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INTRODUCTION

# Popular Imaginations and Hemispheric Attachments in the Age of Revolutions

*“Yes, I have saved my country; I have avenged America . . . sooner or later Divine Justice will unchain on earth some mighty minds, above the weakness of the vulgar, for the destruction and terror of the wicked; tremble, tyrants, usurpers, scourges of the new world!”*

—JEAN-JACQUES DESSALINES, “LIBERTY OR DEATH” (1804)

PEOPLE LIVING DURING the Age of Revolutions (ca. 1770–1850) witnessed a series of popular rebellions that today remain unparalleled in scope and political importance.<sup>1</sup> In the span of about eighty years, more than thirty resistance movements emerged throughout the Americas. One by one, reaching from current day Canada to Argentina, they addressed colonial subjection and postcolonial emancipation from simultaneously idiosyncratic but importantly shared experiences.<sup>2</sup> As Jean-Jacques Dessalines, one of the leaders of the Haitian Revolution (1791), made clear in “Liberty or Death,” the plight of colonial domination was one that affected all the peoples of the Americas.<sup>3</sup> As such, postcolonial resistance—what he called the “avenging” of America—comprised a shared response motivated by the collective uprising of all *Americans*, *americanos*, and *américains*. “America” and “American,” in other words, emerged during this period as a hemispheric identity that produced commiserations cutting across otherwise idiosyncratic episodes of conquest, settlement, extraction, enslavement, taxonomical orders, gendered subjection, economic precarity, and forced labor. By the end of the revolutionary period, fewer than a dozen nation-states emerged despite the numerous movements and proposed visions for the postcolonial Americas. This book analyzes the rise, influence, and decline of American hemispheric identities as the first,

and most prominent, point of political convergence that motivated the wave of postcolonial imaginaries and movements now understood to characterize the Age of Revolutions.

The popular uprisings of the “new world” were, of course, not isolated events. They responded to transatlantic and global shifts in imperial power, political economy, cultural production, and the social ramifications of advances in natural science.<sup>4</sup> They also formed part of a global moment of conflict against and between empires, the ruling class, and colonial institutions. In Europe these included the French Revolution (1789), the Irish Rebellion against the British Crown (1798), the Serbian Revolution against the Ottoman Empire (1804), the Peninsular War and fall of the Spanish Crown (1808), the Greek independence movement (1821), uprisings in Belgium, Poland, Italy, Portugal, and Switzerland during the 1830s, concluding with the revolutions of 1848.<sup>5</sup> In global terms, these revolutionary events were also affected by the social, material, and political consequences of the Industrial Revolution, the economy of transatlantic slavery, colonial extraction in Asia, and contestations of colonial rule represented by uprisings in India, Australia, and Africa.<sup>6</sup> While this story emphasizes the hemispheric identities that motivated a break from colonial power in the Americas, the popular movements at the center of my analysis comprise part of a broader sequence of events that reach far beyond transatlantic history. That said, the hemispheric dimensions of these events remain largely overlooked.<sup>7</sup>

The shared identities, problems, and experiences that mobilized popular uprisings throughout the Americas and the broader world have been sidelined in favor of a teleology of the nation-state system. Today, rather than movements and peoples, it is more common to talk about states—the “Haitian revolution,” the “Mexican independence movement,” or in an even clearer example, the “American (i.e., United States) revolution.” This approach assumes the emergence of the state and its scope of influence as the ultimate conclusion of the popular movements that undergirded them. As such, the communities, claims, and contestations that comprised the revolutionary moment have been folded into largely coherent national or proto-national histories, if not altogether erased from the narrative of national foundation.<sup>8</sup> This is unsurprising in numerous ways. The instrumentality of monumental histories and narratives for the legitimation of national authority, institutions, and power is thoroughly familiar to political theorists and political scientists. As Hannah Arendt famously writes in *On Revolution*, the “greatest event” or the “decisive act” of revolution resides in the historical memory of “foundation,” which ensures the longevity of the state and protects the revolutionary spirit that undergirds it.<sup>9</sup> Within this tradition of foundation and monumentality, the hemispheric appeals of figures like Dessalines become little more than preambles—foreshadowings of the world order to come via the political innovations and regulatory capacities of the nation-state system.

Recent work by political theorists like Angélica Bernal, Paulina Ochoa Espejo, Jason Frank, Margaret Kohn, and Keally McBride, among others, has fruitfully analyzed the paradoxes of foundation that came with the nation-state. As Bernal argues, foundations are always incomplete and, in that regard, offer precarious but resilient sources of legitimate authority.<sup>10</sup> Ochoa Espejo demonstrates that the incomplete character of foundation leads to subsequent paradoxes in popular sovereignty, which as a result leans on a mostly fictional notion of collective consent.<sup>11</sup> These accounts fruitfully interrogate the paradoxes of state-building and its precarious conceptualizations of popular sovereignty, representation, and consent. In doing so, however, these approaches also necessarily assume the emergence of the state as the framing device for popular politics and institutions. How do these conceptualizations and conclusions change when the state is treated as little more than a contingent solution, among many others proposed, that emerged in a moment of crisis? How do the paradoxes of popular sovereignty, representation, and consent manifest when the organizing landscape is hemispheric rather than national? Paradoxes of authority and sovereignty certainly remain, but they appear among an array of similarly incomplete, stopgap responses to the problem of colonial subjection and the impulse toward postcolonial emancipation.

*A New World of Revolutions* contends that decentering the nation-state as the primary outcome of the Age of Revolutions is necessary for us to be able to lend due attention to the hemispheric visions that motivated the peoples, practices, cultures, and political contestations that long preceded national landscapes. My account of this phenomenon is developed across a three-part argument uncovering the links between movements in New Spain, the United States, New Granada, and the Andes. Each chapter approaches the emergence of hemispheric politics during the Age of Revolutions as a matter of popular cultural production, which in turn reflexively influenced the rise of formal proposals that centered the idea of an American front against colonial subjection. The book employs archival methods and research to illustrate the saliency of hemispheric discourses as they appeared in poems, plays, marching songs, correspondence, newspapers, and visual artifacts, as well as in the familiar objects of nation-building, like constitutions, proclamations, decrees, and manifestos.<sup>12</sup> Given the scope and saliency of this phenomenon, whenever I reference “American” thought, politics, and histories throughout the book, I am referring to all people born in the Americas or who identified with the project of American emancipation.

First, I argue that hemispheric discourses and cultural production were fundamental to the development of popular postcolonial politics in the Americas. When revolutionary movements emerged seeking sources of legitimate authority to make demands on colonial powers, hemispheric narratives provided recourse to novel American conditions, identities, histories, and politics as the foundations for postcolonial emancipation. These narratives in turn

also rendered their political visions familiar to local and international audiences. In this regard, my analysis demonstrates that hemispheric discourses in the Americas framed early interpretations of postcolonial emancipation and provided an organizing background for groups throughout the region. The political proposals that emerged from these projects are best contextualized outside the conventional parameters of the nation-state.

Second, I argue that hemispheric politics were particularly important to marginalized communities in the Americas who had little recourse to other forms of genealogical or political authority.<sup>13</sup> As the chapters herein demonstrate, Indigenous, Pardo, Mestizo (mixed-race), and enslaved peoples deployed the language of American emancipation, unity, and resistance in ways that mobilized coalition-building across colonial societies. In doing so, these groups also developed novel conceptions of hemispheric identities and publics, which they argued would frame the coming age of “new world” politics. These discursive conditions paved the way for radical reforms such as the rejection of caste taxonomies, abolition of slavery, protection of Indigenous land rights, elimination of tributary practices, redistribution of property, and of course, more expansive conceptions of popular sovereignty. At a strategic level, hemispheric politics offered a point of convergence through which movements could overlap repertoires of mobilization, resistance, and genealogical claims. At the level of political imaginations, hemispheric visions developed syncretically alongside the memorialization of Indigenous histories, epistemologies of enslavement, critiques of environmental extraction, and more broadly, in conversation with the transatlantic republican tradition.

The popular dimensions of hemispheric thinking in the Americas, importantly, did not operate exclusively within the realm of the merely celebratory or symbolic. The third, final facet of the book’s argument is that hemispheric discourses were fundamental to the adoption and transformation of republican politics in the Americas. Specifically, I show that the popular dimensions of hemispheric politics shifted republicanism from an elite, European tradition to a popular, American version. Just as revolutionary movements turned to one another to legitimize their efforts, they also learned from their respective interpretations of republican governance, particularly as it related to novel conceptualizations of civic equality, popular sovereignty, citizenship, and material inequality that centered on colonial subjection as a framing condition. As such, I demonstrate that marginalized communities participating in the Age of Revolutions held a prominent role in the development and transformation of republican political thought. These contributions, however, remain largely overlooked in the field.

Theorists like Joshua Simon, Juliet Hooker, Adam Dahl, and Inés Valdez have made important headway toward establishing the importance of Latin American political thought by engaging prominent American thinkers like Simón Bolívar, Domingo Sarmiento, José Martí, José Vasconcelos,

and W.E.B. Dubois on questions of empire, race, citizenship, and international development.<sup>14</sup> Others, like Mauro Caraccioli, Gabriel Salgado, and Antonio Vazques-Arroyo have approached related problems via the conceptual and historiographic implications of studying the colonial Americas from the vantage point of political theory.<sup>15</sup> My analysis builds on both these strands of research by centering the popular and vernacular dimensions of hemispheric American thinking, as a project that linked republican and postcolonial politics through novel political, cultural, historiographic, artistic, and literary production. As I show in each chapter, the movements studied also instantiated innovative trajectories in republican political thought by linking the tradition with seemingly unlikely convergences in Indigenous politics, Catholic identities, and abolitionist principles; they were also characterized by a vehement rejection of European hegemony despite their broad engagement with European thinkers, traditions, and visions of modernity. As is the case with the rest of the colonial world, the hemispheric American moment was replete with paradoxical exchanges in political thinking that only render its proposals for emancipation all the more captivating.

### *Colonial and Postcolonial Convergences*

It is worth assessing why and how this type of hemispheric analysis is possible given the array of groups, practices, institutional contexts, and cultural landscapes at play in the Americas. People living during the revolutionary era experienced astounding levels of social, political, and economic change that in turn opened up junctures for developing conceptions of shared American experiences and patriotism. These intersecting factors offered opportunities to appeal to the economic and political independence of the Americas and the legitimacy of popular rule by Americans, as well as critiques regarding the European powers' reliance on American production to sustain their economies. Rather than look to a single breaking point in Europe's grasp on the hemisphere, I emphasize the cumulative effects of these factors on an emergent collectivization of American identities.

This process of hemispheric convergence began with a wave of economic reforms that sought to regulate production across the colonial system. In the Spanish Americas, the Bourbon Reforms of the eighteenth century were deployed in an attempt to organize the entire Spanish Empire under a centralized bureaucratic system that regulated commerce, race, religion, land, and intellectual production from New Spain to Rio de La Plata. The scope of the reforms, however, were both a source of power and weakness for Spain.<sup>16</sup> While Spain was far from the only colonial power seeking to formalize a transactional relationship between metropole and colony, the sheer scope of the Spanish reforms makes them a particularly consequential factor for the emergence of hemispheric discourses. In simple terms, and importantly for the

archival research that motivates this book, these efforts produced an astounding diversity of documents addressing the shifting relationship between colony and metropole as a central motivation for popular organizing throughout the Americas. The reforms were also of importance to Anglo-American publics witnessing important shifts in colonial power that established extractivist and absolutist relationships between metropole and colony.<sup>17</sup>

Three aspects of the Bourbon Reforms are particularly important for understanding shifts in colonial authority and their relation to the Americas. First, the reforms broadly succeeded in curtailing Creole elite power in important American cities like Mexico City, Santa Fe de Bogotá, Lima, Cartagena de Indias, and Buenos Aires by formalizing transactions between colonial actors and the colonial authorities.<sup>18</sup> Creoles had benefited from sitting atop the colonial hierarchy and assumed power to make political appointments, arbitrate land purchases, and interpret the law.<sup>19</sup> The Bourbon Reforms diminished Creole power by relegating institutional authority to representatives of the Crown and by limiting the power of colonial institutions like the Catholic Church, Indigenous leaders, and economic guilds.<sup>20</sup> These changes, in turn, fomented a need for Creoles to engage, organize, and negotiate with the “lower classes” to protect their interests and curtail the power of colonial authorities. Second, the reforms improved state surveillance and linked it more directly with the regulation of American production and centralized colonial extraction via *republicas de indios*, which represented the king and adjudicated local disputes. Similarly, the abolition of the *repartimiento* system, which relied on Creole elites to distribute labor in the colonies, and the establishment of competing *consulados* curtailed the economic power of urban centers.<sup>21</sup> Taxes were also aggressively increased while expanding the number of people required to pay tribute to the Crown. Third, while the reforms certainly focused on fiscal changes, Spanish attempts to alter social and cultural practices were meant to solidify loyalties to the king. They carried educational goals as well, which were instituted through schooling reforms that forcefully reeducated Indigenous communities as subjects to the Crown and reinforced the connection between Catholic beliefs and the king’s authority.<sup>22</sup>

While education policies under Bourbon rule were relatively unsuccessful, as Peter Guardino and Pamela Voekel demonstrate, schooling practices illustrate some of the ways Enlightenment language was deployed to justify colonial rule.<sup>23</sup> By 1780 the Bourbon bureaucracy justified intervention into the personal lives of the lower classes through the language of “the public,” a term previously absent from notions of colonial subjection wherein the divine authority of the monarch justified Spanish rule.<sup>24</sup> Here the role of popular thinking and conceptual change becomes more apparent. There is no question that the Bourbon Reforms comprised a bureaucratic “reconquest” of the Americas by way of formalized extraction and hierarchical dynamics between colony and metropole. Popular thinking, however, became an important

obstacle in legitimizing imperial rule in absence of the king. “The public” of the Spanish Crown was a project-in-progress that aimed to reconstruct the cultural and moral assumptions of the *pueblo bajo* (low-born public) through “uniform public behavior regardless of social position.”<sup>25</sup> In the United States and the Caribbean, the Bourbon Reforms developed parallel to similar changes in the English and French colonial bureaucracies. A good example of these are the Stamp Act (1765) and the Townshend Acts (1767) in the English American system, which sought expanded control of commercial activity in the colonies via taxation.<sup>26</sup> While these did not rival the scope of the Bourbon enterprise, they did set the grounds for critiques of European reliance on American production, highlighting a central marker of the precarity of colonial rule.

The centralization of colonial power by way of institutional reform was a unifying development for the Americas. Missing the importance of absolutist reforms during the eighteenth century would render hemispheric discourse a more puzzling, almost coincidental, development. Hemispheric thinking emerged at a moment in which Americans sought to leverage the power of collective narratives as a response to European attempts to “reconquer” the Americas through colonial regulation. These responses were only accelerated with the advent of the Peninsular War in 1808 and the abdication of Ferdinand VII, which threw the global colonial system into further disarray. While some Spanish American cities remained on the side of the Crown, sentiments quickly shifted from appeals to royal authority (in the absence of a king) to arguments that sovereignty actually resided in the public.<sup>27</sup> These arguments were only strengthened by the profitability of partnerships between American cities that highlighted the possibilities of an independent “new world” economy. In other words, hemispheric discourses emerged as a response to the decaying legitimacy of colonial power, the emergent economic importance of the American centers, and the metropole’s inability to maintain popular loyalties as Europe descended into war.<sup>28</sup>

Sentiments surrounding the weakening power of European colonial states were only amplified through the early successes of the US and Haitian revolutions. As Caitlin Fitz shows, US citizens viewed their revolutionary legacy as an usher of a republican American era and were thus eager supporters of Latin American independence.<sup>29</sup> These hemispheric loyalties were present across different venues and spaces of public discourse, appearing from chronicles and newspapers to plays and even engendered the formation of secret societies motivated by the emancipation of Mexico.<sup>30</sup> My analysis draws from Fitz’s work on republican language as a popularly evolving phenomenon, which only grew in strength following the establishment of freedom of the press in the Spanish Americas. I diverge from her analysis, however, by showing that hemispheric commitments moved well beyond romanticized accounts of patriotism and incipient nationalism in the United States. They also proved influential for establishing concrete points of convergence and political possibilities throughout the Americas.

In places like New Granada, for example, the legacies of Haitian republicanism produced significant junctures in the racial politics that accompanied republican revolution. If Black enslaved publics could dispel French colonial rule in Saint Domingue while appealing to the avenging of America, so could Pardos in Cartagena de Indias reject Spanish authority via the language of American enslavement. In the US-Mexico borderlands, the centrality of Indigenous identities in Mexico's reception of hemispheric emancipation likely inspired Tonkawa, Comanche, and Apache volunteers to join the cause of Texan independence as a strategy to resist European expansion into Indigenous lands. In the Andes, commiseration among individuals involved in US, Peruvian, and Argentinian efforts led to captivating discussions regarding the role of Inca sovereignty within the United Provinces of South America's own contributions to the hemispheric moment. As each of these cases show, hemispheric discourses brought the possibilities of political imaginations together with the crystallization of postcolonial republican systems across the Americas.

### *Rethinking "American"*

The saliency of hemispheric identities, narratives, and rhetoric during the revolutionary period offers a fruitful opportunity to problematize the peoples, contexts, archives, and politics that comprise the tradition of American political thought (APT). As outlined, the hemispheric valences that appear across the movements examined in each chapter centered on a more capacious understanding of the term, identity, and political category of "American(s)." The word most commonly assumed a dual meaning: First, "America" as a regional term carried epistemic and ontological meanings that responded to the hegemony of European rule, knowledge production, and interpretations of progress within modernity, each of which assumed that the "new world" was unfit for republican institutions. Second, the use of "American" thus extended these logics to claim that the people of the region were also, *by nature*, unfit for self-rule. Appeals to the political novelty of "the Americas" and its publics during the Age of Revolutions reconfigured these narratives by redeploying the language of novelty. Soon people across the hemisphere began to suggest that the natural and unconventional conditions of the "new world" were a strength—a sign that the region would produce the future institutions, politics, and principles that would organize the coming era of global politics.

In this regard, I contend that we should look to this period as instantiating a tradition of American political thought that preceded the crystallization of national identities in the United States, and which offers avenues for studying APT through a less nation-state centered and more critically expansive lens. One of the clearest unifying facets of the hemispheric turn in APT lies in its postcolonial imaginaries, visions that moved the project toward establishing

futures that existed beyond subjection to the political, epistemic, genealogical, and material reach of European hegemony. Importantly, these ambitions did not denigrate the role of the Americas in transatlantic exchanges or contexts. Rather, they leveraged the familiar narratives of global modernity to illustrate the importance of American contributions to global progress. In other words, engaging the postcolonial dimensions of APT also clarifies how American groups related to the problem of colonial power, modernity, and global hierarchy. The case studies presented in this book show that postcolonial movements were not seeking an absolute break from Europe. Instead, they recognized the syncretic nature of postcolonial imagination, and thus, I emphasize that syncretism is a necessary facet of engaging post- and decolonial lenses through historically demanding approaches to political theory.<sup>31</sup>

These syncretic encounters and simultaneous appeals to the idiosyncratic possibilities of the Americas are readily apparent in the relation between hemispheric discourses and the appeal to novelty. The communities that mobilized projects in current-day Mexico, Colombia, Peru, and the United States sought to translate, reconfigure, and contest the language of the Enlightenment to legitimize political innovations that they believed were only possible in the “new world.” Importantly, these appeals to American novelty were not limited to the exceptional figures of the hemisphere—that is, the Madisons, Bolívars, and Dessalines. Postcolonial emancipation was a topic of *popular interest* and thus produced a general motivation to instantiate the coming era of American innovation. These efforts cut across classes, racial standpoints, gender, and genres of cultural production.

Among theorists and thinkers of the anglophone world, American political thought has been predominantly studied as a project of the United States. The tradition’s intellectual and political history moves through enterprises of democratic theory, national exceptionalism, pragmatism, imperial foreign policy, and liberalism, with each being understood as projects of, or associated with, the United States.<sup>32</sup> While this branch of APT is nationally demarcated it remains importantly linked to the developmental and progressive vision of European modernity.<sup>33</sup> This is apparent, for example, when Judith Shklar suggests that American political thought should be understood as “an integral part of modern history as a whole.”<sup>34</sup> While it is clear for Shklar that the United States and its intellectual contributions should be a part of modernity, her account remains motivated by the question of what could *truly* be attributed to the tradition.

Shklar is correct to suggest that upon “close examination American political thought is not, in fact, just our own,” but her invocation of plurality is ambiguous at best.<sup>35</sup> These debates regarding the foundational politics, identities, and histories of APT remain relevant today—especially given the saliency of appeals for the return of American “greatness” in contemporary US politics.<sup>36</sup> As Shklar goes on to suggest, American thinking might have

“special political traits,” but “isolating it in order to illuminate its peculiarities is bound to reduce it to charmless uniformity.”<sup>37</sup> The risk of uniformity here comes, once again, from the dual argument that the United States is both unique and nonetheless undoubtedly a part of the developmental trajectory of “Western” politics. I follow Shklar in recognizing that American thinking cannot be separated from the global context of modern history, but reducing the perplexities of American thinking to exchanges between the United States and Europe proves similarly reductive. The pluralization of APT, rather, resides in breaking the tradition out of national identities, institutions, borders, and the always ambiguous scope of the “West.”

A competing understanding of American political thought is evident in Hispanophone and Francophone scholarship invested in interrogating the colonial construction of *América*, the continent and its publics. This camp is no more cohesive than that of its anglophone counterpart—it is also similarly apprehensive of its own position vis-à-vis European hegemony, with the added problem of US imperialism. Like US-centric APT, the question of how American thinking might operate as a distinct practice when its identity is so closely connected to, and constructed by, the colonial order, is a recurring problem. These questions are complicated by the rise of the United States as an expansionist power that has produced its own hegemonic network. This tradition, in other words, responds not only to the construction of “America” and “Americanness” in regional and transnational terms but also to the erasure of these identities as the category of “American thinking” began to center on the United States.

While Latin American and Caribbean studies are usually approached as areas of political thought distinct from the nationally demarcated tradition of APT, they were intrinsically involved in defining American thinking.<sup>38</sup> This facet of the tradition interacted with political discourses in the United States, but most importantly, engaged questions of political futurity from the standpoint of all Americans. Here one can point to Jean-Jacques Dessalines’s appeal to the avenging of America in “Liberty or Death!,” Simón Bolívar’s hemispheric republicanism in his “Jamaica Letter,” or Andres Bello’s epic American poetics in *Alocución a la poesía* (Address to poetry).<sup>39</sup> As US imperialism emerged in the latter half of the nineteenth century, so did works that responded to the resiliency of Latin American identities. Among them was José Martí’s genealogical account in “Nuestra America” (Our America) (1891), Laura Mendez’s transpacific community in *La Revista Hispano-Americana* (1895–96) (The Hispanic-American journal), and José Vasconcelos’s appeal to Mestizo identities in the *La raza cósmica* (The cosmic race) (1925).<sup>40</sup> More contemporary Latin American thinkers have continued to address questions surrounding Latin American identity, history, philosophy, and the advent of US imperialism. Here one might think of Edmundo O’Gorman, Leopoldo Zea, José Carlos Mariátegui, Angel Rama, Teresa de la Parra, Roberto Fernandez Retamar, and Victoria Ocampo,

among others concerned with establishing a Latin American tradition of philosophy and history.<sup>41</sup> While these figures now comprise the canon of Latin American and Caribbean thought, this book offers a reminder that their proposals have been also hemispherically developed—often from diasporic cities and positionalities that circumvented national boundaries.

In short, this book's argument offers a reminder that the United States, at the peak of its radical political visions, had far more in common with the Latin American tradition than the European one. James Monroe conceded as much in his December 1823 address to Congress, now known as the "Monroe Doctrine," where he recognized that the United States was "of necessity more immediately connected" with "the movements in this hemisphere" and bound by "causes which must be obvious to all enlightened and partial observers."<sup>42</sup> American political thought is *necessarily* hemispheric, its collectivities move transnationally, and the tradition's early cultural and political production was moved by the possibility of postcolonial futures. This genealogical and historiographic fact has been lost in favor of state teleologies and nationalist narratives.

Reconciling the two identities of APT also proves important for addressing ongoing debates in postcolonial and decolonial theory motivated by contemporary hierarchies in knowledge production. Latin American scholars have long argued that Euro-American academic production either overlooks, or at worst extracts, insights from the region without engaging with it directly.<sup>43</sup> Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui's work engages this disjuncture as a replication of colonial legacies that have related to the "global south" via extractive dynamics.<sup>44</sup> More broadly, it points to a problem within the praxis and hermeneutics of decolonial and postcolonial theory, which remains the target of criticisms that argue the tradition is too focused on epistemic questions and distances itself from the on-the-ground politics motivating its most central questions.<sup>45</sup> Simultaneously, however, these critiques themselves tend to replicate the problem of expanding academic debates without fully engaging the Latin American tradition of political thought. Returning to the Age of Revolutions as an exercise in reconciling the broadest facets of APT also opens avenues for addressing the legacies of colonial power that continue to influence knowledge production.<sup>46</sup>

### *Vernacularizing the Archive*

Recent work across the humanities and social sciences has sought to problematize and expand the texts, thinkers, and contexts of their respective fields.<sup>47</sup> Within political theory, studies of the Americas have taken a prominent role in this wave of research, where accounts of transnational, Latin American, Caribbean, and Creole politics have proven fruitful areas of interrogation.<sup>48</sup> This book contributes to this area of research through its account of hemispheric political imaginaries, while also problematizing two

key methodological practices that remain prevalent in political theory writ large. First is the field's leaning on "great thinkers" and otherwise exceptional figures as one of the guiding heuristics of political theory. In the context of the Americas, this method has mapped onto recent work on Latin American and Caribbean political thought that, while certainly fruitful in its analysis, remains focused on elite actors like Simón Bolívar, José Vasconcelos, and Domingo Sarmiento to build representative claims regarding the region.<sup>49</sup> The second tendency, which can likely be understood as a consequence of the first, is the field's reliance on "great texts" as its primary object of political thought. Attachment to great works, similar to the admiration of great thinkers, has produced fruitful work. It has also, however, led to a limited conception of what constitutes political theory—one that has left "everyday" actors and popular thinking largely beyond the bounds of field research.

In this regard, "non-Western" political theory research of this kind—that is, the study of global, foundational figures from different parts of the world—carries a double effect. On the one hand, it addresses the absences, erasures, and provincial characteristics that have long limited the types of peoples and cultures theorists traditionally engaged for the study of political thought.<sup>50</sup> On the other hand, this approach falls well in line with the conventions of the field, and as such, leaves hermeneutic (*how we read*) and heuristic (*what counts as objects of political theory*) conventions largely unquestioned. Similar to Shklar's point on extending the American connection to Europe, it offers good initiative but does not extend far enough.

Political theorists have begun to address these issues by interrogating the methodological and hermeneutic consequences of novel approaches in comparative, postcolonial, decolonial, and democratic theory.<sup>51</sup> Work in the field has turned to architecture, participatory ethnography, soundscape studies, digital landscapes, and visual politics to better assess the scope of political thinking.<sup>52</sup> While historical approaches to political thought assume a long-standing tradition in the field, I contend that a need yet remains to broaden, define, imagine, and establish a concrete relationship with the political theory archive. This process can start by recognizing the value of archival ephemera—that is, the contingent and many times improvised objects of popular thought, across textual, visual, and auditory practices—as objects of innovative and often transgressive political thinking. Theorists have started to highlight these moments in community meetings, factories, public hearings, collective memorials, and internet forums.<sup>53</sup> Doing so pushes us to reconfigure not only the objects of interest to political theory but also the types of spaces, peoples, practices, and contexts we look toward to study pressing historical and contemporary questions, problems, and experiences. My goal in pursuing this exercise, to borrow from Diana Taylor's language in her own methodological contestations within performance studies, is to consider not what political theory *is* but what it *allows us to do*.<sup>54</sup>

In this regard, I argue for a *vernacular turn* that attends to the importance of “popular” and “everyday” elocutions, appeals, narratives, and actions for studying the history, development, and contemporary manifestations of political thought more capaciously. My use of “vernacular” centers on a dual understanding of the term, each of which proves illuminating for thinking about popular-discursive approaches to political theory.<sup>55</sup> The first relates to *spoken* language as it has emerged and operated in distinction from the conventions, forms, or norms of *written* language. Attending to spoken-word objects—their available remnants for historical contexts such as marching songs, popular poems, and pamphlets meant to be read aloud—in turn opens paths for studying the politics that manifest from performativity, collectivity, and cultural production. Emphasis on spoken practices and oral histories is already a prominent dimension of Indigenous, postcolonial, decolonial, and comparative approaches to political theory but remains largely disconnected from more conventional lenses in the field.<sup>56</sup> This facet of a vernacular approach offers avenues to implement popular-discursive activity as both a site of political innovation and a practice that problematizes the regulatory dimensions of the canon.

The second aspect relates to vernacularity as the emergence of “home” languages, dialects, and discursive norms that characterize a given region, community, or set of identities.<sup>57</sup> Innovations in political thinking can be found in the contingent, sometime precariously improvised, elocutions, exchanges, appeals, and unexpected convergences of language and the archival objects that preserve it. Importantly, this facet of vernacularity cuts across the textual versus spoken binary and instead centers on the idiosyncratic characteristics of regionalized linguistic, cultural, and creative practices that map onto the ways people speak, write, think, and imagine. In other words, there are points of convergence between “ephemeral” objects, like correspondence, pamphlets, songs, and the “monumental” works that are already studied in the field, like constitutions, proclamations, treaties, and declarations. The goal is not to set up a binary between vernacular and canonic lenses; rather, it is to illustrate that a reflexive relationship between the two is necessary in order to establish more expansive parameters and possibilities in political theory. For example, my account of popular hemispheric discourses is also importantly connected to the saliency of European thinkers in the Americas, including Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the Baron de Montesquieu, Adam Smith, Jeremy Bentham, Benjamin Constant, Guillaume Thomas François Raynal, and Cornelius De Pauw. The difference resides in treating popular proposals in republican and postcolonial politics as themselves a point of contribution to the tradition, rather than a simple reaction to the canon.

Beyond the hermeneutic and heuristic conventions of political thought, I also contend that there are concretely *political* reasons to engage popular discourses and thought. There is a need, for example, to move beyond assumptions

that “common” actors were primarily followers of elite leaders and had little to communicate during moments of revolutionary change.<sup>58</sup> As recent scholarship in history, anthropology, and cultural studies shows, marginalized groups in the Americas were not only aware of contemporary shifts in imperial power but were also actively considering their respective position within current and emergent social orders.<sup>59</sup> In Michel-Rolph Trouillot’s terms, these contestations over the production of history and politics have largely swayed in favor of the elite, but that does not mean that the contributions of the “common” groups are nonexistent, or even that they necessarily operated contrary to the visions of the ruling class.<sup>60</sup> Recovering popular visions and conceptualizations, in other words, entails working against the politics of the production of history and knowledge, both of which have importantly informed the absence of these groups from the canon of political thought.<sup>61</sup> For the purposes of this book, this entails reconstructing the political influence of marginalized groups and understanding how, why, and in favor of what parallel visions their movements were ultimately suppressed.<sup>62</sup>

While this book’s analysis focuses primarily on nineteenth-century revolutionary movements, I also emphasize the importance of understanding these projects as *living* revolutions. This is both a historiographic and hermeneutic concern regarding the way political theorists currently approach the problem of colonial legacies. The events of interest to this book took place more than two hundred years ago, but the claims involved should ring familiar in many ways. Each chapter involves Indigenous, Black, gendered, and working-class communities making demands regarding experiences of material, political, and social marginalization, histories of violence, and proposals for reparations addressing these experiences. Since then, the descendants of these communities have continued to make similar demands throughout the Americas, usually meeting similar ends.<sup>63</sup> It is of little surprise, for example, that activists throughout the Americas have toppled colonial statues while linking colonial history to contemporary experiences of structural violence.<sup>64</sup> These groups see themselves as responding to the structural and material effects of colonial power, and thus their appeals also point to a need for political theorists to better explain the temporal, political, and social dynamics that emerge from the longue durée character of both colonial legacies and postcolonial politics.<sup>65</sup>

### *Chapter Overview*

The book’s chapters are designed to trace developing revolutionary movements as they reacted to compounding hemispheric events from North America and into South America. The chapters are organized regionally and chronologically, starting with the earliest revolutionary events in North America, moving into developing projects in the Caribbean, and concluding with events that ranged from the Andes and into the Southern Cone. Each chapter

considers relevant preceding events, especially in the eighteenth century, but otherwise the context of interest resides in the first three decades of the nineteenth century. My aim throughout is to capture the ideological travel, cultural encounters, and vernacular evolution of hemispheric politics in narrative form. I also seek to illustrate the iterative evolution of republican, postcolonial, and American political thought as these ideas appeared across varied but interconnected contexts.

Chapter 1 begins with the case of New Spain (current-day Mexico), where Indigenous genealogies called for the return of the “Anáhuac Empire,” a Nahua history proving that Mesoamerican peoples held long legacies of Indigenous self-rule. In this chapter, I argue that appeals to Indigenous rule framed the Mexican independence movement as a *restorative revolution*, rather than a foundational act that looked to pre-Hispanic practices to legitimize critiques of the colonial state. This framing allowed Mexican insurgents to link histories of Indigenous sovereignty with proposals for postcolonial emancipation as well as the novel conditions of the Americas. The chapter draws on the case of the Dolores Republicans, a majority-Indigenous movement led by Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, a parish priest, to demonstrate that marginalized actors held central roles in defining the movement’s early republican politics. Drawing on marching poems, pamphlets, and visual materials, I show that the Dolores movement reinterpreted republican principles as characteristically religious, plebeian, and hemispherically bound to a Pan-American community. I trace these principles into the latter half of the Mexican independence movement when popular republican principles were institutionalized via the 1814 Constitution of Apatzingán. As such, the chapter problematizes conventional interpretations of republican political thought as an elite, secular, and national project.

Chapter 2 turns toward the United States to analyze the reception of hemispheric discourses from the East Coast to the southern border. This chapter focuses on the US-Mexico borderlands to understand how hemispheric loyalties influenced the competing visions of neocolonial expansion (in the case of the United States) and anti-colonial revolution (in the case of Mexico). While scholarship in political theory tends to study these as contentious ideologies, I argue that hemispheric thinking allowed US citizens to interpret them as complementary dimensions of revolutionary change and resilient nation-building. Further, I demonstrate the connection between neo- and anti-colonial politics as founding principles of the United States, which leveraged the language of novelty and innovation in the Americas. The chapter begins with a hemispheric interpretation of American exceptionalism as deployed in the *Federalist Papers* to analyze how “Publius” justified the convergence between imperial and republican ambitions. I follow this rhetorical practice into the nineteenth century with the “Republicans of Nacogdoches,” an insurgency group comprised of Indigenous, Mestizo, Creole, and US volunteers

who set out to emancipate Mexico from Spanish rule. The group was led by Bernardo Gutiérrez de Lara, a Mexican revolutionary who was sent to the United States by Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla with the goal of acquiring formal support from the United States. The chapter draws on dramaturgical works, contraband pamphlets, correspondence, and newspapers to demonstrate that communities in the US-Mexico borderlands envisioned republican revolution through a transnational lens that prioritized hemispheric links in the rejection of European domination. My analysis also aims to intervene on the relative absence of borderlands and Latinx studies in political theory.

Chapter 3 works south, toward New Granada (current-day Colombia, Venezuela, Panamá, and Ecuador) to analyze the importance of hemispheric discourses for Black, Indigenous, and Mestizo communities. I focus on the case of Caribbean New Granada, particularly Cartagena de Indias and Santa Marta, to analyze the contrasting reception of republican revolution among communities that lived at different standpoints within the Spanish caste system. I argue that racial colonial orders framed the way marginalized communities related to republican politics since idiosyncratic caste standings affected the emancipatory value of republican ideologies. These factors in turn rendered race and racial inequality a prominent component behind the reception of hemispheric republican discourses. Drawing on correspondence, newspapers, petitions, and speeches, I suggest that revolutionaries attempted to recruit racialized actors by instrumentalizing visions of what I call a “variegated republicanism,” which claimed that the general will, common good, and popular sovereignty were predominantly practices of racial equality. I trace these practices into the ultimate overtaking of the movement by Creole elites and the political exclusion of marginalized groups. This chapter engages with recent work analyzing the importance of racial regulatory power and its influence on nation-building projects in the Caribbean.

Chapter 4 turns to the Andes to offer a counter-analysis of the effects of hemispheric discourses in contexts where Indigenous sovereignty, practices, and communities operated as a competing source of political power. In this chapter, I analyze the role of Inca sovereignty in defining the possibilities of postcolonial citizenship and the ways it came into conflict with the Creole-led program of hemispheric American emancipation in the region. I argue that Andean Indigenous politics illustrate the potentially assimilationist and regulatory dimension of hemispheric politics, especially as linked to an idea of a shared American community wherein the place of Indigenous groups remained ambiguous, at times. In this regard, I assess how ostensibly emancipatory republican proposals collided with the competing visions and interests of the Indigenous communities who wanted to preserve the space between Indigeneity, American belonging, and republican citizenship. The chapter draws on plays, newspapers, proclamations, songs, and Andean-Indigenous cultural production to show how early republican projects in the region

excluded Indigenous communities while simultaneously attempting to assimilate the legitimacy of Inca sovereignty into their programs. The analysis also addresses the absence of Andean political thought in the field.

The conclusion focuses on the importance of studying “failed” movements as living revolutions that carry political legacies across the Americas. This is especially relevant to the hemispheric movements studied in the book because each was ultimately suppressed by elite interests and the emergent ruling class. In this discussion I also consider the gradual decay of hemispheric discourses into the late nineteenth century with the advent of US imperialism. The book closes with concluding thoughts on the future of rethinking the American tradition in political theory.

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