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A Problem of Biography: A Study of Simón Bolívar in Historical Record

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I. Introduction

Historiographical trends show how the discipline of history has evolved and expanded over time. Despite its constantly shifting nature, history has seen some continuity in academic approaches. The study of notable individuals is an area that has garnered consistent interest from historians and students alike. Although popular, biographies have stirred up controversy among scholars who disagree about their historical worth. This essay will address the problem of the biography in historical writing, while highlighting the advantages of studying important individuals as an instrument to understand the past.

To complete this task, this paper will investigate the historiography of one of the most prominent individuals in Latin American history—Simón Bolívar. My study will focus on four biographies about Bolívar, each written as traditional political narratives. The examination of these Bolívar-themed books reveals some of the major shortcomings of biographies within the field of history. The next part will feature four scholarly monographs that fall within the broad category of the history of the Latin American Independence movements. Each of the monographs also examine Simón Bolívar, but not as the centerpiece of their study. While the role of biographical studies about individuals is hotly contested within academia, this paper shows the underlying value that close studies of prominent figures like Simón Bolívar have in the field of Latin American History.

II. The Problem Outlined

A major grievance among historians about biographies is that authors of biographical pieces carry unshakable biases. In the past, it was often thought that biographies were not a part of serious academic literature, but rather were written for pleasure by amateurs.[1] This holds some validity when reviewing the distant past of biographies. Originally, biographies were educational. During the Renaissance they were used to portray individuals as model citizens who displayed Christian ideals. Following that phase, the Victorian era saw biographies used as a tool to maintain the political status and legacy of elite members of society.[2] As the field of history developed, it is easy to see why there remains a lot of gray area between the biased past of the biography and a piece that is considered historically sound. Scholars have acknowledged some biographical publications of the 20th Century and beyond in a favorable light, but many historians still express criticism about their inherent flaws. John Tosh cites biographies as "often…overlaid by intentions that are inconsistent with a strict regard for historical truth."[3] He also explains the intense amount of work that biographers have to endure to acquire the essential understanding of the historical and social contexts surrounding an individual. The time and energy that go into this immersion often produce partialities. Historians who participate in the subgenre are so engrossed in the life of one individual that it becomes impossible to "escape some identification with the subject and [the

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[1] Jonathon Steinberg, *Is Biography Proper History?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011)

[2] John Tosh, *The Pursuit of History: Aims, methods and new directions in the study of modern history.* (New York: Pearson Education Limited, 2006) 120.

[3] Tosh, 119.

biographer] will inevitably look at the period to some extent through that person's eyes."[4] Tosh is implying that biographies always contain bias, which can mislead the piece from becoming a truth-seeking component of the history of the subject's time and place. Additionally, Tosh points out that the style of biographies are limiting in the way that they promote simplified, linear narratives from the point of view of the subject. More extensive histories include multiple perspectives about events or people that are acting simultaneously. The biographies of Simón Bolívar analyzed here do not escape these problems; however, some offer more value than others. More recent biographies provide deep analyses of Bolívar and seek to broaden understanding about what motivates his life choices. They can broaden understandings of why and how those actions influenced large groups of people and offer insight to how people of that time and place operated. The biographical works under review have publication dates that span from 1944-2006--- an era that saw many changes in how history was recorded. Each piece claims to be contributions to Latin American History in some fashion, but not all of them meet the qualifications that would convince the majority of historians.

III. Biographies of Bolívar in Historical Record

For many years Gerhard Masur's *Simón Bolívar* (1948) provided the English-speaking world with a standard biographical account of the South American revolutionary. Masur's intention with this work is clear from the onset: to deliver a piece of Latin American history that is completely centered on Bolívar. He says, "He may be studied from many angles: military, diplomatic, and literary […] But the biographer

[4] Tosh, 120.

should organize his facts around the core of the individual, for only in this manner can he see the integral structure from which all other aspects take their form."[5] Masur effectively writes a narrative account of Bolívar's life while providing political and social contexts that are essential to understand this era in Latin American history. The piece provides insight to the political landscape of the time by following the life of Bolívar. Masur's analysis, however, never deviates from focusing on Bolívar's involvement in the evolution of Latin American Independence. Thus, as hinted at before, the biography falls short of offering an in-depth look at many aspects of the Independence movements occurring at this time. For instance, Masur neglects to fully examine the political uprisings in Venezuela and Colombia, as well as other social aspects that should be considered when studying this setting.

Masur, a German intellectual who fled Nazi Germany in the 1930s, came upon this project while searching for a home; a home he found in the archives of Colombia, researching the life of Bolívar. Immersed in a new endeavor, Masur borrowed tactics practiced by other political historians, such as Ranke, and sorted through the available important documents on Bolívar and South American movements. Like Ranke, Masur is concerned with facts and a heavy focus on the interactions between prominent leaders and nations. And like Ranke, nationalistic sentiments lay underneath compilations of facts. He sought to compile a narrative grounded in primary documents that would give justice to a man of such legendary stature. Masur's piece, however, is not strictly political. He also interprets the life of Bolívar through his role in a social context.

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[5] Gerhard Masur, *Simón Bolívar.* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1948) viii.

Overall, Masur portrays Bolívar in a favorable manner, extolling his ideals and heroisms. Masur admits that he personally identifies with principles what he believes Bolívar stands for such as freedom.[6] Despite some clear favoritism, Masur does convey Bolívar's flaws at times. Masur states, "It was not fame he coveted, but power. […] and the power of a dictator, that was his dream for the future.[7] Masur acknowledges Bolívar's power-hungry nature, but maintains praise for the man even as he speaks of Bolívar exercising his power as a pseudo-dictator of newly formed independence states. Masur never skips a chance to glorify the leadership and ideals of Bolívar, leading the reader to call into question Masur's own prejudices. Allow Tosh to remind us, "Biography nearly always entails some distortion."[8]

As Masur travels through Bolívar's life, the use of documents reflects his diligent work and passion for the topic. Personal letters penned by Bolívar and journal accounts written by his General Daniel O'Leary are widely used to support Masur's narrative. Masur does not provide footnotes for immediate clarification, but concluded the piece with a lengthy bibliography sorted by chapter. This work builds a foundational reference for anyone interested in the political history of Latin America. Correspondence between important figures, journal entries, state documents, and other manuscripts are heavily utilized. Masur uses letters that state letters that were exchanged between Spanish authorities and leaders of the independence movement. Often, the letters were negotiations of colonial policies or militarily related. The Venezuelan National library contains vast archives of such exchanges. The feature of these sorts of documents allow

[6] Masur, ix.
[7] Masur, 131.
[8] Tosh, 121.

Simón Bolívar to remain a premier piece of literature and academic reference for Latin Americanists.

Masur's *Simón Bolívar* is glossed over by a positive bias towards Bolívar, understating some of his imperfections. The structure of the biography is narrow and episodic, featuring the sequence of Bolívar's life through political terms. Masur, however, withstands criticism from most historians because his work does what most biographies do not. He applies sound historical practices, uses a vast array of primary documents, and thoroughly covers a very important political figure who is credited with liberating five South American states from Spanish control. Masur's biographical work provides Latin American scholarship with a cornerstone political narrative.

Waldo Frank's *Birth of a World: Bolívar in Terms of his Peoples,* (1951) makes the problem of the biography becomes more apparent. Waldo Frank, an American historian and novelist, asserts that the life of Simón Bolívar, if portrayed accurately and justly, provides significance as the starting point of the world we refer to as America. He claims that the life and legacy of Bolívar should be appreciated in the United States, as it is revered in Latin America. Frank's study follows a structure similar to Masur's, following Bolívar's life as a chronological narrative. The types of sources used are also similar, but Frank departs from Masur with his imaginatively styled text. From the opening lines, Frank's past as a novelist is visible, which invites criticism of his historical methods. *Birth of A World* begins with Frank inserting the reader into a rich description of the Amazonian jungles of Venezuela.[9] Almost like a work of creative nonfiction,

[9] Waldo Frank, *Birth of a World: Bolívar in Terms of his Peoples* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1951) 3-15.

Frank's book sets an exoticized tone. Frank writes, "Like the human heart Venezuela is a vibrant cone. Its vertex is down. Above its upturned base are the airs of the open sea: Spain, Europe, North America; but the vertex lies deep within the night of Amazonia—rivers and jungles of a visceral world almost as large as Europe."[10] The poetic description that Frank offers is merely fluff around bits of historical truth, but its presence blurs the line between illustrative fabrication and reality throughout his work. The method that Frank uses for sourcing documents and other works also acts as an obstacle in distinguishing fact from fiction. Nonetheless, Frank insists the presence of footnotes or endnotes in his text would "destroy the narrative's flow—and defeat the book's essential purpose."[11] If one can look past Frank's imperfect academic tendencies, there lies a thoughtful story of Bolívar's experiences and the development of the legacy that he left.

Frank effectively demonstrates an energetic account of Bolívar's early life, intellectual studies, military endeavors, personal relationships, political ideals, and personal faults. Through all the phases of Bolívar's life, Frank frames the story through Bolívar's personal circumstances of the present and the influence of his past. He excels during moments that relate the relationships between Bolívar and close associates such as Simón Rodriguez, Francisco de Miranda, Antonio Jose de Sucre, and Daniel O'Leary. This can be attributed to his copious use of primary documents and letters. Through the use of Bolívar's personal exchanges, he builds a better understanding of him as an individual as well as his place in the politically and socially transitioning region. Frank's narrative contains questionable objectivity when detailing some of the personal aspects of

[10] Frank, 3.
[11] Frank, vi.

Bolívar's life. In this regard, Frank's piece diverges from Masur's fair depiction of Bolívar.

Frank's book was written from 1948-1951 in response to a politically active South America. Specifically, Romulo Gallegos had just been democratically elected President of Venezuela, which was the first election under a constitution that fairly included all Venezuelans.[12] During this era, most of South America was undergoing political and economic changes. The communist revolution in Cuba, a similar movement in Venezuela, and the Vargas movement in Brazil caused revolutionary sentiments to spread all over the continent. It is for this reason that people and historians began to revisit the roots of their sovereign people including Simón Bolívar. Frank, along with a band of colleagues writing in this era, revisited Bolívar, driven by the nationalism swelling throughout the continent.

Despite its shortcomings, *Birth of a World: Bolívar in Terms of his Peoples* is considered a milestone contribution because it is one of the first extensive studies of Bolívar that came out of the United States. The American disposition within the text shines, specifically in the closing statements. While speaking abstractly about myth and legends, he draws a connection between Simón Bolívar and George Washington. He continues with the American Presidential theme by projecting a parallel between Bolívar and Abraham Lincoln.

> Lincoln's archaic face of sorrow is *our own*, beneath the commerce-smile, the comfort-smirk, the power-mask. Bolívar within the chaos of his people expressed *their* mastering need: order and unity. As Lincoln naturally spoke in Bible cadence, Bolívar naturally found the accent of the great Roman writers. He

[12] Frank, vii.

> released chaos and it doomed him. But he personifies the tradition of his culture, its challenge and its potential in America to create a new world from chaos.[13]

With this conclusion, Frank passionately emphasizes a thread that is present throughout his piece, which is Bolívar's undying belief in the hemispheric unity of America. The final years of Bolívar's life ended with political, economic, and social uncertainty for the nations that he liberated, however, Frank argues that the legacy he left provided them with framework for prosperity and cooperation. Still, criticism regarding the historical value of the piece remains intact and valid.

The next Bolívar biography under review is John Johnson's *Simón Bolívar and Spanish American Independence* (1968). Johnson's work shares some flaws with the preceding authors, but distinguishes itself in other areas. Johnson's narrative account of Spanish American independence movements follows the life and activities of Bolívar and his unwavering pursuit of a united America, free from Spanish authority. Johnson attempts to display Bolívar in the many roles he assumed: revolutionary activist, solider, statesman, and internationalist. He proceeds to accomplish this goal by plotting the story of Simón Bolívar on the timeline of Spanish American independence movements and the political developments that followed. Through his telling of the preceding circumstances, revolutionary events, and the Creole reaction that followed, Johnson is constantly assessing Bolívar's achievement. This approach is similar to the historiographical frame used by both Masur and Frank. Johnson, however, emphasizes Bolívar's social role as a member of the Creole class. He also credits Bolívar as an accomplished soldier,

[13] Frank, 312.

statesman, political leader, prophet, and internationalist who at all times sustained notions of independence, even when great oppositions were positioned against his cause.[14]

Johnson's work is brief, but richly supported by primary and secondary sources. The entire second part is dedicated to showcasing the most relevant primary sources regarding Bolívar, in the form of a reference appendix. His examination offers a great starting point for someone wishing to delve into the history of Bolívar and Latin America. Many of the important texts that Johnson cites throughout the narrative are accessible to the reader in the appendix. At the time of publication in 1968, Johnson's historical account was particularly relevant as citizens of the independent states he helped create revisited Bolívar's ideals, rallying nationalism in a region that had experienced over twenty years of political instability and shifting leadership. Like inhabitants of those countries, Johnson joined in revering of one of the most influential public figures of this hemisphere's history, through a lucid biographical chronicle. The flaws of Johnson's biographical account lie in his limited scope. Similar to Masur's piece, Johnson does not fully explore the context in which Simón Bolívar live and experienced. His study is undersized in comparison to more complete histories. The narrow scope of the work summons a historical mind to question its value in the body of work in Latin American History. His narrative is comprehensible and pleasurable to read but Johnson's can be easily criticized based on the sheer size and selectivity of the author. The account glorifies Bolívar using carefully selected works among an enormous body of potentially available documents. This calls into question Johnson's bias as a creator of history. The

[14] John Johnson, *Simón Bolívar and Spanish American independence, 1783-1830*. (Princeton: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1968) 3.

American Book Company that published his work is known for providing secondary-level and college-level students with readable surveys of history.

Simón Bolívar: A Life (2006) by John Lynch[15] challenges the problems commonly associated with biography, claiming that the passage of time and new ways to study Bolívar enabled him to create a valuable historical contribution. Lynch claims that the study of Latin American independence movements is incomprehensible without thorough investigation, analysis, and interpretation of prominent liberators. Simón Bolívar legacy has stood the test of time, as he is widely regarded as the most prominent revolutionary from the continent of South America. Lynch seeks to advance Latin American history by creating a comprehensive historical account and interpretation through the study of Bolívar. Published in 2006, Lynch had the advantage of recognizing biographers' past mistakes. Acknowledging previous biases embedded into biographical studies, Lynch states, "Many words have been said about Bolívar […] basically out of sympathy with its subject." Additionally, he gives a nod to Gerhard Masur for escaping many problems of the biographers before him. He says, "[the work of Bolívar] was soon overtaken by Gerhard Masur's more balanced work, which held the field as the leading academic study in English for half a century before it began to show its age."[16] Lynch asserts that modern research promotes historical accuracy and better judgment, which is the attitude he takes into his own work. He seeks to add a new interpretation to the existing body of work that explores Bolívar's inner motivations and views the revolutionary in a new way. At this point, he says, "The challenge is one of interpretation rather than facts, although

[15] John Lynch, *Simón Bolívar: A Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006)
[16] Lynch, xii.

interpretation is impossible without facts, and the facts themselves are often in dispute."[17] As Lynch writes, he expected that his piece would be one of many that began to appear as the bicentennial of Spanish American Independence movements approached. A focal point of his argument is the particular perspective of studying the independence movements that occurred as a conflict lost by Spain, rather than a win for Americans. This results in a narrative that emphasizes military history within the political and social storyline surrounding Simón Bolívar.

As a British Latin American historian, Lynch brings a high degree of proficiency and academic expertise to his study. Lynch extracts his history of Bolívar from the widely read primary sources of the 19th Century as well as from many secondary biographical studies. Lynch's study of Bolívar comes late in a long career of contributions to Latin American scholarship in which he has written about Spanish Colonial Administration, Spanish Royalty, San Martin, and Spanish American Revolutions in general. Lynch can be considered a "big picture" historian, as he is known to provide a thorough historical view of political movements and trends. For example, Lynch writes, "The two years after 1808 were decisive. The French conquest of Spain, the collapse of the Spanish Bourbons, the implacable imperialism of Spanish liberals, all delivered a profound and irreparable shock to relations between Spain and America."[18] While Lynch is partially paraphrasing a deeper narrative, this excerpt displays the broad context that he uses in his study of Bolívar. This type of history exists in contrast to more specific historical studies known as specialism.[19] This feature allows Lynch's work to be

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[17] Ibid.
[18] John Lynch, *Simón Bolívar: A Life (*New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 45.
[19] Robert Burns, *Historiography* (Routledge: New York, 2006), 2.

readable in addition to being well respected as a leading piece of academic literature on Bolívar. Throughout the detailed account Lynch remains fair, not presenting an overwhelming bias. Colleague Timothy Anna writes that while Lynch "clearly admires Bolívar, he is not uncritical. Social political, economic, cultural, and regional factors are fully articulated in relation to the achievements and failures of the Liberator."[20] In his own work, Anna expands on the concept of Spain losing its colonies, rather than its colonies liberating themselves.

In comparison to the other biographies mentioned, Lynch's *Simón Bolívar: A Life* withstands a lot of the historical criticism directed against biographies. In his work, he is able to transform the natural curiosity that audiences have with prominent individuals into an investigation of the past. In the academic community, scholars generally praise Lynch for producing the most historically accurate biographical piece on Simón Bolívar. In his work, the problems that accompany biographies within historical record have been tamed, but they have not disappeared.

IV. Historical Monographs Featuring Simón Bolívar

The monograph is the foundational type of historical writing. A monograph is based on original research conducted to support a thesis, based on primary sources placed in the context of extensive secondary sources. The scope of the study is generally very specific. Tosh writes that such works are "an original contribution to knowledge (as required under the regulations for obtaining high degree." He comments that the influence of individuals is often minimally emphasized in monographs, but the

[20] Timothy Anna. "Review." review of *Simón Bolívar: A Life,* by John Lynch, *Hispanic American Historical Review*, Vol. 88, N. 1 (Feb., 2008) pp. 154

accumulation of monographs builds the body of original work that makes up the field of history. To contrast the place of biographies as contributions to history, I would like to review the role of monographs in recording the history of people like Simón Bolívar. For this study, I have chosen four authors whose monographs feature Bolívar notably, but do not study him as the centerpiece of their arguments. The nature of monographs is to produce original thought, to frame a subject in a completely new fashion. The sample chosen carries its own flaws, but demonstrates that monographs bring a particular value to the process of recording history.

In *The Independence of the South American Republics: A Study in Recognition and Foreign Policy* (1971) Frederick Paxson studies the independence of newly formed South American states through a frame of diplomatic relations and international recognition. Paxson's monograph investigates how the states, freshly liberated by Simón Bolívar, were recognized around the globe. His text follows the process of the region transitioning from Spanish colonial rule to internationally credited states in diplomatic and political terms. Paxson's primary players include states such as the United States, France, Spain, Venezuela, New Granada, and more, along with prominent political statesmen like George Washington, Napoleon Bonaparte, José de San Martin, and Simón Bolívar. The breadth of Paxson's study of diplomatic relations is thorough, making it somewhat difficult to intake. His meticulous approach leaves him with a product that is a unique addition to the body of Latin American history.

Simón Bolívar is one subject of Paxson's book, primarily in the first third of the monograph. The first part focuses on the wars of independence in South America, so Bolívar's presence is notable. In Paxson's account, Bolívar is portrayed as a main actor

and studied through a political and diplomatic frame. Bolívar's early life, education, and personal details are not important to complete Paxson's task. Paxson's view of Simón Bolívar is interesting in comparison to how biographers like Masur, Johnson, Frank, and Lynch portray the figure. Bolívar is credited by Paxson as the liberator of the northern nations, but does not regard Bolívar to have been as accomplished as San Martin. He understands Bolívar as a piece of the puzzle that led South American states to be recognized internationally. Paxson writes, "Simón Bolívar, who was the spirit of the northern movement, is better known than his counterpart San Martin, who accomplished a greater work in the southern half of the continent."[21] Overall Bolívar is treated with favor based on his military and diplomatic abilities, however the overbearing celebration of Bolívar does not show in Paxson's piece as it does in the biographies previously mentioned. This suggests that the historical monograph records figures like Bolívar into history in a more objective way. Paxson's coverage of Bolívar, however, is not as thorough.

In the latter two parts of the monograph, Paxson shows the foreign relations between the newly independent South American states and The United States and Great Britain, respectively. Through his detailed recounting of diplomatic relations, Bolívar remains an supporting player within the recognition process, but the focus is set on the correspondents of diplomats negotiating terms. In chapter two, Paxson portrays the United States as a watchful participant of the independence movements, eager to see how

[21] Frederick L. Paxson, *The Independence of The South-American Republics: A Study in Recognition and Foreign Policy* (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1970), 53.

the events of revolution unfolded, and conscious of possible advantages to gain.[22] Although he states that they could benefit from a partnership with newly created states, Paxson illustrates the United States as peaceful onlookers, maintaining neutrality and avoiding the creation of diplomatic conflicts. The U.S. viewed these events not as a revolution like theirs, but a civil war.[23] Paxson's argument is strongly reinforced by congressional reports and government activities, but there is a lack of economic and social implications or mentions of such possibilities. The final chapter dealt with South American relations with Great Britain. The English were not as open to the notion of recognition, siding with the Spanish throne for sometime. Paxson shows how the diplomatic relationship developed from reluctance to a great opportunity for British trade.

The sources that Paxson used in his work were mostly from state archives including the British Foreign Office, the Public Records Office in London, and the Bureau of Indexes and Archives at Washington. Those archives contain the correspondence between diplomats, public records, court transcripts, and proposed legislation. Paxson's source base differs from the document types used by biographers, which relies heavily on diary entries, letters, and other personal documents. *The Independence of the South American Republics: A Study in Recognition and Foreign Policy* has its shortcomings in providing very limited social and cultural contexts. Additionally, Paxson's style of delivering his research dense and is difficult to read fluidly.. Despite these disappointments, Paxson's work provides a valuable study based on South American state documents, diplomatic files, and foreign policy relations. His

[22] Paxson, 102.
[23] Paxson, 103.

book lays the political and diplomatic groundwork, providing a place for other historians to build on, using a number of other schools of thoughts and historical frameworks.

Timothy Anna's *Spain and the Loss of America* (1983) provides an interesting addition to the study of Simón Bolívar within the historical record. In the preface, Anna explains his motivation for writing this monograph and acknowledges history as a group of moments threaded together. He quotes Juan Friede saying, "the sum of individual actions, mainly military and political, of a generation that seems to have acted in a vacuum, without the concurrence of those conditions that engendered their actions…and that decided the final outcome."[24] This implies that Anna appreciates the study of individuals, like Bolívar, as well. Anna approaches this work to expand the perspective of Latin American historians to include a fuller study of the era. Specifically Anna seeks to clear the misconceptions regarding the role of Spain in the independence movements. To do so, he focuses on sources in Spain regarding the monarch, state, and the close councils. As a result, the end product of Anna's labor is the depiction of the relationship between Spain and "her liberated offspring."[25] Again, this monograph features Bolívar as just one component in a larger historical illustration.

Anna introduces a new historiographical lens with which to view Simón Bolívar. The Spanish crown remains the centerpiece of his study, with Simón Bolívar as a figure in which monarchy interacts with. This differs from previous scholarship that has always illustrated Bolívar and his revolution as the source of provocation. Aside from the first page, Simón Bolívar isn't even mentioned in Anna's research until more than 175 pages

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[24] Timothy Anna, *Spain and the Loss of America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), xii.

[25] Anna, xvi.

later.[26] This demonstrates the Spanish-centered frame with which Anna is working. In his perspective, the revolutions that were credited successes of Simón Bolívar by his biographers, were simply a result of a series of failures and negotiations on Spain's end. When Anna does shift focus to Bolívar, he characterizes him as determined and militarily intelligent. Anna relies exclusively on primary sources when speaking of Bolívar and other top officials. The selection of sources indicates another notable disparity between this monograph and biographies such as John Lynch's *Simón Bolívar: A Life*. Biographies are generally founded on primary sources but use existing secondary sources to complement their research. Anna's narrative ends with Spain losing all control in the Americas and eventually recognizing the newly independent nation.[27] Anna does not continue his study once the region was independently in the hands of Simón Bolívar.

The next monograph under review represents a historiographical trend that began in the 1980s, but reached Latin American historiography later. *South American Independence: Gender, Politics, Text* is written by Catherine Davies, Claire Brewster, and Hilary Owen. In this work, Davies et al. use a gendered analysis to study South American Independence movements. Studying Latin American history, including Bolívar, through the frame of gender is something that all of the previously discussed authors neglected to do. The main focus of the text is to illuminate the overlooked status of women in South America, as much of the continent transitioned from an age of monarchal subjection to becoming members of independent republics. Davies et al. assert that the political rights that were denied under Spanish rule to all, were still denied after the shift into independent states; however, only to women. Furthermore, men and women

[26] Anna, 179.
[27] Anna, 294.

in South America during this time period lacked the expectation that the status of women should benefit from the newly defined political and social orders. The authors approach their gendered study by examining texts produced by women and men from the time of study. This enables them to construct a cultural history that speaks to the social and political status of women as well as their contributions to achieving independence. This book complements existing gender analyses in the field of history by deconstructing the concept of women as a social construction in the era of Latin American Independence. The authors' methods provide a refreshing outlook on the study of South American Independence in the age of Simón Bolívar.

Davies et al. effectively make a new contribution to Latin American history. Their book is focused to justly investigate gender in textual documents from the Bolívarian era. Since the scope of this monograph is narrow, the authors rely heavily on the existing history that provide political, social, economic, and cultural context for their writing. Davies et al. credits a number of historians who have produced work that has become well respected in Latin American history including the work of John Lynch. Davies cites Lynch's latest biographical work along with many more of his monographs that study this time in history. Davies et al. suggests that these works, while necessary for their own efforts to set the context, tell an incomplete story over and over. *South American Independence: Gender, Politics, Text* sets out to share historically sound research that has not been heard, which in this case comes in the form of gendered cultural inquiry.

Davies et al. make strides in the study Latin American history in general, but they also contribute to the study of prominent individuals of the early 19th Century. Simón Bolívar remains a topic of great interest as the authors delve into the liberator's own

texts, extracting moments that are rich in gendered meanings; specifically social representations of the feminine. They argue that Bolívar, who seemed to embody the ideals of independence and liberation, accurately reflects the social attitude towards women. Classically educated and prolifically admired for his intellectual abilities, Bolívar viewed the social role of women as insignificant—an impression the authors believe he may have picked up from enlightened writers such as Rousseau.[28] Davies et al. also make a clear distinction between the subtle nuances of Bolívar's public writings and his personal correspondence, which were often exchanged with women. His personal letters support rumors that Bolívar was a womanizer who was flirtatious and, as the authors point out, sometimes patronizing.[29]

Davies et al. forcefully emphasize the representation of gender in Bolívar's political texts. To argue that his writings implicitly speak to the belief of feminine inferiority, they analyze a few of his more important manuscripts. Davies et al. clearly accomplish this task by examining Bolívar's first major political release: *Manifesto de Cartagena*. In the text, Bolívar proposes a plan that would allow Venezuela to successfully divorce itself from Spanish Rule. Davies et al. are quick to notice that Bolívar personifies the weak states of Venezuela and New Grenada as women in need of a strong masculine rescue. As his manifesto continues, Bolívar makes statements that suggest that the feminine is "in need of protection… [and] a threat to order."[30] The authors proceed to show examples of implicit attitudes towards women reflected within Bolívar's major writings and speeches. As their final Bolivian subject to analysis, the

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[28] Catherine Davies, Claire Brewster and Hilary Owen, *South American Independence: Gender Politics, Text* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2006), 34.
[29] Davies et al., 35.
[30] Davies et al., 37.

authors review the Bolivian Constitution, written by Bolívar in 1826. They note that this public document does not explicitly constrict the political rights of women as citizens, however it leaves the issue open ended. Having not explicitly denied the rights of citizenship to women, nor granted them, the document allows for interpretation by a male dominated patriarchal power structure. As one can imagine, Davies et al. suggest that this was interpreted unfavorably towards the civil and social status of women. Davies et al. communicate a convincing argument about how the cultural view promoting the inferiority and weakness of women can be detected in voice of one of the region's most celebrated individuals. At the same rate, the authors do not discredit Bolívar for his determination in liberating the region from Spanish control; they are displaying the portrayal of women and gender in the text written as this political transformation occurred. This gendered discourse develops the history of Simón Bolívar and South America to include a perspective that aligns with contemporary trends in the discipline of history.

V. Conclusions

The debate over whether biographies deserve a place in the historical record remains alive and actively contested. A review of the historiography of Simón Bolívar reveals visible problems and withstanding strengths of biographies in comparison to historical monographs. Bias was detected in all biographies reviewed for this study. The partialities of the authors were more apparent in works from the mid-Twentieth Century while subjectivity was harder to perceive in more recent publications like John Lynch's *Simón Bolívar: A Life* (2006). Additionally, biographies of particular figures tend to follow similar paths as they navigate the chronology of an individual's life. This is also

apparent in the biographies on Bolívar by Masur, Frank, Johnson, and Lynch. All follow a narrative that takes Bolívar through his life from beginning to end. Each biographer uses the available sources in various ways, but there are no groundbreaking discoveries or schools of thought displayed that change the historiography of The Liberator.

John Lynch's *Simón Bolívar: A Life*, which owes much to the biographies that were published before it, has a place in contemporary historical writing. John Tosh, who questions the historical worth of biographies, still acknowledges that there is some value to studying individuals in great depth. Tosh notes that, "biography in indispensable to the understanding of motive and intention. […] but plainly the motives of individuals have *some* part to play in explaining historical events."[31] With cultural histories emerging, historians find value in understanding the decisions and thoughts of individuals. A biographer studying the early life and development of someone like Simón Bolívar is in a better position to make claims about historically influence decisions. This perspective that is gained by biographers can become an integral part of understanding the role of individuals on the shaping of the past. Also, biographies can act as a useful resource to historians and students as a stockpile of relevant literature. This is because biographies are often written with the use of great amounts of primary and secondary sources. This gives students the opportunity to look up the source being used along with related documents. Ultimately, it is an invitation to continue the deep exploration of a topic. Authors can benefit from the discovery of personal documents that are commonly uncovered and used in biographical research.

[31] Tosh, 121.

Biographies present modern historians and readers with benefits and shortcomings. The historical monograph, on the other hand, provides unique interpretations that allow individuals like Simón Bolívar to be remembered in history in unique ways. Frederic Paxson's *The Independence of the South-American Republics* features Bolívar as one of many diplomats involved in negotiating the international recognition of new nations in South American. Timothy Anna's *Spain and the Loss of America* records Bolívar as a secondary player interacting and responding to the failures of the Spanish Crown. Thomas Millington's *Colombia's Military and Brazil's Monarchy* provides notably detail about the early life, political ideas, and military conquests of Bolívar but set into a much broader context of South American and Spanish history. *South American Independence: Gender, Politics, Text* by Davies et al. provides a refreshing study of gender within Latin American texts from the era of Bolívar. A significant portion of the study is dedicated to the close analysis of Bolívar's writings and implicit sentiments about women and gender. This sample of monographs reflects many different approaches that historians use to view similar subjects. Each study includes Simón Bolívar in their attempt to contribute to the growing body of Latin American research. Atypical of biographies their depictions of Bolívar vary in breadth and intent. Similarly, however, they all use Bolívar as an instrument to create a valuable perspective within the broad discipline of history.

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Text Book Review
World History: People & Nations by Holt, Rinehart, and Winston

Composing a comprehensible history of the world for use in secondary classrooms is a massive undertaking. The finite number of pages invites the reader to wonder what the author chose to include and how they chose to communicate aspects of the past to their audience. Historical themes, time periods, places, and figures have been viewed through many different lenses. In this paper I will be reviewing the way in which Simón Bolívar and Spanish American Independence movements in the early 19th Century have been recorded by Holt, Rinehart, and Winston. Holt et al. wrote *World History: People & Nations* specifically for use in a secondary global history classroom. The textbook's nearly 1000-pages are filled with a detailed chronology beginning with ancient civilizations, spanning to just after the collapse of the Soviet Union. A close examination of how Simon Bolívar and Spanish American Independence movements were recorded demonstrates the authors' approach as historians.

In *World History: People & Nations*, Holt et al. attempt to convey a balanced approach, drawing historical connections while following a loose narrative. The authors view history as "the unfolding drama of people and events through ages,"[32] while also emphasizing the importance of geography in the story telling of history. Geography enables historians to bring their chronicle into focus providing a spatial context for studying historical events and personalities. Overall, Holt et al. navigate through the historical timeline with political and social frameworks while constantly referencing geographic situations. The textbook is organized into seven wide-reaching units in which

[32] Holt, Rinehart and Winston, *World History: People & Nations* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 2000), XXV.

the contents are loosely connected to a broad theme. Some of the themes include "The Beginnings of Civilization," "The World in Transition," and "Industrialism and Nationalism." Each unit is broken down into chapters, and chapters into more specific sections. The text primarily focuses on big picture political and social changes throughout history. This becomes apparent in the study of the authors' interpretation of Simon Bolívar and Spanish American Independence Movements.

Chapter 21 of *World History: People & Nations* is titled "The Age of Reform," and is a part of a larger section on industrialization and nationalism. The authors touch upon patriotic and revolutionary themes in regions all around the world during the 18th and 19th Centuries. The French Revolution, The United States' Revolutionary War, The Age of Napoleon, and Spanish American Independence are notable areas of focus. The portion that surveys the events leading up to the independence of Latin American nations relies heavily on political and social history, emphasizing the role of social class and political figures. Simon Bolívar is featured as a key revolutionary figure during the era, whose role was necessary for the liberation of many South American nations. Unlike biographies or detailed historical monographs, this textbook offers only a glimpse of Simon Bolívar, narrowly focusing on his political role and social influence. Additionally, a history that could easily span hundreds of pages has been reduced to a mere five-page spread. Having been published in 2000, this textbook is not on the curve of modern historiography. Its historical approach is consistent with much of the political and social scholarship of the 20th Century. There is very little presence of cultural history or other tangential schools of thought.

The segment on independence movements in Latin America focuses on the relationship of Spain and Portugal to their colonies prior to independence, social class in Latin America, and the short-term aftermath of independent nations in the continent. After reviewing the conditions of life in Spanish American colonies before 1800, Holt et al. begin to explain what led to independence movements. They claim that growing discontent was a result of social class division, power struggles, and unequal economic opportunity. Holt et al. refer to significant politicians and broad social classes to introduce the notion of independence. They say, " [Spain] began to fill many upper-level positions in the colonial government and owned and operated mines and *haciendas*. In the mid-1700s, in an effort to reassert control, King Charles II of Spain instituted certain changes."[33] Holt et al. proceed to outline the social class structure within the colonies along with the economic advantages and disadvantages associated with class distinction. They effectively present a broad image of discontented colonies in need of a leader to achieve independence. This description sets the stage for Simon Bolívar to enter and lead a "creole revolution" based in patriotic sentiments. This theme of patriotism has been threaded throughout the entire chapter in the coverage of the French and American Revolutions. At first mention of Bolívar, Holt et al. quote his famous *Jamaica Letter*, in which he states, "The hatred that the Peninsula has inspired in us is greater than the ocean between us." Here, the authors use Bolívar's commentary to reflect the attitude that colonists, particularly members of the creole class, have toward Spain.

Just from reviewing this brief segment, it is apparent that Holt et al. can be classified as members of the Annales school of thought. The Annales school was founded

[33] Holt et al., *World History,* 564.

by Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre and is characterized by the inclusion of disciplines like economics, sociology, and geography in a historical study.[34] This style allows the authors to connect many different places and times with expansive social and economic themes. While this text features political aspects, its broad multidisciplinary approach distinguishes itself from traditionally strictly political narratives. As authors of a secondary-level textbook, Holt et al. aim to provide a digestible, balanced image of the past.

As Holt et al. delve into the independence movements, they credit Simon Bolívar as one of three great South American leaders, along with Jose de San Martin and Bernardo O'Higgins. Many other biographers and historians such as Gerhard Masur, John Lynch, and Federic Paxson hold Bolívar at a much higher importance than individuals like San Martin and O'Higgins. Nonetheless, Bolívar is portrayed in a favorable light, as the liberator of multiple South American nations. The study of him is brief and scanty in comparison to more thorough studies or biographies. The only mention of Bolívar's early life is that he spent some time studying Enlightenment ideals in North America and Europe. Additionally, the years that Bolívar spent mustering up support and enduring long military campaigns are reduced to sentences that suggest easy triumph. Holt et al. state, "Bolívar started the revolt in his native city of Caracas in 1810. He did not succeed in destroying Spain's power in Venezuela until 1821 at the battle of Carabobo. In the meantime, he raised another army and defeated the Spanish in New Granada in 1819 at the battle of Boyacá."[35] Holt et al. use these broad-sweeping

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[34] John Tosh, *The Pursuit of History: Aims, methods and new directions in the study of modern history.* (New York: Pearson Education Limited, 2006) 126.

[35] Holt et al., *World History,* 566.

statements to show Bolívar through as a political and military leader, but the overarching themes of the section remain fixed on social implications of the Liberator. The narrative then shifts to Brazil's effort to detach itself from Portugal's control and also discusses the international response to these events.

Next, Holt et al. refocus on Bolívar and his role as a pseudo-dictator following the independence of Gran Colombia and Peru. In this portion, the authors use Bolívar as a point of reference to show the shift in society around him. Sentiment for patriotism and Latin American unity were strong; however, implementing a fully functioning government was not a fluid operation. Holt et al. view Bolívar as a political figure in a top-down discussion about post-independence South America.[36] The last mention of Bolívar refers to his idealist attempt to unite Latin America at the Panama Conference. Following that blurb, the authors focus strictly on the social instability of the newly minted states, excluding Bolívar from the conversation even though he is still in power. This move suggests that the authors interpret the social themes of this chapter to be more important than the life of a notable individual like Bolívar.

The new millennium has seen many new historiographical trends that have been applied to the study of Bolívar by other historians. Holt et al. portray the Liberator as leader of the creoles, a social leader, while John Lynch views Bolívar as a believer in freedom and equality in his work *Simon Bolívar: A Life* (2006). Lynch is more concerned with Bolívar's personal ideals and views his actions with them in mind while Holt et al. are more concerned with connecting social themes. In *South American Independence: Gender, Politics, Text* (2006), Catherine Davies et al. portray a leader who is driven to

[36] Holt et al., *World History,* 569.

advance his own sex along with his social class. Davies et al. emphasize the role of gender through the examination of primary texts. The social implications are acknowledged and interpreted, but gender remains the focal point of the study. They claim that Bolívar's writing suggested that he viewed women as symbolically strong, but socially and politically weak. Davies et. al.'s piece shows a cultural perspective that Holt et al. lack in their textbook. Cultural histories began to emerge in the 1980s; however, political and social histories are still produced. It is also worth noting that women of Latin America are not explicitly mentioned in this section. The concentration is the general social and political movements, which align with the theme of the unit ("The Age of Reform").

To sum up the Holt et al. section on South American independence movements, including Bolívar, the authors' main objectives regarded social conflict and changes. The chapter dealt largely with the economic and social problems that faced the creole class before and after independence. Additionally, the authors highlighted the roles of important individuals like Bolívar, San Martin, L'Ouverture, Ferdinand VII and each of their sociopolitical effects. A Latin Americanist or a biographer of Simon Bolívar may view this passage as a shallow depiction of a complex era and individual. This is an inherent characteristic of projects of this scale. John Tosh describes this sort of grand sweep of history as "fairly described as a 'tertiary' source, since the writer is inevitably placed in the position of making emphatic statements about topics based on no more than a reading of the standard secondary source."[37] Obviously Tosh et al. or any handful of authors could not feasibly research the amount of primary documents needs to create a

[37] Tosh, *The Pursuit of History*, 159.

history of this scope. Thus, as the range of study expands, the quality of the research saturates. Despite that major shortcoming, large textbooks like *World History: People & Nations* offer value to educators and students alike. They encourage readers to synthesize and process historical events that would be meaningless if fragmented. Marc Bloch is famously quoted saying, "The microscope is a marvelous instrument for research; but a heap of microscopic slides does not constitute a work of art."[38] Broadening understanding of students is the value of far-reaching surveys.

Within *World History: People & Nations,* Holt et al. convey a shallow social, economic, and political interpretation of Latin American Independence Movements and Simon Bolívar. The depth of the study is limited, however the piece provides comprehensive research that focuses on themes relevant to global reforms occurring nearly simultaneously. Connecting a chronology with fixed geographic references and thematic ties, Holt et al. offers a valuable resource for novice students. Texts like these can be used to survey great spans of time, provide abundant historical context, or be the starting place for someone who would like to begin to deeper explore a topic.

[38] R.R. Davies, 'Marc Bloch', *History, 52* (1967) p. 273

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Proclamation of 1813 [modified]

Simon Bolívar

In 1811, Venezuela declared its independence from Spanish rule. By 1812, Spain regained control of the country. Simón Bolívar fled to New Granada (current-day Colombia) to fight for independence. Successful in New Granada, Bolívar led an army back to Venezuela fight the Spanish. In 1813, he released this statement to Venezuelans attempting to gain support for the independence movement. A couple months later, Bolívar's army captured the capital city freeing Venezuelans from Spanish authority.

Venezuelans: an army of your brothers, sent by the Sovereign Congress of New Granada has come to **liberate** you. Having expelled the **oppressors** from the provinces of Mérida and Trujillo, it is now among you.

We are sent to destroy the Spaniards, to protect the Americans, and to reestablish the republican governments that once formed the Confederation of Venezuela. The states defended by our arms are again governed by their former constitutions and tribunals, in full enjoyment of their liberty and independence, for our mission is designed only to break the chains of servitude which still shackle some of our towns, and not to impose laws or exercise acts of dominion to which the rules of war might entitle us.

Moved by your misfortunes, we have been unable to observe with indifference the afflictions you were forced to experience by the barbarous Spaniards, who have ravished you, plundered you, and brought you death and destruction. They have violated the sacred rights of nations. They have broken the most solemn agreements and treaties.

Any Spaniard who does not, by every active and effective means, work against **tyranny** in behalf of this just cause, will be considered an enemy and punished; as a traitor to the nation, he will inevitably be shot by a firing squad. On the other hand, a general and absolute amnesty is granted to those who come over to our army.

And you Americans who, by error or treachery, have been lured from the paths of justice, are informed that your brothers, deeply regretting the error of your ways, have pardoned you as we are profoundly convinced that you cannot be truly to blame, for only the blindness and ignorance in which you have been kept up to now by those responsible for your crimes could have induced you to commit them. Fear not the sword that comes to avenge you and to sever the ignoble ties with which your executioners have bound you to their own fate. You are hereby assured, with absolute **impunity**, of your honor, lives, and property. The single title, "Americans," shall be your safeguard and guarantee. Our arms have come to protect you, and they shall never be raised against a single one of you, our brothers.

Spaniards and Canary Islanders, you will die, though you be neutral, unless you actively espouse the cause of America's liberation. Americans, you will live, even if you have trespassed.

The Jamaica Letter

By Simón Bolívar

Simón Bolívar led independence movements in five countries, freeing them from Spanish rule. He wrote this document in response to a letter from the English Governor of Jamaica in 1815. The Englishman asks Bolívar what his opinion is on Venezuelan independence and how he thinks a new republic should operate. This letter offers Bolívar's ideas about achieving independence and implementing a new government before he is successful in leading Venezuela and New Granada (Colombia) to independence.

Kingston, Jamaica, September 6, 1815

My dear Sir:

With what a feeling of gratitude I read that passage in your letter in which you say to me: "I hope that the success which then followed Spanish arms may now turn in favor of their adversaries, the badly oppressed people of South America." I take this hope as a prediction, if it is justice that determines man's contests. Success will crown our efforts, because the destiny of America has been irrevocably decided; the tie that bound her to Spain has been severed. Only a concept maintained that tie and kept the parts of that immense monarchy together. That which formerly bound them now divides them. The hatred that the Peninsula has inspired in us is greater than the ocean between us. It would be easier to have the two continents meet than to reconcile the spirits of the two countries. The habit of obedience; a community of interest, of understanding, of religion; mutual goodwill; a tender regard for the birthplace and good name of our forefathers; in short, all that gave rise to our hopes, came to us from Spain As a result there was born principle of affinity that seemed eternal, notwithstanding the misbehavior of our rulers which weakened that sympathy, or, rather, that bond enforced by the domination of their rule. At present the contrary attitude persists: we are threatened with the fear of death, dishonor, and every harm; there is nothing we have not suffered at the hands of that unnatural stepmother-Spain The veil has been torn asunder. We have already seen the light, and it is not our desire to be thrust back into darkness…

It is harder, Montesquieu has written, to release a nation from servitude than to enslave a free nation. This truth is proven by the annals of all times, which reveal that most free nations have been put under the yoke, but very few enslaved nations have recovered their liberty. Despite the convictions of history, South Americans have made efforts to obtain liberal, even perfect, institutions, doubtless out of that instinct to aspire to the greatest possible happiness, which, common to all men, is bound to follow in civil societies founded on the principles of justice, liberty, and equality. But are we capable of maintaining in proper balance the difficult charge of a republic? Is it conceivable that a newly emancipated people can soar to the heights of liberty, and, unlike Icarus, neither have its wings melt nor fall into an abyss? Such a marvel is inconceivable and without precedent. There is no reasonable probability to bolster our hopes.

More than anyone, I desire to see America fashioned into the greatest nation in the world, greatest not so much by virtue of her area and wealth as by her freedom and

glory. Although I seek perfection for the government of my country, I cannot persuade myself that the New World can, at the moment, be organized as a great republic. Since it is impossible, I dare not desire it; yet much less do I desire to have all America a monarchy because this plan is not only impracticable but also impossible. Wrongs now existing could not be righted, and our emancipation would be fruitless. The American states need the care of paternal governments to heal the sores and wounds of despotism and war…

From the foregoing, we can draw these conclusions: The American provinces are fighting for their freedom, and they will ultimately succeed. Some provinces as a matter of course will form federal and some central republics; the larger areas will inevitably establish monarchies, some of which will fare so badly that they will disintegrate in either present or future revolutions. To consolidate a great monarchy will be no easy task, but it will be utterly impossible to consolidate a great republic.

When success is not assured, when the state is weak, and when results are distantly seen, all men hesitate; opinion is divided, passions rage, and the enemy fans these passions in order to win an easy victory because of them. As soon as we are strong and under the guidance of a liberal nation which will lend us her protection, we will achieve accord in cultivating the virtues and talents that lead to glory. Then will we march majestically toward that great prosperity for which South America is destined.

I am, Sir, etc., etc.

SIMÓN BOLÍVAR

"Don Quijote Bolívar"

This is a philosophical essay written by Miguel de Unamuno, philosopher, novelist, and Professor. Unamuno was one of the most prominent of Spain's literary figures in the late 19th Century. In this essay, he compares Simón Bolívar to Don Quijote, one of the most famous Spanish folklore characters, known for his courage and adventures. In many ways the legacy of Bolívar is remembered like Don Quijote's as heroic, valorized, and larger-than-life.

Bolívar was master of the art of war, not an expert…in military science; he was guerilla fighter rather than a soldier…he was theatrical and emphatic, naturally and unaffectedly as his race, our race is, but he was not a pedant. Bolívar was a man, all man; a whole and true man…Bolívar was of the ilk of Don Quixote, he of the large, black and drooping moustache…

There is no doubt that his teacher, don Simon Rodriguez helped him by Rousseau-ing him…

He made war, one might say, alone, by himself, without a general staff, like Don Quixote. Humanity followed him—humanity not merely an army—and humanity was his Sancho…

Who does not recall that phrase of Bolívar's, uttered when he was practically dying: "The three greatest fools of history have been Jesus Christ, Don Quixote—and I!"

Bolívar had several affairs, or rather amours; he did not lack a touch of Don Juan. It is enough to recall Josefina, Anita Lenoir, Manuelita, the Niña of Potosi…But the memory of that eighteen-year-old love [his wife] became his Duclinea, his glory.

SOURCE: Miguel de Unamuno, "Don Quijote Bolívar." In *Simon Bolívar liberador de la America del Sur: por los mas grandes escritores Americanos* (Madrid: Renacimiento, 1914)

Message to the Congress of Angostura, 1819

By Simon Bolívar

In 1819, Simón Bolívar was in the midst of his quest for South American independence. He had led successful military campaigns in New Granada and was working towards complete independence in his home country of Venezuela. The Congress of Angostura was a temporary government set up by Bolívar, which he served as President. This is his address to the Congress and people of Venezuela.

We are not Europeans; we are not Indians; we are but a mixed species of aborigines and Spaniards. Americans by birth and Europeans by law, we find ourselves engaged in a dual conflict: we are disputing with the natives for titles of ownership, and at the same time we are struggling to maintain ourselves in the country that gave us birth against the opposition of the invaders. Thus our position is most extraordinary and complicated. But there is more. As our role has always been strictly passive and political existence nil, we find that our quest for liberty is now even more difficult of accomplishment; for we, having been placed in a state lower than slavery, had been robbed not only of our freedom but also of the right to exercise an active domestic tyranny. . .We have been ruled more by deceit than by force, and we have been degraded more by vice than by superstition. Slavery is the daughter of darkness: an ignorant people is a blind instrument of its own destruction. Ambition and intrigue abuses the credulity and experience of men lacking all political, economic, and civic knowledge; they adopt pure illusion as reality; they take license for liberty, treachery for patriotism, and vengeance for justice. If a people, perverted by their training, succeed in achieving their liberty, they will soon lose it, for it would be of no avail to endeavor to explain to them that happiness consists in the practice of virtue; that the rule of law is more powerful than the rule of tyrants, because, as the laws are more inflexible, every one should submit to their beneficent austerity; that proper morals, and not force, are the bases of law; and that to practice justice is to practice liberty.

Although those people [North Americans], so lacking in many respects, are unique in the history of mankind, it is a marvel, I repeat, that so weak and complicated a government as the federal system has managed to govern them in the difficult and trying circumstances of their past. But, regardless of the effectiveness of this form of government with respect to North America, I must say that it has never for a moment entered my mind to compare the position and character of two states as dissimilar as the English-American and the Spanish-American. Would it not be most difficult to apply to Spain the English system of

political, civil, and religious liberty: Hence, it would be even more difficult to adapt to Venezuela the laws of North America.

Nothing in our fundamental laws would have to be altered were we to adopt a legislative power similar to that held by the British Parliament. Like the North Americans, we have divided national representation into two chambers: that of Representatives and the Senate. The first is very wisely constituted. It enjoys all its proper functions, and it requires no essential revision, because the Constitution, in creating it, gave it the form and powers which the people deemed necessary in order that they might be legally and properly represented. If the Senate were hereditary rather than elective, it would, in my opinion, be the basis, the tie, the very soul of our republic. In political storms this body would arrest the thunderbolts of the government and would repel any violent popular reaction. Devoted to the government because of a natural interest in its own preservation, a hereditary senate would always oppose any attempt on the part of the people to infringe upon the jurisdiction and authority of their magistrates. . .The creation of a hereditary senate would in no way be a violation of political equality. I do not solicit the establishment of a nobility, for as a celebrated republican has said, that would simultaneously destroy equality and liberty. What I propose is an office for which the candidates must prepare themselves, an office that demands great knowledge and the ability to acquire such knowledge. All should not be left to chance and the outcome of elections. The people are more easily deceived than is Nature perfected by art; and although these senators, it is true, would not be bred in an environment that is all virtue, it is equally true that they would be raised in an atmosphere of enlightened education. The hereditary senate will also serve as a counterweight to both government and people; and as a neutral power it will weaken the mutual attacks of these two eternally rival powers.

SOURCE: Simón Bolívar, An Address of Bolívar at the Congress of Angostura (February 15, 1819), Reprint Ed., (Washington, D.C.: Press of B. S. Adams, 1919)

The Monroe Doctrine

In 1823, President James Monroe gave a speech that warned European nations not to get involved in political matters in Central and South America. The Doctrine was intended to show that the United States was the only country that could influence nations in those regions. Many South American countries were newly independent from Spain and Portugal. The U.S. did not want them to become colonies of European countries again.

. . It was stated at the commencement of the last session that a great effort was then making in Spain and Portugal to improve the condition of the people of those countries, and that it appeared to be conducted with extraordinary moderation. It need scarcely be remarked that the results have been so far very different from what was then anticipated. Of events in that quarter of the globe, with which we have so much intercourse and from which we derive our origin, we have always been anxious and interested spectators. The citizens of the United States cherish sentiments the most friendly in favor of the liberty and happiness of their fellow-men on that side of the Atlantic. In the wars of the European powers in matters relating to themselves we have never taken any part, nor does it comport with our policy to do so. It is only when our rights are invaded or seriously menaced that we resent injuries or make preparation for our defense. With the movements in this hemisphere we are of necessity more immediately connected, and by causes which must be obvious to all enlightened and impartial observers. The political system of the allied powers is essentially different in this respect from that of America.

But with the Governments who have declared their independence and maintain it, and whose independence we have, on great consideration and on just principles, acknowledged, we could not view any interposition for the purpose of oppressing them, or controlling in any other manner their destiny, by any European power in any other light than as the manifestation of an unfriendly disposition toward the United States.

In the war between those new Governments and Spain we declared our neutrality at the time of their recognition, and to this we have adhered, and shall continue to adhere, provided no change shall occur which, in the judgment of the competent authorities of this Government, shall make a corresponding change on the part of the United States

indispensable to their security.

The late events in Spain and Portugal shew that Europe is still unsettled. Of this important fact no stronger proof can be adduced than that the allied powers should have thought it proper, on any principle satisfactory to themselves, to have interposed by force in the internal concerns of Spain. . . . Our policy in regard to Europe, which was adopted at an early stage of the wars which have so long agitated that quarter of the globe, nevertheless remains the same, which is, not to interfere in the internal concerns of any of its powers; to consider the government *de facto* as the legitimate government for us; to cultivate friendly relations with it, and to preserve those relations by a frank, firm, and manly policy, meeting in all instances the just claims of every power, submitting to injuries from none. But in regard to those continents circumstances are eminently and conspicuously different.

It is impossible that the allied powers should extend their political system to any portion of either continent without endangering our peace and happiness; nor can anyone believe that our southern brethren, if left to themselves, would adopt it of their own accord. It is equally impossible, therefore, that we should behold such interposition in any form with indifference. If we look to the comparative strength and resources of Spain and those new Governments, and their distance from each other, it must be obvious that she can never subdue them. It is still the true policy of the United States to leave the parties to themselves, in the hope that other powers will pursue the same course. . . .

SOURCE: *The Monroe Doctrine,* The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History. www.gilderlehrman.org

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SOURCE: expat-chronicles.com

“The Liberator”

Tito Salas painted the following portrait in 1930. The painting is titled “El Libertador, “which means “The Liberator.” Simón Bolívar is credited for leading independence movements in Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, and Peru.

"The Social Contract" (1762)
By Jean-Jacques Rousseau

Jean-Jacques Rousseau was an important writer during the Age of the Enlightenment, a time when intellectuals called for the use of reason, science, and individualism rather than traditional authority like monarchs and religion. Writers of the Enlightenment spread ideas that would lead to the French Revolution and others around the world. Simón Bolívar was heavily influenced by Rousseau's work.

"Since no man has any natural authority over his fellowmen, and since force is not the source of right, conventions remain as the basis of all lawful authority among men. [Book I, Chapter 4].

Now, as men cannot create any new forces, but only combine and direct those that exist, they have no other means of self-preservation than to form by aggregation a sum of forces which may overcome the resistance, to put them in action by a single motive power, and to make them work in concert.

This sum of forces can be produced only by the combination of many; but the strength and freedom of each man being the chief instruments of his preservation, how can he pledge them without injuring himself, and without neglecting the cares which he owes to himself? This difficulty, applied to my subject, may be expressed in these terms.

"To find a form of association which may defend and protect with the whole force of the community the person and property of every associate, and by means of which each, coalescing with all, may nevertheless obey only himself, and remain as free as before." Such is the fundamental problem of which the social contract furnishes the solution. …

If then we set aside what is not of the essence of the social contract, we shall find that it is reducible to the following terms: "Each of us puts in common his person and his whole power under the supreme direction of the general will, and in return we receive every member as an indivisible part of the whole." [Book I, Chapter 6].

But the body politic or sovereign, deriving its existence only from the contract, can never bind itself, even to others, in anything that derogates from the original act, such as alienation of some portion of itself, or submission to another sovereign. To violate the act by which it exists would be to annihilate itself, and what is nothing produces nothing. [Book I, Chapter 7].

It follows from what precedes, that the general will is always right and always tends to the public advantage; but it does not follow that the resolutions of the people have always the same rectitude. Men always desire their own good, but do not always discern it; the people are never corrupted, though often deceived, and it is only then that they seem to will what is evil. [Book II, Chapter 3].

It is not sufficient that the assembled people should have once fixed the constitution of the state by giving their sanction to a body of laws; it is not sufficient that they should have established a perpetual government, or that they should have once for all provided for the election of magistrates. Besides the extraordinary assemblies which unforeseen events may require, it is necessary that there should be fixed and periodical ones which nothing can abolish or prorogue; so that, on the appointed day, the people are rightfully convoked by the law, without needing for that purpose any formal summons. [Book III, Chapter 13]."