, the leaders of the American Independence movements were notoriously self-contradictory. The imperial crises that led to independence produced a cohort of flamboyant philosopher kings, still venerated across the hemisphere, whose voluminous pronouncements on history, politics, and human nature continue to inspire and confound. Bolívar, as much as Thomas Jefferson or any of his U.S. peers, can be selectively read as either a supremely democratic or cynically anti-democratic thinker. It is perhaps this very oracular quality that has allowed these figures to survive as national symbols for so long, for they have been—in four centuries now—whatever Americans have needed them to be.

Although they frequently addressed themselves to *all time* and *all mankind*, these creole patriot authors are best understood as political actors, responding to a particular set of circumstances. Despite their significant linguistic, cultural, and religious differences, Anglo and Latin American elites faced a similar set of political challenges. As Joshua Simon has shown, the colonial elite throughout both

⁶ Lacroix, *Diario de Bucaramanga*, 75.

⁷ Bolívar, "Discurso del General Bolívar al Congreso el día de su instalacion" [*Discurso de Angostura*], February 27, 1819, *Correo del Orinoco* no. 20. Digitized in La Biblioteca Virtual del Banco de la República:

<https://babel.banrepcultural.org/digital/collection/p17054coll26/id/4005/rec/79>.

British and Spanish America shared a common worldview that justified both their struggle for independence from Europe and their right as a class to govern America. It was their shared position as creoles, caught between the European elite above them and the diverse American majority below, that drove both Anglo and Latin American revolutionaries to make similar arguments for independence, to undertake similar nation-building efforts, and to express similar aspirations for the future of the hemisphere. Their great task was to achieve independence from Europe, a project that required significant popular support, without displacing themselves as a ruling class in the process. Their infamous ideological slipperiness was the result of navigating these countervailing forces.⁸

The European colonization of the Americas had given rise to a distinct category of American-born persons of European descent, whose interests and views diverged from both the imperial elite and the colonial majority. A subset of this intermediate, *creole* population consisting of lawyers, physicians, academics, military officers, and clergy, came to serve an increasingly important professional-managerial role in late colonial society. The second half of the eighteenth century would turn this professional class into a self-conscious political class, as reorganization of both the British and Spanish Empires following the Seven Years War resulted in new imperial impositions on colonists who had become accustomed to a high degree of autonomy. In both the British and Spanish cases, imperial modernization efforts empowered the mother country's politicians and bureaucrats at the expense of the monarchy and sought to consolidate imperial control over their American territories. These changes fostered resentment among colonists and contributed to the emergence of a distinct "creole patriotism," first described as such by D.A. Brading.⁹

During this period, neoclassicism became the preferred aesthetic of both Georgian and Bourbon elites as various European empires vied for the title of a modern-day Rome.¹⁰ The self-conscious imitation of antiquity became an internationally recognized mark of modernity, and what distinguished neoclassicism from the other dominant aesthetic genres of the eighteenth-century Atlantic World was its explicitly political character. The Rome of the early modern imagination, of Machiavelli's *Discourses on Livy* and Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, was the theater of elite power struggles and popular unrest that provided the foundation

⁸ Joshua Simon, *The Ideology of Creole Revolution: Imperialism and Independence in American and Latin American Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

⁹ D.A. Brading, *The First America: The Spanish Monarchy, Creole Patriots, and the Liberal State, 1492–1867* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

¹⁰ Philip Ayres, *Classical Culture and the Idea of Rome in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Paul B. Niell and Stacie G. Widdifield, eds., *Buen Gusto and Classicism in the Visual Cultures of Latin America, 1780–1910* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2013).

for the taxonomy of politics itself.¹¹ This Rome's highest virtue was patriotism, and its gravest sin treason, for without the hope of a Christian afterlife, its people led lives dominated by earthly affairs, amidst a cosmos governed by capricious and unsympathetic forces. Even its great philosophers were lawyers—its great poets, propagandists—its great warriors, lovers, and martyrs, politicians.

Love of the nation, and the desire to emulate its national heroes produced virtue in these imaginary Romans, despite their heathenhood. Cotton Mather allowed that while “the Romans of old” lacked the sense of “an Infinite God, who takes notice of all that passes,” they nonetheless had “made it a Rule of a prudent Conduct [to] Imagine Cato to stand by and look on.” To the extent that Rome provided role models, it was in this respect. “Certainly,” Mather continued, “it would Restrain us from very many Impertinencies, if we could in our Visits consider our selves as observed by those men that are wiser than our selves.”¹² By the eighteenth century, the stated rationale for prioritizing the classical canon in university curricula was to inculcate a kind of secular, civic virtue in the elite young men who would go on to take positions in the increasingly complex imperial bureaucracies of the Atlantic World.

For colonial Americans, who lived at the edges of these states' influence, the classical canon provided a powerful symbolic vocabulary for describing the contingent, contested world of human events that surrounded them. Classical stories, such as the abdication of Cincinnatus or the assassination of Julius Caesar, were essentially secular parables, transmitting lessons about human psychology, conflict, and power that seemed especially applicable in intense, politically unstable times. The nature and quality of classical instruction varied throughout this highly diverse and decentralized colonial world: New England puritans placed great value on the classical canon as a requirement for learned Protestant clergy, while their Catholic counterparts in much of Spanish America, though generally

¹¹ J. G. A. Pocock identifies this early modern view of antiquity with a continuous civic republican tradition across the centuries from Renaissance Italy to the American Revolution in *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975). I follow scholars like Srinivas Aravamudan in building on Pocock while taking a more holistic and less schematic view of civic republican ideology: “Though Pocock in excess distorts the picture, he can be ignored only at peril,” Srinivas Aravamudan, *Tropicopolitans: Colonialism and Agency, 1688–1804* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 105–6. My approach is not to look for a coherent ideology of American Independence, but to examine how patriotic and republican ideas both shaped and were shaped by the media environment of the independence movements, and the various political, literary, and mythological traditions which early Americans found useful.

¹² Cotton Mather, *The Rules of a Visit...* (Boston: Timothy Green, 1705), 9. Further bibliographic details for this work can be found in the English Short Title Catalogue, where it is known as ESTC W19419.

trained in Latin, were less likely to put such emphasis on the pagan authors.¹³ Nevertheless, from Harvard University to the University of Chuquisaca, students were exposed to the works of Cicero, Virgil, Ovid, Sallust, Livy, Plutarch, and Homer, as well as modern political theorists whose writings were influenced by these ancient authors, such as Machiavelli, Montesquieu, and Rousseau.¹⁴ A familiar set of ancient Greek and Roman texts remained at the core of a gentlemanly education into the nineteenth century.¹⁵

A shared set of classical referents helped the creole political class to define and discipline its membership. In a revolutionary situation, in which class boundaries might be thrown into question, the classical education designed to prepare

¹³ At times, the primacy of the pagan classics may have seemed in tension with Christianity, but puritans were able to reconcile the two without much difficulty. They generally believed it was desirable for an educated clergy to be well-versed in what they called “humane letters,” which required mastery of the classical canon. David A. Lupher, *Greeks, Romans, and Pilgrims: Classical Receptions in Early New England* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 1-3. Universities in colonial Spanish America employed the syllabus of the School of Salamanca, a reformed scholastic curriculum which placed a greater emphasis on the methods and practices of knowledge production in contrast to the Protestants’ fealty to certain canonical texts. Thomas Duve, “The School of Salamanca: A Case of Global Knowledge Production,” in *The School of Salamanca: A Case of Global Knowledge Production*, eds. Thomas Duve, José Luis Egio, and Christiane Birr (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 7. Yet early Spanish Americans were intimately familiar with the classical world. The received wisdom of the ancients took on new meaning in America, where Spanish colonists frequently interpreted unfamiliar Native American cultures through the lens of Greco-Roman antiquity. As Sabine MacCormack observed in her study of Neoclassicism in early colonial Peru, classical antiquity formed so much of the cultural and physical backdrop of Medieval Europe that “Roman and classical literature provided a framework...for the construal of historical experience itself.” Sabine MacCormack, *On the Wings of Time: Rome, the Incas, Spain, and Peru* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), xv. For a more detailed discussion of the uneven implementation of the School of Salamanca curriculum in Spanish American universities, the relative difficulty of accessing books in the New World, the gradual emergence of more secular/professional learning towards the end of the colonial period, and the diffusion of Enlightenment ideologies in colonial Spanish America see Natacha Bacolla and Ignacio Martínez, “La toga y el ágora. Las reformas universitarias en perspectiva histórica,” and Susana Gazmuri Stein, “La Universidad de San Felipe y la Ilustración en los Márgenes (1738–1839),” in *Universidad, élites y política: de las reformas borbónicas al reformismo de 1918*, eds. Natacha Bacolla and Ignacio Martínez (Rosario: HyA Ediciones, 2018), 7-24 and 51-75.

¹⁴ Winterer, *Culture of Classicism*, 12-13; Charles W. Arnade, *The Emergence of the Republic of Bolivia* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1957), 4-8.

¹⁵ As J. David Hoeveler notes, Harvard’s 1646 admission criteria “should be cause for wonder to today’s students,” as it required students be able to read classical Latin fluently. J. David Hoeveler, *Creating the American Mind: Intellect and Politics in the Colonial Colleges* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), 30. Entrance requirements at Yale and William and Mary were similar. Some early American scholars, such as Thomas Jefferson’s own professor James Murray, advocated for American universities to break from European tradition by de-emphasizing the classics (Ibid., 95-96). But by the second half of the eighteenth century, despite reform efforts by such luminaries as Benjamin Franklin at the College of Philadelphia, “Latin and Greek remained staples of the entire collegiate course” (Ibid., 173).

future gentlemen to lead public lives remained an important mark of gentlemanly status. The civic virtue supposedly derived from this education helped to explain and justify the domination of early American politics by a small political elite.¹⁶ As Joanne Freeman has observed, aspects of European honor culture endured longer in America than in Europe, while at the same time, aspects of modern mass politics emerged earlier in America.¹⁷ The class value system of the creole elite was somewhere between an early modern *code duello* and a bourgeois professional mentality. In the absence of formal political institutions such as parties, the classical idiom of honor, glory, and civic virtue helped a precarious and highly personalized elite, newly answerable to popular pressures and anxious of its status relative to Europe, to distinguish itself from the masses and enforce political norms on its members.

But the classical idiom did more than help status-conscious creoles show off their erudition; it helped them to think through the great questions of their age. For the old civic republican theorists like Machiavelli, ancient Greco-Roman history showed that the balanced Republic was constantly teetering between the extremes of tyranny and anarchy. This ideology made sense to the creole political class, who found themselves continuously threatened by foreign domination on the one hand and the possibility of domestic uprising on the other. The explosion of written constitutions across the hemisphere, only a subset of which ever went into effect, show a serious concern with classical notions of balance.¹⁸ In the aftermath of independence, Bolívar told the Congress of Angostura, America had “found itself like the Roman Empire when that great mass fell.”¹⁹ In other words, a vast, ungovernable territory, with a radically diverse, diffuse, unequal, and divided population.

And yet, in their most messianic moments, panamericanists like Bolívar saw in their necessarily limited political project something like the liberation of all mankind. J.G.A. Pocock detected within the civic republican tradition a kind of proto-Marxist secular historicism.²⁰ For creole patriots, American Independence

¹⁶ In the aftermath of the American Revolution, college-educated professionals mounted “defenses of the existence of a heavily classical curriculum that would safeguard the pedigree of the gentleman.” Winterer, *The Culture of Classicism*, 41.

¹⁷ Joanne B. Freeman, *Affairs of Honor: National Politics in the New Republic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001). See also Sarah C. Charters, *From Subjects to Citizens: Honor, Gender, and Politics in Arequipa, Peru, 1780–1854* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 1999).

¹⁸ Pierángelo Catalano, *Constitución Romana y Pueblos de América Latina* (Bogotá: Universidad Externado de Colombia, 2020).

¹⁹ Bolívar, *Discurso de Angostura*.

²⁰ Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*, 461, 505. Glen C. Dealy discusses how modern Latin American political cultures arrived at Marxism via a distinctive Catholic humanist and civic republican route: “It is this attempt to recapture the past, to realign their ethical values with political, social, and economic reality of their countries, which has provided the impetus for

heralded the final stage of world history, the synthesis of Old and New Worlds—the free and uncorrupted spirit of the Indians, combined with the prosperity and grandeur of Europe—culminating in the form of a Republic which was somehow also an Empire. The metaphor of the return of antiquity was a conceptual tool for navigating the perils and opportunities which the emerging democratic nation-state represented.

What has sometimes been taken as an early form of *mestizaje* or *indigenismo* among Latin American Independence leaders is better understood as a form of neoclassicism, which linked them intellectually with their Anglo-American peers. Creole classicism was, first and foremost, a lingua franca of the creole political class. Glorification of the indigenous past did not imply political representation for contemporary indigenous people, for the creole elite posited *themselves* as the inheritors of ancient glory. In Cecilia Méndez's pithy formula, the rule for creole patriot representations of the nation was "Incas yes, Indians no."²¹ Spanish American patriots adopted Inca and Aztec imagery for more or less the same reasons the members of the Boston Tea Party dressed as Mohawks; neither had much to do with twentieth-century notions of *indigenismo*. Rather, classicization involved removal to the plane of heroic time, a symbolic realm detached from the flow of historical time. Like the more traditional Greco-Roman mythography, classicization of the precolumbian world was a tool for thinking about the present, through comparison with the heroic, legendary, canonical, and yet somewhat lurid and exotic past.

While Bolívar was still Rodríguez's teenaged student, his fellow Venezuelan Francisco de Miranda was already agitating for South American Independence from Spain. Like Thomas Paine or the Marquis de Lafayette, Miranda belonged to the category of colorful freelance revolutionaries who wandered the Atlantic World in those days, living what must have been among the most exciting and cosmopolitan lives of anyone in history. Something of an outcast among the Caracas elite, Miranda's father Sebastian, who was born in the Canary Islands, had spent years attempting to prove his family's *limpieza de sangre* (blood purity) after a group of rival aristocrats accused him of being a *mulatto*. As a young man, Miranda joined the Spanish military and was stationed in Africa, where he studied

Latin American revolution in this century. The appeal of communism in these nations is grounded on the somewhat similar teleology it proclaims. But one must recall that the Mexican Constitution which is so widely emulated preceded the Russian Revolution. It is from Saint Thomas [Aquinas] and Machiavelli rather than from Marx and Lenin that Latin Americans ultimately derive their political bearings." Dealy, "The Tradition of Monistic Democracy in Latin America," in *Politics and Social Change in Latin America: Still a Distinct Tradition?*, ed. Howard J. Wiarda, 3rd ed. (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), 52.

²¹ Cecilia Méndez, *Incas sí, indios no: apuntes para el estudio del nacionalismo criollo en Perú* (Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 1993).

the Quran, developed a degree of sympathy for his Moorish enemies, and began to think critically about the workings of Spain's vast empire. He fought as a Spanish ally in the American Revolution, then spent much of the 1780s on the run from the Spanish Inquisition, and the 1790s first as a general in the French Revolutionary Army, and then as a political prisoner of the Jacobins. In 1798, having somehow dodged the guillotine, he fled to London on a Danish ship, already plotting his next adventure.²²



Figure II. Frontispiece engraving by Charles-Étienne Gaucher in *South American Emancipation...Made by General Miranda, for the Attainment of That Object During the Last Twenty-Five Years* (London: R. Juigné, 1810).

From his London exile, Miranda is said to have founded the secretive *Logia de los Caballeros Racionales* (Society of the Knights of Reason), a revolutionary network whose membership eventually included Bolívar, as well as independence

²² Karen Racine, *Francisco de Miranda: A Transatlantic Life in the Age of Revolution, 1750–1816* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 2002).

leaders Bernardo O'Higgins and José de San Martín.²³ In America, the club became known as the *Logia de Lautaro*, named for a sixteenth-century Mapuche warrior famous for his campaigns against the Spanish conquistadors. Lautaro was best known to nineteenth-century creoles from the epic poem *La Araucana* by Alonso de Ercilla, in which the indigenous leader was said to have "a higher claim to glory" than the greatest Greek and Roman generals "Curtius, Horatius, Scaevola, and Leonidas... Furius, Marcellus, Fulvius, and Cincinnatus."²⁴ For Miranda and his co-conspirators, such classicized depictions of indigenous resistance to the Spanish conquest became powerful symbols of the creole desire for independence from Spain. Initiates to the Lautaro Society would learn to recite a dialogue that began with the exchange: "Who must we emulate? The valiant Lautaro. What did Lautaro do? He died to defend his country. What was his country? Our own country."²⁵

The aim of Miranda's networking efforts was to build international support for an invasion of Venezuela that would expel the Spanish authorities and establish a new, republican government. In London, he tried and failed to secure British sponsorship for the project.²⁶ But the ardent panamericanist was already getting ahead of himself. In 1789, he drew up a speculative plan for a super-state called *Colombeia*, which would include all of Spain's American territories under a single republican constitution. The name was a Greek neologism meaning "in relation to Colombia," a possible play on *Politeia*, the original Greek name for Plato's *Republic* (Miranda is said to have borrowed this wordplay from the enslaved U.S. poet Phillis Wheatley).²⁷ The constitution combined classical Roman and indigenous American

²³ Miranda was the founder according to legend, though as its members intended, the society's true origins remain obscure: "Su carácter secreto, sellado con el juramento de no dar información, a que se sujetaban sus miembros, dificulta conocer los pormenores de sus movimientos y su verdadera significación." Norberto Galasso, *Seamos libres y lo demás no importa nada: vida de San Martín* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Colihue, 2000), 52.

²⁴ "No los dos Publios Decios, que las vidas/ sacrificaron por la patria amada/ ni Curcio, Horacio, Scévola y Leonidas/ dieron muestra de sí tan señalada,/ ni aquellos que en las guerras más reñidas/ alcanzaron gran fama por la espada,/ Furio, Marcelo, Fulvio, Cincinato,/ Marco Sergio, Filón, Sceva y Dentato." Alonso de Ercilla y Zúñiga, *La Araucana* (Santa Fe: El Cid Editor, 2003 [og. pub. 1569]), 70 [Canto III].

²⁵ From the oral account of José Matías Zapiola, a member who later revealed secrets of the Lautaro Society to Argentine President Bartolomé Mitre, quoted in José Manuel Estrada, *Lecciones públicas sobre historia de la República de Argentina Tomo II*, (Buenos Aires: Librería del Colegio de Pedro Igón y Cía, 1898), 53.

²⁶ Racine, *Francisco de Miranda*, 142-43.

²⁷ Juan Carlos Chirinos, *Francisco de Miranda, el nómada sentimental* (Caracas: Editorial Norma, 2006), 23. It is interesting to note that in his correspondence with Europeans, such as British Prime Minister William Pitt, Miranda consistently used terms like "South America" and "Spanish America," while using the term "Colombia" when addressing fellow Americans, both North and South. Elise Bartosik-Velez, *The Legacy of Christopher Columbus in the Americas: New*

elements, with an emperor bearing the title of “Inca,” and a body of lifelong senators called “Caciques,” as well as two “Censors” elected by the people to supervise and check their power.²⁸ In its preposterously ambitious scope and its gesture towards global cultural synthesis and universal Americanism, the document laid out Miranda’s vision of the Republican Empire.

Miranda’s efforts soon put him in contact with a certain U.S. citizen who shared his continent-sized thirst for glory: the former treasury secretary Alexander Hamilton. The two had been introduced back in 1784, while Miranda was briefly hiding out from the Inquisition in New York.²⁹ In 1792, from his office in Paris, Miranda had written to Hamilton of the progress of the Revolution in France, and of their shared hopes for “our dear Country America, from the North to the South.”³⁰ Now, Miranda wrote again, in search of U.S. backing for his planned expedition to liberate Venezuela.

Hamilton hardly needed persuading, expressing his eagerness “to be an instrument of so good a work,” and hinting that he would personally lead ground troops into Caracas, if only the U.S. government would authorize it.³¹ The very same day, he wrote to fellow Federalist Rufus King, then ambassador to Britain, about his correspondence with Miranda, citing the necessity of establishing a “moderate government” in Venezuela, that would avoid the extremes of anarchy and tyranny—and, crucially, ensure favorable trade conditions for the United States.³² Burned by his time in a Jacobin prison, Miranda agreed. He told Hamilton of his disillusionment with the French Revolution and his desire to establish a “mixed form of government” in the style of their “Greek predecessor Solon,” the ancient statesman said to have laid the foundations of Athenian democracy.³³ With what he regarded as the death of Liberty in France, Miranda wrote, “let us all unite firmly to bring about the Salvation of our dear Homeland, and perhaps...we shall save the whole World.”³⁴

Throughout their correspondence, it is obvious that Miranda and Hamilton,

Nations and a Transatlantic Discourse of Empire (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2014), 112-14.

²⁸ Francisco de Miranda, “Draft Constitution for Spanish America,” c. 1798, in *Latin American Independence: An Anthology of Sources*, eds. Sarah C. Chambers and John Charles Chasteen (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 2010), 57. Miranda’s biographer Karen Racine describes the plan as “a strange hybrid of ideas from Britain, ancient Rome, indigenous America, and the United States,” in Racine, *Francisco de Miranda*, 107.

²⁹ Alexander Hamilton to Francisco de Miranda, November 23, 1784, *Founders Online*, National Archives (<https://founders.archives.gov>).

³⁰ Francisco de Miranda to Alexander Hamilton, November 4, 1792, *Founders Online*.

³¹ Alexander Hamilton to Francisco de Miranda, August 22, 1798, *Founders Online*.

³² Alexander Hamilton to Rufus King, August 22, 1798, *Founders Online*.

³³ Francisco de Miranda to Alexander Hamilton, April 6, 1798, *Founders Online*.

³⁴ Francisco de Miranda to Alexander Hamilton, November 10, 1798, *Founders Online*.

who both denounced the imperialism of France's revolutionary government, thought nothing of lobbying for the United States to intervene in Venezuela. They agreed that the creole political class to which they both belonged had a special right to govern America, and that their brand of republican imperialism was legitimate, while France's was illegitimate. Bringing the American Revolution to Venezuela was not, in their view, the imposition of a foreign system, but almost the realization of a historical necessity. As unlikely as it would have seemed to most observers in 1798, vanguardists like Miranda already felt certain that the future of the entire hemisphere was independent and republican. His anglophone interlocutors shared his confidence, speaking the same language of hemispheric greatness. "The destiny of the New World," Rufus King wrote to Hamilton of Miranda's plans, "and I have full and firm Persuasion that it will be both happy and glorious, is in our Hands."³⁵

In his capacity as ambassador to Britain, King came into possession of the papers of the exiled Peruvian Jesuit Juan Pablo Viscardo y Guzmán, who had died in London in February of 1798. He turned the papers over to Miranda, who discovered among them a blistering manifesto entitled *Lettre aux espagnols américains* ("Letter to Spanish Americans"), which would become the basis for Miranda's next lobbying campaign.³⁶ In the *Letter*, Viscardo made a historical case for creole independence. He argued that as descendants of the conquistadors, who had undertaken the great risk and hardship of conquering the New World, the creole elite had a right to rule there. "Although it was not the most just," he said of the Spanish Conquest, "it was at least as good as that right which the ancient Goths of Spain had, to appropriate the fruits of their courage and labors." At the same time, Viscardo cited the brutal execution of the "young and innocent Inca Túpac Amaru" as told in the chronicles of Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, as an example of American courage in the face of European tyranny.³⁷

³⁵ Rufus King to Alexander Hamilton, July 31, 1798, *Founders Online*.

³⁶ Racine, *Francisco de Miranda*, 147.

³⁷ Juan Pablo Viscardo y Guzmán, *Lettre aux espagnols américains* (Philadelphia, 1799), 3, 13. Miranda also translated the letter into Spanish and published it as *Carta derijida [sic] a los Españoles Americanos* (London: P. Boyle, 1801).



Figure III. *Constitucion federal de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos* ([Ciudad de México]: Imprenta del Supremo Gobierno de los Estados-unidos mexicanos, en Palacio, 1824), Library of Congress Control Number 11031218. Seal of the Mexican Republic, by José Mariano Torreblanca. An indigenous Aztec coat of arms combined with Roman liberty cap and bows of laurel and oak represent both Mexican patriotism and civic republicanism.

This seemingly contradictory claim to represent both the European heritage of the conquistadors, and the indigenous heritage of the great Incas, was at the heart of creole patriot mythology. Though Viscardo mentioned the mixture of Indian and European blood, it was not ethnicity *per se*, but the historical experience of settling the New World which distinguished the creoles as a people from Europeans. In other words, his claims of Inca descent were not to be taken literally. Famous tales of indigenous resistance against the Conquest functioned as

secular parables, in much the same way as the legends of ancient Greece and Rome. While early modern Europeans received their political education by studying the classical Greco-Roman canon, the indigenous American past represented an alternate classicism for the continent's creole elite, one which reflected the supposed *innocence* and *liberty* of their New World. By absorbing the lessons of both, learned creoles could claim an unprecedented cosmopolitanism which would allow them to perfect the Republic—something which Europeans, in their incomplete knowledge of the world, had consistently failed to do.³⁸

Viscardo ended his *Letter* with a stirring call to action: “The courage with which the English colonies of America have fought for freedom,” he wrote, “which they now gloriously enjoy, covers our indolence with shame. We have ceded the laurels to them, with which they have crowned the first independent sovereignty of the New World.” Striking the messianic panamericanist tone that so appealed to Miranda, he continued, “Let us newly discover America again, for all our brothers, the inhabitants of this globe... The reward will be no less for them than it is for us.” Viscardo described his vision of the New World as a refuge for all mankind, a land “covered with men of all nations,” especially those “fleeing from oppression and misery.” Out of the brutality of the Conquest, he suggested, there had come a new universalism, a violent but historically necessary collision of two previously separate halves of Earth. “America will reconcile the extremities of the world,” he declared, and convert mankind into “a single Great Family of Brothers.”³⁹ While King paid for Viscardo's *Letter* to be published in London in its original French, Miranda translated it into Spanish for distribution throughout America. Copies of the manifesto circulated for years, bedeviling the Office of the Inquisition. By the time of Miguel Hidalgo's 1810 Rebellion in Mexico, Spanish imperial authorities were still struggling to suppress the document's popularity among literate creoles in Mexico City.⁴⁰ Like many Spanish American revolutionary tracts of the period, the *Letter* bore a false Philadelphia imprint. Miranda and other authors employed this device both as a way of confusing imperial censors, and as a symbolic invocation of the city of Philadelphia as the vanguard of hemispheric independence.⁴¹

After years of failing to secure British military support for his scheme, Miranda finally gave up on London and set sail for New York in 1805, by which time his co-conspirator Hamilton had already met his fateful end in a duel with Vice President Aaron Burr. The world of the globetrotting creole elite was, at

³⁸ Viscardo y Guzmán, *Lettre aux espagnols américains*.

³⁹ Viscardo y Guzmán, *Lettre aux espagnols américains*, 37-41.

⁴⁰ Racine, *Francisco Miranda*, 147.

⁴¹ Rodrigo Lazo, *Letters from Filadelfia: Early Latino Literature and the Trans-American Elite* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2020), 43.

times, a remarkably small one: On his way down to Washington, Miranda ran into Burr in Philadelphia. The disgraced vice president was at that point too embroiled in his own adventures in the Louisiana territory to have any part in Miranda's scheme, though as he later said of their conversation "my heart and feelings are...wholly and warmly with the patriots of Venezuela."⁴² In Washington, Miranda got down to business soliciting the aid of then-president Thomas Jefferson. The need to maintain peace with Spain prevented U.S. intervention of the kind Hamilton had fantasized about but didn't necessarily stop the cause of Venezuela from finding a sympathetic ear. Just as he had with Hamilton and King, Miranda rhapsodized to Jefferson about "the future destiny of our dear Colombia."⁴³ Appealing to Jefferson's sense of patriotism, he established their common ground as creoles by quoting (in the original Latin) this passage from Virgil's *Aeneid*:

That last great age foretold by sacred rhymes,
Renews its finish'd course; Saturnian times,
Roll round again, and mighty years began,
From this first orb, in radiant circles ran.⁴⁴

Playing on the Virgilian theme of *translatio studii et imperii*, Miranda chose this passage in reference to the return of the Age of Saturn in the New World. The Age of Saturn, according to ancient Roman tradition, was the Golden Age of peace and abundance that existed before civilization fell into decline. American Independence, Miranda told Jefferson, would mark "the arrival of that age, the return of which the Roman bard [Virgil] invoked in favor of the human race."⁴⁵ Although the United States did not officially intervene in what would turn out to be a failed expedition to liberate Venezuela in 1806, Miranda did manage to secure (with a Jeffersonian wink and nudge) some number of private U.S. ships and guns, and at least two hundred U.S. recruits. According to one of them, a New Yorker named James Biggs, Miranda's Anglo-American followers were convinced of "the glory and advantages of the enterprise" in part by the general's eloquent appeals to classical antiquity. "He took excursions to Troy, Babylon, Jerusalem, Rome, Athens, and Syracuse," Biggs recalled. "Men famed as statesmen, heroes, patriots, conquerors and tyrants, priests and scholars he produced, and weighed their merits and defects." For Miranda's recruits, a number of

⁴² Aaron Burr to Jeremy Bentham, October 16, 1811, in *The Private Journal of Aaron Burr*, ed. Matthew L. Davis (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1838), 2: 255.

⁴³ Francisco de Miranda to Thomas Jefferson, January 22, 1806, *Founders Online*.

⁴⁴ Miranda to Jefferson, January 22, 1806.

⁴⁵ Miranda to Jefferson, January 22, 1806.

whom had just left college, the didactic use of classical literature would have been intimately familiar, creating a cultural bridge between the New Yorkers and their Venezuelan comrades.⁴⁶

It was in this manner that the classical idiom provided a highly aestheticized and emotive medium for patriotic expression, grounded in a kind of universal antiquity to which both British and Spanish Americans could just as plausibly lay claim. Activists like Miranda successfully marshaled the imagery of antiquity to frame the creole professional class as a virtuous political class—and the struggle for independence as an opportunity for young men educated in the classical canon to finally undertake the kinds of heroic deeds they had until then only read about in books.⁴⁷

In France, the Jacobins had embraced neoclassicism not because of any necessary connection with revolutionary politics, but because it was the one pervasive elite aesthetic that readily lent itself to a revolutionary interpretation.⁴⁸ The striking neoclassical canvasses of painter Jacques-Louis David, for example, were originally commissioned by members of the French nobility. Only retroactively, once David himself had thrown in with the Jacobins, did he accept the title of “the author of Brutus and the Horatii, this patriot and Frenchman whose genius anticipated the Revolution.”⁴⁹ When the Jacobins searched the European past for non-monarchical models of civic life, the Greek city-states, and to an even greater extent the Roman Republic, seemed like the only political legacy worth harkening back to.⁵⁰

The rejection of a familiar vocabulary of symbols associated with the *ancien régime* produced what Lynn Hunt has called “a crisis of representation” within France’s revolutionary political culture.⁵¹ The word “representation” refers here to both political representation within the Republic and symbolic representation within the official public sphere. In her analysis of the seal of the French Republic, which featured a nude Hercules wielding a club, Hunt illustrates the circularity of this process. Revolutionary leaders sought to educate the people to become

⁴⁶ James Biggs, *The History of Don Francisco de Miranda’s Attempt to Effect a Revolution in South America*... (Boston: Oliver & Munroe, 1808), 290-91.

⁴⁷ Biggs, *The History of Don Francisco de Miranda*, 10.

⁴⁸ Hugh Honour, *Neo-Classicism: Art and Civilization* (London: Pelican Books, 1968), 69-100; Caroline Winterer, “From Royal to Republican: The Classical Image in Early America,” *The Journal of American History* 91, no. 4 (2005): 1268.

⁴⁹ Jacques-Louis David, Speech delivered to the Jacobin Club by Edmund-Loius Alexis Dubois-Crancé, October 28, 1790, quoted in Francis Haskell, *History and its Images: Art and the Interpretation of the Past* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 398.

⁵⁰ David Irwin, *Neoclassicism* (London: Phaidon Press, 1997), 249-96.

⁵¹ Lynn Hunt, “Hercules and the Radical Image in the French Revolution,” *Representations* 2 (1983): 95.

what they supposedly already were, by creating idealized depictions of what they were supposed to be. In his rugged strength and nude simplicity, this Hercules was “an image-representation of the people provided by the people’s representatives.”⁵² This embrace of neoclassicism as a revolutionary aesthetic had its political advantages but sat uncomfortably beside the Jacobins’ avowed iconoclasm. After all, why should a truly rational, republican society have any need for nostalgic pseudo-Roman spectacle? Was it not the duty of revolutionary leaders to properly educate the people in republican political theory, rather than seeking to dazzle them with banners and parades? Some called for the abandonment of such manipulation tactics altogether. As one anonymous contributor to the *Annales Patriotiques* argued, the strict empiricist “metaphysical principles of Locke and Condillac” demanded that “the people should be accustomed to see in a statue nothing more than stone and in a painting only canvas and colors.”⁵³

But as Hunt showed, this kind of purism was never a majority view, even among the most radical Jacobins. Rather, a tension between the principles of republican austerity and the demands of popular mobilization conditioned revolutionary leaders’ aesthetic choices. While the legislature of the First French Republic generally agreed upon the necessity of abolishing “the ridiculous hieroglyphs” of the monarchy and aristocracy, they were also convinced of the need to create new symbols capable of “grabbing hold of the senses” in order to promote the proper mode of civic republican consciousness.⁵⁴ The Republic needed signs and seals, songs and slogans, statues and canvases, in order to be made real and present in the minds of the people. The question became what kinds of symbols reproduced the irrationalism and decadence of the monarchy, and what kinds were truly republican.

The American Independence movements faced a related, but somewhat different set of aesthetic questions. American patriot leaders seldom expressed the level of hostility the most strident Jacobins evinced towards adopting the trappings of monarchy to suit more republican purposes. Their statues and canvases were to be enchanted with the spirit of the *patria*, in all its more and less republican forms. In a strategy historians have called “wearing the mask of Fernando,” Spanish American patriot leaders used the plight of the deposed King Fernando VII to mobilize a largely royalist population against the usurper Napoleon.⁵⁵ Their peers in the British Colonies had initially followed a similar pattern, denouncing

⁵² Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 100.

⁵³ *Annales Patriotiques* (November 13, 1793), 1467.

⁵⁴ Henri Grégoire, *Rapport fait au Conseil des Cinq-Cents, sur les sceaux de la République, par Grégoire. Séance du 11 pluviôse, an IV* (January 31, 1796), 3.

⁵⁵ John C. Chasteen, *Americanos: Latin America’s Struggle for Independence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 56.

the actions of traitors in Parliament while maintaining their fealty to King George III.⁵⁶ While some patriot leaders were highly motivated by republican and egalitarian ideologies, many had no real intention of incorporating the masses into the independent polities they hoped to establish. In both the British and Spanish American cases, patriotism, rather than strict anti-monarchism, was the strongest element.



Figure IV. *The Female Combatants*, Anonymous, January 26, 1776. Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University, Call No. 776.01.26.01. This political cartoon depicts the British Colonies as a rebellious Indian maiden, with a Roman liberty cap to her right.

⁵⁶ Brendon McConville argues that in British America, as in Spanish America, independence was the contingent result of imperial crisis, rather than any inchoate republican aspirations among the colonists. Popular royalism dominated colonial American political culture, right up until the moment it didn't; this is to say that it was the independence movement that popularized republican ideology (beyond a radical and learned few) and not the other way around. See Brendon McConville, *The King's Three Faces: The Rise and Fall of Royal America, 1688–1776* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia, by the University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

The aesthetic task of the creole revolutionaries was therefore to represent Americanness itself as an *ethos*, somewhat abstracted from either a British or Spanish *ethnos*. European artists had long personified America as a passive Indian maiden; Patriot artists from Boston's Paul Revere to Mexico City's Pedro Patiño Ixtolinque classicized—and therefore politicized—her, arming her with a gladiatorial sword and topping her indigenous dress with a Roman liberty cap.⁵⁷ These hybrid representations visualized the idea of America as a universalizing figure, a synthesis of the Old and New Worlds. By augmenting the traditional pantheon of Catos and Ciceros with classicized versions of indigenous American figures, such as the Mapuche warrior Lautaro or the Inca Emperor Atahualpa, creole patriots attempted to give the New World its own classical past. Rather than distinguishing Latin American creoles from their Anglo-American peers, the valorization of such figures was used to reinforce the idea of hemispheric solidarity. The *New-York Columbian*, for example, printed editorials in support of the Spanish American cause, which posited Atahualpa as a shared symbol of independence. When the Spanish conquistadors arrived in Peru, the paper claimed, their Old World religious intolerance led them to persecute the Inca for the crime of worshipping the sun. But a defiant Atahualpa would not convert to Christianity, even under pain of death. "Before he was to be sacrificed," wrote the editors, "the insulted prince firmly replied: 'You worship a God who died on a gibbet; we worship the sun, who never dies.'"⁵⁸ Interestingly, it was Atahualpa's very paganism, his refusal to accept Christianity as a European import, which marked him as a patriot—a kind of home-grown American Cato. Like the Roman Cato, his pagan virtue was to be admired as a secular political virtue.

⁵⁷ See for example: Paul Revere, Masthead Engraving, *The Royal American Magazine* (Boston: November 1774); Anonymous, "The Parricide, or, A Sketch of Modern Patriotism," in *The Westminster Magazine* (London: May 1776); Anonymous, *The Female Combatants* (January 1776); Anonymous, *The Commissioners* (London: Matthias Darly, April 1778); Anonymous, *An Emblem of America*, (c. 1800). A similar figure in sculpture, *América* (1830) was created by Mexican artist Pedro Patiño Ixtolinque, and is now at the Museo Nacional de Arte, Mexico City.

⁵⁸ "The Cause of the South Americans," *The New-York Columbian*, September 4, 1817. The Inca Empire was depicted as a proto-republic in Vicente Pazos Kanki, "Extracts from Pazo's Letters No. 1," *City of Washington Gazette*, trans. Jonathan Elliot (April 12, 1819). Andean rebel leader Túpac Amaru II was celebrated in U.S. newspapers as a modern embodiment of this classical Inca republicanism, for example in "Americanus," *Albany Argus* (September 27, 1816).



Figure V. *América*, Pedro Patiño Ixtolinque, ca. 1825. Museo Nacional de Arte, INBA, Ciudad de México. This statue personifies America as a hybrid, mestizo figure: an Indian maiden in the style of a classical Greco-Roman.



Figure VI. *Allegory of Independence*, Anonymous, 1834. Museo Histórico Curato de Dolores, INAH, Guanajato. This image personifies Mexico as a neoclassical goddess in pseudo-indigenous feathered headdress with a Roman liberty cap. The Mexican Independence hero Miguel Hidalgo crowns Mexico with a wreath of laurels, the Roman symbol of victory.

In the Anglo-American context, the Iroquois leader Logan played a similar role. When the Colony of Virginia defeated his forces in Lord Dunmore's War, after Logan sought revenge for the massacre of his family by Virginian settlers in 1774, he delivered a speech that would become a standard American school text during the first half of the nineteenth century. Studied in classrooms across the United States, the celebrated speech of Logan helped to supply American students with the kind of political and moral education that had traditionally been attributed to Greek and Roman orators like Pericles and Cicero.⁵⁹ For Anglo Americans—including members of the very same Virginian polity that had destroyed his family—Logan's rhetorical virtuosity became a point of patriotic pride. In his *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Jefferson wrote: "I may challenge the whole orations of Demosthenes and Cicero, and of any more eminent orator, if Europe has furnished eminent, to produce a single passage, superior to the speech of Logan."⁶⁰ In the inaugural 1842 issue of *The American Pioneer*, a journal of the Logan Historical Society, the editors explained their choice of name as a tribute to America's own home-grown Cicero. "It has been truly stated that no piece of composition ever did more, if so much, as the speech of Logan," they declared, "to form the mind and develop the latent energies of the youthful American orator." Indeed, the editors claimed, the influence of Logan's oratory had "extended even into the halls of Congress," to "the bench and in the bar of this nation," as well as "the American pulpit."⁶¹

Creole classicism flattered the sensibilities of college-educated professionals who aspired to lead heroic public lives, but patriot leaders were also conscious of the need to get their message to the masses. Like Hunt's Jacobins, they strove to represent—and in so doing, almost to create—a certain kind of American public. Upon the liberation of Caracas, for example, Bolívar threw himself a Roman triumph, riding into the city on a chariot and bowing his head to be crowned with laurels by a group of young girls dressed in white. This ritual performance, before a live audience of thousands, was then reported in newspapers across Spanish America.⁶² Since the majority of the population was illiterate, independence activists worked to disseminate these newspapers as widely as possible through oral readings. The revolutionary Junta which took over Buenos Aires in 1810 went so far as to issue an edict requiring every priest in the Río de la Plata to read its official *Gazeta de Buenos Ayres* aloud to their parishioners at the end of

⁵⁹ See, for example, the widely used McGuffey Eclectic Reader: William H. McGuffey, "The Speech of Logan," *The Eclectic Fourth Reader: Containing Elegant Extracts in Prose and Poetry, from the Best American and English Writers*, 6th ed. (Cincinnati: Truman and Smith, 1839), 82.

⁶⁰ Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (London: John Stockdale, 1787), 104.

⁶¹ *American Pioneer* (Cincinnati), January 1, 1842, p. 7.

⁶² The original account appeared in "Entrada triunfante del General Bolívar en Caracas," *Gaceta de Caracas* (August 1813).

each mass.⁶³ Like the Oath at Rome, the Triumph at Caracas would become a part of Bolívar's far-reaching media image, reproduced in national and international newspapers in a way that would have been impossible in ancient times.

A peculiar combination of traditionalism and futurism, republicanism and imperialism, europeanness and indigeneity epitomized the dominant political aesthetic of the American Independence movements, which borrowed promiscuously from a globalized heroic past, while also conceiving of themselves as historically unique and modern. The rejection of monarchy and the separation from Europe created a vacuum of symbolic authority which patriot leaders in both Anglo and Latin America scrambled to fill. Neoclassicism, the stern and rational style of the French Revolution against the pastel frivolity of the *ancien régime*, was the obvious choice. But the return of republican antiquity meant one thing in dense, ancient Paris, and quite another throughout the vast, rural territories of early America. In their efforts to both classicize the New World and Americanize the classical canon, the creole elite converged upon a shared vision of America as the vanguard of human history against a backward, monarchical Europe. By emphasizing the shared destiny of all those born in the New World, creole classicism provided an intellectual framework for panamerican solidarity that crossed boundaries of language, ethnicity, and religion. It helped to reconcile republican utopianism and universalism with the class interests of the creole elite by justifying their rule in historicist terms. In an Atlantic World still dominated by European empires and their elaborate systems of hierarchy, creole classicism helped make sense of American Independence, both by legitimizing a precarious and highly personalized creole elite, and by providing an ambiguously inclusive and democratic political horizon for the future of the hemisphere.

⁶³ Orden de la Junta, "La 'Gaceta' debe ser leída por los sacerdotes en las parroquias, después de misa" (1810), in *Ideario de Mayo*, ed. Narciso Binayán (Buenos Aires: Kapelusz, 1960), 137.