

THE BOLIVAR ARCHIVE

Politicizing the Past in Venezuela

1962-2010

by

Alexander Philip Bercovitch

A thesis submitted to the
Department of History
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the
Degree of Bachelor of Arts
with Honors

Harvard University

Cambridge
Massachusetts

13 March 2014

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
I. The Betancourt Decree: State Formation in Unstable Times	23
II. The Caldera Decree: Punto Fijo Democracy's Legitimacy Crisis	54
III. The Chávez Decree: Recuperating the People's History	80
Conclusion	114
Bibliography	124

INTRODUCTION

“A sage dedicating to me the history of my country is the most flattering testimony of appreciation I can receive in my life ... I accept it, but on the condition that you say that it is made to your friend Bolívar, and not to the ruler of Colombia.”
– Simón Bolívar, 1824¹

In the ninth article of the will written on his deathbed in Santa Marta, Colombia in December 1830, Simón Bolívar ordered that his personal archives be burned.² Recognized widely as *El Libertador*, or “The Liberator,” after having led six South American countries to independence from Spanish rule, Bolívar had been known for an avid commitment to documentation, carrying troves of correspondences on his campaigns. Writing to an official about the Archive of the Venezuelan Ministry of War in 1821, he had emphasized the importance of preserving its documents, directing that the official “will advise me of their receipt, and will have special care to save them in any unfortunate event, guarding against any ways in which they may be lost, even by moth infection.”³ The tumultuous events of his later life, however, radically altered his perspective: his dream of a *Gran Colombia* – the union of Venezuela, Colombia, and Ecuador – destroyed by regionalism and civil war, his term as dictator of Venezuela undone by conspiracy and betrayal, his personal wealth sacrificed for the sake of

¹ “Carta datada en Chancay, el 10 de noviembre de 1824, dirigida al historiador y estadista neograndino José Manuel Restrepo, autor de una historia de Colombia,” Volume 36, Document 129 (Archivo del Libertador, AL). All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

² “Testamento del Libertador Simón Bolívar otorgado en San Pedro Alejandrino, el 10 de diciembre de 1830,” Volume 36, Document 379, (AL).

³ “Oficio de Pedro Briceño Méndez al comandante general de los Valles de Cúcuta, fechado en Maracaibo el 16 de septiembre de 1821,” Volume 19, Document 6316 (AL).

revolution. By 1830, Simón Bolívar faced death as an impoverished and despised exile.⁴ With the ninth article of his final testament, he sought to extinguish all that remained of his public life.⁵

His will was ignored. His executors instead sent the archive to Jamaica, where it was expanded to include Bolívar's correspondences, observations, and war decrees. In 1879, the documents came under the control of the Venezuelan state, then ruled by strongman Antonio Guzmán Blanco; in 1921, during the 28-year dictatorship of Juan Vicente Gómez, they were moved to Bolívar's natal house in Caracas to become part of a newly-inaugurated museum.⁶ After the fall of Venezuela's final dictatorship in 1958, the Bolívar Archive and its administration were subjected, in turn, to three presidential decrees. The first, in 1962, ordered the publication of the archive's letters, charging the independent Bolivarian Society with this task. The second, in 1999, mandated the archive's transfer to the independent National Academy of History. The third, in 2010, stipulated its final relocation to the state-controlled General Archive of the Nation.

The documents composing the Bolívar Archive were neither expanded nor altered during this time; the artifacts themselves remained impervious to political tampering, in part because Bolívar's writings were so well known.⁷ Yet in stark contrast to the textual integrity of the documents – the fact that their content was fixed and unchallengeable –

⁴ Marie Arana, *Bolívar: American Liberator* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2013), 5–6. In 1989, Nobel Prize-winning writer Gabriel García Márquez published a historical novel that vividly portrays Bolívar's final days. See Gabriel García Márquez, *The General in His Labyrinth: A Novel* (New York: Random House LLC, 1990).

⁵ Inés Quintero, "El Archivo del Libertador," trans. Aris da Silva and Ana Suarez Vidal, paper presented at the conference "Britain and the Independence of the Bolivarian Republics," London, May 9, 2012, accessed February 12, 2014, <http://bolivariantimes.blogspot.com/2012/09/full-transcript-with-photos-of-britain.html>.

⁶ Elías Pino Iturrieta, "Crónica del archivo del libertador," *El Universal*, May 22, 2011, <http://www.eluniversal.com/2011/05/22/cronica-del-archivo-del-libertador>.

⁷ In Venezuela, the archive is known as the *Archivo del Libertador*, translated literally as Archive of the Liberator. Because the identification of Bolívar as "the Liberator" holds more easily in Venezuelan Spanish than in United States English, I refer to it throughout this thesis as "The Bolívar Archive."

institutional control over the archive was subject to continual challenge and political dispute. Why did the archives become a political concern in 1962 under President Romulo Betancourt, the founder of a fledgling democratic project that was then struggling to assert its legitimacy? Why did they regain prominence decades later, in 1999, during the lame-duck stage of President Rafael Caldera's administration, only days before it ended with the inauguration of President Hugo Chávez? And why did they again prove to be of pivotal political interest 11 years later, on April 13, 2010 – the eight-year anniversary of Chávez's return to power after a brief coup d'état? What do these three respective presidential decrees – by Betancourt, Caldera, and Chávez – tell us about the tumultuous unfolding of modern Venezuelan history? And, importantly, what do they suggest to us about the role of archives in processes of state formation, legitimation of political rule, and historical knowledge production?

* * *

Historical study of Bolívar's political and cultural role in Venezuela originates with Venezuelan historian German Carrera Damas' *El culto a Bolívar (The Cult of Bolívar)*, a 1969 dissertation reissued seven times.⁸ Written as a warning to contemporary politicians, the book employs methods of intellectual history to trace the transformation of Bolívar from a cult *of* the people to a cult *for* the people. After beginning as a figure of admiration for the Venezuelan popular sectors, in other words, Bolívar became a mechanism through which ruling political classes manipulated those sectors to

⁸ Aside from prologues, the content of the book has remained unchanged. It was republished most recently in 2013 with Editorial Alfa in a version that included a prologue by British Bolívar biographer John Lynch. Germán Carrera Damas, *El culto a Bolívar: esbozo para un estudio de la historias de las ideas en Venezuela* (Caracas: Editorial Alfa, 2013).

consolidate their own power.⁹ Almost all subsequent accounts of Bolívar, which typically make frequent use of Bolívar's letters and writings, are indebted to Carrera Damas' foundational work.¹⁰ None of them, however, gives serious consideration to the source of those writings and letters: the Bolívar Archive.¹¹ One explanation for the omission is practical: many of Bolívar's writings, particularly his letters, were widely published by the later twentieth century, negating a need to go to the archive itself.¹² The other reason is methodological, and concerns the nature of Venezuelan historiography, which has been marked by a strong trend toward objectivism over the past half century. Viewing archives solely as repositories of evidence, as opposed to contested spaces in their own right, historians used archival materials in their studies as documents that portrayed the objective truth of movements and events. Of course, these historians were not themselves apolitical, and their work, particularly during the polarized 1960s and 1970s, often featured black-and-white portrayals of previous governments. Many of these writers had

⁹ Carrera Damas, *El culto a Bolívar*, 31, 278. As Carrera Damas told me during an interview, the book served as "a way of completing a social role. I was exiled for 10 years [during the dictatorship of Marcos Pérez Jiménez], and when I went back to Venezuela, I realized that those who were re-advancing democracy were utilizing the same values that those who had come before them had used: "Bolívar!" "Bolívar, our God," etc. ... there's a great danger to that, and that danger, which I described in the book, is that it has served a function that has become a manner of societal control." Germán Carrera Damas, Interview by author, Caracas, July 30, 2013.

¹⁰ See, for example, John Chasteen, "Simón Bolívar: Man and Myth," and John V. Lombardi, "Epilogue: History and Our Heroes – The Bolívar Legend" and "Beginning to Read about Bolívar", in *Heroes and Hero Cults in Latin America*, Samuel Brunk and Ben Fallaw, eds. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006), 21-39; 159-191; John Lynch, *Simón Bolívar and the Age of Revolution* (London: University of London Institute of Latin American Studies, 1983); Elías Pino Iturrieta, *El divino Bolívar: ensayo sobre una religión republicana* (Madrid: Catarata, 2003); Germán Carrera Damas, *El Bolivarianismo-Militarismo: una ideología de reemplazo* (Caracas: Ala de Cuervo, 2005); Enrique Krauze, *El poder y el delirio* (Caracas: Editorial Alfa, 2008); and Michael Zeuske, *Simón Bolívar: History and Myth*, trans. Steven Randall and Lisa Neal (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2013).

¹¹ As Carrera Damas quotes in a footnote: "The indisputable fact that in the annals of the world there was not one character, among the most famous figures of history, who offers such a complete documented relation of his life, of his passions, of his works, as the Liberator. The Letters are, at times, true diaries of his life, meridian confessions of his intentions, of his generosity and his very noble ambitions ... " (quoted in Carrera Damas, 119).

¹² The publication of the Sociedad Bolivariana de Venezuela is the first in a 30-volume series of Bolívar's letters.

belonged to the “Generation of ’28,” a political movement made up originally of university students that protested against the military dictatorships of Juan Vicente Gómez, which ended with his death in 1935, and eventually of Marcos Pérez Jiménez, which was overthrown in 1958.¹³ The historical accounts that were produced, consequently, portrayed these regimes as backward and economically stagnant, emphasizing certain “turning points” to democratic rule while minimizing the continuities between them.

These perspectives were influenced by the sweeping professionalization of the historical field, which began with the establishment of schools of history at the country’s two most prestigious universities, in 1955 at Mérida’s Universidad de Los Andes (ULA) and in 1958 at Caracas’ Universidad Central de Venezuela (UCV).¹⁴ With leading figures in these schools coming from postgraduate formation at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma (UNAM) in Mexico, the methodological focus shifted from secondary sources, which were considered overly politicized, to primary sources.¹⁵ In particular, Carrera Damas, who served as the director of the UCV’s school of history, increased the number of methodology courses and introduced statistical history, despite resistance from his colleagues. By highlighting the shortcomings of the period’s historiography – an overly rigid periodization, the tendency toward ignoring primary sources, and the “cult of

¹³ See, for example, Simón Alberto Consalvi, *El 18 de octubre de 1945* (Caracas: Editorial Seix Barral, 1979); Ramon Velasquez, J.F. Sucre Figarella, and Blas Brunicelli, *Betancourt en la historia de Venezuela del siglo XX* (Caracas: Ediciones Centauro, 1980); and Ruben Carpio Castillo, *Acción Democrática, 1941-1971: bosquejo histórico de un partido* (Caracas: Ediciones República, 1971).

¹⁴ María Elena González Deluca, *Historia e historiadores de Venezuela en la segunda mitad del siglo XX* (Caracas: Academia Nacional de Historia, 2007), 50. It is important to note that, generally speaking, the most prestigious universities in Venezuela (including the ULA and the UCV), though autonomous, have always been public.

¹⁵ González Deluca, 62-3. In one biography of Eleazar López Contreras, the country’s President from 1935-1941, historian Tomas Polanco opted to exclusively utilize primary sources. See Tomas Polanco, *El general de tres soles* (Caracas: Editorial Arte, 1985).

the hero,” as expressed in his seminal work on Bolívar – Carrera Damas helped lay the groundwork for the revisionist generation that would come to the fore in the 1980s.¹⁶ In particular, the country’s National Academy of History contributed to historical production by encouraging and publishing studies and primary sources in its quarterly bulletins and through the founding of the department of historical investigation under the guidance of Guillermo Morón.¹⁷

The new revisionist historiography that emerged in the 1980s called past generations’ polarized accounts into question. Insisting that it was not necessary to embrace a “pro-democratic” or “anti-democratic” position to write history, these younger historians provided more nuanced accounts of Venezuela in the period before 1960.¹⁸ Yet even during this period, when the postmodern turn had begun to influence the discipline of history in other countries, revisionist historians in Venezuela still argued their position on the basis of having the right objective facts.¹⁹ In addressing her relatively positive account of Gómez in her 1987 book *Las luces del gomecismo*, historian Yolanda Segnini argued that “my principal responsibility as an historian is inquiry: scrutinizing the sources in order to draw conclusions about ... the facts, even though they militate against official history.” A favorable reviewer agreed that Segnini’s facts had painted a truer history than that of earlier researchers: “To the degree to which [historians] search in the *Archivo*

¹⁶ Germán Carrera Damas, ed. *Historia de la historiografía venezolana (textos para su estudio)* (Caracas: Ediciones de la Biblioteca UCV); Steve Ellner, “Venezuelan Revisionist Political History, 1908-1958: New Motives and Criteria for Analyzing the Past,” *Latin American Research Review* 30:2 (1995), 93.

¹⁷ González Deluca, 61; Guillermo Morón, Interview by author, Tape recording, Caracas, June 21, 2013.

¹⁸ This referred to the fact that many of these historians, writing during the country’s first significant period of representative democracy, were publishing histories of the military dictatorships of Juan Vicente Gómez (1908-1935) and Marcos Pérez Jiménez (1948-1958) that portrayed the rulers in a more positive light. Ellner, 92.

¹⁹ For an important account of the impact of the postmodern turn on Western historiography, see Geoff Eley, *A Crooked Line: From Cultural History to the History of Society* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005).

Histórico de Miraflores, they will find a different Gómez, and a different Venezuela embodied there in the cold paper manuscripts in handwriting or typed on a primitive typewriter.”²⁰ As such revisionism grew throughout the 1990s, a decade marked by economic recession and political discontent, this historiography’s rehabilitation of past dictatorships reflected the sentiment which contributed to the popularity of two failed coup attempts in 1992.²¹ The political complexity of Venezuelan historiography culminated in the efforts of President Hugo Chávez during the 2000s to remedy what he viewed as an untenable historiographic oversight: the exclusion of the Venezuelan people – namely the working classes, women, indigenous groups, and Afro-Venezuelans – from national history.

In the English language, only a handful of significant historical works on Venezuela have emerged during the past half century. One of the strategically less important countries for the United States (as opposed to Brazil, Argentina, and Mexico, whose English-language historiographies are therefore much larger), Venezuela was more often a subject for political scientists, who lauded the country’s maintenance of representative democracy as other Latin American countries fell to authoritarianism.²² While studies dealt with subjects apart from political history – including John Lombardi’s *The Decline and Abolition of Negro Slavery in Venezuela* – they were nevertheless

²⁰ Quoted in Ellner, 92. Located in the lower section of the Miraflores Presidential Palace, the *Archivo Histórico de Miraflores* contains presidential papers and related state documents from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

²¹ As Ellner explains, “the thesis [advanced by some revisionist historians] that nondemocratic governments promoted economic development may have enhanced the attractiveness of the two coups attempted in 1992 during a prolonged recession.” Ibid., 93-4.

²² Known as exemplifying the exceptionalism thesis, the studies produced, particularly throughout the 1970s and 1980s, contended that Venezuela’s oil revenues and social mobility contributed to a tradition of stable representative democracy. For further discussion of these points, see *Latin American Perspectives*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (March 2005), Venezuelan Exceptionalism Revisited: The Unraveling of Venezuela’s Model Democracy.

framed from the viewpoint of United States concerns: in a speech to the Venezuelan National Academy of History in 2000, Lombardi noted that his study of Venezuelan slavery and race, published in 1971, “rested on the hope that the Latin American experience, properly understood, could clarify a United States economic, social, and political dilemma.”²³ After the publication of works focusing largely on politics and oil in the 1980s and 1990s, scholarly interest in Venezuela dramatically increased following the election of Hugo Chávez as president in 1998.²⁴ Yet this almost exclusive emphasis on the figure of Hugo Chávez – with every aspect of political, economic, and social life attributed to a “Chávez phenomenon,” presented for the most part as discontinuous with the Venezuelan past – has resulted in work that is predictably *ahistorical*.²⁵ Chávez’s myriad invocations of Bolívar have not gone unnoticed, as historian John Lynch, in 2006, and journalist Marie Arana, in 2013, published carefully-researched biographies of

²³ John V. Lombardi, *The Decline and Abolition of Negro Slavery in Venezuela (1820-1854)* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971); Quoted in Miguel Tinker Salas, *The Enduring Legacy: Oil, Culture, and Society in Venezuela* (Durham [N.C.]: Duke University Press, 2009), ix.

²⁴ These works include, regarding political history, John V. Lombardi, *Venezuela: The Search for Order, the Dream of Progress* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982); Judith Ewell, *Venezuela: A Century of Change* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984); Steve Ellner, *Venezuela’s Movimiento Al Socialismo* (Durham [N.C.]: Duke University Press, 1988). Studies focusing on oil and politics include Stephen Rabe, *The Road to OPEC: United States Relations with Venezuela, 1919-1976* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982); Brian McBeth, *Juan Vicente Gómez and the Oil Companies in Venezuela, 1908-1935* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Terry Lynn Karl, *The Paradox of Plenty: Oil Booms and Petro-States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); and Fernando Coronil, *The Magical State: Nature, Money, and Modernity in Venezuela* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997). Coronil’s book, though more a work of cultural anthropology than of history, is particularly important in linking state formation to the control of a country’s natural resources.

²⁵ Examples of Chávez-focused studies include Gregory Wilpert, *Changing Venezuela by Taking Power* (London: Verso, 2007); Richard Gott, *Hugo Chávez and the Bolivarian Revolution* (London: Verso, 2005); and Rory Carroll, *Comandante: Hugo Chávez’s Venezuela* (New York: Penguin, 2013). Useful counterweights, focusing on bottom-up movements within Chávez’s Venezuela, include Sujatha Fernandes, *Who Can Stop the Drums?: Urban Social Movements in Chávez’s Venezuela* (Durham [N.C.]: Duke University Press, 2010); George Ciccariello-Maher, *We Created Chávez: A People’s History of the Venezuelan Revolution* (Durham [N.C.]: Duke University Press, 2013). It is worth noting, however, that nearly all these studies fall more strongly into the discipline of political science. Tinker Salas’ 2008 study on oil, *The Enduring Legacy*, is the only clear historical book to emerge during the period.

Bolívar that condemned Chávez in their conclusions.²⁶ Neither devotes much attention to Bolívar's archive: Lynch misconceives the archive as an example of the liberator's tendency to be "careless," and Arana does not directly address it at all.²⁷ This thesis, therefore, extends existing work on the significance and cult of Simón Bolívar by using the archive as a point through which to examine continuity and change as Venezuela moved from the representative democracy of the 1960s to the participatory democracy of Hugo Chávez. In so doing, this thesis provides a historical basis for the study of Chávez and *chavismo*, as opposed to current research, which often borders ahistorical journalism.

By taking seriously Michel-Rolph Trouillot's dual conception of historicity – "that which happened" versus "that which is said to have happened" – this thesis breaks with traditionally objectivist Venezuelan historiography by considering the source of historical documentation: the archive.²⁸ It draws its methodology from new work in the historical field, influenced by the interdisciplinary "archival turn," which deals with the subjectivity of the archive in its own right, or what anthropologist Ann Laura Stoler refers to as a "the archive-as-source to the archive as subject."²⁹ Trouillot's own *Silencing*

²⁶ Arana voiced some of these conclusions in a *New York Times* op-ed shortly after her book's release. Marie Arana, "Bolívar, Latin America's Go-To Hero," *The New York Times*, April 17, 2013, sec. Opinion, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/18/opinion/arana-latin-americas-go-to-hero.html>.

²⁷ Lynch's reasoning behind his characterization stems from the fact that Bolívar's archives were preserved "through the devotion of his followers rather than his own concern." He ignores the fact that Bolívar expressly ordered that they be burned as a means of carefully maintaining his public image. See John Lynch, *Simón Bolívar: A Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), xi; Arana, *Bolívar: American Liberator*.

²⁸ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Beacon Press, 1995), 29.

²⁹ Stoler is astute in pointing out, too, that while Jacques Derrida's well-known text, *Archive Fever*, published in 1995, provided this archival turn with important theoretical grounding, the text in itself represented a movement several decades in the making. Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 44; Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995). For more on the interdisciplinary shifts which characterized the archival turn, see, in particular John Ridener, *From Polders to Postmodernism: A Concise History of Archival Theory* (Duluth [M.N.]: Litwin Books, 2009); as well as Francis X. Blouin and William G. Rosenberg, *Archives*,

the Past, published in 1995, argues that the “general silencing” of the Haitian Revolution by Western historiography is partly the result of “uneven power in the production of sources, archives, and narratives.”³⁰ In her 2006 edited volume *Archive Stories* – a collection of historians’ encounters with archives spanning the world – imperial historian Antoinette Burton asserts the crucial role of the archive “as a site of knowledge production, an arbiter of truth, and a mechanism for shaping the narratives of history.”³¹ More recently, historian Kathryn Burns has applied this focus to Latin America, constructing what she calls a makeshift ethnography of notarial documents from Colonial Perú to challenge the idea that these artifacts are simply “clear panes through which one can see the past.”³²

Indeed, the archive as subject has woven itself into cultural and academic discourse more broadly. In “The Lives of Others,” the 2006 Academy Award Winner for Best Foreign Language Film, the surveillance of socialist playwright Georg Dreyman by East Germany’s secret police, known as the Stasi, culminates in Dreyman’s visit to the Stasi archives years later, after the fall of the Berlin Wall.³³ At the beginning of this year, *The New Yorker* ruminated on the nature of documentation – much of it electronic – in the Susan Sontag Archive, for example, and in the January issue of *The New York Review of Books*, historian Robert Darnton noted that even in our age of increasingly digitized

Documentation, and Institutions of Social Memory: Essays from the Sawyer Seminar (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007); and Eley, *A Crooked Line*.

³⁰ Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 27.

³¹ Antoinette Burton, *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions, and the Writing of History* (Durham [N.C.]: Duke University Press, 2006), 2.

³² Kathryn Burns, *Into the Archive: Writing and Power in Colonial Peru* (Durham [N.C.]: Duke University Press, 2010), 15. Kirsten Weld’s recently-published book, also with Duke University Press, adds to the literature on archives in Latin America. See Kirsten Weld, *Paper Cadavers: The Archives of Dictatorship in Guatemala* (Durham [N.C.]: Duke University Press, 2014).

³³ *The Lives of Others*, directed by Florian Henckel Von Donnersmarck (2006; Munich: Wiedemann & Berg Film Produktion, 2006), DVD.

information – whose expansion he administers in his capacity as acting director of the Harvard University Library – “the good way to do history” still consists of direct interaction with original, physical documents. It allows for “a kind of marinating,” Darnton writes, “an absorption through the pores.”³⁴

* * *

The archive, as I define it, consists of two inversely related parts. The first is a repository of documents, a place where certain facts or writings are discovered and subsequently incorporated into larger historical narratives. These documents are the building blocks of history, and while their materials are made available to researchers with varying interpretative frameworks and motivations, the archival documents in themselves – the raw data from which history is crafted – are apolitical. This is not to say that they accurately portray the past: as Michel Foucault reminds us, no collection of discursive statements can ever reveal the authentic wholeness of an individual or a conscience – “at most, once these marks have been deciphered they can, by a sort of memory that moves across time, free meanings, thoughts, desires, buried fantasies.”³⁵ Indeed, “at once close to us, and different from our present existence,” this form of the archive represents “the border of time that surrounds our presence, which overhangs it,

³⁴ Benjamin Moser, “In the Sontag Archives,” *The New Yorker Blogs*, January 30, 2014, <http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/books/2014/01/in-the-sontag-archives.html>; Robert Darnton, “The Good Way to Do History,” *The New York Review of Books*, January 9, 2014, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2014/jan/09/good-way-history/>. Darnton’s own work in French archives pioneered the ascendance of cultural history. See Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre: And Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (New York: Basic Books, 1984).

³⁵ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Vintage Books, 2010), 122-3.

and which indicates it in its otherness; it is that which, outside ourselves, delimits us.”³⁶

From this perspective, any archive – of a person, a society, a culture, or a civilization – encapsulates the unattainable totality of what once was.

The second part of the archive consists of the institution that governs these documents. It is on this level that the archive assumes the role of what philosopher Achille Mbembe terms the “instituting imaginary,” whose fundamental struggle with death – through a maintenance of the remains and debris of those who are no longer living – performs a religious function within societies.³⁷ The archive here takes on a symbolic and political role, at once representing the encompassing power of totalitarian regimes (for example, the Stasi Archive of the former German Democratic Republic) and the efforts of citizens to combat them (as in the case of the recently-discovered National Police Archives in Guatemala).³⁸ For historically excluded minorities, the act of deliberately creating archives serves as a challenge to the authority of traditionally dominant groups: in the highly-publicized case *Delgamuukw v. British Columbia*, presented before the Canadian Supreme Court in 1991, members of the Gitskan and Wet’suwet’en aboriginal groups actively compiled information to prove their claim to land in an effort that not only revealed the inadequacy of the colonial archive, but also produced an indigenous archive in its own right.³⁹ This second conception of the archive,

³⁶ Ibid., 130.

³⁷ Achille Mbembe, “The Power of the Archive and its Limits,” in Carolyn Hamilton et al, ed., *Refiguring the Archive* (Cape Town: David Philip Publishers, 2002), 21-2.

³⁸ See Timothy Garton Ash, *The File: A Personal History* (New York: Random House, 1997); Kirsten Weld, “Dignifying the *Guerrillero*, Not the Assassin: Rewriting a History of Criminal Subversion in Postwar Guatemala,” *Radical History Review*, Issue 113 (Spring 2012): 35-54.

³⁹ See Adele Perry, “The Colonial Archive on Trial: Possession, Dispossession, and History in *Delgamuukw v. British Columbia*,” in Antoinette Burton, ed., *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions, and the Writing of History*, 325-350. In the same volume, Chicana and Chicano studies professor Horacio Roque Ramírez takes the life history of female transgender Latin artist Teresita la Campesina as “a living archive of evidence that responds to both the whiteness of queer archiving practices and the heteronormativity of

therefore, is inherently political, both created and maintained as an assertion of power by groups, or individuals, with a desire to influence national history and politics.

To repeat: these two elements – the archive as documents and the archive as institution – are inversely related: as one gains power, the other diminishes. The archival institution’s symbolic quality makes it highly susceptible to interpretation and political manipulation, and as this politicization grows – through the media, governmental decrees, and public debate, for example – the archival documents themselves shrink in significance. Ironically, these very documents, the materials that provide the justification for the archive’s existence, also harbor the historical facts that limit interpretation and resist presentist political manipulation; they retain the power to illuminate historical understanding independent of political considerations.

The changing fate of the Bolívar Archive provides an exemplary instance of the relationship between the archive’s documentary versus institutional import. In 1962, President Rómulo Betancourt’s decree charged the Bolivarian Society with custody of the documents expressly for the purpose of publishing the *writings* of Bolívar; the institution of the archive, in its own right, was given no consideration. Accordingly, the decree was barely mentioned in political discourse or in the press. President Rafael Caldera’s decree, in 1999, represented a shift: locating the authority to dictate matters regarding archival institutions in the state, the decree neglected the documents themselves. This was despite the fact that the National Academy of History, where the archive was transferred, highlighted concern about the condition of the documents as the primary reason for the decree. Indeed in their public comments to the press – which devoted significantly more

Latino historiography.” See Horacio N. Roque Ramírez, “A Living Archive of Desire: Teresita la Campesina and the Embodiment of Queer Latino Community Histories,” in Burton, ed., 111-135.

attention to the decree than in 1962 – Academy members themselves put greater emphasis on the political dimensions of the transfer. Chávez’s 2010 decree drew out these dimensions even further, explaining the transfer as evidence of the archive’s status as the “ideological base” of his self-proclaimed Bolivarian Revolution. Here, neither the documents nor their condition mattered, as demonstrated by the flurry of newspaper articles covering the transfer: the important factor was the symbolic value of the archive as an institution in its own right.

Before presenting my central argument and method, let me offer a clarification about the Bolívar Archive itself. This archive, a collection of the documents of Latin America’s primary revolutionary hero, is no ordinary archive – it is the *Bolívar* Archive. In contrast to the 13 English colonies which combined to form the United States under the leadership of numerous statesmen, including George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Benjamin Franklin, the colonies of Spanish America achieved independence under one key figure: Simón Bolívar.⁴⁰ Thus while the United States boasts multiple archives honoring its founders – George Washington’s Mount Vernon, Thomas Jefferson’s

⁴⁰ The region’s second key independence hero is José de San Martín, an Argentine who led independence movements in his home country, Chile, and Perú. A less prolific writer and politician, however, San Martín’s relative legacy faded following his death, while Bolívar’s grew stronger. It is fitting, then, that John Lynch’s biography of San Martín, the first published in English in over five decades, was written following the author’s acclaimed biography of the more prominent, Venezuelan-born independence hero: Simón Bolívar. John Lynch, *San Martín: Argentine Soldier, American Hero* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009). For examples of discussion of a “cult of San Martín” in Argentinean politics and literature, see Michael Goebel, *Argentina’s Partisan Past: Nationalism and the Politics of History* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011), 88; Raanan Rein, “Peronist Nationalism and the Hispanic Heritage in Argentina,” in Moshe Gammer, ed., *Community, Identity, and the State: Comparing Africa, Eurasia, Latin America and the Middle East* (London: Routledge, 2004), 79; Earl T. Glauert, “Ricardo Rojas and the Emergence of Argentine Cultural Nationalism,” *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, Vol. 43, No. 1 (Feb. 1963): 9-12, doi: 10.2307/2510433; and Joy Logan, “From Borges to Tourism: Mendoza and the Nation in Martín Kohan’s *El Informe: San Martín y el otro cruce de los Andes*,” *Confluencia*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (Spring 2012): 2-15, Academic Search Premier, EBSCOhost (76253072).

Monticello – the Bolívar Archive is *the* one and only foundational archive in Venezuela.⁴¹ Moreover, its power does not stop at Venezuelan borders. Just as Bolívar’s thought – expressed in the writings which comprise his archive – laid claim to the identity of the entire American continent, his archive assumed (and indeed continues to assume) transnational qualities. If his dreams of a united America had been realized, after all, his archive might now be housed in Panama City, the capital he envisioned for his new continent, rather than in Caracas, his birthplace.⁴² As a national hero *and* revolutionary whose ideas traveled well beyond Venezuela, Bolívar – and the archive he amassed – represent the union of a number of conflicting ideals, left-wing and right-wing, conservative and revolutionary.⁴³ While Venezuela is by no means unique in extolling the documents of its founder, the importance of those documents is intensified by the singularity of the hero they commemorate and the (trans)national context they represent.

* * *

My argument in this thesis is the following: that at moments of high political tension, politicians appropriated the Bolívar Archive as a cultural mechanism through which to consolidate power in the Venezuelan state and to extend that power selectively

⁴¹ The Venezuelan archive which comes closest to the value of Bolívar’s is that of independence hero Francisco de Miranda. Housed at the National Academy of History after its acquisition during the early twentieth century, it, too, was transferred to the General Archive of the Nation (AGN) with Chávez’s 2010 decree. Its relative importance, however, is lessened by the fact that Miranda himself did not live to see full Latin American independence, as he died in 1816.

⁴² “Carta del Libertador para el señor Manuel Lorenzo Vidaurre, fechada en La Paz el 30 de agosto de 1825,” Document 11113, Section 30 (AL).

⁴³ Historian German Carrera Damas has pointed out, for example, that despite Karl Marx’s well-known essay critical of Bolívar, Venezuelan Marxists nevertheless extolled the liberator during the 1960s. Germán Carrera Damas, Interview by author; Karl Marx, “Bolívar y Ponte,” originally published in *The New American Cyclopaedia*, Vol. III, 1858, accessed Feb. 15, 2014, <http://www.marxistsfr.org/archive/marx/works/1858/01/bolivar.htm>.

to favored groups. The invocation of the archive, in other words, was *always* political, with the archive represented through a political language that expressed differing visions of Bolívar, of history, and of Venezuelan society more broadly. So considered, the Bolívar Archive serves as both a microcosm of broader political and cultural projects in Venezuela over the past half century, and a window into the ways in which public and private interests converged around the cult of Bolívar. Ultimately, this thesis shows the dangers of politicizing the archive: it reveals that in tense, polarized environments, archival management is best left to institutions that are professionalized and comparatively apolitical.

The three chapters which follow each focus on one presidential decree. The first chapter examines President Rómulo Betancourt's decree of July 23, 1962, which called for the publication of Bolívar's writings and entrusted the Bolivarian Society with the task. It argues that at a time when Betancourt clung to a tenuous legitimacy as president, the Bolívar Archive served as an anchoring force around which he sought to naturalize his exercise of political power. In order to highlight the climate of political uncertainty that dogged Betancourt's presidency, the chapter begins with an overview of Venezuelan political history. Characterized by caudillos (military strongmen) and civil war in the nineteenth century and dictatorship in the twentieth, Venezuela had experienced a mere 114 *months* under civilian-led regimes in the 132 years before Betancourt became president. In this context, the first chapter shows, the political turmoil of Betancourt's first years as president was hardly surprising: two coup attempts from the right wing, two coup attempts from the left wing, one near-successful assassination plot, and frequent protest in the form of labor and university strikes. Though the state-ordered publication of

Bolívar's letters did not directly counter this insurgency, it was a clear appeal to the cultural heritage of Venezuela during the country's most important democratic moment. The chapter then turns to an analysis of the oil industry, which showed its interest in the Bolívar Archive through the funding of an indexation project carried out in 1961, one year before the decree's publication. Through an exploration of cultural projects advanced through the Shell and Creole petroleum companies – many of which centered on Bolívar – the chapter concludes by demonstrating the all-encompassing presence of oil in Venezuelan society, culture, politics, and identity.

The second chapter discusses President Rafael Caldera's decree of January 13, 1999, which transferred custody of the archive from the Bolivarian Society to the country's National Academy of History. This chapter, like the first one, begins with an overview of the previous four decades in Venezuelan politics, describing the decay of the representative democracy launched under Betancourt and the immense social discontent of the 1990s, which led to the rise of Hugo Chávez. A dark-skinned *mestizo* born in a mud hut on the Venezuelan plains, Chávez differed from traditional Venezuelan elites in race, class, and social status, and his promises to upend the country's entire political system represented a grave threat to their interests. It was during his lame-duck period, after Chávez was elected president in 1998 through the support of the lower classes, that Rafael Caldera – a member of the political elite who had helped to found, with Betancourt, Venezuela's representative democracy – enacted the decree regarding the Bolívar Archive. My second chapter analyzes this historical context in order to demonstrate the archive's symbolic function, providing a means by which the elites of the previous four decades – many of whom were members of the National Academy of

History – attempted to retain political significance on the national stage. To assume control over the Bolívar Archive was to maintain, in some fundamental sense, their political legitimacy. The Academy guided the archive through an elaborate renovation process, sponsored by a private bank, and its culminating ceremony – featuring the Catholic Church, several foreign companies, and the media – conveyed the archive’s symbolic meanings, fusing religious, political, and cultural aspirations.

The final chapter explores President Hugo Chávez’s decree of April 13, 2010, which transferred the archive from the Academy to the state-controlled General Archive of the Nation, the country’s national archives (AGN). In contrast to the first two chapters, which are situated, for the most part, in the country’s political context, the third chapter is situated in the country’s historiographical context. Chávez’s aim was to recuperate the role of the people, *el pueblo*, in historical struggles. This “insurgent historiography,” as one historian termed it, was made manifest concretely in the reorganization of the Rómulo Gallegos Center for Latin American Studies (Celarg) and the creation of the National Center for History (CNH) in 2007, both influential arms of Venezuelan historical production. Predictably, the traditional guardians of the nation’s history at the Academy offered strong resistance: within a decade of Chávez’s presidency, every one of the country’s four leading historians – including Carrera Damas – published books condemning Chavez’s misappropriations of Bolívar, and of history more generally. In such a charged historiographic context, the writing of history *was* politics: by fully embracing the union of the two, this chapter argues, Chávez fashioned the transfer of the

Bolívar Archive as a dual consecration of his country's founding hero and of his own political-historical project.⁴⁴

* * *

In the wake of Hugo Chávez's death on March 5, 2013, conducting research in Caracas, the Venezuelan capital and one of the world's most dangerous cities, was no easy task. Political tensions greatly increased after the contested victory of Chávez's designated successor, Nicolás Maduro, in the subsequent presidential elections held April 14. These tensions continued in subsequent months. A dozen of the country's most important universities – including the UCV in Caracas and the ULA in Mérida – closed down for the entirety of my research due to student protests and strikes.⁴⁵ In addition to complicating access to libraries, professors, and students, these tensions infused the dynamics of my historical research in its own right. Going to the AGN, where Maduro posters hung in the front lobby and archivists often wore Chávez t-shirts, was a vastly different experience from going to the libraries and archive at the Academy, whose secretaries and staff frequently spoke to me of my opportunity to illuminate, for the United States, the story of the Chávez disaster once and for all. At each place I tended to conduct myself differently, lauding Chávez's achievements when asked at certain times, and criticizing his failures at others. As I sat in the AGN one day, waiting for an archivist to bring me a box of documents, a woman, who had come for information about her family lineage, turned to me and said that she loathed being in that building because

⁴⁴ I draw on Weld's *Papers Cadavers* for developing these ideas.

⁴⁵ Sascha Bercovitch, "Strikes Continue at Venezuelan Universities," *Venezuela Analysis*, June 10, 2013, <http://venezuelanalysis.com/news/9688>.

“these people [the archivists] have no culture.”⁴⁶ My own firsthand experience, then, corroborates the argument of my third chapter: to conduct historical research in Venezuela is inevitably to participate in the country’s tense politics.

My thesis is a form of cultural history, drawing on the methods of recent studies that focus on the archival institution in its own right. Due to the lack of scholarly attention paid to the Bolívar Archive – and to Venezuelan history more generally, in the case of the English language – I have utilized, almost exclusively, primary sources in Spanish. These sources include newspapers, archival manuals and guidebooks, government documents from Venezuela (and the United States), presidential speeches, posters, photographs, videos, and more. The majority of these sources, particularly the internal documents from the Academy analyzed in my second chapter, have never before been examined. In addition, I interviewed dozens of historians, librarians, archivists, politicians, and citizens – all in Venezuela, save for one in the United States – to supplement my research with live perspectives on Venezuelan history, politics, and the decrees and transfers of the Bolívar Archive.

In one of these interviews, Guillermo Morón, the Academy’s longest-standing member, noted that “it is still very early for a serious researcher to come to a determined thesis about the fourteen years of the Chávez government.”⁴⁷ He was alluding, of course, to the particular difficulty of writing contemporary history, which provides my disciplinary challenge in the second and third chapters. As historian Arthur Schlesinger Jr. pointed out in a 1967 essay, contemporary history, for reasons of method and ethics,

⁴⁶ The phrase *no tener cultura*, “to have no culture,” is occasionally used by members of the Latin American upper classes to refer to working class, and often non-white, citizens. Given the rhetoric advanced by Chávez, pitting these lower classes against what he considered the traditional oligarchic elites, the phrase is invoked with notable frequency in contemporary Venezuela.

⁴⁷ Guillermo Morón, Interview by author (Spanish).

has long “held a precarious status in the annals of historiography.”⁴⁸ As he noted later in a foreword to a new edition of *A Thousand Days*, his Pulitzer Prize-winning biography of John F. Kennedy, “posterity of course has its compensating advantages – a cooler perspective, knowledge of consequences, access to declassified documents and private papers, the diverse illuminations of hindsight.”⁴⁹ Nevertheless, and partly owing to Schlesinger’s own work, a vastly expanded and increasingly accessible profusion of documentation (the earlier availability of private manuscript collections, the tape and video recorder) has coalesced to make contemporary history more acceptable both among general audiences and academics.⁵⁰ In their 2012 collection of essays on *Doing Recent History*, history professors Claire Bond Potter and Reneé Romano argue that recent history – which, they observe, has seen contributions from increasing numbers of scholars – presents unique possibilities for understanding and method: “Although recognizing the problems that we as historians might face when we undertake to shift the boundaries of what constitutes a legitimate topic for historical study,” they write, “we also insist on the reward and the potential methodological innovations that result when one of us turns our gaze on that history ‘just over our shoulder.’”⁵¹ This is undoubtedly true of Spanish-language history writing in Venezuela, where, according to historian Ali López, the historical penchant and political controversy of Hugo Chávez has led to a

⁴⁸ Arthur Schlesinger Jr., “On the Writing of Contemporary History,” *The Atlantic*, March 1967, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1967/03/on-the-writing-of-contemporary-history/305731/>.

⁴⁹ Arthur Schlesinger Jr., *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2002), ix.

⁵⁰ Arthur Schlesinger Jr., “On the Writing of Contemporary History.”

⁵¹ Claire Bond Potter and Renee Christine Romano, *Doing Recent History: On Privacy, Copyright, Video Games, Institutional Review Boards, Activist Scholarship, and History That Talks Back* (Athens [G.A.]: University of Georgia Press, 2012), 4. Some of the recent works of contemporary history they mention are James Patterson’s *Restless Giant: The United States from Watergate to Bush v. Gore* (2007) and Jeffrey G. Madrick’s *Age of Greed: The Triumph of Finance and the Decline of America, 1970 to the Present* (2011).

surge in works of contemporary history.⁵² While any study of Venezuela during the highly politicized years of Chávez's presidency is susceptible to ideological distortion, my grounding of this thesis in the history of the Bolívar Archive provides a new perspective. This is the first study of the Bolívar Archive, and my hope in writing it is that it will not be the last.

In a footnote in his short book, *Archive Fever*, Jacques Derrida writes, "There is no political power without control of the archive, if not of memory."⁵³ This thesis grounds that assertion in an empirical case study, while showing that in tense, politicized environments, the value of archival documents is often subordinated to the institutional power of the archive itself. Indeed, as the Bolívar Archive was invoked throughout modern history, it became increasingly fashioned, symbolically, as a tool of both state consolidation and political legitimation. Through examining the struggles for control over this archival space, then, we illuminate aspects of Venezuelan society as a whole: its tense politics, its varied culture, its identity rooted in its founding liberator. In modern Venezuela, as we shall see, the Bolívar Archive embodies the ways in which the past and the present are understood, reclaimed, and re-imagined for political ends.

⁵² Alí Henrique López Bohórquez, "Historia contemporánea inmediata de Venezuela: Notas para una aproximación historiográfica," *Nuestro Sur*, Año 3, Número 4 (January-February 2012): 69-97.

⁵³ Derrida, *Archive Fever*, 4.

CHAPTER ONE

THE BETANCOURT DECREE: STATE FORMATION IN UNSTABLE TIMES

Precisely because no form of government is so weak as the democratic, its framework must be firmer, and its institutions must be studied to determine their degree of stability ... unless this is done, we will have to reckon with an ungovernable, tumultuous, and anarchic society, not with a social order where happiness, peace, and justice prevail.
– Simón Bolívar, 1819¹

On July 23, 1962, Rómulo Betancourt decreed the publication of Bolívar's writings and charged the independent Bolivarian Society with the task. The decree reasoned the following: that since July 25, 1967 would mark the fourth centennial of the founding of Caracas, the country's capital and "the cradle of The Liberator," the publication of Bolívar's thoughts would constitute "the most dignified homage to his memory" and to his natal city.² In its first volume, published two years later in 1964, the Bolivarian Society proclaimed that the project would satisfy a "historical necessity" that fit the institution's objective "to foment, propagate, and extol the cult to the memory of the Liberator."³ Through its decree, the Society concluded, the Betancourt government had confirmed "a just appreciation of the dimensions of the figure of The Liberator."⁴ Yet despite this claim, the fact is that by 1962, Bolívar's writings had already been published throughout the world – in Europe, South America (including Venezuela), and the United States, where a project funded by the Bank of Venezuela had resulted in 11 printed

¹ "Discurso de Angostura, pronunciado por El Libertador Simón Bolívar el 15 de febrero de 1819, en el acto de instalación del segundo congreso de *Venezuela*," Volume 13, Documento 3589, (Archivo del Libertador, AL).

² Decreto Presidencial nro. 803, *Gaceta Oficial de la República de Venezuela* (nro. 26.906), Caracas, 23 de julio de 1962, año XC, mes X, p. 199.830 (Sala de Lectura de la Biblioteca Nacional, SLBN).

³ *Escritos Del Libertador: Introducción General* (Caracas: Sociedad Bolivariana de Venezuela, 1964), 35.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 40.

editions of his writings by 1948.⁵ In print – and indeed in wider commemoration – Bolívar already enjoyed an uncontested ubiquity. Why, then, did Betancourt feel a need to publish his writings with the watermark of the Venezuelan state – and why on July 23, 1963?

Little historical documentation exists on Betancourt's 1962 archival decree: bulletins from the Bolivarian Society made no mention of its new responsibility, and just one newspaper, *El Nacional*, provided a brief summary among a list of other presidential decrees the following day.⁶ Yet this should not obscure the importance of these documents in their own right: as archivist Trudy Huskamp Peterson writes, "Documents are a potent legitimator of a group and its identity. They play a crucial role in claims of nationhood."⁷ Indeed, historian Randall Jimerson notes that even in the United States, whose National Archives and Records Administration opened less than a century ago in 1934, founding documents during the early republic held importance "in establishing national identity and securing the authority of the ruling elite."⁸ So too with the French Revolution, where, as historian Stefan Berger points out, one of the first acts of the revolutionary assembly was to create a national archives and designate an "archivist of the republic."⁹ This chapter draws on these studies to argue that Bolívar's documents played an important role in legitimating an uncertain project in state formation.

⁵ See Simón Bolívar, *Cartas de Bolívar (1799-1822)* (París y Buenos Aires: Sociedad de Ediciones Lous-Michaud, 1913) Vicente Lecuna, ed., *Papeles de Bolívar publicados por Vicente Lecuna* (Caracas: Litografía del Comercio, 1917); R. Blanco-Fombona ed., *Cartas de Bolívar: 1823-1824-1825* (Madrid: Editorial-América, 1921); Vicente Lecuna, ed. *Cartas del Libertador* (New York: The Colonial Press, 1948).

⁶ "Ordenada publicacio de Escritos del Libertador," *El Nacional*, July 24, 1962, 1 (Hemeroteca de la Biblioteca Nacional, HBN).

⁷ Trudy Huskamp Peterson, "Macro Archives, Micro States," *Archivaria* 50 (2000): 43.

⁸ Randall C. Jimerson, "Documents and Archives in Early America," *Archivaria* 60 (2006): 236.

⁹ Stefan Berger, "The Role of National Archives in Constructing National Master Narratives in Europe," *Archival Science* 13:1 (2013): 5.

Betancourt fashioned his democratic system as a definitive break from Venezuela's history of strongman rule, and he embraced the legacy of Bolívar as a means of consolidating what he saw as the nascent Venezuelan nation state. This appropriation of the liberator occurred, necessarily, within a narrow framework: facing opposition from both political extremes, Betancourt sought a limited interpretation of Bolívar which encompassed his legitimating political groups – namely the two parties which came to represent his political system, Acción Democrática and Copei – and excluded others which threatened his stability. By focusing on the documents and limiting the Bolívar Archive's symbolic potential, Betancourt provided what he saw as necessary interpretation for the consolidation of his newfound state.

This chapter proceeds through the consideration of two historical dimensions. The first part examines the necessity for the Venezuelan state to reinforce what was then a nascent project in democracy, one that faced mounting pressure from both the far right and far left. During his first presidential term, Betancourt weathered four coup attempts, one assassination plot, and continuous threats from urban protests and rural guerrilla warfare, all the while attempting to maintain positive relations with the United States. To appeal to Bolívar in this context, as Betancourt did, served as a cultural appropriation around which he hoped to unite an unstable society. The second dimension was the growing dependency of the Venezuelan state on the extraction of oil. With the country emerging as the world's largest oil exporter by the early 20th century, foreign companies established a widespread presence within society through the creation of public relations departments which sponsored television and radio programs, published cultural magazines, and even financed an indexing project for the Bolívar Archive in 1961. These

companies, too, recognized the importance of Bolívar, and their indexing project, along with their numerous references to him in company magazines, represented a foreign attempt to lay claim to the liberator. As the two primary foreign companies – Creole, a subsidiary of the Standard Oil Company in New Jersey, and Shell, a subsidiary of the multi-national Royal Dutch Shell Company – operated primarily from the United States, the dynamics of Venezuelan-United States relations wove themselves into these cultural projects. The goal of this chapter is twofold: to demonstrate how, during times of high political tension, Betancourt attempted to legitimate his nation-state with an appeal to its founding documents, and to extend previous arguments about the profound social, cultural and political importance of oil to the history of Venezuela.

* * *

To grasp the tenuousness of Rómulo Betancourt’s political project, some historical context is helpful. The nineteenth century was characterized by civil wars and caudillo rule, the twentieth by military dictators.¹⁰ Betancourt himself gained fame through his leadership in the “Generation of 1928,” a movement of university students that sought to overthrow the military dictator Juan Vicente Gómez, who had come to power in 1908. The group’s first actions began early that year, when the newly-formed

¹⁰ A caudillo is typically defined as a strongman, authoritarian ruler, generally emerging from the military, whose charisma allows for a powerful connection with the popular classes. A feature of Latin American politics particularly throughout the nineteenth century, the phenomenon of *caudillismo* has been identified as distinctive to the region. See, for example, Alina Titei, “Caudillismo: Identity Landmark of Hispanic American Authoritarian Political Culture,” *Philobiblon: Transylvanian Journal of Multidisciplinary Research in Humanities*, Vol. 18, No. 2: 283-296, accessed March 1, 2014, *Academic Search Premier, EBSCOhost* (92976070). Max Weber’s concept of “charismatic authority” has proven particularly important in understanding the phenomenon. See Max Weber, *The Theory Of Social And Economic Organization*, trans. A. M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2009), 359–367.

Venezuelan Students Federation organized a Student Week, which soon emerged as an outlet to express discontent over Gómez. From the first gathering, Betancourt and other leaders made sure to articulate their motivations with reference to those of the country's Liberator: marching a mile from Caracas' Central University to the Pantheon, where Bolívar and other national heroes lay buried, the students deposited a wreath over Bolívar's tomb.¹¹ As one of the leaders proclaimed, "Your rebel voice can be heard again."¹² Armed with the rhetorical power of Bolívar, and aided by the country's demographics (70 percent of the Venezuelan population was under 25 years of age), the group quickly mobilized sentiment against Gómez.¹³ Following larger protests and conspiracies to overthrow Gómez, which eventually proved unsuccessful, Betancourt went into an eight-year exile during which he maintained an active presence among the Latin American left wing.¹⁴ A self-proclaimed Marxist, he helped to establish and operate the Costa Rican Communist Party; his plan for Venezuela, announced from Colombia in 1931, consisted of protecting "the productive classes from the capitalist tyranny," and a complete review "of contracts and grants signed by the nation under national and foreign capitalism."¹⁵ Returning to the country in 1936 after the death of Gómez and a democratic opening, Betancourt emerged as a key leader, uniting clandestinely with other sectors of the left wing to form what would become the Democratic Action political party

¹¹ Robert Jackson Alexander, *Rómulo Betancourt and the Transformation of Venezuela* (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1982), 36–7.

¹² Quoted in *ibid.*, 37.

¹³ Guillermo Morón, *Historia de Venezuela* (Caracas: Los Libros de El Nacional, 2012), 167.

¹⁴ Jackson Alexander, *Rómulo Betancourt and the Transformation of Venezuela*, 41–3.

¹⁵ "Plan de Barranquilla," accessed November 24, 2013, http://www.analitica.com/bitbliblioteca/venezuela/plan_de_barranquilla.asp. It is worth noting that the late 1920s and early 1930s saw not only an increase in Communist Party activity throughout much of Latin America, but also more forceful articulations of economic nationalism by way of political movements, including the American Popular Revolutionary Alliance (APRA) in Perú. One of the leading scholars on these movements, incidentally, was Betancourt biographer Robert Jackson Alexander. See Robert Jackson Alexander, *Labor Parties of Latin America* (New York City: League for Industrial Democracy, 1942).

(AD).¹⁶ The growing opposition to the political establishment, fomented by AD, led to a military coup in October 1945 with Betancourt established as the temporary head of a self-proclaimed “Revolutionary Junta.”¹⁷ With his newfound powers, Betancourt immediately embarked on a left-leaning political program, expanding suffrage and launching agrarian reform.¹⁸

His advances, however, and the period itself – known as the *Trienio* – proved short-lived. In November 1948, in reaction to the country’s intense politicization, the same military junta that had collaborated with AD three years earlier took power.¹⁹ A chaotic four years ensued, during which one governing president was assassinated and another toppled, giving way to army colonel Marcos Pérez Jiménez, who would rule as dictator from 1952 to 1958. This period of dictatorship was characterized by positive relations with the United States: at a time when the US was adapting to a postwar setting and launching a prolonged struggle against communism, Pérez Jiménez offered preferential tax rates and concessions to foreign oil companies and heavily repressed subversive activity.²⁰ As reported by the US State Department, the Venezuelan ruler remained “basically anti-communist,” and displayed “considerable skill in eliminating one threat at a time to his control of the country.”²¹ When the country’s economic

¹⁶ Jackson Alexander, *Rómulo Betancourt and the Transformation of Venezuela*, 134.

¹⁷ Simón Alberto Consalvi, “Introducción: Antecedentes Y Consecuencias Del 18 de Octubre,” in *El 18 de Octubre de 1945* (Caracas: Editorial Seix Barral, S.A., 1979), 11.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 12.

²⁰ Stephen Rabe, *The Road to OPEC: United States Relations with Venezuela, 1919-1976* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982), 117.

²¹ “Memorandum From the Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs (Holland) to the Acting Secretary of State,” June 1, 1956, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955-1957, American Republics: Central and South America*, p. 1130, accessed online November 24, 2013, <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS195557v07>; “Memorandum From the Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs (Holland) to the Ambassador of Venezuela (McIntosh),” June 1, 1956, *FRUS, 1955-1957, American Republics: Central and South America*, p. 1133, accessed online November 24, 2013, <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS195557v07>. In October, 1954, in

situation began to deteriorate in 1957, however, his control proceeded to unravel. On January 23, 1958, a civilian-military alliance, led by a “Patriotic Junta” under the direction of left-wing journalist Fabricio Ojeda, overthrew Pérez Jiménez.²² While a temporary government junta presided over the country, the former underground political leaders, Betancourt among them, returned from exile. At the house of Rafael Caldera, the leader of the right-leaning Social Christian Party Copei, three of the country’s major political parties – Betancourt’s AD, Caldera’s Copei, and Jóvito Villalba’s left-wing Democratic Republican Unity (URD) – drew up an agreement establishing representative democracy.²³ Dubbed the Pact of Punto Fijo – the location of Caldera’s house – the accord called for popular elections and a “Government of National Unity” that included cabinet representation from all three parties.²⁴

The Punto Fijo Pact featured one notable exclusion: the Venezuelan Communist Party (PCV). While leaders such as Betancourt remained in exile, the PCV had played a key role on the ground in the overthrow of Pérez Jiménez, and its exclusion was a pronounced slight.²⁵ In the December 1958 presidential elections, the party threw its support, along with the URD, behind former junta leader Wolfgang Larrazábal, and Betancourt’s subsequent victory resulted in two days of rioting throughout Caracas, where he had been trounced by a margin of five-to-one.²⁶ As Betancourt prepared for his

fact, US President Dwight Eisenhower had awarded Pérez Jiménez the Legion of Merit, honoring his “outstanding leadership and example in the Caribbean.” See Judith Ewell, *The Indictment of a Dictator: The Extradition and Trial of Marcos Pérez Jiménez* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1981), 33.

²² Ewell, 258.

²³ Morón, 258.

²⁴ “Pacto de Punto Fijo,” accessed November 24, 2013, http://www.analitica.com/bitbliblioteca/venezuela/punto_fijo.asp.

²⁵ George Ciccariello-Maher, *We Created Chávez: A People’s History of the Venezuelan Revolution* (Durham [N.C.]: Duke University Press, 2013), 24.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 26; Jackson Alexander, *Rómulo Betancourt and the Transformation of Venezuela*, 429.

inauguration in February, the situation worsened: on the nearby island of Cuba, revolutionary leader Fidel Castro and his rebels had achieved victory after a six-year guerrilla struggle against dictator Fulgencio Batista, and in late January Castro paid a visit to the Venezuelan capital. The US State Department recounted that “he, as well as his bearded companions, was received everywhere with wild acclaim.”²⁷ Castro and Betancourt remained vaguely aligned at this point: the Cuban leader, who would not express his identification with Marxism-Leninism until two years later, portrayed himself as a moderate democrat, committed to social justice through the functioning of representative democracy; while Betancourt, a former Marxist, retained a lukewarm attachment to his once-adamant left-wing ideals.²⁸ Yet when Castro mentioned Betancourt during a speech in the Plaza El Silencio, a few blocks away from the presidential palace, as Castro would later recall, “an immense jeer rose from that gigantic mass.” This outpouring of contempt, Castro continued, contributed to the “extraordinary hatred that Betancourt felt toward the popular masses of the capital of Venezuela.”²⁹ As Betancourt struggled to contain the left in subsequent years, Castro would entrench his communist state in Cuba, never losing sight of Venezuela’s unique potential: rich with oil and located at the top of South America, it was capable of sparking continent-wide revolution.

²⁷ “Editorial Note,” January 27, 1959, *FRUS, 1958–1960, Cuba*, p. 386-7, accessed November 20, 2013, <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS195860v06>.

²⁸ Jorge I. Domínguez, *To Make a World Safe for Revolution: Cuba’s Foreign Policy* (Cambridge [M.A.]: Harvard University Press, 1989), 30; Ciccariello-Maher, 26. According to the US State Department, Betancourt had sponsored and supported Castro’s guerrilla movement throughout the 1950s. “Letter From the Ambassador in Costa Rica (Willauer) to the Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs (Rubottom),” January 27, 1959, *FRUS, 1958-1960, Cuba*, p. 385, accessed March 1, 2014, <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS195860v06>.

²⁹ Fidel Castro, “Fidel Castro 13 March Anniversary Speech,” accessed November 20, 2013, <http://lanic.utexas.edu/project/castro/db/1967/19670314.html>.

When Betancourt was sworn in as president on February 13, 1959, therefore, he had the tumultuous events of Venezuela's past, and recent events in Cuba, in mind. On one hand, he faced the challenge of stabilizing a left wing with whom he had previously identified politically; on the other, he faced the growing power of the United States, which had largely ignored Betancourt during his exile, once forcing him to leave Puerto Rico at the request of Pérez Jiménez.³⁰ Moreover, as Betancourt well knew from the *Trienio*, the project of civilian, democratic rule had little precedent in Venezuela. In the 132 years between the nation's final independence and Betancourt's inauguration, Venezuela had spent just 114 *months* under civilian-led regimes. The new constitution he planned to instate, based on the Pact of Punto Fijo, would mark the 26th time the document had been rewritten. Were he to complete his five-year term successfully, it would stand as the first peaceful transfer of power in Venezuela's republican history.³¹

Confronting such high stakes, Betancourt appealed to his country's liberator: Simón Bolívar. Quoting Bolívar's famed Jamaica Letter in his inaugural address, Betancourt implored Venezuelans in the liberator's name to observe "the practices of civil society."³² Yet this civil society, built on fragile foundations, could tolerate little debate or disruption, or so Betancourt believed. For this reason, Betancourt banished the PCV, whose political philosophy threatened, he said, "the organization of the country on stable bases and law."³³ Betancourt repudiated his former left-wing activism for the sake of the state: its fragility required a narrow framework, designed to promote unity and

³⁰ Rabe, *The Road to OPEC*, 137.

³¹ Jackson Alexander, *Rómulo Betancourt and the Transformation of Venezuela*, 5.

³² Quoted in "Discurso de Toma de Posesión Presidencial Ante El Congreso Nacional (1959)," accessed November 17, 2013, <http://constitucionweb.blogspot.com/2010/07/discurso-de-toma-de-posesion.html>. For a translation of Bolívar's Jamaica Letter, I consulted Simon Bolivar, *El Libertador: Writings of Simon Bolivar*, ed. David Bushnell, trans. Frederick Fornoff (Oxford University Press, 2003), 18.

³³ "Discurso de Toma de Posesión Presidencial Ante El Congreso Nacional (1959)."

minimize conflict. The Bolívar he marshaled was, accordingly, limited in scope: a figurehead around which the various sectors could unite.

Yet as Betancourt attempted to control a volatile Venezuelan political scene, he found himself overwhelmed with challenges. He spent the majority of his first year in office quelling protests from urban workers, rural peasants, and university students, several times partially suspending constitutional rights.³⁴ By the beginning of January 1960, mass leafleting throughout Caracas called for Betancourt's overthrow – and twice that year, right-wing sectors heeded the call.³⁵ In April, military officials, under the direction of Pérez Jiménez's former Minister of Defense, attempted a military coup, though it failed to spread beyond the western city of San Cristóbal.³⁶ Two months later, Betancourt barely survived an assassination attempt when a car-bomb exploded as his presidential limousine passed by en route to a military parade. While the chauffeur and a military colonel were killed, Betancourt managed to escape with second-degree burns. Eventually linked to Dominican Dictator Rafael Trujillo, a long-time enemy of Betancourt since his left-wing activism in the 1930s and 1940s, and particularly since the overthrow of Pérez Jiménez, Trujillo's ally, the bomb had activated prematurely – otherwise, it could easily have resulted in the president's death.³⁷ Another failed military

³⁴ Ciccariello-Maher, 10; Richard Gott, *Guerrilla Movements in Latin America* (London: Seagull Books, 2008), 100, 102.

³⁵ Jackson Alexander, *Rómulo Betancourt and the Transformation of Venezuela*, 483. Indeed, the events of January 1960 alone, which also included armed attacks on police stations and central offices, resulted in 19 deaths among civilians and police. See Edgardo Mondolfi, *El Día Del Atentado: El Frustrado Magnicidio Contra Rómulo Betancourt* (Caracas: Editorial Alfa, 2013), 151.

³⁶ Jackson Alexander, *Rómulo Betancourt and the Transformation of Venezuela*, 477–80.

³⁷ Mondolfi, 23. Or, as Junot Díaz's narrator, Yunior, describes it in a footnote to *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*: "At Trujillo's behest Abbes [Chief of the Dominican Secret Police, or SIM] organized the plot to assassinate the democratically elected president of Venezuela: Rómulo Betancourt! (Betancourt and Trujillo were old enemies, beefing since the forties, when Trujillo's SIMians tried to inject Betancourt with poison on the streets of Havana.) The second attempt worked no better than the first. The bomb, packed into a green Olds, blew the presidential Cadillac clean out of Caracas, slew the driver and a bystander but

coup the next year, in June 1961, marked the last right-wing attempt to overthrow Betancourt. Originating in the eastern capital of Anzoátegui state, Barcelona, the rebellion gained local civilian support before it was violently crushed by soldiers loyal to the government, an operation that left seventeen citizens dead.³⁸ In the face of continuous instability, Betancourt had demonstrated his staying power. At an independence day rally following the second coup attempt, he declared, “These enemies to our rule of law are determined to justify that maxim of Bolívar in the Angostura Discourse: It is more difficult to maintain the balance of liberty than to endure the weight of tyranny ... [Yet] the people's unwavering support of the government – the same support which has been given to them – guarantees its stability, along with the institutional strength of the Armed Forces.”³⁹ The events of the past years had clearly proven otherwise: many sectors of the country strongly opposed Betancourt’s regime, most notably the military, whose second attempted coup surely weighed on him. This made the invocation of Bolívar all the more significant: by drawing on the country’s liberator to rationalize his attempted consolidation of power, and by seeking the appeasement of the country’s civilian and military sectors, Betancourt linked his political project to the one Bolívar had embarked on a century before.

These sectors, it was soon apparent, would not include the Venezuelan left wing, which had begun to splinter off as early as March 1960. That month, two youth leaders in

failed to kill Betancourt! Now that’s *really* gangster!” Junot Díaz, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (England: CPI Bookmarque, Croydon, 2008), 110-111, n. 14.

³⁸ Opposition accounts contend that Betancourt’s troops perpetrated a cold-blooded massacre of civilians who had joined the coup, while the Anzoátegui governor argued that the death toll emerged from particularly violent conflict initiated by the rebels. Guillermo García Ponce, *Relatos de la lucha armada (1960-1967): La insurrección (1960-1962)* (Valencia: Vadell Hermanos Editores, 1977), 46–7; Jackson Alexander, *Rómulo Betancourt and the Transformation of Venezuela*, 481.

³⁹ Rómulo Betancourt, *La Revolución Democrática En Venezuela (1959-1964): Tomo II (1959-1961)* (Caracas, 1968), 109-110.

Betancourt's own AD party withdrew to form the Marxist political party Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR), taking with them 80 percent of AD's youth sector and 14 of 73 congressional deputies.⁴⁰ Two months later, at a meeting of the Organization of American States in Costa Rica, tensions arose between Betancourt and the left-leaning Democratic Republican Unity (URD), one of the parties to sign the Pact of Punto Fijo. As mandated in the pact, Betancourt had enlisted cabinet representatives from both COPEI and URD, and URD Foreign Minister Ignacio Luis Arcaya refused to sign a proposal that condemned Cuba.⁴¹ Betancourt promptly discharged him, spurring pro-Castro rallies throughout Caracas as well as the resignation of three more URD cabinet members.⁴² These growing divisions between Betancourt, the MIR, and the URD, soon erupted: toward the end of October, the MIR issued calls for the overthrow of Betancourt, as graffiti everywhere declared, "RR": *Rómulo Renuncia*, or "Rómulo Resign."⁴³ On October 19, in the Chamber of Deputies, Rangel read aloud a recent editorial from the MIR's official journal, *Izquierda*, which claimed that, "there can not be any exit other than a change in government, the substitution of the current regime for another which responds to the interests of the people."⁴⁴ When the government arrested six members of the MIR one day later, street demonstrations broke out in Caracas and nine other cities

⁴⁰ Gott, 104–5.

⁴¹ Ciccariello-Maher, 27. The final declaration from the meeting, while not explicitly mentioning Cuba, rejected "the attempt of Sino-Soviet powers to make use of the political, economic, or social situation of any American state," and reaffirmed "that the inter-American system is incompatible with any form of totalitarianism." Cuba, represented at the meeting by Raúl Roa García, was excluded from the OAS two years later at the organization's next meeting in Uruguay. Venezuela voted for the exclusion of Cuba. See "Eighth Meeting of Consultation of Ministers of Foreign Affairs," January 22, 1962, <http://www.oas.org/consejo/MEETINGS%20OF%20CONSULTATION/Actas/Acta%208.pdf>; "Ninth Meeting of Consultation of Ministers of Foreign Affairs," July 21, 1964, <http://www.oas.org/consejo/MEETINGS%20OF%20CONSULTATION/Actas/Acta%209.pdf>.

⁴² Gott, 106.

⁴³ Jackson Alexander, *Rómulo Betancourt and the Transformation of Venezuela*, 485.

⁴⁴ Quoted in García Ponce, *Relatos de la lucha armada (1960-1967): La insurrección (1960-1962)*, 1:8.

across the country.⁴⁵ That day alone, according to one estimate, left 10 dead, 200 injured, and 350 detained.⁴⁶ As the violence escalated, Betancourt ordered the shutdown of all universities and high schools, and as students continued to mobilize at Caracas' Universidad Central de Venezuela (UCV), Betancourt ordered the military to occupy its campus.⁴⁷ For a politician who had risen to fame through his leadership in the 1928 student movement, the act marked a striking reversal. Once promoting the university as the site of "permanent conflict between the nation and those governing against its will," Betancourt now condemned it as a "den of terrorists."⁴⁸

Speaking at a government-organized rally in Plaza El Silencio on November 1 – the first time he had spoken publicly since the assassination attempt several months earlier – Betancourt justified his use of military force given "the grave intent to disrupt the public order, with the goal of overthrowing the constitutional government." It had pained him severely to spend his nights listening to the sound of gunshots: "I always wished that no one would suffer under my government. But then I remembered the bitter, desolate, experience of our republic. And I remembered Bolívar when he said: 'Absolute freedom invariably leads to absolute tyranny.'"⁴⁹ Betancourt's invocation of Bolívar here served a dual purpose: it distinguished his efforts, in establishing a system of democracy, to break with the military dictators and caudillos of the past, while at the same time warning of the dangers that freedom could bring. Compared to the "bitter, desolate" dictatorships of Gómez and Pérez Jiménez, Betancourt suggested, his government's

⁴⁵ Ibid., 9; Gott, 105.

⁴⁶ García Ponce, 9.

⁴⁷ Ciccariello-Maher, 100.

⁴⁸ Manuel Cabieses Donoso, *Venezuela, okey!* (Santiago de Chile: Ediciones del Litoral, 1963), 218; Ciccariello-Maher, 110.

⁴⁹ Luis Ricardo Dávila, ed., *Betancourt: Antología Política*, Volume 7, 1959-1964 (Caracas: Fundación Rómulo Betancourt, 2007), 229, 234.

responses to instability had been quite mild. To ignore his efforts would allow the republic to stray, once again, toward tyranny.

The Venezuelan left wing remained undeterred. 10 days later, on November 11, the remaining members of the URD cabinet resigned.⁵⁰ A wave of strikes and protests roiled the country, culminating in a complete suspension of constitutional guarantees.⁵¹ It was around this time, according to PCV leader Douglas Bravo, that a group of military leaders presented the party with the proposition of a Communist-military alliance. The Communists equivocated: while the PCV debated principles (could they overthrow a democratically-elected government?), the insurgency was quelled. “The incapacity of the Communist Party to understand this historical moment. How truly sad that was!” said Bravo in a recent interview. “That was the first big battle, *chico*, and we lost.”⁵² As the year closed, Betancourt drew on army loyalists to effectively quash what remained of the resistance.⁵³

With the Venezuelan political situation calm for the first part of 1961, attention turned to the country’s relations with the United States, where John F. Kennedy had recently been inaugurated as president. Though Betancourt’s history of left-wing sympathies had made him an object of suspicion throughout the 1950s, the Venezuelan president’s strong opposition to the communist party had earned him favor by the time of the Kennedy administration. As State Department official Adolf Berle noted, his actions represented “quite a change from the days” when the department “kicked him around.”⁵⁴ Indeed at the beginning of Kennedy’s presidency, officials installed a direct phone line

⁵⁰ Gott, 106; Jackson Alexander, *Rómulo Betancourt and the Transformation of Venezuela*, 486.

⁵¹ Gott, 107–8; García Ponce, 15–6, 18.

⁵² Quoted in Ciccariello-Maher, 28.

⁵³ Gott, 108.

⁵⁴ Quoted in Rabe, *The Road to OPEC*, 137.

between the White House and the Miraflores Presidential Palace in Caracas, and two months later, in March, Kennedy announced the creation of the Alliance for Progress, an economic initiative to promote integration between the United States and Latin America.⁵⁵ Framed within efforts to contain the spread of communism in Latin America, the 10-year program committed the United States to promoting industrialization and middle class growth throughout the region.⁵⁶ As Kennedy was well aware, Betancourt and Venezuela represented a key strategic partner: the final version of the Alliance for Progress initiative included significant suggestions from Venezuelan experts, and despite the country's domestic social turmoil, Kennedy's advisers proclaimed Venezuela "a model for Latin American progressive democracy."⁵⁷ This relation included recognition of the pan-American ideals embedded in the Venezuelan liberator. Speaking before a statue of Bolívar at a Venezuelan independence day ceremony held in Washington, D.C. on July 5, 1961, Kennedy proclaimed:

By this act, we give double testimony: of our friendship for the land that gave him birth and that he launched on the road to freedom; and of our own rededication to the ideal of which he was the first and perhaps the greatest prophet – the unity of the Americas. Fifteen years ago this month, President Betancourt of Venezuela said before another statue of Bolívar: "Today our concern and interest is to make [Bolívar's] message live ... to follow loyally his luminous example in our daily tasks as governors and governed." It is as important today to do all these things.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Ibid., 144. A later work by Rabe provides a definitive account on the Alliance for Progress more broadly. Stephen Rabe, *The Most Dangerous Area in the World: John F. Kennedy Confronts Communist Revolution in Latin America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999). See also, Jeffrey Taffet, *Foreign Aid as Foreign Policy: The Alliance for Progress in Latin America* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

⁵⁶ As Kennedy declared in a speech announcing the alliance, "Our unfulfilled task is to demonstrate to the entire world that man's unsatisfied aspiration for economic progress and social justice can best be achieved by free men working within a framework of democratic institutions." John F. Kennedy, "Address at White House reception for members of Congress and Latin American republics' diplomatic corps," March 13, 1961, *Papers of John F. Kennedy*, Speech Files, Series 3, JFKPOF-034-013, accessed online, March 2, 2014, <http://www.jfklibrary.org/Asset-Viewer/Archives/JFKPOF-034-013.aspx>.

⁵⁷ Rabe, *The Road to OPEC: United States Relations with Venezuela, 1919-1976*, 144.

⁵⁸ The White House, "Remarks of the President at Wreath-Laying Ceremonies, Simon Bolivar Monument, 18th & Virginia Avenue, NW (Venezuelan Independence Day)," July 5, 1961, *Papers of John F. Kennedy*, Speech Files, Series 3, JFKPOF-035-024, accessed online, March 2, 2014, <http://www.jfklibrary.org/Asset-Viewer/Archives/JFKPOF-035-024.aspx>.



Figure 1.1: John F. Kennedy speaking before a statue of Simón Bolívar in Washington, D.C. in commemoration of Venezuela's Independence Day.⁵⁹

Betancourt had made this declaration during the *Trienio* period 15 years prior, when he served as temporary head of a revolutionary left-wing government whose nationalist rhetoric roused concerns within the US State Department. Indeed, around the time of Betancourt's speech, State Department officials had been making covert overtures to Venezuela's exiled former president, Eléazar López Contreras, who had been overthrown by Betancourt's junta in a military coup.⁶⁰ Kennedy's sidestepping of this historical context indicated a desire to embrace the Venezuelan president as ally. While Kennedy's

⁵⁹ Abbie Rowe, "President John F. Kennedy Delivers Address at 150th Anniversary Celebration of the Independence of Venezuela," Photograph, *White House Photograph Collection*, Series 1, AR6677-E, accessed online, March 2, 2014, <http://www.jfklibrary.org/Asset-Viewer/Archives/JFKWHP-AR6677-E.aspx>.

⁶⁰ See, for example, "The Ambassador in Venezuela (Corrigan) to the Assistant Secretary of State for American Republic Affairs (Braden)," July 13, 1946, *FRUS, The American Republics (1946)*, pp. 1298-1299, accessed online, March 2, 2014, <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1946v11>.

celebration of Bolívar as a prophet of “the unity of the Americas” served the purpose of legitimating a continent free of communism, it contradicted the new America which Bolívar had envisioned, independent of United States influence. Still, the reference to the founding father of Betancourt’s political project confirmed Kennedy’s recognition that invoking the great liberator was the best way of reinforcing what he considered his country's spirit of generosity and supportive intentions.

Despite these favorable economic and diplomatic signs, Venezuela’s internal political situation soon grew tumultuous. In November, particularly after Betancourt broke off diplomatic ties with Cuba, protests surged among workers and university students throughout the country, culminating in another university strike and dozens of deaths.⁶¹ The government again invoked harsh measures. In one case, municipal police removed the dead body of a student from his family’s home and scattered materials for the funeral in the street, an incident one left-wing newspaper declared “without precedent in the history of Venezuelan law enforcement.”⁶² A second split with AD at the end of the year further weakened Betancourt; for the first time since the overthrow of Pérez Jiménez, the party lost its majority in Congress. By the start of 1962, wrote journalist Richard Gott, “the drift towards open rebellion [seemed] almost inevitable.”⁶³

This insurgency would culminate in two coup attempts in the middle of the year. The first, on May 4, involved a seizure of the eastern naval base of Carúpano by naval captain Jesús Teodoro Molina with a battalion of 450 marines. Despite initial euphoria,

⁶¹ Muertos 106 heridos,” *Clarín*, 1961. Item 2, Box 326 (Archivo General de la Nación, AGN); Gott, 110, n. 17.

⁶² “¡Sin precedents en la historia policial de Venezuela!” *Clarín*, 17 de noviembre de 1961, Item 4, Box 326 (AGN). That very day, *Clarín* was prevented from circulating further. See García Ponce, 59.

⁶³ Gott, 109.

Molina's revolt was soon crushed by government troops.⁶⁴ What distinguished this attempt from previous right-wing coups and urban insurgencies, however, was that it was clearly supported by the communists.⁶⁵ PVC ambivalence about challenging a democratically elected government had evaporated – and Betancourt's government recognized this transformation. Concerned about communist sympathizers within the military, Betancourt and his cabinet arrested several PCV members in Caracas and suspended the charters of both the PCV and the MIR.⁶⁶

Such concerns proved well-founded: a month later, on June 3, a naval commander and captain led a second revolt at the Puerto Cabello naval base, located west of Caracas. After two days of fighting – reported by the *New York Times* as “the bloodiest and most savage seen in Venezuela for years” – 1,000 government troops were required to overcome 400 rebels, leaving 35 dead and over 100 wounded.⁶⁷ The rebellion exposed two crucial weaknesses of Betancourt's state: the prospect of ongoing challenges from an internally divided military, and the continuing threat from rural guerrilla fighters. Indeed, a number of rebels from the uprising escaped to the hills to join the guerrillas, and as the year wore on they acquired more prominent members, most notably Fabricio Ojeda.⁶⁸ The former head of the Patriotic Junta that had overthrown the Pérez Jiménez dictatorship, Ojeda had gone on to serve as a member of Congress for four years. In a rousing speech announcing his resignation, delivered on June 30, Ojeda likened himself

⁶⁴ Ibid., 123; Carlos Capriles Ayala, “Prolegómenos Al Adventimiento de La Democracia,” in *Todos Los Golpes a La Democracia Venezolana*, by Carlos Capriles Ayala and Rafael Del Naranco (Caracas: Consorcio de Ediciones Capriles, 1992), 102.

⁶⁵ Capriles Ayala, 101.

⁶⁶ Gott, 124; Jackson Alexander, *Rómulo Betancourt and the Transformation of Venezuela*, 491.

⁶⁷ United Press International, “Venezuela Recaptures Navy Base from Rebels,” *New York Times*, June 3, 1962, 1, 37. Hector Rondón's photograph of a priest holding a wounded soldier, taken during the rebellion, would win the Pulitzer Prize in 1963. “1963 Winners,” accessed November 23, 2013, <http://www.pulitzer.org/awards/1963>.

⁶⁸ Gott, 124.

to his country's founding heroes. His decision, he emphasized, was "the same decision which our liberators had to make against a colonized homeland, against an enslaved people. They, the builders of our nationality, gave us the path, and we have to continue it with the same sacrifices, the same risks, and the same faith." Following "the lessons of Bolívar," the Venezuelan left wing had emulated the liberator's "courage, nobility, and patriotism," and through his own defection, Ojeda followed suit. This use of Bolívar was a direct challenge to Betancourt's: while the president invoked the liberator to support his own ends and to suppress the left, Ojeda invoked him in support of a left wing insurgency designed to topple Betancourt. Betancourt, Ojeda insisted, had no place in the new Venezuela modeled by Bolívar. His concluding attack on Betancourt could not have been more direct: "And so, Mr. President, call my substitute, because I have gone to fulfill the oath that I took before you all to defend the Constitution and the laws of this country. If I die, it matters not – others will come behind me to take up our rifle and our flag to continue, with dignity, what is an ideal and an obligation for all our people."⁶⁹

By July 1962, then, Romulo Betancourt had withstood the following: four coup attempts, one assassination plot, strikes and riots in the cities, and guerrilla warfare in the countryside. His democratic project, conceived and executed with careful deliberation, was imperiled. Hence the broader political context for Betancourt's decree of July 23, 1962: the entrusting of the Bolivarian Society to carry out the state-ordered publication of Bolívar's writings. Just as Ojeda invoked Bolívar, so too did Betancourt. Yet here was a crucial distinction: where Ojeda's invocation was purely rhetorical, Betancourt marshaled his power, as the head of a newly-formed state, to draw Bolívar into a wider cultural

⁶⁹ "Carta de Reununcia de Fabricio Ojeda," accessed November 23, 2013, <http://www.cedema.org/ver.php?id=2105>; Ciccariello-Maher, 22–3.

symbolology. By asserting institutional control over the Bolívar Archive, in other words, Betancourt recognized the liberator as a legitimating power for the Venezuelan nation-state. Indeed on July 24, 1962, the 179th anniversary of his birth, national newspapers, in addition to placing his portrait prominently on the front page, reminded Venezuelan citizens of their obligation on national holidays – stipulated three days earlier by the Ministry of Interior Relations – to raise the national flag “in their particular houses, offices, and establishments.” (Those who ignored this obligation would be subject to fine or imprisonment, at the discretion of local authorities.)⁷⁰ In the words of political scientist George Ciccariello-Maher, Betancourt worried about “the people in the abstract ... an entelechy which professional demagogues use in seeking to upset the social order.” The president thus focused on institutional mechanisms, seeking a system that promoted gradual, rather than radical, change.⁷¹ So considered, Betancourt’s interpretation of Bolívar, and attention to Bolívar’s writings rather than the Bolívar archive per se, signaled his commitment to pragmatic change under the guise of state institutions. Issued at a point of political peril, the state-ordered publication of Bolívar’s writings through Betancourt’s decree confirmed the inseparability of archival power and practical politics.

* * *

The development of the archive was also interdependent with another key aspect of Venezuelan society: oil production. An index of the archive published in 1961, to

⁷⁰ “Obligado de enarbolar la bandera nacional,” *El Universal*, 24 de julio de 1962, 11; “Obligación de enarbolar la bandera nacional,” *Últimas Noticias*, 24 de julio de 1962, 5 (HBN).

⁷¹ Ciccariello-Maher, 10.

honor the 150th anniversary of Venezuelan independence, listed foundations from the Shell and Creole petroleum companies as benefactors.⁷²

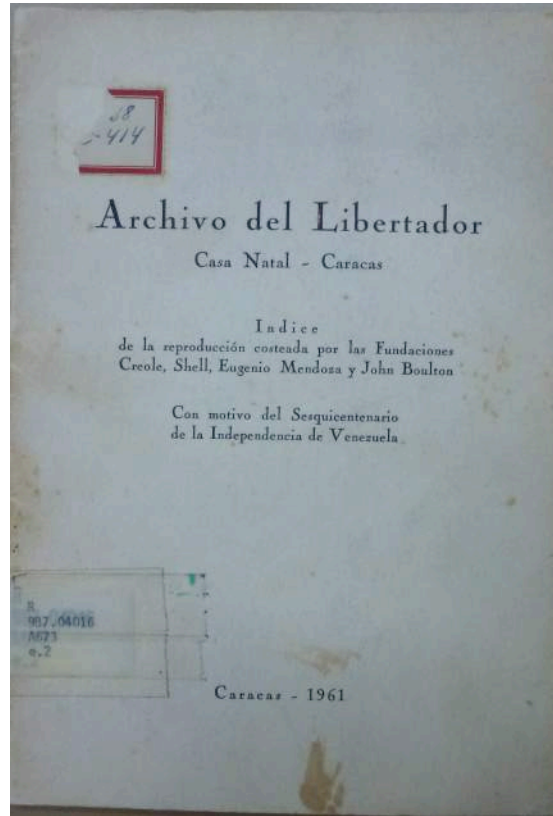


Figure 1.2: 1961 index of the Bolívar Archive.⁷³

The rest of this chapter examines the development of the Venezuelan oil industry to demonstrate that given the all-encompassing presence of oil in Venezuelan society and culture, the funding of the index was hardly coincidental. Indeed, for these companies, assisting the Bolívar Archive represented a cultural appropriation that enhanced their relationship to the Venezuelan public by putting their own stamp upon the nation's founding hero. From this perspective, we can understand the archive as providing a

⁷² *Archivo Del Libertador (Indice)* (Caracas: Italgráfica, C.A., 1961). The other two foundations listed – Fundación Eugenio Mendoza and Fundación John Boulton – originated in Venezuela. See Susan Berglund, “The Fundación John Boulton,” *Latin American Research Review* 21, no. 2 (January 1, 1986): 137–141; C. L. M., “Fundación ‘Eugenio Mendoza’ (Venezuela),” *Revista de Historia de América*, no. 33 (June 1, 1952): 195–196.

⁷³ Photo courtesy of the Sala de Lectura de la Biblioteca Nacional (SLBN).

window into the various ways in which oil affected the Venezuelan economy, and culture and society more broadly.

Though Venezuelan oil deposits, located in the western state of Zulia, had served as a resource for indigenous groups for centuries, the nascent oil industry of the later 18th century largely overlooked Venezuela.⁷⁴ This changed under the early twentieth century dictatorship of Juan Vicente Gómez, who encouraged foreign investment as a means of achieving economic and social stability.⁷⁵ Venezuela developed rapidly: by 1914, the country's first major oil deposit had been discovered; by 1918, oil exporting had begun; and by 1928, Venezuela had emerged as the largest exporter and second largest producer of oil in the world.⁷⁶ Between 1917 and 1930, Venezuelan oil revenues increased by a magnitude of nearly 3,000, the bulk of it coming from the holdings of Standard Oil and Shell.⁷⁷ By the late 1930s, the two companies controlled 85 percent of Venezuela's total oil production (50 and 35 percent, respectively).⁷⁸

Oil, it seemed, held the potential to modernize Venezuela in one fell swoop, a notion readily adopted for political ends. "In the hands of politicians," anthropologist Fernando Coronil writes, "oil wealth created the illusion that modernity could be brought to Venezuela as if pulled out of a hat."⁷⁹ The connection proved so strong that during the 1930s, members of the Communist Party – with whom Betancourt still sympathized at the time – warned of the impending conflict between foreign oil companies and their

⁷⁴ Edwin Lieuwen, *Petroleum in Venezuela: A History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1954), 2–4, 8.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 12; Fernando Coronil, *The Magical State: Nature, Money, and Modernity in Venezuela* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997), 70.

⁷⁶ Coronil, 70.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 69–70; Diego Bautista Urbaneja, *Pueblo Y Petróleo En La Política Venezolana Del Siglo XX* (Caracas: Monte Ávila Editores Latinoamericana, 1992), 60, n5.

⁷⁸ Coronil, 76.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 68–9.

domestic allies, and the Venezuelan population as a whole.⁸⁰ At a 1936 rally, Betancourt cautioned that the country's attachment to large foreign interests represented a "dramatic, pathetic portrait of our social and economic reality."⁸¹ The oil companies duly recognized the power of such nationalist sentiment. As early as 1937, Standard Oil directors noted that "a growing feeling of nationalism and its inevitable reaction of antagonism to foreigners [had] made it an imperative for any foreign company operating in Latin America to give more attention to industrial and public relations."⁸² Both Standard Oil and its Venezuelan affiliate, Creole, created comprehensive public relations departments that were well established by the 1940s. According to a *Fortune* magazine article, by 1949, the president of Creole, Arthur Proudfit had no operational duties, instead spending "all of his valuable time on relations with the Venezuelan government and the Venezuelan people."⁸³ As a 1955 report on Creole concluded, in the long run, "the 'success' of an enterprise abroad must be judged in the light of its relations to the host country ... If U.S. private enterprises abroad are managed in such a way that the host

⁸⁰ Ibid., 92; Jackson Alexander, *Rómulo Betancourt and the Transformation of Venezuela*, 95.

⁸¹ Quoted in Guersindo Rodríguez, *Rómulo Betancourt Y La Siembra Del Petróleo: Sus Principales Escritos de Economía Política, 1927-1976* (Caracas: Editorial Arte, 2012), 61. Betancourt would later identify this statement as "the first public discussion of the oil problem in Venezuela." Quoted in Coronil, 97.

⁸² Quoted in Miguel Tinker Salas, "Staying the Course: United States Oil Companies in Venezuela, 1945-1958," *Latin American Perspectives* 32, no. 2 (March 1, 2005): 150. It is important to note that, considering the broader Latin American context, these concerns were not misdirected: one year later, in 1938, Mexican nationalist President Lázaro Cárdenas nationalized the country's oil industry, expropriating the holdings of Standard Oil and other foreign corporations. The incident proved critical for subsequent efforts by oil companies to represent themselves as compatible with Latin American sovereignty and nationalism. See, for example, Lorenzo Meyer, *Mexico and the United States in the Oil Controversy, 1917-1942*, trans. Muriel Vasconcellos (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1977), 233; Paul E. Sigmund, *Multinationals in Latin America: The Politics of Nationalization* (Madison [W.I.]: University of Wisconsin Press, 1980), 48; and Clayton R. Koppes, "The Good Neighbor Policy and the Nationalization of Mexican Oil: A Reinterpretation," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 69, No. 1 (June, 1982): 62-81, JSTOR (187752). For a comprehensive account of the politicking which went on at the state level, between the Venezuelan government and foreign oil companies, during this time period, see Kelvin Singh, "Oil Politics in Venezuela during the Lopez Contreras Administration (1936-1941)," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 21, no. 1 (February 1, 1989): 89-104.

⁸³ Quoted in Miguel Tinker Salas, *The Enduring Legacy: Oil, Culture and Society in Venezuela* (Durham [N.C.]: Duke University Press, 2009), 191.

countries are convinced they are also promoting their economic and social development, then it is most likely that they will receive the cooperation essential to long-run survival.”⁸⁴ Though Shell initially resisted such demands, Director of Shell Venezuela and Assistant to Company’s President José Giacopini Zárraga later recalled how the company capitulated after “continuing to appear before the country’s opinion as a disproportionate giant present at all crossroads of national life.”⁸⁵ Zárraga focused on the more economic aspects of Shell’s public activity, which might include contributing to “the diversification of national production, the diversification of the national economy – with the goal of destroying that disproportionate and negative image.”⁸⁶ Though each public relations department evolved separately, Tinker Salas notes that they shared a common goal: to ensure that the interests of the Venezuelan nation, and those of the foreign oil companies cohered.⁸⁷

This was accomplished through various means. The companies were omnipresent in local media, fostering contacts among news writers and agencies. Creole, for one, retained a staff of experts that regularly delivered public lectures on industrial and academic subjects hoping to attract coverage. As the mediums of radio and television became increasingly popular during the 1950s, companies sponsored programs appealing

⁸⁴ Wayne Taylor and John Lindeman, *The Creole Petroleum Corporation in Venezuela* (Washington, D.C.: National Planning Association, 1955), 99.

⁸⁵ Juan Pablo Pérez Alfonzo, ed., *La dinámica del petróleo en el progreso de Venezuela: ponente Juan Pablo Pérez Alfonzo* (Caracas: Dirección de Cultura, Universidad Central de Venezuela, 1965), 61, 63; Tinker Salas, *The Enduring Legacy*, 192.

⁸⁶ Pérez Alfonzo, 63. Such statements fell in line with the doctrine of import-substitution industrialization (ISI), through which Latin American companies attempted to stimulate national development through the strengthening of domestic industry, diversification of economic activity, and installation of protectionist measures. A frequently-debated topic in political science, ISI was perhaps most notably discussed by Guillermo O’Donnell, who linked its development to the breakdown of democratic regimes in the southern cone during the 1960s and 1970s. See Guillermo O’Donnell, “Toward an Alternative Conceptualization of South American Politics,” in Peter Klarén and Thomas J. Bossert, eds., *Promise of Development: Theories of Change in Latin America* (Boulder [C.O.]: Westview Press, 1986), 239-275.

⁸⁷ Tinker Salas, *The Enduring Legacy*, 193.

to ever-larger segments of the population. Thus Shell had a weekly radio broadcast as well as television shows, and Creole's prime time television program, "Observador Creole," drew two thirds of viewers nationally.⁸⁸ Both companies provided financial support to prominent artists and writers and also subsidized university faculty appointments and scholarships for study abroad. A 1961 edition of *El Farol*, the Creole Foundation's bimonthly magazine, featured a section profiling 427 students who had received financial awards from the foundation, through a program aimed at "the advancement of a new Venezuela, toward which the Foundation intends to render its service."⁸⁹ Such mechanisms for extending and solidifying company influence inevitably bolstered its financial standing as well.

Over time, these outreach methods grew increasingly ambitious. The Fundación Creole, founded in 1956, listed its primary objective as "promoting the education of the Venezuelan man with the goal of accelerating the social and economic development of the country."⁹⁰ The Fundación Shell, founded three years later in 1959, aimed to "promote and assist with activities in the natural sciences, education, and culture in Venezuela."⁹¹ Institutions from numerous sectors of society soon took note of the philanthropic and cultural activities of these foundations: a 1960 report from the country's National Academy of History noted the reception of a 30.000 Bs. donation

⁸⁸ Ibid., 193–4.

⁸⁹ *El Farol*, Septiembre/Octubre 1961.

⁹⁰ *Fundación Creole 1956-1964* (Caracas: Cromotip, 1964), 5. The Foundation took the maxim "... education for development" as its motto, and included a quotation from Nathaniel Bacon on the final page of its report: "They are ill discoverers that think there is no land, when they can see nothing but sea." See pp. 1, 77.

⁹¹ Quoted in Tinker Salas, *The Enduring Legacy*, 195.

(roughly \$9,000) – for the foundation of a Center for the Conservation of Historical Documents.⁹²

In fulfilling what they understood as necessary obligations to the society from which they profited, it was natural that these foundations would turn to the figure of Bolívar. A 1955 Creole case study, for example, included pictures of Bolívar’s birthplace – where the archive was kept at this point – and statue in the city center.⁹³ “From the standpoint of understanding Venezuela today,” the report read, “Bolívar’s great military achievements are of less interest than the evolution of his political thinking ... his consistent emphasis throughout his life on the duties of a soldier-statesman to maintain order and to participate actively in the peaceful development of his country.” The result, according to the report, was that “all present government policies appear to be dominated by the conviction that further change in Venezuela should never occur as a result of Venezuelans fighting each other.”⁹⁴ Regardless of the accuracy of such statements – the characterization of the dictatorial policies of Pérez Jiménez as designed to preserve peace was euphemistic at best – the key here was the recognition of Bolívar, the man and his thought, as foundational to Venezuelan society.⁹⁵

⁹² “Informe de la Academia al Ministro de Educación sobre sus labores en el año de 1960,” *Boletín de la Academia Nacional de Historia*, Enero-Marzo 1961 (Tomo XLIV: N° 173): 169. For the conversion, see “Control de cambios en Venezuela | GestioPolis,” accessed November 29, 2013, <http://www.gestiopolis.com/recursos/documentos/fulldocs/eco/ccv.htm>; JARM, “Dolar Frente Al Bolívar Desde 1960-2010,” *Economía Y Finanzas*, accessed November 29, 2013, <http://economistajarm.blogspot.com/2010/01/dolar-frente-al-bolivar-desde-1960-2010.html>.

⁹³ Taylor and Lindeman, 44.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 8–9.

⁹⁵ This likely has to do with the fact that oil companies, including Creole, enjoyed significant concessions under Pérez Jiménez. See Tinker Salas, “Staying the Course,” 157–161.

The national magazines of Shell and Creole, too, intensified their focus on Bolívar.⁹⁶ An issue of *Revista Shell*, published in June 1961, featured a piece on the Bolívar top hat (“a hat with a high crown which flares upward, like a vase, a very wide brim, and an elegant and attractive shape”⁹⁷) and the Morillo top hat (which shared the name of Bolívar’s archenemy, the Spanish general Pablo Morillo), both popular in eighteenth century French theatre.⁹⁸ The magazine, which was edited by prominent historian Guillermo Morón and widely distributed free of charge, took up, a year later, the subject of Bolívar’s famed mistress, Manuela Saénz. After reviewing the “brief iconography” of “the liberator of the liberator,” historian Alredo Boulton quoted from Bolívar’s romantic letters before concluding that “in every way, it is more difficult to know the truth than to imagine her.”⁹⁹ *El Farol*, Creole’s national magazine, which distributed 33,000 free copies per issue, likewise drew continuous attention to the figure of Bolívar. A 1961 issue featured the museum established in Bolívar’s natal home, along with images from the archive. The piece featured both written and material artifacts, ranging from Bolívar’s speeches and letters to clothing, shoes, and even a hammock he used during campaigns.¹⁰⁰ These reproductions, according to the author, confirmed “an old ideal cherished by Venezuelans: that the memories of the *Padre de la Patria*, the

⁹⁶ Tinker Salas notes that particularly in the case of Creole, the magazine comprised “one of the key tools in the ... public relations arsenal.” Tinker Salas, *The Enduring Legacy*, 196.

⁹⁷ Leo Van Witsen’s volume on costuming and the opera confirms that the Bolívar was, indeed, a top hat utilized during the first half of the nineteenth century. Leo Van Witsen, *Costuming for Opera: Who Wears What and Why, Volume 2* (Metuchen [N.J.]: Scarecrow Press, 1994), 329.

⁹⁸ *Archivo Del Libertador (Indice)*, 17; Gabriel Giraldo Jaramillo, “El Libertador, Los Sombreros y el Teatro,” *Revista Shell*, Junio de 1961 (Año X, N° 39): 37-40.

⁹⁹ Alfredo Boulton, “Breve iconografía de Manuela Sanz,” *Revista Shell*, Diciembre de 1962 (Año XI, N° 45): 30, 33.

¹⁰⁰ Ana Mercedes Pérez, “El Musemo Bolivariano,” *El Farol*, Mayo/Junio 1961 (Año XXII, N° 194): 24-27.

Father of our Homeland, and the symbols of the odyssey of his life are cared for with dignity and framed in the atmosphere of the time.”¹⁰¹

Perhaps the most striking Bolívar testimonial of the time, however, appeared in the same issue in an article about William Faulkner. The article, which made prominent mention of the fictional Yoknapatawpha County where the famed American author set most of his novels and stories, pictured Faulkner beside Bolívar’s tomb. This particular photograph from Faulkner’s 15-day tour of the country in 1960 at the invitation of the North American Association of Venezuela, marked, according to a caption, “one of the innumerable acts of Faulkner” during the visit. The photograph accompanied a lengthy quotation from a speech Faulkner delivered at the ceremony where he received the Andrés Bello Award, the country’s highest civilian honor:

... [The artist] tries, with every means in his possession, his imagination, experience and observation, to put into some more durable form than his own fragile and ephemeral life ... the passion and hope, the beauty and horror and humor, of frail and fragile and indomitable man ... He is not to solve this dilemma nor does he even hope to survive it save in the shape and significance, the memories, of the marble and paint and music and ordered words which someday he must leave behind him ... So, as I stand here today, I have already tasted that immortality. That I, a country-bred alien who followed that dedication thousands of miles away, to seek and try to capture and imitate for a moment in a handful of printed pages, the truth of man's hope in the human dilemma, have received here in Venezuela the official accolade which (sic) says in effect – Your dedication was not spent in vain. What you sought and found and tried to imitate, was truth.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ Ibid: 21.

¹⁰² Quoted in Rafael Piñeda, “Yoknapatawpha: El condado de William Faulkner,” *El Farol*, Mayo/Junio 1961 (Año XXII, N° 194): 12. Faulkner delivered the speech in Spanish, although he originally wrote it in English and had it translated. Louis Daniel Brodsky provides an excellent historiography of the speech, in addition to its original English version, which I utilized. See Louis Daniel Brodsky, “The 1961 Andrés Bello Award: William Faulkner’s Original Acceptance Speech,” *Studies in Bibliography*, Vol. 39 (1986): 277-281, accessed 27 November 2013, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40371850?origin=JSTOR-pdf>.

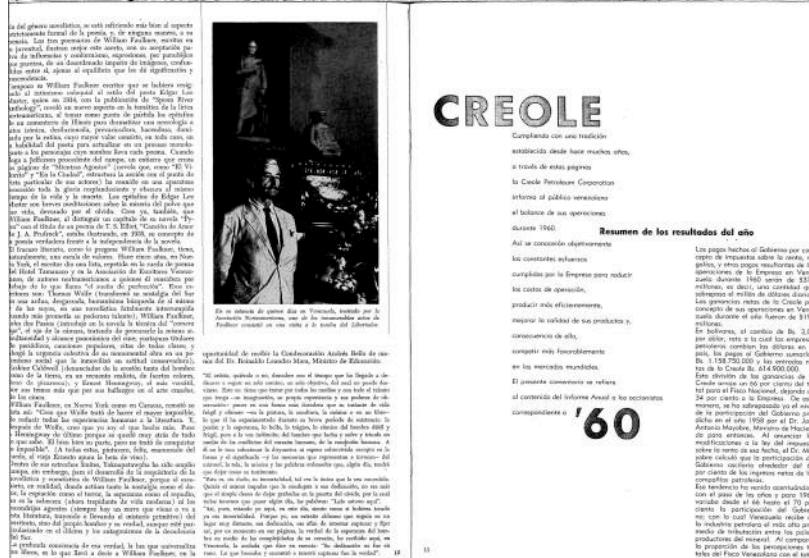


Figure 1.3: Faulkner before Bolívar's tomb.¹⁰³

As the magazine noted, Faulkner had traveled widely in Venezuela, even visiting with President Betancourt.¹⁰⁴ Yet the one photo the magazine chose to publish pictured him before Bolívar's tomb. This presence, coupled with a characteristic Faulknerian rumination on immortality – “the shape and significance, the memories, of the marble and paint and music and ordered words which someday he must leave behind him” – served to highlight the continuum between Faulkner, Bolívar, and the Creole Foundation more broadly. Here was a “country-bred alien,” before the tomb of Venezuela’s Liberator, declaring that his quest to capture “the passion and hope, the beauty and horror and humor, of frail and fragile and indomitable man” and confirming that what he had “sought and found and tried to imitate, truth,” was reflected in universal Venezuelan values. The picture chosen to accompany this message confirmed that those values were nowhere more profoundly manifest than in the figure of the country’s Liberator. Just as

¹⁰³ Rafael Piñeda, “Yoknapatawpha: El condado de William Faulkner,” *El Farol*, Mayo/Junio 1961 (Año XXII, N° 194): 12.

¹⁰⁴ Joseph Blotner, *Faulkner: A Biography* (Oxford [M.I.]: Univ. Press of Mississippi, 2005), 688.

Bolívar had achieved a “more durable form than his own fragile and ephemeral life,” so too had Faulkner – in the shadow of Bolívar, with the watermark of Creole Petroleum. When the company, along with Shell, chose to finance the index of the Bolívar Archive, it marked another association with Venezuela’s culturally immortal Liberator. The result was a cementing of the ties between oil, Bolívar, and Venezuelan identity more broadly.

* * *

This chapter has shown that while Rómulo Betancourt’s rule did not hinge on the appropriation of Bolívar’s Archive alone, the publication of the foundational documents of his country’s liberator nevertheless proved essential to securing his authority and legitimating his state. Just as the French revolutionary assembly made sure to establish a national archives following the 1789 Revolution, and the ruling elites of the Early American Republic utilized founding documents to maintain their control, Rómulo Betancourt saw the Bolívar Archive as a means of consolidating his nascent democratic project. He did so in the context of the growth of foreign oil companies, particularly Shell and Creole, which came to exert considerable influence on Venezuela, through their public relations agendas, media, educational outreach, and creation of philanthropic and cultural foundations. In such a context then, the Bolívar Archive embodied a contradictory set of values: on one hand, it represented Betancourt’s appeal to national unity; on the other, it demonstrated the subordination of that unity to foreign interests. Yet it also demonstrated how, through cultural appropriation, the disparate interests of the Venezuelan left wing, the Venezuelan right wing, foreign oil, and even the United States

– in competition throughout Betancourt’s presidency – managed to cohere, if only figuratively. The ultimate harmony served as a testament not to Betancourt, but to the enduring power of Bolívar: that he was able to symbolically encompass such potent contradictions.

This increasing appeal to the country’s liberator, however, would soon prove cause for alarm. Seven years after Betancourt’s decree, historian Germán Carrera Damas published his graduate dissertation, *The Cult of Bolívar (El culto a Bolívar)*, which would emerge as a foundational work of Venezuelan historiography. In describing various political manipulations of Bolívar, which he considered detrimental to the Venezuelan people as a whole, Carrera Damas envisioned his study as a warning to contemporary politicians. “I wanted to tell them, ‘look, be careful,’” Carrera Damas said in a recent interview. “The people admired Bolívar like [the United States] admired Washington. That’s logical, and normal in any society. The problem comes when you take that, you implement it, you convert it into a state policy, and you convert it into a single point of view. It allows you to control society.”¹⁰⁵ Four decades later, after years of public service as an ambassador under Betancourt’s Punto Fijo democracy, Carrera Damas would be horrified to witness the next chapter of Venezuelan history. Amid economic recession and widespread discontent, a military colonel named Hugo Chávez would threaten to overthrow the entire political establishment on the heels of a movement he proclaimed Bolivarian.

¹⁰⁵ Germán Carrera Damas, Interview by Author, Caracas, July 30, 2013.

CHAPTER TWO

THE CALDERA DECREE: PUNTO FIJO DEMOCRACY'S LEGITIMACY CRISIS

You became infatuated with freedom, dazzled by her powerful allure; but because freedom is as dangerous as beauty in women, whom all seek to seduce out of love, or vanity, you failed to preserve her in her natural innocence and purity, just as she descended from heaven. Power, the visceral enemy of our rights, has stirred the private ambitions of each sector of our state.
– Simón Bolívar, 1829¹

In a meeting on May 7, 1998, members of the Venezuelan National Academy of History expressed concern over the state of the Bolívar Archive. Since Betancourt's 1962 decree, the Bolivarian Society had yet to finish the task of publishing the collected *Escritos del Libertador* (27 of the projected 33 volumes had appeared), and the members of the Academy demanded the project's immediate completion. "It is lamentable that other countries publish the work of their Heroes with the appropriate celerity," a summary of the meeting read, "and that it has taken Venezuela more than 38 years to edit the work of The Liberator." Academy Vice President Rafael Armando Rojas proposed a solution: "for the Academy to take, in its own hands, the publication of the remaining volumes." This, however, would require a transfer of the archive and a reappropriation of funds – steps demanding executive attention, according to Academy member Venezuelan Cardinal Rosalio Castillo Lara, who recommended that the matter be presented to the Venezuelan president, Rafael Caldera.²

Thus, over the coming months, Academy President Rafael Fernández wrote Caldera to inform him of the delays in publishing *Escritos del Libertador*. Highlighting the Academy's experience in maintaining archival documents, Fernández noted "that the

¹ "Una Mirada sobre la América Española, 1829" Volume 35, Document 2019 (Archivo del Libertador, AL).

² "Acta correspondiente a la junta ordinaria del jueves 7 de mayo de 1998" (Archivo de la Academia Nacional de la Historia, AANH).

Academy will assume this as any other activity ... we will take care of the archive, and we will act in the service of Bolívar's ideas."³ Though missing from the Academy's meeting notes, concerns would also emerge over the condition of the documents. As revealed by photographs of the archive, Bolívar's writings had been woefully neglected. Bundled haphazardly into uneven piles, in back offices of the Bolivarian Society, the pages had deteriorated from years of exposure to Caracas heat.

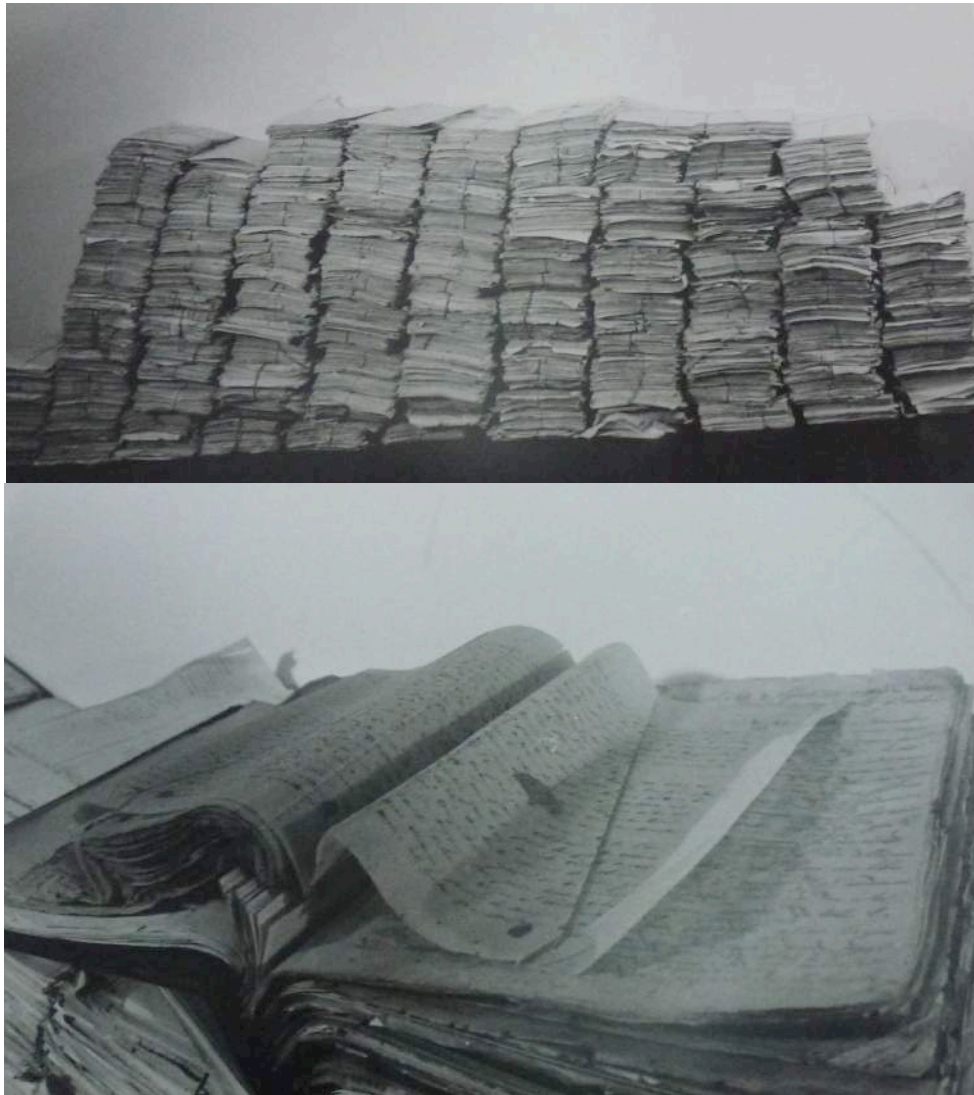


Figure 2.1: Pictures of the Bolívar Archive, as housed in the Bolivarian Society, in 1999.⁴

³ “Correspondencia de la Academia Nacional de la Historia al Sr. Presidente de la República,” Caracas, November 30, 1998, in *Boletín de la Academia Nacional de la Historia* (Enero-Febrero-Marzo), Tomo LXXXII, N° 325, 83 (Biblioteca de la Academia Nacional de la Historia).

⁴ “Fotografías” (AANH).

Caldera's response was relatively swift: on January 13, 1999, he issued a decree that annulled Betancourt's decree from 1962 and transferred custody of the Bolívar Archive to the National Academy of History.

So presented, the story of the 1999 transfer appears straightforward, an appropriate institutional reaction to obvious worries about the condition of the archive and the glacial pace of its publication. Yet the timing of the decree complicates such assumptions: while the conditions of the archive and the lagging publication rate of the *Escritos del Libertador* were valid concerns in 1999, they had long been valid concerns. For one, the conditions causing the deterioration of the documents had persisted for decades. Nor was there anything new about the plodding rate of publication. The Bolivarian Society had taken four years between its 12th and 13th volumes, from 1976 to 1980, and between its 17th and 18th volumes from 1983 to 1987; the 27th volume, for comparison, had been published in 1996, two years before discussions on the archive began in 1998.⁵ Given these curious circumstances, what, exactly, lay behind Caldera's decree?

In contrast to the 1962 decree, which had pointed to the fourth centennial of the founding of Caracas for its justification, Caldera's decree found its justification in the authority of the Venezuelan state. The archive, the decree read, "constitutes the most valuable repository of the actions related with the origin of our [Venezuelan] nationality ... it is of the highest national interest and duty of the state to preserve this material of

⁵ Sociedad Bolivariana de Venezuela, *Escritos del Libertador XII: Documentos N° 2291-2582* (Caracas: Sociedad Bolivariana de Venezuela, 1976); Sociedad Bolivariana de Venezuela, *Escritos del Libertador XIII: Documentos N° 2583-2939* (Caracas: Sociedad Bolivariana de Venezuela, 1980); Sociedad Bolivariana de Venezuela, *Escritos del Libertador XVII: Documentos N° 3990-4483* (Caracas: Sociedad Bolivariana de Venezuela, 1983); Sociedad Bolivariana de Venezuela, *Escritos del Libertador XVIII: Documentos N° 4484-5210* (Caracas: Sociedad Bolivariana de Venezuela, 1987); Sociedad Bolivariana de Venezuela, *Escritos del Libertador XXVII: Documentos N° 8419-9018* (Caracas: Sociedad Bolivariana de Venezuela, 1996) (Biblioteca de la Sociedad Bolivariana de Venezuela).

transcendental importance for the historical and cultural heritage of Venezuela, as well as to determine the exercise of its custody.”⁶ Venezuelan nationality, in other words, *originated* with Bolívar, a claim that effectively erased the existence of indigenous, *mestizo*, and other cultural groups that had preceded him. In the broader context of the decree, the politics here were unmistakable. Indeed the decree itself was among the final acts of the Caldera government, issued during the lame-duck stage of his presidency just 20 days before the inauguration of Hugo Chávez. As an outsider whose self-proclaimed Bolivarian movement promised to break definitively with the traditional political elite of Betancourt’s representative democracy, Chávez roused considerable tension among key political actors. These elite actors included Caldera, at whose house the Pact of Punto Fijo, the founding document of that democracy, had been signed, as well as members of the National Academy of History, several of whom maintained contact with the national government and served in various capacities as ministers and as secretaries.

As this chapter will show, Caldera’s decree was inspired by concerns that were chiefly political rather than institutional. In the polarized atmosphere that characterized Venezuelan society at the turn of the millennium, it demonstrates, politicians marshaled two differing conceptions of Bolívar. To the leaders of the Punto Fijo democracy, Bolívar represented the ultimate Venezuelan, a hero who modeled an ideal of civil conduct for citizens and politicians alike. To Hugo Chávez and his supporters, Bolívar represented an abstraction, an ideological tool around which to unite previously excluded indigenous and working class groups: the country, its history, its people – Chávez proclaimed – were Bolivarian. For *puntofijismo*, Bolívar was a noun; for *chavismo*, Bolívar was an adjective.

⁶ Decreto Presidencial nro. 3.211, *Gaceta Oficial de la República de Venezuela* (nro. 36.629), Caracas, 26 de enero de 1999, año CXXVII, mes IV, p. 307.816 (Sala de Lectura de la Biblioteca Nacional).

Their interpretations diverged on question of the role of the Venezuelan people: on one hand, Bolívar represented a singular hero for the people to emulate; on the other, he represented an ideal through which they could recover their own agency.

The chapter culminates with an account of the elaborate renovation process carried out by the Academy following the transfer. Funded primarily by a private bank along with several subsidiaries of foreign companies, the renovation was noteworthy for the absence of *chavismo*. Chávez not only refrained, at least initially, from asserting the power of his newfound state over the archive, which was controlled and financed by his critics, but he also expressed thanks to the Academy for assuming custody of it. At this early point in Chávez's political career, then, the Bolívar Archive remained a mechanism through which the political elites of Betancourt's democracy retained a claim to their Bolívar and, in some sense, to political legitimacy – a claim that Chávez would wait, for strategic reasons, to contest.

* * *

The Venezuelan system of representative democracy had seen enormous volatility since Betancourt had turned over the presidency to Raúl Leoni in 1964. Initially there was consolidation: the widespread insurgency from both political extremes waned as an oil boom in the 1970s provided, in the words of political scientist Terry Lynn Karl, “the modern day equivalent of the dream of El Dorado.”⁷ While other countries throughout Latin America fell to dictatorship, Venezuelan democracy remained intact, and the

⁷ George Ciccariello-Maher, *We Created Chávez: A People's History of the Venezuelan Revolution* (Durham [N.C.]: Duke University Press, 2013), 42–3; Terry Lynn Karl, *The Paradox of Plenty, Oil Booms and Petro-States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 71.

economy thrived: in five years, the government of Carlos Andrés Pérez, elected in 1973 with a massive popular mandate, generated a higher fiscal revenue than that of all Venezuelan governments since 1917 *combined*.⁸ Yet the large-scale projects pursued under Pérez, requiring huge expenditures with few adjustments to benefit public institutions, led to widespread economic decline and political discontent.⁹ Confronting overwhelming debt, President Luis Herrera Campins abruptly devalued the national currency, the bolivar, by 74% in 1983, and Jaime Lusinchi, who took power the following year and quickly aroused public ire through a scandalous affair with his secretary, was unable to mitigate the worst national recession in decades. In the 1988 elections, Venezuelans reelected Pérez, who promised a return to the Venezuela of the 1970s.¹⁰ Just weeks after his inauguration, however, Pérez reneged on his fiery campaign rhetoric decrying the neoliberal policies of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), instead introducing a series of austerity measures, including the slashing of public services and a hike in gas prices.¹¹ “In January and February of 1989, one could feel the tension rising,” recalled Charles Hardy, a Maryknoll priest living in a Caracas *barrio* at the time, and before long it came to the fore.¹² In the *Caracazo* of February 27, 1989, mass riots, featuring widespread looting and destruction of public property, broke out among the urban poor and quickly spread across the country. Pérez, forced to declare a state of emergency, ordered the military into the hillside *barrios*, and the result was 350 dead by official measures and between 1,000 and 1,500 unofficially. The event, which

⁸ In 1973 alone, for example, revenues consisted of roughly \$800 million each month. Karl, 116–7.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 161.

¹⁰ Bart Jones, *¡Hugo! From Mud Hut to Perpetual Revolution: The Hugo Chávez Story* (London: The Bodley Head, 2008), 109-110.

¹¹ Karl, 180.

¹² Charles Hardy, *Cowboy in Caracas* (Willimantic [C.T.]: Curbstone Press, 2007), 25.

marked Latin America's first popular rejection of IMF policies and the beginning of the downfall of *puntofijismo*, became known colloquially as "the day the hills came down."¹³

The next momentous challenge came three years later: a February 1992 coup attempt against Pérez mounted by Chávez, then an army colonel, with a band of soldiers. Though the rebellion failed, it established Chávez's notoriety, in part due to his early-morning proclamation that his Bolivarian Movement had failed "*por ahora*, for now."¹⁴ According to a best-selling book published later that year, the coup, capitalizing on years of social discontent, was a "rebellion of the angels": in *barrios* throughout Caracas, graffiti emblazoned walls with Chávez's vow, *por ahora*.¹⁵ Political change was inevitable: Pérez was soon impeached on embezzlement charges, and in the presidential elections that followed, Rafael Caldera broke with the political party he had founded, Copei, to run as an independent candidate.¹⁶ Though Caldera, like Pérez, would betray his campaign promises and continue the country's neoliberal turn, he took one crucial step to satisfy popular demands: shortly after he was sworn in during February 1994,

¹³ Karl, 180; Jones, 123. The experience of military officials, many of whom themselves came from these lower classes they were instructed to repress, would contribute to a surge in colonel Hugo Chávez's subversive movement, MBR-200. Its name (*Movimiento Bolivariano Revolucionario-200*, or Revolutionary Bolivarian Movement-200) derived from the 200th anniversary of Bolívar's birth in 1983, the year in which it was founded. See Jones, 67-82, 122-6. George Ciccariello-Maher also provides an excellent account of the *Caracazo* from the perspective of left-wing revolutionaries and activists, noting that the event was "neither completely spontaneous nor fully organized." See Ciccariello-Maher, 88-103.

¹⁴ The speech was given after Chávez and his soldiers had surrendered as a means of preventing more fighting, encouraging troops in the city of Maracay to surrender. The Minister of Defense, Fernando Ochoa Antich, permitted Chávez's speech to be broadcast live, on national television, and did not require him to write down what he planned to say or change out of his military uniform. Ochoa Antich later said of his decision: "The most serious mistake was to allow Hugo Chávez, instead of being presented as a military felon who had betrayed the institutions and had been defeated, to be presented in a way as a hero who had risen up against an unjust government that was corrupt, which wasn't true ... It was a political mistake to allow him to go on live. I never imagined it would have the political impact it did." Quoted in Jones, 158.

¹⁵ Angela Zago, *La Rebelión de los Angeles* (Caracas: Fuentes Editores, 1992); Hardy, 40.

¹⁶ Jones, 181-2, 199-201. After remaining virtually absent from politics for several decades after his first term as president from 1969-1974, Caldera regained prominence following his tacit endorsement of Chávez's coup. See *4-F: Desplome del parlamento puntofijista* (Caracas: Fondo Editorial William Lara, 2012).

Caldera granted Hugo Chávez a presidential pardon, releasing him from prison where he had been since his failed coup attempt. In another apparent lack of foresight, he also failed to ban Chávez from political activity.¹⁷



Figure 2.2: In this montage of those who served as President of Venezuela from 1959-1998, Hugo Chávez stood out for his non-European features. (from top left: Rómulo Betancourt, Raúl Leoni, Rafael Caldera, Carlos Andrés Pérez, Luis Herrera Campins, Jaime Lusinchi, Ramón Velásquez, and Hugo Chávez).¹⁸

As Figure 2.2 demonstrates, Hugo Chavez's rise to the presidency stood as a true anomaly in the Punto Fijo system. A dark-skinned *mestizo* who grew up in a dirt shack and hawked fruits on the street as a child to support his family,¹⁹ Chávez's story was antithetical to that of the small handful of creole-descended elites that had previously

¹⁷ Jones, 184.

¹⁸ Montage designed by author, with images from *Venezuela Tuya*, *Venelogia*, *Veniciclopedia*, *Jaimelusinchi.org*. It is important to note that Ramón Velásquez, the second-to-last leader pictured and appointed as interim president from 1993-4, following the impeachment of Pérez, was (and remains) a key member of the Venezuelan National Academy of History.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 22-3.

dominated Venezuelan politics. In contrast to these self-styled gentlemen, Chávez eschewed suits and was brash, delivering long rambling speeches, at times breaking into song. He claimed to represent the country's impoverished sectors, which by 1997 encompassed 67% of the population.²⁰ "These people were invisible: they were dying of hunger – often they had to eat their own dogs – and the politicians [of the two dominant parties under *puntofijismo*] ignored them," said one of Chávez's supporters, who had toured the country during the presidential campaigns of her husband, Teodoro Petkoff, who represented the Socialist Party in 1983 and 1988. "Chávez made them seen by the whole world. He made them visible."²¹

The centerpiece of Chávez's political project was Bolívar. The day after his 1994 release from prison, Chávez visited Bolívar's tomb at the National Pantheon. Just as Betancourt and his fellow student activists had done in 1928, Chávez placed a wreath beside Bolívar's grave, a symbolic beginning to his series of travels around the country, which he called the "Bolivarian hurricane."²² Chavez invoked Bolívar in the name of a new political project that incorporated previously excluded working class and indigenous groups. Asked during an interview what Simón Bolívar meant to him, Chavez described the liberator as an embodiment of those he sought to empower: "[I see Bolívar] in the face of the Yukpa and Yanomami Indians, trampled by the dominant sectors of our country; in the working class of Caracas; in university students and in schools," he said.

²⁰ Indexmundi, CIA World Factbook, accessed February 27, 2014, <http://www.indexmundi.com/g/g.aspx?v=69&c=ve&l=en>.

²¹ Teodoro Petkoff's story is a curious one: after fighting as a guerrilla and member of the Venezuelan Communist Party, founding the political party Movement for Socialism in 1971, and campaigning for president in the 1980s, Petkoff accepted a position in Rafael Caldera's second government in 1995 and proceeded to help institute a number of conservative neoliberal economic reforms. In 2000, he founded *Tal Cual*, a virulently anti-Chávez newspaper. He and his wife, who remains a Chávez supporter, divorced during the 1990s. Lillian Rojas, Interview by author (Spanish), Tape Recording, Caracas, May 7, 2013.

²² Jones, 187.

“Bolívar is present in our national spirit, he forms a part of the hope of our nation ... And I think that that's exactly what we need in our Venezuelan world which has no ideology: we need to develop our own, unique approach. This is an ideological banner for the ideological struggle.”²³ Chávez’s Bolívar was an expansive figure, sufficiently vast and heterogeneous to encompass a broad new coalition. Elected president in 1998 with 56% of the popular vote, and over a million more votes than his closest competitor, Chavez saw the ratification of his political project.²⁴ “Once again, the people of Simón Bolívar have shown themselves to be a grand people,” Chávez declared in a speech after the results were revealed. “Venezuela is being born again.”²⁵

The reaction of Chávez’s opposition often took the form of class-based condescension. A cartoon in *El Camaleón*, a satirical newspaper edited by the conservative *El Nacional*, for instance, mocked the euphoria in *el ranchito*, a typical hillside shack occupied by Chavez’s destitute constituency: “This year I need to bring five agendas,” the text read, “because I have many plans.” In a jab against the stability as well as individuality of these citizens, the speech bubble came directly from the crumbling, one-room shack, hanging precipitously on a cliff. Where Chávez proclaimed the distinctiveness of each citizen – embodied within the larger framework of Bolívar – the opposition media envisioned an amorphous mass, blindly drawn to the president-elect’s populist charisma.

²³ José Vicente Rangel, *De Yare a Miraflores, el mismo subversivo: Entrevistas al comandante Hugo Chávez Frías (1992-2012)* (Caracas: Ediciones Correo del Orinoco, 2013), 94-5.

²⁴ Harold Trinkunas and Jennifer McCoy, The Carter Center, “Observation of the 1998 Venezuelan Elections,” February 1999, accessed February 27, 2014, <http://www.cartercenter.org/documents/1151.pdf>.

²⁵ “Hugo Chavez is Elected President of Venezuela, Urges 'Reconciliation',” *The Times of India (1861-Current)*, Dec 08, 1998, accessed January 6, 2014, <http://search.proquest.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/docview/608974375?accountid=11311>.



Figure 2.3: Cartoon from *El Camaleón*.²⁶

The historians of the National Academy of History, many of whom had served in various governments under Betancourt's democracy, shared these prejudices. In a lengthy interview published in late January in *El Universal*, one of the country's leading daily newspapers, Academy member Elías Pino Iturrieta decried the president-elect's use of Bolívar. "We are facing not only a problem of historiographical interpretation, but a pathology," he said. "In the past presidential elections, how many people voted for Bolívar?" For Pino Iturrieta, Bolívar had been dangerously misappropriated; by distorting history, he suggested, Chávez had deceived the general populace. The implementation of Chávez's ideology, Pino Iturrieta continued, would inaugurate a "popular-Bolivarian-patriotic cult, capable of provoking harmful conduct" and arouse "artificial and odious classifications of the citizenry." Though the ultimate effects were political, Pino Iturrieta warned of an even deeper cultural violation: "the danger of historical ignorance."²⁷

²⁶ Oscar Cruz, "El Ranchito," Cartoon, *El Camaleón*, January 29, 1999 (Hemeroteca de la Academia Nacional de la Historia, HANH).

²⁷ Jaime Bello-León, "Simón Bolívar no era pitoniso," *El Universal*, January 24, 1999, 1-18 (HANH).

Politicians contributed with their own distinct political language, epitomized by Rafael Caldera's farewell address to Congress on January 29, 1999. In the emotional, hour-and-a-half long speech – “Venezuela is entering an age of long speeches,” he explained in a hostile nod to Chávez – Caldera invoked Bolívar as he defended the record of *puntofijismo* and the 1961 Constitution as a Magna Carta for the flourishing of democracy. “I believe that, as the children of the Fatherland of Bolívar,” he said, “we know by experience what freedom is, what it means to lose it, and what it costs to recover it.” Caldera invoked the liberator here symbolically; his Bolívar was a noun, the founder of the Venezuelan nation and guiding father of its political children, who in this case comprised the legislators of the Punto Fijo Congress. An article summarizing the event, published in *El Nacional*, concluded with a striking differentiation: while the people outside, in the working-class Capitolio district, “passed by indifferently,” the legislators in attendance gave Caldera a standing ovation, while he himself wiped away tears.²⁸

The atmosphere was even more charged at Chávez's controversial inauguration on February 2. During the oath of office, while Caldera stared stonily ahead, Chávez swore, “over this moribund Constitution” – an oath greeted with gasps by those in attendance – to instill “the necessary democratic transformations so that the new republic has an adequate magna carta for these new times.”²⁹

²⁸ Adela Lea, “Los hijos de Bolívar saben el valor de la libertad y lo que significa perderla,” *El Nacional*, January 30, 1999, A-1 (HANH).

²⁹ *Discurso Memorable, Día Toma Posesión 02-FEB-1999*, 2013, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4p_tDYgFRAY&feature=youtube_gdata_player.



Figure 2.4: Chávez's oath of office, with Caldera standing in center.³⁰

It was at this moment, according to Guillermo Morón, who had served as director of the ANH for nearly a decade, that Chávez revealed his intention to become a dictator. “The first act of government of President Chávez,” he said in an interview, “was a false oath, by a constitution which he considered moribund ... and Caldera, who was present, did not say one word. Therefore, Caldera ... being present during a false oath, was irresponsible, a traitor to his homeland.”³¹ Chávez began his inaugural address with a striking invocation of Venezuela's “infinite father,” echoing Bolívar's speech two centuries earlier at the Congress of Angostura, which established the Republic of *Gran Colombia*, a union of Venezuela, Colombia, and Ecuador: “Happy is the citizen,” he said, “who, displaying the armorial shield of his command, has the privilege of convoking the

³⁰ Image accessed online, March 1, 2014, <http://rafaelcaldera.com/index.php?route=information/gallery&album=10>.

³¹ Guillermo Morón, Interview by author, Tape recording, Caracas, June 21, 2013.

representatives of national sovereignty so that they might exercise their will, which is absolute.”³² “Why Bolívar?,” Chávez asked rhetorically, after quoting Whitman’s “Song of Myself” to emphasize that he was in purpose as “sure as the most certain sure.” Bolívar, he said, represented the “urgent need for all Venezuelans – indeed for all Latin Americans– to look to “the roots of our own existence [to find] the formula to get out of this horrible labyrinth in which we all find ourselves, in one way or another.” Like the Roman god Janus, whose two faces allowed him to preside over transitions, Chávez emphasized that “we must look to the past to attempt to unravel the mysteries of the future.”

Chávez’s allusions, which ranged from American literature to Roman mythology, signaled a larger purpose: the renewal of the Bolivarian ideal of hemispheric integration. Chávez envisioned a self-reliant Latin America, liberated from IMF austerity measures and pursuing its own unitary interests apart from U.S. influence. The use of Whitman was particularly meaningful to Chavez’s revolutionary fervor, as the poet had served as an important figure for revolutionaries across the region; in the words of historian Greg Grandin, “Whitman embodied an alternative ‘America,’ and they sensed in him ... [the possibility of] a “democratic and progressive” America, one in which the nation’s universal promise was not shackled to Washington’s ambitions.”³³ The foundation of Chávez’s political project, as outlined in the two-hour-long speech, included the convocation of a Constitutional Assembly – by a national referendum – to replace the

³² “Discurso de Toma de Posesión,” accessed December 24, 2013, <http://www.analitica.com/bitbliblioteca/hchavez/toma.asp>; For translation, I consulted David Bushnell, ed., *El Libertador: Writings of Simón Bolívar*, trans. Frederick Fornoff (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 31, 221.

³³ Greg Grandin, “Your Americanism and Mine: Americanism and Anti-Americanism in the Americas,” *The American Historical Review* 111, no. 4 (October 1, 2006): 1044, doi:10.1086/ahr.111.4.1042.

current Constitution with one that honored human rights and social justice, reflected the twinned aims of national development and regional integration, and, he suggested, renamed the country with the watermark of its liberator: the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. With a charismatic intensity that impressed even his most hostile critics, Chávez had fashioned his political project under the banner of the country's great liberator. To carry it to completion was, in his words, "to reclaim the Bolivarian dream."³⁴

* * *

Several months later, Chávez turned his attention to the Bolívar Archive itself. In a June 29 letter written to Fernández and Ponce, the Academy Director and Secretary, respectively, Chávez's personal secretary expressed the president's "satisfaction that such invaluable material ... is under the custody and preservation of such a dignified institute."³⁵ As Academy member Inés Quintero noted, Chávez's letter indicated tacitly that Caldera's decree was "not only a legitimate decree, but one which Chávez himself carried out ... Caldera enacted the decree, but Chávez approved the act of transfer."³⁶ Indeed, as the rest of this chapter shows, Chávez's early politics permitted the coexistence of two Bolívars: the Academy's which focused on Bolívar as a singular figure whose heroism provided a model of honor and citizenship, and Chávez's own, which focused on Bolívar's broader appeal to previously excluded groups. Over the next

³⁴ "Discurso de Toma de Posesión."

³⁵ "Republica de Venezuela: Secretario privado del presidente de la república: 003453, Miraflores, 29 de junio de 1999," in *Boletín*, 97 (BANH).

³⁶ Inés Quintero, Interview by author, Caracas, July 25, 2013.

year, the Academy solicited financing from private companies, carried out an extensive renovation of the archive, and disseminated stories about its efforts through the media, thus consolidating its own vision of Bolívar.

Once details of the transfer were settled by June 1999, the key matter for the Academy was to confirm a means of financing the archive that would enable not only the continued publication of *Escritos del Libertador*, but also the construction of a renovated archival space. Agreements had already stipulated that Academy Director Fernández would seek both money and land from private and public institutions in Venezuela.³⁷ Withdrawing their contributions to the Bolivarian Society for the preparation of *Escritos del Libertador*, the Ministries of Education and Interior Relations awarded a combined 6 million *bolivars*, roughly \$10,000 USD, for the same purpose.³⁸ Immediately following Caldera's decree, the privately run Banco de Venezuela offered to fund construction of a new space for the Archive, and the Academy solicited more funds from the bank three months later, in June.³⁹ The final breakthrough, however, came a month later, in July, with the Banco Venezolano de Crédito (BVC), another large private bank which agreed to donate 40 million *bolivars*, roughly \$70,000, to carry the project forward to its completion. In a letter sent to the Academy, read by BVC President Oscar García Mendoza during a press conference held on July 8, the BVC described its contribution: "material, managerial, and technical assistance to contribute to the restoration of the Bolívar Archive, convinced as we are that this precious documentary repository is of the

³⁷ "Acta Correspondiente a la junta ordinaria del jueves 28 de enero de 1999," 4-5; "Acta Correspondiente a la junta ordinaria del jueves 13 de mayo de 1999," 2-3 (AANH).

³⁸ "En busca del arca perdida," *El Nacional* (BANH). The exchange rate of *bolivars*, then the official Venezuelan currency, to US dollars was 606.82 bs for one USD in 1999. Lawrence H. Officer, "Exchange Rates Between the United States Dollar and Forty-one Currencies," *MeasuringWorth*, 2014, accessed January 6, 2014, <http://www.measuringworth.com/exchange/global/>.

³⁹ "Acta Correspondiente a la junta ordinaria del jueves 11 de febrero de 1999," 2; "Acta Correspondiente a la junta ordinaria del jueves 17 de junio de 1999," 2 (AANH).

highest value to our collective memory.”⁴⁰ In announcing the bequest, García Mendoza paid tribute to his late grandfather, Cristóbal Mendoza, distinguished historian and member of the Academy who had been president of the Bolivarian Society when Betancourt’s decree was issued in 1962.⁴¹ Inspired by his grandfather, García Mendoza explained, “when we found out that the archive was endangered, we did not hesitate to give our support for its recuperation, because as Venezuelans, we feel committed to working on the maintenance of such material of transcendental importance for the historical and cultural heritage of the country.”⁴² As detailed by members of the Academy, the donation would provide for the installation of a hydro-pneumatic system of lighting and air conditioning, fire alarm, and security system; floor repair; and the housing of the documents on marble shelves with green glass, to neutralize processes of oxidation and further deterioration.⁴³ If all went as planned, the Archive would open to the public on December 17 – the 169th anniversary of the death of the country’s liberator.⁴⁴

After moving the documents to a protected vault within the BVC, where they would remain for the duration of the construction, the Academy forged ahead with its project.⁴⁵ It encountered difficulties, initially, with the door to the archive’s front

⁴⁰ “Acta Correspondiente a la junta ordinaria del jueves 8 de julio de 1999,” 4 (AANH).

⁴¹ “Sesión especial de la Academia Nacional de Historia con motivo de la donación del Banco Venezolano de Crédito para la restauración del Archivo del Libertador,” in “Acta Correspondiente a la junta ordinaria del jueves 8 de julio de 1999,” 4 (AANH); “Homenaje: Cristóbal L. Mendoza: Trayectoria Y Voluntad,” *Revista de Historia de América*, no. 85 (January 1, 1978): 5–6.

⁴² Mercedes González, “Donados Bs. 60 millones para el Archivo del Libertador,” *El Nacional*, July 9, 1999, C/8 (AANH).

⁴³ González, “Donados Bs. 60 millones para el Archivo del Libertador” (HANH).

⁴⁴ “Recobran vida en el presente,” *El Correo del Presidente*, July 9, 1999, 5 (AANH).

⁴⁵ “Por remodelación de sede: Venezolano de Crédito designado depositario del Archivo del Libertador,” *Últimas Noticias*, August 15, 1999, 13 (AANH); “El Libertador en el BVC,” *El Nacional*, August 30, 1999, B/7 (AANH). The transfer itself from Bolívar’s Natal House to the BVC was carried out by personnel from the National Library and the Academy, with the assistance of the city’s firefighters and the Armed Forces. “Acta correspondiente a la junta ordinaria del jueves 22 de julio de 1999,” 1-2 (AANH).

entrance: as noted in a meeting between a member of the Academy, BCV, and the construction company Interambiente, the original door, ordered from Mosler Safe Company in Ohio, “does not offer the required security.” It was replaced with a door from the local Coresdesca company, costing 10 times more.⁴⁶ Such challenges prevented the renovation from meeting the much anticipated December 17, 2000 deadline, but construction nevertheless proceeded: the marble arrived from Italy over the fall, and by the beginning of the new millennium, the archive had moved to its final stages of preparation.⁴⁷

By January, the chief concern had become prospects for the archive’s wider financing – an endeavor more or less dictated by the BVC. “Given that the revenue of institutions, like ours in the Academy, is increasingly meager,” a BVC letter read, “it has become necessary to take advantage of the willingness of Venezuelans [to assist] cultural projects.” The bank’s Director of Marketing and Public Relations, Anabel Pérez, elaborated on this during a presentation to the Academy at one of its regular meetings, during which she proposed the creation of a program to generate resources for the archive. Titled Friends of Bolívar Archive, the program would divide participants into four categories – friends, benefactors, co-sponsors, and donors – for the contribution of goods ranging from “economic resources to objects that can help to embellish the site [of the archive].” Pérez envisioned the internet as a crucial tool for advertising the donor program as well as for the digital diffusion of the documents themselves.⁴⁸ Pérez’s true brainstorm focused particularly on the country’s phone companies. Under a commonly

⁴⁶ “Interambiente a la Academia Nacional de Historia,” August 8, 1999 (AANH).

⁴⁷ “Vida de la Academia,” in Academia Nacional de la Historia, *Boletín de la Academia Nacional de la Historia* (Octubre-Noviembre-Diciembre), 407 (BANH).

⁴⁸ “Junta ordinaria del jueves 20 de enero de 2000,” 1-2 (AANH).

used service, users bought prepaid cards for use with either private or public phones – what if those cards carried images of the archive? “The rescue of [the archive] today offers an image that was not previously available,” she said, “and it would be an opportune way for the numerous Venezuelans who use these instruments [to learn about it].” More importantly, Pérez saw in the phone cards a potential for profit. The cards of most customers normally retained a certain fraction of money after they were discarded for new ones, and the Academy, following the bank’s program, might encourage patrons and the general public to donate these residual proceeds to support the Bolívar Archive. Such an idea – which “has not occurred to anyone in the marketplace” – brought the possibility of both diffusing knowledge of the archive and raising funds: “if we can communicate,” she said, “with the assent of businesses, to Venezuelans that these residuals can be deposited in mailboxes, supermarkets, pharmacies, the subsidiaries of our bank, or those other organizations which want to join the program, they can be redeemed afterward in their value.”⁴⁹ Pérez’s idea combined public education and the profit motive in a way that served everyone’s interests.

By mid-April, with the construction of the archive close to completion, the Academy set a May 30 date for its groundbreaking. In the week leading up to the event, the Academy, the BVC, and the archive’s other sponsors spread the news. “The Archive of the Liberator will show its new face,” announced a May 23 article in *El Nacional*; “now [the archive] features a dignified space for its safekeeping and conservation,” echoed *El Universal*.⁵⁰ A day before the inauguration on May 29, the Caracas-based *El Globo* distributed 50,000 copies of a four-page tabloid supplement on the archive in its

⁴⁹ Ibid., 3-4.

⁵⁰ Pablo Villamizar, “Archivo del Libertador mostrará su nueva cara,” *El Nacional*, May 23, 2000, C; “Reabren sede del Archivo del Libertador,” *El Universal*, May 26, 2000, 3-5 (AANH).

daily newspaper (the supplement, ordered a month earlier, cost seven million bolivars, \$10,000 USD).⁵¹ The same day, *El Nacional* ran a full-length feature on the archive in its “Culture” section, including a teaser for it on the newspaper’s front page. “Archive of the Liberator,” read the headline, “a dignified place for the memory of the American hero.” The dramatic introduction, whose tone rivaled Chavez’s speeches, is worth quoting at length:

It is a sad fate that we Venezuelans have reserved for a man for whom life was nothing but an unwavering commitment to liberty and justice. Simón Bolívar does not deserve such forgetfulness and neglect, such disrespect and indifference ... And thus it is shameful to note that the majority of us, fellow compatriots of Bolívar, disavow his thinking ... and that in the land where he was born, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, his personal archive ... has been at the point of disappearing due to lack of proper care and storage ... What follows is a story that should not be told. A story that, fortunately, might have an outcome other than the irreversible loss of memory.

As the great national hero who embodied liberty and justice, Bolivar deserved an archive worthy of his importance to the collective past. At 11 a.m. the following day, decades of terrible neglect would be appropriately rectified: the new archive would show “the face of dignity: a beautiful space with floors and walls of grey marble, bookcases with columns of Carrara marble and glass shelves, and an armored door – the type found in a bank – to ensure the integrity of the legacy of Simón Bolívar.”⁵² That the Bolívar Archive would finally represent the grandness of the man whose papers it housed was an achievement enabled, the article made clear, by the collaboration of the Academy and the BVC.

⁵¹ “Blanca Elena Pantin al Dr. Rafael Fernández Herés,” 13 de abril de 2000 (AANH).

⁵² Juan Antonio González, “Archivo del Libertador: digno lugar para la memoria del héroe Americano,” *El Nacional*, May 29, 2000, C-1 (AANH).

The opening of the Archive was a festive event, infused symbolically with religion, politics, and culture. To begin, the monsignor Jorge Urosa Savino, archbishop of Valencia, the country's third largest city, blessed the facilities in which the archive was kept.⁵³ Fernández followed, with a short speech thanking those who contributed to the archive's renovation, particularly the BVC – which had in fact paid 110 million bolivars, nearly three times as much as originally indicated, for the renovations – and detailing the history of the renovation.⁵⁴ He stressed the close collaboration between political figures and the Academy, noting how, before Caldera published his decree, the Minister of Interior Relations, Asdrúbal Aguiar, had approached the Academy with concerns over the state of the Bolívar Archive, and the Academy had responded with a letter to Caldera offering its cooperation.⁵⁵ In fact this account was slightly misleading: conversations had begun in the Academy at least as early as May 1998, when members had considered approaching Caldera directly because previous conversations with Aguiar had proved “lamentable.”⁵⁶ Yet by suppressing these details, and emphasizing the role of the state and its ministers in the events surrounding the transfer, Fernández designated political power as the pivotal force behind the Bolívar Archive. The actions of his institution, in other words, found their legitimation in the forces of Caldera's near-moribund political state.

Oscar García Mendoza, President of the BVC, delivered the final speech, which served to reconcile the ambitions of banker, historian, and politician. “There is no better or more appropriate project” than the Bolívar Archive, he began, “for a bank Venezuelan

⁵³ “Acto de inauguración de las obras de restauración de la sede del Archivo del Libertador: Programa” (AANH).

⁵⁴ González, “Archivo del Libertador” (AANH).

⁵⁵ “Palabras del Dr. Rafael Fernando Herés, Director de la Academia Nacional de la Historia, con motivo de la reinauguración del Archivo del Libertador,” 1 (AANH).

⁵⁶ “Acta correspondiente a la junta ordinaria del jueves 7 de mayo de 1998,” 1 (AANH).

in name, tradition and shareholders – and [we intend] to remain so.” Citing Bolívar’s “moral character traits” reflected in archival documents – honesty, tenacity, courage, austerity – he thanked the many institutions and businesses that had supported the project, including the Academy. How appropriate it was, García Mendoza noted, that the BVC was celebrating its 75th anniversary: “During our long history, we have chosen the difficult path, sacrificing easy profit or business to accommodate certain situations,” he said. “For indeed our only constants are change, modification, advancement. Therefore, even though we are conservative, we change and better ourselves with the security that this is the route to permanency.”⁵⁷ The speeches were followed by a tour of the new archive, a press conference, and a party.⁵⁸

Alongside García Mendoza’s speech, the BVC and the archive’s other corporate sponsors made certain that their roles in the enterprise were duly acknowledged. The following day, the California-based Sun Microsystems, which had a subsidiary in Caracas, placed an advertisement in *El Universal* celebrating its proud contribution to the archive project, joined by the Academy, BVC, and the Universidad de Los Andes in Mérida, who announced: “We invite you to join our efforts!”⁵⁹ In full-page advertisements that ran in *El Nacional* and *El Universal* the day following the inauguration, the BVC focused on its own role in the restoration. Featuring a reprint of García Mendoza’s speech from the inauguration, the advertisements suggested that the renovations to the Bolívar Archive went toward “rescuing the heritage of Venezuelans.” The bank’s logo alone (not the Academy’s) was prominently displayed along with a

⁵⁷ “Palabras del Dr. Oscar García Mendoza, Presidente del Banco Venezolano de Crédito, con motivo de la reinauguración del Archivo del Libertador,” 1-3 (AANH).

⁵⁸ “Acto de inauguración de las obras de restauración de la sede del Archivo del Libertador: Programa” (AANH).

⁵⁹ “Un aporte para la memoria del mundo,” advertisement in *El Universal* (May 31, 2000): 2-5 (AANH).

graphic commemorating the bank’s 75th anniversary and a link to its website – a clear intention to garner its own publicity, and, more broadly, to conflate its own aims and those of Bolívar.⁶⁰



Figure 2.5: Advertisements from Sun Microsystems (left) and BVC (right), respectively.⁶¹

Recognition of the archive’s renovation extended beyond Venezuelan borders.

The President of the Central Bank of Bolivia’s Cultural Foundation, Valentín Abecia

Baldivieso, wrote to Fernández that the project “satisfies me immensely,” and the

President of Guatemala’s Academy of History and Geography congratulated the

Academy, “very sincerely, for having been selected to carry out this important work in

⁶⁰ “Rescatando la herencia de los venezolanos,” advertisement in *El Nacional* (May 31, 2000): E/3 and *El Universal* (May 31, 2000): 2-3 (AANH).

⁶¹ *Ibid.*; “Rescatando la herencia de los venezolanos,” advertisement in *El Nacional* (May 31, 2000): E/3 and *El Universal* (May 31, 2000): 2-3 (AANH).

defense of history and of our best men of Latin America.”⁶² In Lisboa, Portugal, the Ministry of Culture took note of how the BVC’s support allowed “such valuable improvements in [the Academy’s] facilities.”⁶³ In the United States, the archive had already figured in conversations between the Academy and Brown University’s John Carter Brown Library, which had recently opened a collection of Bolívar manuscripts and memorabilia, the largest such collection outside of Latin America.⁶⁴ Chávez himself was invited to speak at the opening ceremony, held in March, and though he almost came, according to Norman Fiering, the director of the library at the time, his Ambassador to the United States, Alfredo Toro Hardy, talked instead.⁶⁵ In his own account of the ceremony, Germán Carrera Damas, the distinguished historian who had warned politicians about the cult of Bolívar in 1969, suggested that the proceedings, dedicating a room in honor of a collection donor, Maury Bromsen, for instance, should have discomfited cult devotees: “Indeed, to see that the name of the generous donor of the documents exhibited in the room is placed before that of the Liberator would itself appear to be blasphemous, although it is the result, pure and simple, of the well-deserved and normal expression of institutional gratitude to a distinguished benefactor ... who is known for his fervent Bolivarianism.”⁶⁶ In short, a virtual chorus of statesmen,

⁶² “Valentín Abecia Baldivieso a Rafael Fernández Heres,” La Paz, June 5, 2000, in *Boletín de la Academia Nacional de la Historia* (Abril-Mayo-Junio), Tomo LXXXII, N° 330, 113; “Jorge Mario García Laguardia a Rafael Fernández Heres,” Guatemala, June 15, 2000, in *Ibid.*, 115 (BANH).

⁶³ “Joaquim Veríssimo Serrão a Rafael Fernández Heres, N° 29012000,” Lisboa, June 7, 2000, in *Ibid.*, 114.

⁶⁴ Brown University News Service, “Venezuelan ambassador to speak at opening of Bolivar collection,” March 3, 2000, accessed January 6, 2014, http://brown.edu/Administration/News_Bureau/1999-00/99-091.html.

⁶⁵ The library also made a 20-minute educational film on Bolívar for the event, since, as Fiering noted, “there was nothing cinematic available that did not focus almost entirely on Manuela Sáenz,” Bolívar’s mistress. Norman Fiering, email message to author, January 9, 2014.

⁶⁶ Quoted in Norman Fiering, Foreword to *Simón Bolívar: Essays on the Life and Legacy of the Liberator*, David Bushnell and Lester Langley, eds. (Lanham [M.D.]: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2008), x.

philanthropists, and institutional heads from America to Europe acknowledged the National Academy of History and the BVC for safeguarding the legacy of Bolívar.

* * *

After collaboration with the government, extensive fundraising, and much public fanfare, the Bolívar Archive finally opened. This process, tied as it was to the tensions generated by the election of Chávez and the implementation of his controversial political program, which spelled a definitive break from the past four decades under Betancourt's representative democracy, confirmed the archive's political and social significance. To Rafael Caldera's government, withering under social and economic crisis, Bolívar and his archive offered a final symbolic attempt at consolidation before Chávez assumed power. To the Banco Venezolano de Crédito, and the other companies that contributed to the renovation process, the archive represented an effort to educate Venezuelan citizens about the legacy of their great national hero – a philanthropic gesture they eagerly emphasized in the media at home and abroad. By the time of the archive's festive inauguration, these efforts had largely paid off: institutions public and private, domestic and international, recognized the great efforts of both the BVC and the Academy in preserving the memory of the country's liberator. Two days after the inauguration, on June 1, the Academy voted unanimously to designate José Rafael Lovera, a member of both the Academy and the board of the BVC, as the archive's chief curator, and formal

visits to the archive began a year and a half later.⁶⁷ Beginning with 19 visits that year, the archive would give tours to groups of school students and offer features for television programs, even hosting a tour of a group from Chávez's weekly television program, *Aló Presidente*.⁶⁸

Yet despite the great optimism reflected in such activities, the Bolivarian Society remained permanently affected by Caldera's decree. Upon being inaugurated as president of the Society in March 2002, historian Vinicio Romero held one objective in mind: "We will try to recover the private archive of the Liberator and the writings of Bolívar, which were stolen by former President Caldera's decree and are now in the custody of the [Academy]," he told *Últimas Noticias* in an interview. "Our idea is not to promote partisan discussions. We are not a group of sanctimonious prigs that prays and lights candles to Bolívar, as some believe. Our goal is to expand the critical study of the life and work of the Liberator."⁶⁹ Though Romero's objective of having the documents returned to the Bolivarian Society would never be fully realized, the Chávez government, eight years later, would agree on one point: that Caldera's decree had misappropriated the archive, making it essential that Bolívar's documents, once again, change hands.

⁶⁷ Rafael Fernández Heras a José Rafael Lovera, Caracas, June 1, 2000, in *Boletín de la Academia Nacional de la Historia* (Abril-Mayo-Junio), Tomo LXXXII, N° 330, 102; Academia Nacional de la Historia, "Distribución anual de actividades febrero 1999/abril 2010," (AANH).

⁶⁸ Academia Nacional de la Historia, "Distribución anual de actividades febrero 1999/abril 2010," (AANH).

⁶⁹ José Gabriel Díaz, "'No somos beatos del Libertador,'" *Últimas Noticias*, March 20, 2002, 68 (AANH).

CHAPTER THREE

THE CHAVEZ DECREE: RECUPERATING THE PEOPLE'S HISTORY

Fellow citizens, show that you are worthy of representing a free people, casting aside any notion that I am indispensable to the republic. If a single man were necessary to sustain a state, that state should not exist, and in the end would not.
– Simón Bolívar, 1830¹

On April 12, 2010, President Hugo Chávez decreed the transfer of the Archives of Simón Bolívar and independence hero Francisco de Miranda – both maintained by the National Academy of History – to the state-controlled General Archive of the Nation (AGN).² Previous decrees by Betancourt (in 1962) and Caldera (in 1999) had been plain and concise, locating their justification in the fourth centennial celebration of Caracas, and in the power of the state to determine the institutional body in charge of the archive. Eleven years later, however, Chávez broke from these precedents by directly embracing the archive's political implications. The distinctiveness of his rhetoric merits quoting at length. The archives would be transferred, read the decree, for the following reasons:

¹ “Gaceta de Colombia, N° 449, 24 de enero de 1830, Mensaje del Libertador Simón Bolívar dirigido al Congreso Constituyente de la República de Colombia, fechado en Bogotá el 20 de enero de 1830,” Volume 36, Document 183 (Archivo del Libertador, AL). For translation, I consulted David Bushnell, ed., *El Libertador: Writings of Simón Bolívar*, trans. Frederick H. Fornoff (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 108-9.

² Another Venezuelan independence hero who died in 1816, before the country achieved its final emancipation from Spain, Francisco de Miranda left behind a trove of writings that comprise his personal archive. Recovered in London in 1926, the archive was repatriated to Venezuela, where dictator Juan Vicente Gómez charged the Academy with its custody and preservation. The archive remained with the Academy until Chávez's 2010 decree. While a history of the Miranda Archive, which can be traced through an examination of Bulletins from the Academy, is interesting in itself, it is beyond the scope of this thesis. Indeed, within the context of the 2010 decree, as we shall see, the Bolívar Archive emerged as the more salient issue. For an account of the archive's recovery in 1926, see “Venezuela adquiere el archivo de Francisco de Miranda,” in *Boletín de la Academia Nacional de la Historia*, N° 70. I thank Marcos Fuenmayor, of the Miraflores Archive in Caracas, for pointing me to these documents.

(1) that the universal thought of “The Liberator” Simón Bolívar and of the Supreme Commander Francisco de Miranda represent the ideological base of the Bolivarian Revolution and consequently, their archive contains the fundamental documentation of their revolutionary and liberating legacy for the peoples of our America and the world;

(2) that documents and Historical Archives of the Nation should be at the service of state institutions which truly develop those functions, with the objective of rescuing the historical memory of the struggles for liberation of the Venezuelan people, which have been hidden from the revolutionary process due to political factors;

(3) that it is the obligation of the Revolutionary State to guarantee the protection, preservation, enrichment, and restoration of the cultural patrimony, as well as the historical memory, of the nation, having in mind that the custody, conservation, and study of the documents and historical archives of the republic are for the public utility; and

(4) that by constitutional and legal ordainment, the General Archive [of the Nation] is the body charged with the custody, organization, safeguarding, protection, and conservation of cultural patrimony, as well as the supervision of archival management in all the national territory.³

This decree exhibited two levels of politicization. The first referred to the documents within the archive: these materials, the decree read, had been concealed from the “revolutionary process due to political factors.” Though deliberately vague, the wording here implied that the Academy had confined archival access to those who shared its elitist politics. By this logic then, transferring the archive was tantamount to reclaiming it for groups outside of the Academy’s constituency, namely the larger public, especially the working classes that provided the base of Chávez’s support. The symbolic implications of the transfer, moreover, revealed a second political element. Indeed according to the decree, the Bolívar Archive served as the ideological base not only of the government’s revolutionary project, but also – in an invocation of Cuban revolutionary José Martí – for

³ Decreto Presidencial nro. 7.375, *Gaceta Oficial de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela* (nro. 39.402), Caracas, 13 de abril de 2010, año CXXXVII, mes VII, p. 375.796-8 Sala de Lectura de la Biblioteca Nacional, SLBN).

the “peoples of our America and the world.”⁴ By facilitating the conservation, diffusion, and dissemination of the Archive, the “Revolutionary State” claimed to be furthering the public education of the American continent as a whole.

However, to Inés Quintero, a member of the Academy who served as the institution’s Secretary at the time, the decree was a bald politicization of a national treasure that transcended political divisions. “The important thing isn’t whether or not the state had the right to conduct the transfer,” she said in an interview. “The important thing is the text of the decree, because in that text what is said is that those documents are the patrimony of the Bolivarian Revolution. You can take them, in other words, simply because you feel like it ... The argument they gave was neither archivistic, nor technical, nor historical. It was political.”⁵ At the heart of this conflict between the Chávez government and the Academy was a critical distinction. According to the Academy, despite the political views of the institution itself, the Bolívar Archive should remain immune to politics, an enduring legacy to be protected from the interests of state power. According to Chávez, the Bolívar Archive had always been political, its significance confirmed by the way it had been withheld from its true constituency over the years – the struggling populace that could most benefit from its revolutionary contents.

Quintero’s claims here, moreover, were noteworthy for the way they sanctioned the very arguments she sought to challenge. In fact, the decree referred to three separate

⁴ Martí’s activism as a writer and politician came to symbolize Cuba’s movement for independence from Spain toward the end of the nineteenth century. In one of his texts, “Our America,” Martí stated famously, “Whatever is left of that sleepy hometown in America must awaken.” Here he envisioned “America,” like Bolívar had, as the entire American continent. José Martí, “Our America,” Published in *El Partido Liberal* (Mexico City), March 5, 1892, compiled by J.A. Sierra, accessed February 24, 2014, <http://www.historyofcuba.com/history/marti/America.htm>. See also Jeffrey Grant Belnap and Raul A. Fernández, eds., *José Martí’s “Our America”: From National to Hemispheric Cultural Studies* (Durham [N.C.]: Duke University Press, 1998).

⁵ Inés Quintero, Interview by author, July 25, 2013.

reasons for the transfer: first, that the archive represented the cultural patrimony of the Bolivarian Revolution; second, that its documents, and their contribution to the “historical memory,” had been “hidden” by the Academy through restricted access; and third, that the AGN should have custody over such documentation. By concerning herself almost exclusively with the first argument – the political one – Quintero made her own unwitting contribution to the politicization of history under Chávez’s presidency. In so doing, she pointed, as well, to the heightened role of the historical discipline in public life. From the time of the decree’s passing to the time the archive’s transfer was made official two months later, the Bolívar Archive seemed omnipresent in the nation’s key media outlets, publicized regularly through interviews with historians and through feature stories. Technological innovation itself – the rise and expansion of new media – certainly accounts for some of this increased attention, but the country’s three major newspapers (*El Nacional*, *El Universal* and *Últimas Noticias*) had been dominant public resources in 1999, and in 1962 – the years, respectively, of the previous decrees – and their coverage of those transfers paled by comparison.

The narrative of this chapter, therefore, focuses on the historiographical context of the 2010 decree, rather than its political context. It details the ways in which Chávez, as president, sought to reconceptualize the national past by emphasizing the role of the common people, *el pueblo*, in historical struggles continuing into the present. In so doing, he faced widespread resistance from traditional elite guardians of historical production – including the Academy – and responded with his own initiatives, founding the National Center for History (CNH) in 2007 and reorganizing the Romulo Gallegos Center for Latin American Studies (Celarg). The centerpiece of this project was Bolívar, and though

Chávez was not the first national leader to recognize the liberator's importance – we have seen this in the previous two chapters – he was the first to fully embrace the union of history and politics: to proclaim Venezuela, its past, and its people as a united Bolivarian Republic. Thus the transfer of his archive from the Academy, following the 2006 relocation of the AGN, represented a dual consecration: of the country's founding hero, and of Chávez's political-historical project.

* * *

What were the specifics of this political-historical project? Chávez emphasized the empowerment of marginalized classes against the country's traditional political elites, a vision which he sought to make manifest concretely through a redistribution of the country's oil wealth toward social programs focused on health and education, among other initiatives. The creation of the mission *Barrio Adentro* several years into his presidency, for example, brought medical facilities into the nation's poorer communities, and the establishment of "Bolivarian Schools," in which students received free meals and course materials, attempted to simplify access to education.⁶ Chávez found the justification for these projects in the Venezuelan past: the exclusion of these communities by previous politicians, in his view, made their empowerment in the present a historical necessity. Thus from the very beginning of his campaigning for president, Chávez grounded his political movement in the country's history, characterizing its "three roots" as historical derivations of Bolívar, Simón Rodríguez (Bolívar's tutor), and the nineteenth

⁶ Bart Jones, *¡Hugo! From Mud Hut to Perpetual Revolution: The Hugo Chávez Story* (London: The Bodley Head, 2008), 389-393, 400.

century peasant leader Ezequiel Zamora.⁷ Granting numerous interviews to historian Agustín Blanco Muñoz, a left-wing professor at the *Universidad Central de Venezuela* in Caracas, during his presidential campaign from 1995-1998, Chávez displayed a command of the range of Venezuelan historiography: he praised Ramón Velasquez's thesis on the cyclical nature of the Venezuelan past and described his own work-in-progress, a renovated history of his grandfather, a late nineteenth century soldier falsely portrayed as a ruthless assassin, who had, Chávez planned to show, battled inequality and oppression.⁸ By amending an official history, which he believed had routinely dismissed or overlooked the significance of grassroots popular agency, Chávez hoped to consolidate his own political movement. "I believe in the change from the people as an object to the people as the subject of its own history, transforming itself for the discovery of its own potential strength," he told Muñoz. "And when those people in poverty, who form the consciousness of that force, become protagonists, not even the army dares to stop it."⁹ Conceding the dangers of founding a constituency founded on reverence for the liberator, Chávez pointed to the seminal work of historian Germán Carrera Damas, *The Cult of Bolívar (El culto a Bolívar)*, as a crucial guide. Carrera Damas' 1969 book had been negatively received at the pro-Bolívar Caracas Military Academy while Chávez was a student there. But as Chávez recounted, he and a classmate "began to analyze the situation – and we thought the same as Carrera: Bolívar had become so mystified, and he was just a man. We considered it necessary to study the contradictions of these men, of

⁷ Ibid., 249.

⁸ See Hugo Chávez Frías and Agustín Blanco Muñoz, *Habla el Comandante* (Caracas: Catedra Pio Tamayo, CEHA/IIES/FACES/UCV, 1998), 102–3; 59–62.; Jones, 27-8. Chávez never managed to complete his study.

⁹ Ibid., 29, 31–2.

Bolívar, of Zamora ... to counterpoise their ideas.”¹⁰ This admiration for a study expressly designed to warn politicians against excessive reverence toward Bolívar was noteworthy coming from a politician who would later rename his republic Bolivarian and create a chain of “Bolivarian Schools.”

For his own part, Carrera Damas, then serving as ambassador in Prague under Rafael Caldera’s government, was not heartened by the acknowledgment. Highly suspicious of the soon-to-be president’s motives in appropriating Bolívar, he reviewed Chávez’s rhetoric with trepidation: “something very bad is coming to my country.” In September 1998, he said, “I called the President of the Republic [Caldera], and asked him to consider me retired as an ambassador the moment he turned over power. He asked me why. I said, ‘I must come to my country. The conduct of this incoming government is one that I cannot share.’”¹¹ He had renounced his diplomatic mission, in other words, so that he could return home to work against Chávez, a sentiment which spoke to Carrera Damas’ political concerns. In his view, Chávez had not only grossly misappropriated history, but also posed a serious threat to the political system the historian had served as an ambassador.

Carrera Damas, along with other Academy historians, articulated this charge in subsequent writing. In 2001, Carrera Damas published an essay detailing the dangers of what he termed “Bolivarianism-Militarism,” a “replacement of ideology” borne out of the crisis of socialism at the end of the twentieth century. Tracing the long-invoked cult of Bolívar, from the repatriation of his remains in 1842, Carrera Damas concluded that Chávez had taken this tradition to a level of debauchery. “Independently of whether this

¹⁰ Chávez Frías and Blanco Muñoz, 67.

¹¹ Germán Carrera Damas, Interview by author, Caracas, July 30, 2013.

use of the cult of Bolívar is valued as an ideology,” he wrote, “it is now utilized openly as a legitimating ideological framework of the second attempt [after the February 4, 1992 coup] to establish a militaristic dictatorial regime.”¹² At the time, Carrera Damas said, “this regime still had not revealed what it truly was. But I saw it coming.”¹³

So too did the country’s other leading historians, all of them identified with the Academy. In 2003, Elías Pino Iturrieta – who would later serve as the institution’s president – published a book on the same subject as Carrera Damas, arguing that Chávez’s discourse and politics offered Venezuelan history’s “most disturbing and offensive [example]” of the distortion of Bolívar at the expense of the collective social conscience.¹⁴ While previous leaders had been guilty of some historical misrepresentation, Pino Iturrieta believed that Chávez’s actions in particular would “drive us into the dustbin of history.”¹⁵ The book was enormously successful: publishers twice issued reprints before releasing a second edition, in 2005, alongside a fifth edition of Carrera Damas’ *El culto a Bolívar*.¹⁶

That same year, 2005, the Academy’s longest standing member, Guillermo Morón, published his own condemnation of Chávez, entitled *List of Grievances (Memorial de agravios)*. As the title suggested, Morón wasted little time asserting his opinions. Quoting Aristotle’s *Politics* on the threat to functioning democracies posed “by the intemperance of demagogues,” Morón warned in his prologue that such was the

¹² Germán Carrera Damas, “Alternativas ideológicas en América Latina contemporánea (El caso de Venezuela: el bolivarianismo-militarismo,” originally published in 2001, in *El Bolivarianismo-Militarismo: Una ideología de reemplazo* (Caracas: Ala de Cuervo C.A., 2005), 23, 30-1.

¹³ Germán Carrera Damas, Interview by author, Caracas, July 30, 2013.

¹⁴ Elías Pino Iturrieta, *El divino Bolívar: ensayo sobre una religión republicana* (Madrid: Los Libros de la Catarata, 2003), 221.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁶ Tomás Straka, *La épica del desencanto: bolivarianismo, historiografía y política en Venezuela* (Caracas: Editorial Alfa, 2009), 23.

situation in contemporary Venezuela. “And now, to close my eyes,” he concluded, “because the Apocalypse is coming.”¹⁷ Mounting considerable statistical, journalistic, and historiographical evidence in support of his claims about the dangerous cult of Bolívar, Morón proved far more blunt than Iturrieta in attacking Chávez’s historical rhetoric.¹⁸ The president, he wrote, acted “without civilization”; his Bolivarian republic was “offensively named ... with the object of elevating the affront of the official cult of Bolívar to the fullest.”¹⁹

Morón’s direct rebuttal of the Chávez agenda was echoed a year later by another historian and Academy member, Manuel Caballero, who deliberately mocked the president’s rhetoric by entitling his work “an antipatriotic reflection” on *Why I am not Bolivarian (Por qué no soy bolivariano)*. A distinguished historian and journalist, and a former left-wing activist who had opposed the Betancourt administration, Caballero denounced what he called Chávez’s “fundamentalist nationalism,” citing parallels to the circumstances that led to Hitler’s Third Reich and Mussolini’s Fascist regime in Italy.²⁰ “There is something of a particular danger in Bolivarian fundamentalism,” Caballero concluded: “what is exalted of him, as an almost divine quality, is his condition as a warrior; it is ‘the sword of Bolívar,’ which (without fear of kitsch or anachronism) is set to tour the continent and the world – not his warnings against the intrusion of the military spirit in civilian command; not his warnings against the practice of leaving one man in power for too long ... and as the search for an external enemy is nothing more than

¹⁷ Guillermo Morón, *Memorial de agravios* (Caracas: Editorial Alfa, 2005), 10.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 16, 126.

²⁰ Manuel Caballero, *Por qué no soy bolivariano: una reflexión antipatriótica* (Caracas: Editorial Alfa, 2006), 11, 13–4.

paranoia if not pure bravado,” he warned, “militarism always tends toward civil war.”²¹ The popularity of Caballero’s work – which sold out within a month of its publication – demonstrated the increasing national interest in historical interpretation, as well as the eager embrace of the political ends of the historical enterprise.²² Such outbursts from the country’s prominent historians, wrote Tomás Straka – a history professor whose own contributions were published in a National Academy of History Bulletin²³ – was “without precedent in the republican history [and historiography] of Venezuela.” Through his ardent Bolivarianism, Chávez had inspired an “intellectual ‘rebellion’” that became a focal point of debate within Venezuelan society.²⁴

* * *

Chávez’s own contributions to this debate on history emphasized the need for a more inclusive national narrative, pursuing both historiographic and institutional paths to its realization. Insisting that the story of the nation’s past be appropriately democratized through recuperation of the many contributions made by the people, *el pueblo*, throughout Venezuelan history, Chávez initiated the creation of centers and encouraged the use of media for storing, exhibiting, and disseminating historical knowledge to make it more widely accessible.²⁵ This dual approach was exemplified by a 2007 presidential

²¹ Ibid., 218–9.

²² Straka, 24.

²³ See Tomás Straka, “Hartos de Bolívar? La rebelión de los historiadores contra el culto fundamental,” in *Boletín de la Academia Nacional de la Historia*, Tomo XCII (enero-marzo de 2009), N°365, 51-91. The article comprises the first chapter of Straka’s book, cited in the previous footnote.

²⁴ Straka, *La épica del desencanto*, 21.

²⁵ It is worth noting that Chávez’s efforts to promote more inclusiveness in national narratives were echoed in other Latin American countries under left-wing governments. For example, in Bolivia, President Evo Morales, democratically elected as the country’s first indigenous president, has asserted the importance of

decree establishing a National Center for History (CNH), based on the conviction that “national history is an inalienable right of the Venezuelan people and one of the fundamental pillars of its identity,” and that it was “the obligation of the Venezuelan State to promote and develop the knowledge, research, preservation, and dissemination of the historical heritage of the tangible and intangible memory of Venezuelans.”²⁶ Life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness, and national history: the Chávez government was well aware of the parallels between its decree and the founding documents of the American Revolution, in which Venezuelan independence hero Francisco de Miranda had himself participated. By defining national history as an inalienable right and by facilitating its dissemination through the creation of the CNH – thereby hinting that the Academy was itself incapable of such facilitation – the decree established history as central to the formation of the *chavista* state. The foundation for this historiographic state was Bolívar, as confirmed by the building’s location. Opened later that year in the same building as the newly-relocated General Archive of the Nation (AGN), the CNH stood in the background of the Omar Khayyam Plaza – directly facing the National Library, and some 20 meters to the right of the National Pantheon, where the country’s liberator lay buried.

The most immediate impact of the CNH came with its bi-monthly magazine, *Memorias de Venezuela*. Its content framed within Chávez’s broader ideological discourse, *Memorias* focused on characters and events “historically excluded” from traditional narratives, according to CNH and AGN Director Luis Felipe Pellicer.²⁷ So

the previously-excluded Bolivian indigenous majority. See Nancy Postero, “Andean Utopias in Evo Morales’s Bolivia,” *Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (April 2007): 1-28, accessed online, February 25, 2014, <http://www.anthro.ucsd.edu/faculty-staff/profiles/documents/LACESandeanutopias.pdf>.

²⁶ Decreto Presidencial nro. 5.643, *Gaceta Oficial de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela* (nro. 38.792), Caracas, 18 de octubre, 2007, año CXXXV, mes I, pp. 29-31 (SLBN).

²⁷ Luis Felipe Pellicer, CNH Director, Interview by author, Caracas, August 8, 2013.

much was clear from the magazine's first editorial, published in January 2008, which portrayed its founding in anti-imperialist terms: "From imperial centers during recent years, it has become the trend to speak of an 'End of History.' They meant that nothing new could occur, that humanity had reached the end of its path, that the arrival point was what we saw: the unlimited depredation of capitalism, the hegemony of the few, the so-called liberal democracy which swindles the masses of power. But history, real history," it continued, "is that unstoppable river of a thousand tributaries which generates other results. With the insurgency of the people, History has returned. In reality it had never ceased."²⁸ This message emphasized the magazine's break with traditional historiography – which, according to the CNH, had legitimated the ruling classes at the expense of the people – and in so doing, directly rebuked the old-school historians of the Academy. The issue which preceded the introduction included many of these previously untold stories: a feature on indigenous tribes in the Caribbean; the death of Ezequiel Zamora, the nineteenth century peasant leader who had formed one of the "three roots" of Chávez's Bolivarian Movement; the "big-stick diplomacy" of the United States during the Cold War and its contribution to the overthrow of Jacobo Árbenz, the democratically-elected left-wing president of Guatemala, in 1954; and the role of popular left-wing sectors in the 1958 overthrow of Venezuelan dictator Marcos Pérez Jiménez.²⁹ Later issues continued to emphasize subjects that had been missing from previous histories: the fourth edition detailed the "*mestizaje*, exclusion, and [other] qualities" of Venezuelan society in 1811,

²⁸ "Hacer memoria es hacer historia," *Memorias de Venezuela*, January/February 2008, N° 1, 2. The note of an "End of History" referred to the work of American political scientist Francis Fukuyama, who suggested that western democratic governments, along with free market capitalism, could mark the endpoint of social, economic, and political development. See Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992).

²⁹ *23 de enero 1958: 50 años después*, *Memorias de Venezuela*, January/February 2008, N° 1.

the year of the country's first independence from Spain; the fifth told the stories of "women in our national history."³⁰ As Pellicer noted, the magazine's emphasis on the dynamics of race and gender was motivated by a desire for a more inclusive story:

In the past, indigenous people practically didn't exist in our history books – how is it that they don't exist if they existed 14,000 years before and continue existing throughout all our history? When they discussed our Afro populations, all they discussed was how they were slaves. Women rarely appear, and when they do, they are masculinized, mentioned because they were in a relationship with a great hero – "a great lover," they say – but beyond that they did not have participation in history. The idea of transforming our historiography is to make our people visible; to make those contributions visible in the historical portrait. It isn't an attempt to manipulate history, but rather to do more research so that we can publish things which weren't talked about before.³¹

Pellicer here identified a widespread effort to redress a longstanding historiographical deficiency: while race and gender had emerged as salient issues in Western historiography during the 1970s and 80s, Venezuela had yet to experience a similar historiographic turn. The emphasis on women, indigenous populations, and Afro-Venezuelans, therefore, was unprecedented. To incorporate these groups into Venezuelan history was not only to transform historiography, in the words of Pellicer – it was to "make our people visible." The appeal proved so striking, in fact, that Evo Morales, elected president of Bolivia in 2005, emulated it in his own politics and discourse.³²

The magazine's ambition to reach and educate the widest possible readership was evident in its format and presentation: in full color, and distributed for free with a print run of 120,000. The articles were brief, but included references to more substantial

³⁰ *La sociedad venezolana de 1811: mestizaje, exclusiones y calidades, Memorias de Venezuela*, July/August 2008, N° 4; *Heroínas, matronas y troperas: Las mujeres en nuestra patria, Memorias de Venezuela*, September/October 2008, N° 5; *Un presidente contra el imperio: A 100 años del derrocamiento de Cipriano Castro, Memorias de Venezuela*, November/December 2008, N° 6.

³¹ Luis Felipe Pellicer, CNH Director, Interview by author (Spanish).

³² See footnote 25.

historical accounts, and were accompanied by detailed maps and graphics – sometimes available as foldout posters.



Figure 3.1: A spread from the first issue of *Memorias* detailed features of Caribbean indigenous tribes.³³

The emphasis on the visual elements in magazine production, along with careful attention to variations in color and typeface, gave *Memorias* a stunning coherence from a graphic design standpoint. “The idea of *Memorias* is to create history for the people, and disseminate it,” according to Pellicer, and the appearance and layout of the magazine sought to do just that.³⁴ Both sides of the political divide recognized the value of *Memorias*: as professor María Elena González Deluca, a member of the Academy and Chávez opponent, noted, “History is very important as a factor to mold mentalities through education. Through these magazines – for schools, for teachers, for professors –

³³ “Pueblos Caribe originarios de la costa venezolana y su desarrollo cultural,” *Memorias de Venezuela*, January/February 2008, N° 1, 8-9.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

you can adjust the political knowledge of children to have them identify with the politics of *chavismo*.”³⁵

A second historical initiative involved changes to the Centro de Estudios Latinoamericanos Rómulo Gallegos (Celarg), a state cultural center founded in 1974, during the country’s oil boom and named after Venezuelan literary icon Rómulo Gallegos. Under the Chávez government, the Celarg introduced various prizes designed, in its words, to “promote Latin American and Caribbean integration through processes of research, training, entertainment, and encouragement of cultural production, as well as its diffusion and public debate.”³⁶ In 2001, the center created a Mariano Picón Salas International Essay Prize to honor and promote investigative research on history and culture; in 2005, it added The Liberator Award for Critical Thinking, honoring authors who made possible “the construction of critical thinking which explains and supports the struggle of our people for the rights to freedom and integrity, an essential goal of every human being.”³⁷ Chávez himself presided over the ceremonies for the first Liberator Award, held in the country’s most prominent theater in downtown Caracas, to present the winner, radical German philosopher Franz Hinkelammert, with a prize of \$150,000 USD and a statuette. Hinkelammert’s work, *The Subject and The Law: The Return of the Repressed Subject* (*El Sujeto y la Ley: El retorno del sujeto reprimido*), selected from a total of 136 entries from 16 countries, presented a series of articles on the condition and development of “the subject” throughout history.³⁸ This governmental emphasis on

³⁵ María Elena González Deluca, Interview by author, Caracas, July 23, 2013.

³⁶ “Misión,” www.celarg.org.ve.

³⁷ “Premio Internacional de Ensayo Mariano Picón Salas,” “Premio Libertador al Pensamiento Crítico,” www.celarg.org.ve. A prominent Venezuelan intellectual during the early 20th century, Mariano Picón Salas published numerous essays on the country’s history, literature, and culture. See Thomas D. Morin, *Mariano Picón Salas* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1979).

³⁸ “I Edición del Premio Libertador al Pensamiento Crítico,” www.celarg.org.ve.

historical production culminated in the 2010 International Prize for Research on Emancipation, to honor of the upcoming bicentennial anniversary of the country's independence from Spain in 1811. After reviewing the 58 submissions, judges unanimously declared Cuban journalist Félix Rodríguez's work on *Two Centuries of Lingering Myths (Dos siglos de mitos mal curados)* the winner, "for its ability to account for the genealogy and development of the process of domination/emancipation, under different colonial and neocolonial aspects which have characterized Latin American history in the last five hundred years." The committee awarded Rodríguez a gold medal and \$50,000 USD, praising the book's account of the role played by common people in the independence movement and exposure of how the "official history" of the oligarchic classes "circumvent[ed] the nuances, social contradictions, and resistance of subaltern or dominated subjects."³⁹ As these prizes demonstrated, Chávez not only asserted a new historical vision in his rhetoric, but also actively fostered the production and circulation of new works of history. In the case of the Celarg, the net result of these activities was a perceptible change in the institution itself. As one teacher, who identified with groups representing the Venezuelan left wing, commented, "the Celarg was an institutional space where you wouldn't even think of going before ... Now we have our own history originating from our own experiences within the Venezuelan left, constructed with the participation of the community, from its leader to the political activist to the craftsman ... This movement," he put simply, "has made us free to express ourselves."⁴⁰

³⁹ "Verdicto a la 1.^a edición del Premio Internacional sobre la Emancipación," Caracas, April 16, 2010. www.celarg.org.ve. Historian Ángel Rafael Almarza provides a scathing critique of what he deems the "new official history" in a recent compilation. See Ángel Rafael Almarza, "Dos siglos de historias mal contadas," in *El relato invariable: independencia, mito y nación*, ed. Inés Quintero (Caracas: Editorial Alfa, 2011), 125-154.

⁴⁰ Carlos J. Suarez, Interview by author, Caracas, May 8, 2013.

With both the CNH and the Celarg, the key was that historiography, and historical production, were becoming increasingly central to public life – in an extremely polarized environment. To Quintero, the efforts represented the attempt to elaborate “a sole discourse that incorporates the country’s entire system of memory.”⁴¹ Indeed, González Deluca noted that when the CNH was founded, a “very strong rumor” pervaded the Academy that “they were going to close us down to create an Academy of Sciences similar to that which existed in the Soviet Union: all the disciplines would eventually have a representative body, and the CNH would take over the role the Academy currently had.”⁴² To Pellicer, well aware of these accusations, Chávez’s efforts represented merely another historical interpretation, which sought to fill the gaps of traditional historiography: “Here’s what I’ll say: I don’t know of any objective history. Every person constructs their own history according to his or her interests and perspective. Even books of a methodological character always have a certain perspective of how history is constructed and how it is interpreted,” he said. “What interests us is to reassert the aspirations and the actions of the people in the influence of historical change – to contribute a portrait of reality, but one in which those who aren’t normally in traditional, ‘official’ historiography are present. What we are doing is an insurgent historiography.”⁴³ As the country reached the bicentennial celebration of its first independence from Spain, the tensions evoked by that insurgent historiography – and its connection to the conception of the Bolívar Archive – grew in importance.

* * *

⁴¹ Inés Quintero, Interview by author.

⁴² María Elena González Deluca, Interview by author.

⁴³ Luis Felipe Pellicer, Interview by author.

Chávez's decree of April 12, 2010, therefore, came at a time of great political and historiographical tension. The decree's date of publication, April 13, harkened back to the greatest crisis of the past 11 years, when a brief coup d'état ousted Chávez on April 11, 2002, and civilian and military protest against it, along with faulty management from opposition leaders, enabled his return to power two days later, on April 13.⁴⁴ Indeed the *Gaceta Oficial* published the previous day had declared April 13 a day of "national jubilation" to honor the "historic example of the sovereign people in defense of the Revolution."⁴⁵ It was no accident, then, that the transfer of the Bolívar Archive was announced on this day, for it allowed the public to see the reversal of the opposition-led coup of 2002 and the relocation of the archive – from the control of the opposition-dominated Academy to the government-run AGN – as continuous events. Another note of historical significance for the decree was its publication six days before the anniversary of the country's first independence from Spain, a detail that became an important component of the bicentennial celebration of that independence the following year. By putting the archive of the country's hero in the hands of the Bolivarian state,

⁴⁴ The event remains one of the most controversial moments in recent Venezuelan history, and a full examination would merit a separate thesis in its own right. Because of the debate and polarization that still surrounds it, the April coup has been the subject of a wide variety of works in the English language. See *The Revolution Will Not Be Televised*, Directed by Kim Bartley and Donnacha O'Brien (Ireland: Vitagraph Films, 2003), Film, accessed online, January 27, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Id--ZFtjR5c>; *X-Ray of a Lie*, Directed by Wolfgang Schlak (Venezuela: Wolfproductions, C.A., 2004), Film, accessed online, January 27, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DtDl7SuHRkM>; Gregory Wilpert, *Coup Against Chavez in Venezuela: The Best International Reports of What Really Happened in April 2002* (Caracas: Fundación Venezolana para la Justicia Global, 2003).; Francisco Toro, "The April Crisis Revisited," *Caracas Chronicles*, accessed January 27, 2014, <http://caracaschronicles.com/2004/03/27/the-april-crisis-revisited/>; Brian A. Nelson, *The Silence and the Scorpion: The Coup Against Chavez and the Making of Modern Venezuela* (New York: Nation Books, 2012); and George Ciccariello-Maher, *We Created Chávez: A People's History of the Venezuelan Revolution* (Durham [N.C.]: Duke University Press, 2013), 166–179.

⁴⁵ "Publicado En Gaceta Oficial El Decreto Del 13 de Abril Como 'día de Júbilo Nacional,'" *Noticias24*, accessed January 27, 2014, <http://www.noticias24.com/actualidad/noticia/151081/publicado-en-gaceta-el-otorgamiento-del-dia-de-jubilo-nacional-al-13-de-abril/>.

government officials argued, the decree confirmed the ongoing influence of Bolívar's revolutionary thought two centuries later.⁴⁶

Given such prominent political and historical registers, it was hardly surprising that the transfer garnered considerable attention in the Venezuelan media. Opposition venues portrayed the decree as an expressly political act that exemplified the manipulation and degradation of historical production by the *chavista* state, while government outlets portrayed the decree as both an affirmation of Bolívar as leader and of his valuable cultural legacy. The key to this debate, as the remainder of this chapter will show, was that neither the validity of each side's argument nor the archival documents themselves emerged as the salient issue. What became central instead, were the divergent symbolic meanings evoked by the archive. On one hand, the transfer represented the inclusion of common citizens – Afro-Venezuelans, indigenous groups, and women among them – in national history and politics. On the other, it represented an apogee of *chavista* rhetoric, obscuring the inherent value of the archive in its own right and pointing toward a heightened politicization of the country's past.

Following the decree's announcement on April 13, reactions from the Academy came quickly and repeatedly. On April 15, the country's largest opposition newspapers, *El Universal* and *El Nacional*, published interviews with the Academy's secretary, Inés Quintero, and president, Elias Pino Iturrieta, respectively, in which both noted that the decree had no rational objective.⁴⁷ Pino Iturrieta expanded on this the following day in another story – this time in full-page color – for *El Universal*. The Academy president

⁴⁶ Jorge Berrueta, AGN, Interview by author (Spanish), Tape Recording, Caracas, July 26, 2013.

⁴⁷ Ana María Hernández, "Academia de la Historia sin papeles de Miranda y Bolívar," *El Universal*, April 15, 2010, 2-9; Michelle Roche Rodríguez, "Archivos de Simón Bolívar cambian de administrador," *El Nacional*, April 15, 2010, 8 (Hemeroteca de la Academia Nacional de la Historia, HANH).

here showed no reluctance in declaring his opposition to the “grotesque” actions of the government: “We do not recognize the reasoning behind the decision,” Pino Iturrieta said. “What is this, having documents at the service of the Bolivarian revolution? ... Miranda and Bolívar converted into their servants? This is a problem!”⁴⁸ While Pino Iturrieta alluded to the documents, his key concern was their symbolic placement in the hands of the revolutionary state – one which, he believed, would convert the country’s national heroes into mere figureheads for its own political benefit. Guillermo Morón echoed this point the same day in an interview published in *La Maracucha*, a newspaper in the western state of Zulia. The transfer, he declared, marked “the greatest blunder that can be committed ... the history of the nation is in danger.” Though Morón referred here specifically to the physical and technical conditions of the AGN, which he feared would compromise the documents, he later admitted that he had not gone near the building since its renovation in 2006.⁴⁹ His main concern, then, was not the state of the documents, but rather the symbolic implications the archive held for the legacy of Bolívar. Bringing the Bolívar Archive to the state-controlled AGN, Morón and other Academy historians warned, was a threat to the nation’s history, the “inalienable right” Chávez had himself asserted years before with the founding of the CNH.

As expected, the Academy’s official position, expressed in a letter from Pino Iturrieta to President Chávez and published on its webpage, coincided with these opinions. The April 22 letter described the Academy’s years of devoted stewardship over the archives and the “singular stupefaction” which the decree inspired among the

⁴⁸ Dubraska Falcón, “Pino Iturrieta teme que se manipulen Archivos de Bolívar,” *El Universal*, April 16, 2010, 2-10 (HANH).

⁴⁹ “Guillermo Morón: ‘El Mayor disparate,’” *La Maracucha*, April 16, 2010 (HANH); Guillermo Morón, Interview by author, Caracas, June 21, 2013.

Academy's membership. The absence of complaints, and the failure on the part of the executive branch to warn Academy members of the impending transfer, the letter read, violated "the obligation of timely communication with citizens, a recommended habit of republicanism." The letter concluded by emphasizing its very "plausible preoccupation" with the future of the archives, insisting that their current location provided a "uniquely secure" space for such national treasures. Inviting Chávez or a team of representatives to tour the archive, Pino Iturrieta expressed hope that Chávez might "rectify his decision."⁵⁰ The focus of Pino Iturrieta's critique – the president's failure to uphold the republican value of communication with citizens – revealed the polemic at issue in the Bolívar Archive. Pino Iturrieta was well aware, as his writings and opinions expressed, that the security of the documents was not at issue. In this highly charged political atmosphere, Quintero attested, Chavez's own reaction surprised no one: "not one word in response."⁵¹

The government, for its part, presented the transfer as a striking achievement. A brief published in *Últimas Noticias* on April 15, two days after the decree's publication, noted, "the people" would now be able to appreciate the contents of the archive.⁵² A week later, CNH and AGN Director Luis Felipe Pellicer elaborated on this position in a full-page feature on the transfer in *Correo del Orinoco*, a newspaper founded by Chávez the previous year. Under a headline characterizing the decree as a "popular act," the article quoted Pellicer's denunciations of the Academy as an "anachronistic corporation, buried in the most distant model of our country ... which has not completed the functions to which it was entrusted for a long time." Moreover, noted Pellicer, in its suppression of

⁵⁰ Elías Pino Iturrieta, "Carta de la ANH al Presidente de la República," Caracas, April 22, 2010, in *Boletín de la Academia Nacional de la Historia* (Octubre-Diciembre 2010), Tomo XCIII, N° 372, 111-3 (Biblioteca de la Academia Nacional de la Historia, BANH).

⁵¹ Quintero, Interview by author (Spanish).

⁵² "El pueblo podrá ver los archivos de Bolívar y Miranda," *Últimas Noticias*, April 15, 2010, 6, (HANH).

“the revolutionary spirit of Bolívar and the validity of his transformative and social thought,” the Academy had demonstrated an attitude “against the national project expressed in the Bolivarian Republic.” After eleven years as an “almost clandestine” collection, Pellicer said, Bolívar’s archive would find a home in a well-conditioned space within the AGN.⁵³ Despite the divergence of opinion between Pellicer and historians from the Academy, the crux of the debate remained clear, and it was not about the archive’s documents. What all of these debates centered on was the symbolic power of the archive, and its implications for Bolívar, the historical figure. To the Academy, the fate of the archive revealed the Chávez government’s manipulation of history. To the CNH, it revealed Bolívar’s validation as a true revolutionary hero, whose ties to the contemporary Venezuelan populace had been fully recuperated.

* * *

For all the tension expressed in the media, however, it is worth noting that the logistics of the decree were by all accounts carried out amicably. “Beyond the absurd reasoning,” Quintero noted, “it was an executive decree. We determined that we were going to turn it over. At no point did we try to interfere with, or complicate, the process,” which consisted of an inventory of both archives beginning on May 3.⁵⁴ Quintero herself served as liaison between the two institutions during the inventory, which involved professionals from both the Academy and the AGN. “We were working around the clock – days, nights, weekends – because the decree mandated that the transfer be done so

⁵³ Florángel Gómez, “Mudanza física del Archivo del Libertador será un acto popular,” *Correo del Orinoco*, April 20, 2010, 21 (HANH).

⁵⁴ Inés Quintero, Interview by author.

quickly,” recalled one worker in the Academy who participated in the process. “They brought their personnel, we had our personnel, and our interactions were all very cordial, very professional.”⁵⁵ The respect was mutual throughout: as Pellicer recalled, “There was a spirit of camaraderie, because we are all colleagues.”⁵⁶ Despite the bitter arguments staged in the press, the two sides came together in their concern for the documents themselves.

With the inventory process underway, public attention and the national press turned to considerations of how the documents would be utilized. A day after the inventory began, for example, the Celarg hosted a “political debate” about the transfer open to the public. All eight speakers, however, identified with the Chávez government; in fact, one of them, Carmen Bohórquez, was then serving in the government as Vice Minister of Culture and had been charged with carrying out the decree.⁵⁷ While the inventory process was mentioned in the press – a large color picture of an original document appeared on the front page of *El Universal* on May 5, for example – most of the content focused on the related political and historical issues.⁵⁸ In some media venues, the debate crossed political lines: a May 7 piece in *El Universal*, a paper which had previously conveyed only the views of opposition historians, ran an interview with Pellicer, the director of the AGN. From the title, which warned that the AGN’s manipulations would “rewrite history,” the article focused on the politics of the archive. Though Pellicer cited the goal of “massively disseminating” documents, the interview stressed the dramatic transformation of national historiography. When the reporter

⁵⁵ ANH01, Interview by author, Caracas, July 29, 2013.

⁵⁶ Luis Felipe Pellicer, Interview by author.

⁵⁷ “Agenda: Hoy en CCS,” *Correo del Orinoco*, May 4, 2010, 22 (HANH).

⁵⁸ Venacio Alcázares, “Transformar la historiografía,” *El Universal*, May 5, 2010, 1 (HANH).

questioned Pellicer about the possibility that two distinct versions of history might be created, Pellicer replied affirmatively: “We want to transform historiography in order to transform historical and social conscience,” he said. “That is the goal among those of us historians who belong to the revolutionary process.”⁵⁹ While a previous history had sustained the “liberal bourgeois State,” a new history – with the Bolívar Archive placed firmly at its center – would help to make it revolutionary.

Opposition historians characterized such plans as more worthy of an authoritarian than a revolutionary state, signaling perhaps how readily one might transmute into the other. To Carrera Damas, interviewed for *El Universal* on May 12, the entire process represented a larger “democratic indigestion” to which the Bolívar Archive was “secondary, corresponding to the idea of this regime that to alter what already exists is to construct something new.”⁶⁰ In a column published the same day, editor Elides Rojas concurred that the archival transfer had no real purpose: using Chávez’s varied discourses, he noted sarcastically, one could already put together a history of Bolívar in which the liberator was socialist, Marxist, and assassinated by George Bush.⁶¹ Manuel Caballero, who had criticized Chávez several years before in his “antipatriotic reflection” on not being Bolivarian, went even further, drawing parallels between Chavez’s handling of the archive and his previous uses of another institution central to his legitimacy: the Armed Forces. “The armed scandal perpetrated by the government to take the documents from the Academy is not a wholly unaccustomed act, nor is it illegal,” he wrote: “it is simply ridiculous. With classic military recklessness, the government has tried to give a

⁵⁹ Dubraska Falcón, “Pensamos transformar la historiografía,” *El Universal*, May 7, 2010, 2-11 (AANH).

⁶⁰ Ana María Hernández G., “Tenemos indigestión de democracia,” *El Universal*, May 12, 2010, 2-12 (AANH).

⁶¹ Elides J. Rojas L., “Bolívar sí era socialista,” *El Universal*, May 12, 2010, 3-7 (AANH).

routine, administrative act the character of a heroic battle.”⁶² For Caballero, in other words, Chavez’s appropriation of the Bolívar Archive was a continuation of the military methods that had enabled Chávez’s rise to power, his return after the April 2002 coup attempt, and many of his social programs. According to all these accounts, Bolívar’s documents remained subordinate to Chávez’s discourse on the idea of Bolívar – and by focusing on this very discourse, these opposition critics demonstrated the priority the power of that idea took in their own thought. For Chávez as much as for his opposition, then, the central concern was controlling the representation of the Bolívar Archive; in this case, the ideological significance of Bolívar far outweighed the value of the documents in their own right.

The transfer was made official on June 4, when Pino Iturrieta, Pellicer, and Quintero signed an administrative act that registered the inventory and conditions of the archive. Members of the AGN and the Ministry of Culture carried the documents, in yellow crates, to armored vans of the Central Bank of Venezuela for transport.⁶³ While there had been threats that certain groups “were going to go out to create restlessness,” according to Quintero, the actual process was peaceful. For Quintero personally, however, the event took a toll. “I’m his friend; he was my student; our meetings were very respectful and cordial,” she said of her interactions with Pellicer. “But on the day of the transfer, when they arrived with their crates – that was a day of mourning for me. Still, it was all done professionally. They took their personnel, we took our personnel;

⁶² Manuel Caballero, “De archivos y chivatos,” *El Universal*, May 16, 2010, 4-7 (AANH).

⁶³ Luis Felipe Pellicer, Interview by author.

they called their media groups, we called our media groups; the media was convoked and it became national news. They were packed, they took the archive ... and they left.”⁶⁴

The Academy’s media groups echoed this position. The day after the transfer was formalized, June 6, *El Nacional* dedicated its Sunday editorial to the subject of “Papers and Mourning,” condemning the event as an expression of “a manner of governing which fills us with consternation and perplexity.” More noteworthy than the newspaper’s condemnation of the decree, however, was its professed interest in the papers of the archive themselves. These papers, the editorial read, had been entrusted to the Academy “for several decades,” during which the institution had published more than 30 volumes of writings.⁶⁵ This was not correct: the Academy had taken control of the archive just a decade before, and the vast majority of the published volumes had been prepared by the Bolivarian Society.⁶⁶ While the editorial held that the decree subverted these valuable documents by subjecting them to politicization, then, so too did its account. The following day, June 7, *El Universal* called attention to the mode of transport used for the documents: “In *guacales* [crates] the Bolívar Archive was transferred,” a headline read on the paper’s front page with a photo of Pellicer and Carmen Bohórquez, of the Ministry of Culture, smiling with the yellow boxes.⁶⁷ An accompanying article, in the Arts and Entertainment section, drew further attention to the crates – “like the ones used in the market to carry vegetables ... sealed with brown masking tape and carried toward the Central Bank van. Every volume of the archives,” the article emphasized, “including the

⁶⁴ Inés Quintero, Interview by author.

⁶⁵ “Documentos de Bolívar y Miranda: Papeles y duelos,” *El Nacional*, June 5, 2010, 8 (HANH).

⁶⁶ While the Bolivarian Society had continued its functions as a historical institution to this point, it did not have a role in the 2010 transfer. Carlos Rodríguez, Interview by author, Caracas, August 5, 2013.

⁶⁷ “Arte y entretenimiento: En guacales trasladaron el archivo de Bolívar,” *El Universal*, June 7, 2010, 1 (ANH Newspaper Archive).

Miranda Archive, was packed in a cardboard box and later placed in the plastic crates.” The article’s references to the boxes conveyed a note of class condescension: the use of humble vegetable crates for transferring such valuable documentation suggested how they were diminished in the hands of Chávez and the lower classes he represented.⁶⁸ The most striking portrayal of the event, however, was a June 8 piece in *Tal Cual*, a newspaper known for incendiary anti-Chavez stories (its first issue, published on April 3, 2000, for example, featured a front-page editorial, accompanied by a photograph of Chávez, whose entire text read, “Blah, blah, blah”).⁶⁹ In this issue, a columnist extended Caballero’s analogy between Chavez’s use of the Archive and the military through a sardonic portrayal of the transfer as a battle of the Armed Forces:

The *comandante* Farruco Sesto [the Minister of Culture] ... was ready for the dangerous battle that awaited him ... Thanks to the tactical wisdom of the great hero [Sesto], the enemy, directed by the terrible guerrilla Elías Pino Iturrieta [Director of the Academy], had no time to even react. They were taken by surprise and without a drop of bloodshed. In tomato crates, the precious loot, the Archives of Bolívar and Miranda, were transferred to their new base, where Farruco's loving and responsible gaze will have them under permanent vigilance, so that no one who does not wear a red shirt [the color donned by Chávez and his supporters] will be able to see them. The Hero of the Battle of the Academy of History then sat before his computer to write to his boss, the hero of another historic battle, that of the Military Museum: ... "We recovered the archives, Mr. President! Mission accomplished."⁷⁰

Two points stood out. The first was the characterization of Pino Iturrieta as a “terrible guerrilla” fighter. Guerrilla, a derogatory label applied to many from the Venezuelan left wing of the 1960s that fought against Betancourt (and for which *Tal Cual*’s founder and director, Teodoro Petkoff, had himself served as a key leader), had been recuperated for

⁶⁸ “En cestas plásticas trasladaron archivos de Miranda y Bolívar,” *El Universal*, June 7, 2010, 2-12 (HANH).

⁶⁹ Jones, 266.

⁷⁰ Simón Boccanegra, “La heroica batalla de la Academia de la Historia,” *Tal Cual*, June 8, 2010, 3 (HANH).

positive use in Chávez's rhetoric and in histories produced at the CNH.⁷¹ Indeed, at that very moment there was a work in progress at the CNH, *From Punto Fijo to the Bolivarian Revolution, 1958-2003 (De Punto Fijo a la Revolución Bolivariana)*, which devoted considerable space to the armed guerrilla struggle during the 1960s.⁷² The characterization of Pino Iturrieta was therefore a two-pronged attack on the new historical agenda, seeking to undermine Chávez and reaffirm an old derogatory label. The second striking feature of the *Tal Cual* passage was the parallel it drew between so-called *comandante* Farruco Sesto, Minister of Culture, and *comandante* Hugo Chávez. For despite its overriding irony, the article's comparison between Chávez's "historic battle ... of the Military Museum" – this referred to his position during the attempted coup of February 4, 1992, the day of his famed "*por ahora*" proclamation – and Sesto's battle of the National Academy of History was sincere. The only difference was that as opposed to the failed coup attempt, in this case, the "heroic battle" had proven successful.

In press outlets more sympathetic to the government, such efforts were portrayed as heroic, but without irony. An article printed in *Correo del Orinoco* utilized the same photo of Bohórquez and Pellicer, but in this case affirmatively: "now this documentation will be available to the people of Venezuela, Latin America, the Caribbean, and the world," read the caption. The article highlighted a statement from Sesto, the Minister of Culture, interpreting the event as a victory for the Venezuelan people. "History is not just

⁷¹ After fighting as a guerrilla and member of the Venezuelan Communist Party, founding the political party Movement for Socialism in 1971, and running for president as an outsider candidate twice in the 1980s, Petkoff accepted a position in Rafael Caldera's second government, in 1995, and proceeded to institute a number of conservative neoliberal economic reforms before founding *Tal Cual* in 2000. His former wife, who accompanied him on his presidential campaign trail and has since identified with Chávez's politics, decried the actions of newspapers like *Tal Cual*, noting that "fear, a facet of the national and international media, has paralyzed us." Lillian Rojas, Interview by author, Caracas, May 7, 2013.

⁷² See Centro Nacional de Historia, *De Punto Fijo a la Revolución Bolivariana, 1958-2003* (Caracas: Centro Nacional de Historia, 2012), 57-88.

about large battles," he said, in a reversal of the portrayal of the same event in *Tal Cual*. "History is written by the people, day by day, in the construction of a society of justice and equity. This [transfer] is what should be done, and it is a small part of that history which we are reinterpreting today, from the lens of those that never were respected and were oppressed."⁷³ The focus on reinterpretation no doubt had merit: the documents, Vice Minister of Culture Pedro Calzadilla promised, would soon be digitized and put online, a task which the Academy had never managed to complete despite announcing its intentions to do so 11 years earlier upon taking custody of the archive. Rectifying this technological omission would allow the archive to be consulted "by male and female researchers from any part of the world."

The most striking version of this pronouncement came ten days later, on June 16, when Calzadilla granted another interview to *Correo del Orinoco* in anticipation of a celebration of the archival transfer on June 20. The recuperation of the Bolívar Archive, he said, had indeed constituted another battle – and Venezuela, the country, had won. "It was an important battle which we waged on behalf of the nation," Calzadilla told the newspaper, "to recover our patrimony for the Venezuelan people." By recovering the Bolívar Archive – "without a doubt a banner of the Bolivarian Revolution" – the AGN had asserted its resistance to oligarchic domination. "*El culto a Bolívar*, the cult of Bolívar," he said, "is a popular adoration that is both mobilizing and insurgent. Throughout history, it resisted the mechanisms of domination. This is the Bolívar who is vindicated today by the people and those in power."⁷⁴ A former history professor at the

⁷³ Dubraska Moya, "Archivos de Bolívar y Miranda ya están en manos de Min-Cultura," *Correo del Orinoco*, June 7, 2010, 18 (AANH).

⁷⁴ Várvara Rangel Hill, "Venezuela ganó otra batalla al recuperar archivos de Bolívar y Miranda," *Correo del Orinoco*, June 16, 2010, 19 (AANH).

prestigious Universidad Central de Venezuela (UCV) who had studied under members of the Academy, Calzadilla was well aware of the resonance between his cult of Bolívar and that of Germán Carrera Damas.⁷⁵ In his mind, that cult proved a source of strength and resilience; it united the people, repressed by political elites throughout history, to resist full subordination and assert their own historical agency. With the Chávez government now in power, Calzadilla saw the vindication of these people, their cult to Bolívar, and Bolívar himself. His archive, the banner of this Bolivarian Revolution, served as both the consecration and link between these ideological forces.

Hosted by the AGN on June 20, the celebration of the transfer marked a striking fusion of historical production and popular culture, contrasting sharply with the celebration that had been convened by the Academy eleven years earlier during the archive's inauguration. Where the Academy's celebration had been solemn and formal the AGN event was popular and recreational. While the Academy had opened with a blessing from the Archbishop of Valencia, the AGN began its ceremony with a motorcycle caravan transporting two facsimiles from the archives, Bolívar's Address to the Congress of Angostura and a proclamation of Miranda's. This caravan featured mostly middle-aged men in customized t-shirts and sunglasses who rode through downtown Caracas and reenacted the transfer from the Academy, adjacent to the National Congress building, to the AGN, mere meters from the Pantheon. There, at the Pantheon, an offering of flowers was presented at Bolívar's tomb.⁷⁶ A symbolic act that launched

⁷⁵ As Calzadilla's (and Pellicer's) thesis adviser and Academy member María Elena González Deluca said: "We used to share many ideas, but now they're no longer historians – they're political militants ... You listen to them and what comes out of their mouth is the discourse of militants of the revolution." María Elena González Deluca, Interview by author (Spanish).

⁷⁶ Alexander Escorche Caña, "Documentos de Bolívar y Miranda ahora sí serán Memoria del Mundo como lo pidió la Unesco," *Correo del Orinoco*, June 21, 2010, 5 (AANH).

Betancourt's revolutionary movement against the Gómez dictatorship a century before, and the beginning of Chávez's own revolutionary movement after receiving a presidential pardon from prison a decade earlier, the offering this time ushered in what the government saw as a new chapter in Venezuelan history.

This new chapter, as revealed by the rest of the program, would draw inspiration from popular and indigenous communities instead of European and American ones. In the Omar Khayyam Plaza, near the CNH and AGN, the government organized performances by the National Circus Company and the Venezuelan musical group *Dame Pa' Matala*, which combined hip hop and *reggaetón* with African and Caribbean influences.⁷⁷ The state-run television station Venezolano de Televisión broadcast inside the AGN a tour of the new Bolívar Archive with Pellicer and Bohórquez, among others, who appeared clad in red shirts and detailed the digitization of the first two documents to be made available online, the very ones spirited to the AGN by the *motorizados*.⁷⁸ Later, in the afternoon, large screens were set up outside for broadcasting of the World Cup.⁷⁹ Compared to the inauguration ceremony hosted by the Academy, the AGN celebration eschewed bureaucratic solemnity for popular festivity. The Bolívar Archive, it suggested, was the symbolic foundation of a culture that functioned not only through business and religion, but also through music and sports – a culture that valued the community of its *motorizados* as much as its intellectuals, and that not only invoked *el pueblo* rhetorically, but also worked to actually include *el pueblo* in the body politic.

⁷⁷ “Fiesta por la recuperación de los archivos de Bolívar y Miranda,” *Correo del Orinoco*, June 17, 2010, 19 (AANH).

⁷⁸ Alexander Escorche Caña, “Documentos de Bolívar y Miranda ahora sí serán Memoria del Mundo como lo pidió la Unesco” (AANH).

⁷⁹ “Fiesta por la recuperación de los archivos de Bolívar y Miranda” (AANH).

* * *

The Bolívar Archive had come a long way from Rómulo Betancourt's 1962 decree ordering the publication of *Escritos del Libertador*. Where Betancourt had once focused on the value of the archive's documents, as a mechanism to legitimate his newfound state, Chávez saw the archive for its symbolic potential, as an institution that embodied the aims of a broader political-historical project. This project focused on the empowerment of groups marginalized by other regimes – the working class, women, indigenous groups, and Afro-Venezuelans – through the redistribution of the country's oil wealth toward social programs and, significantly, the inclusion of these voices that had previously been excluded from Venezuelan historiography and political life. With strong rhetoric that continuously invoked Bolívar, Chávez faced particular backlash from the historians of the National Academy of History, the four most prominent of whom published books condemning Chávez's bolivarianism within the first seven years of his presidency. Chávez's response was twofold: the founding of the National Center for History (CNH), and the reorganization of the Celarg, both of which sought to foster an "insurgent historiography" by emphasizing the agency of these marginalized groups. In this charged context, history writing took on a greater political connotation.

So considered, the 2010 transfer to the General Archive of the Nation (AGN) served as a culmination of these battles. While archivists and other employees at the Academy and AGN worked together to create an inventory of the archive's documents, the institutions' directors sensationalized the event throughout the media. The key here was the contrasting meanings the archive invoked symbolically. To the Academy, the

transfer represented a gross misuse of presidential power which threatened the nation's historical memory; to the AGN, it represented the extension of that historical memory to the groups that provided its popular support. The event celebrating the archive's transfer certainly confirmed this: a reenactment of the transfer by the Motorized Bolivarian Forces; performances from a circus and popular musical group; the broadcast of games from the World Cup. And nearby, lying in the Pantheon with ceremonially fresh flowers arrayed before him, Bolívar embodied once again the tense politicization of his country's national history.

By digitizing the archive's documents, as the AGN would eventually do, officials envisioned the extension of the archive to the people of Venezuela, of Latin America, and of the world more broadly. Researchers would be able to access the documentation more easily than ever, all the while acknowledging that the website – www.archivodellibertador.gob.ve, with “gob” short for *gobierno*, or government, of Venezuela – emerged from the initiative of the Venezuelan state, with the watermark of its revolutionary hero, Simón Bolívar. With the presentation of the online archive's first document – the Angostura Address, which had established Bolívar's republic of *Gran Colombia* – officials drew a full circle. It was this address that Betancourt had quoted as he attempted to consolidate power following two right-wing coup attempts half a century before, and it was this address that Chávez had quoted in the opening line of his inauguration as he sought to break from Betancourt's system of democracy once and for all. Where Chávez had quoted Bolívar's opening line as he made clear his intent to embark on a new political project, officials here hoped that the maxims expressed in the conclusion held true in regards to the revolutionary state Chávez had created. “Be so

kind, Legislators,” Bolívar wrote, “as to accept indulgently this profession of my political vision, the final wishes of my heart, and the fervent prayers that I dare address to you in the name of the people. Grant to Venezuela an eminently popular government, eminently just, eminently moral, that will fetter oppression, anarchy, and rancor, a government where innocence, humanity, and peace will reign and where equality and freedom will triumph under the rule of law.”

“Gentlemen, begin your work,” Bolívar concluded. “Mine is done.”⁸⁰

⁸⁰ “Discurso de Angostura, pronunciado por El Libertador Simón Bolívar el 15 de febrero de 1819, en el acto de instalación del segundo congreso de *Venezuela*,” Volume 13, Documento 3589 (AL). For translation, I consulted Bushnell, 53.

CONCLUSION

“The quill cannot be chained, my friend ... soon there will be another that does you justice.”
– Simón Bolívar, 1828¹

This thesis has shown the many roles that archives can play in a culture. At base they are collections of documents, providing material vantage points through which history is accessed. But they are also institutions that assume symbolic import, foundations upon which political battles are waged and state power is consolidated. While historical narratives are often constructed and altered under varying political motivations, so too are the archives from which they emerge; by examining the histories of these historical repositories themselves, we gain new insight into the process of historical writing more generally. Ultimately, though, archives hold the greatest implications for those who use them – most frequently, historians. As the historian whose archival research constitutes this thesis, I feel that it would be inappropriate to conclude without reflecting on my research, analysis and arguments, and their implications for contemporary Venezuela.

Venezuela’s is a society that cares deeply about history. I do not mean this abstractly: in speeches, in books, in posters, and in the media, politicians and citizens ardently debate their country's past. One month before I interviewed Guillermo Morón, the Academy’s longest-standing member, Venezuelan president Nicolás Maduro denounced him on national television after Morón spoke unfavorably about Bolívar’s mistress, Manuela Saénz. Maduro emphasized that these statements were not only “anti-

¹ “De una copia, O.C.B., Carta del Libertador Simón Bolívar a José Fernández de Madrid, fechada en Bogotá el 14 de febrero de 1828,” Volume 34, Document 1586 (Archivo del Libertador).

Bolivarian,” but “anti-patriotic,” and proposed a debate between Morón and Samuel Moncada – a “Bolivarian historian” – which would be televised “so that all of Latin America can see it.”² Maduro’s provocation here underlined not only the pivotal role of historical narratives in Venezuelan politics but also the fashioning of Bolívar into a major Latin American figure. Wrapping himself in the mantle of Bolívar, Maduro implied that any criticism of the liberator was a criticism of Venezuela *as well as* Latin America – the continent that Bolívar had envisioned united. He cemented this idea further several weeks later, when he announced the repatriation of one of Bolívar’s letters on national television. Holding the original letter in his bare hands, Maduro proclaimed that the signature represented “the signature of the Grand Patriotic Pole, of the patriots of Venezuela ... the signature of our homeland.”³ By physically touching the document of his country’s liberator, Maduro sought to establish a link, however abstract, between his own government’s objectives and the ideals of Bolívar: Bolívar’s signed letter, figuratively speaking, showed the Liberator signing off on Maduro’s political project.

As I sought the counsel of historian Germán Carrera Damas the following month, this connection between history and politics became even more pronounced. The acclaimed author of *The Cult of Bolívar*, Carrera Damas made national headlines after government officials released parts of his conversation with a former student that allegedly disclosed opposition plans to foment a US-backed coup. The incriminating conversation had taken place in Carrera Damas’ apartment, where I interviewed him

² Venezolana de Televisión, “Presidente Maduro invita a Guillermo Morón a debatir sobre historia con Samuel Moncada,” *Aporrea*, May 6, 2013, <http://www.aporrea.org/oposicion/n228335.html>. Morón, predictably, made no response to the offer.

³ Sascha Bercovitch, “Recovered Letter from Venezuela’s ‘Great Liberator’ to Be Turned over to Historical Archive,” *Venezuela Analysis*, June 2, 2013, <http://venezuelanalysis.com/news/9646>.

several weeks later.⁴ The incident demonstrated the intense politics of history in contemporary Venezuela, and the heightened political role historians play within it. As former Academy Secretary Inés Quintero explained to me: “In this context in which we live, historians have become public figures because history is the foreground of political debate ... The whole world here is dependent on history.”⁵

How to make sense of history in a world where every fact was so politically charged? The archive became my guide. I had noticed the Bolívar Archive on my first day of research. The AGN guidebook proclaimed it “a space for the socialization of the documentary patrimony of the nation,” but all I saw were rows of gray boxes.⁶ Eventually I noticed more: the broad, clear-glass encasing through which only a select few could pass; the presence of the documents online but not in paper. When I spoke with historians, most had an opinion about it, specifically about the 2010 transfer authorized by Chávez. Some, like CNH and AGN director Luis Felipe Pellicer, lauded the transfer as a means of “transforming historiography, of rewriting history, of making an inclusive history that tells of the actions of the people, the sectors historically excluded.”⁷ Others, like Quintero, spoke of the “singular stupefaction” it produced since “legally, formally, judicially, institutionally, it had no justification.”⁸ As I investigated further into the presidential decrees that had determined the archive’s institutional fate, and the tense political circumstances from which they emerged, I realized that the polemics

⁴ Ryan Mallett-Outtrim, “Leaked Recording Leads to Allegations of Plot to Provoke a Crisis in Venezuela,” *Venezuela Analysis*, June 27, 2013, <http://venezuelanalysis.com/news/9769>; David Smilde, “María Corina Machado Recording Reveals Opposition Strategies and Divisions,” *Venezuelan Politics and Human Rights*, June 27, 2013, <http://venezuelablog.tumblr.com/post/54029382328/maria-corina-machado-recording-reveals-opposition>.

⁵ Inés Quintero, Interview by author, Caracas, July 25, 2013.

⁶ Archivo General de la Nación. *Guía del Archivo General de la Nación* (Caracas: Archivo General de la Nación, 2011), 28.

⁷ Luis Felipe Pellicer, Interview by author, Caracas, August 8, 2013.

⁸ Quintero, Interview by author.

surrounding the Bolívar Archive had not originated with Chávez. Before my eyes, in the words of Ann Laura Stoler, the Bolívar Archive shifted from source to subject.⁹

As a subject in its own right, the Bolívar Archive – and my investigation into it – demonstrates the ways in which political power was both consolidated by and extended to favored groups over the course of the last half-century. In 1962, as President Rómulo Betancourt weathered widespread protest from left and right and sought to appease the United States, his decree was a cultural appropriation providing political legitimacy for his newfound state. In 1999, as the representative democracy established under Betancourt and then-president Rafael Caldera crumbled, Caldera transferred the archive to the National Academy of History as a means of retaining symbolic control over Bolívar on behalf of his own elite class. Though these political elites expressed great trepidation about the election of Hugo Chávez as president, Chávez made little attempt to interrupt the Academy's extensive renovation project, financed largely by a private bank and foreign companies. Eleven years later, in 2010, however, Chávez transferred the archive to the state-controlled AGN. In proclaiming that the transfer would help to preserve Bolívar's "liberating legacy for the peoples of our America and the world," Chávez fashioned the archive boldly and inclusively. The Bolívar Archive now symbolized the expansion of the Venezuelan citizenry, marking the inheritance of groups (the working-class, women, indigenous groups, and Afro-Venezuelans) that Chávez believed had been ignored by historians as well as politicians.

By the time of Chávez's decree, then, the Bolívar Archive had assumed an immense symbolic importance in Venezuelan society – and continuous media attention

⁹ Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 44.

from both sides of the political divide confirmed that importance. This was in contrast to the lack of attention paid to the archival documents themselves, whose significance seemed to be minimized even by the historians and archivists of the Academy and the AGN. As I have argued, the two conceptions of the archive – archive as institution, and archive as a collection of documents – are inversely related. In 1999, to recall, Caldera justified his decree through the power of the state to determine matters relating to archival institutions. Though the Academy and the Banco Venezolano de Crédito marshaled a less expansive vision of the Bolívar Archive’s power than did Chávez, officials, again, paid little attention to the documents themselves. This ran counter to Betancourt’s 1962 decree, which specifically mandated that the Bolivarian Society prepare the *documents* of the Bolívar Archive for their state-ordered publication. While the archival documents, the fact-bound materials that limited interpretation, had been the chief concern, the archival institution, itself highly susceptible to political manipulation, grew increasingly prominent.

First and foremost, I hope that this thesis has shown why archives are worthy of historical study. Through studying archives, we uncover the broader social, political, and cultural experiences of a society. Socially, the Bolívar Archive both encompassed the interests of different groups – the far right and far left, oil companies, banks, political elites, and, eventually, previously-marginalized populations – and reflected the state’s selective methods of extending power to them. Politically, the archive was invoked during moments of intense polarization, as a means for uniting favored constituencies. Culturally, the archive provided confirmation of Bolívar’s enduring centrality, as even centuries after his death, “The Liberator” remains at the heart of Venezuelan identity.

This last point is crucial to understanding the Bolívar Archive: as a collection of the documents of Latin America's principal revolutionary hero, the archive has assumed a unique importance within Venezuelan society. While I am not aware of another country that displays so intense a preoccupation with the archive of its leading figure, foundational documents and archives play a significant role in all nations. Taking these archives as subjects in their own right, therefore, provides an invaluable window on the past.

My hope, too, is that this thesis shows why Venezuela, the *country*, is worthy of historical study. Traditionally overlooked in English-language historiography to begin with, Venezuela has since fallen into the historical dustbin, sometimes surfacing in journalistic accounts of Hugo Chávez which feature a hero/villain dichotomy while oversimplifying the national context. Venezuela is more than this. Hugo Chávez does *not* make Venezuela fascinating, and, frankly, neither does Simón Bolívar. What makes Venezuela fascinating is the intensity of its politics: the fact that continuous insurgency and volatility produced both an unusually active citizenry with a devotion to national politics and political leaders who saw their activities as having immense stakes. What makes Venezuela fascinating is its oil: the natural resource, located just east of the Colombian border, that provides for such opportunity and generates such disenchantment, and so profoundly affects politics and society as a whole. What makes Venezuela fascinating is its culture: its complicated mix of creoles and *mestizos*, indigenous groups and Afro-Venezuelans, urban slum dwellers, elites, and oil tycoons, and ultimately – as John F. Kennedy and William Faulkner testified – the way these all cohere around one

founding father. Though the Bolívar Archive has served as the centerpiece of this thesis, it represents but one thread in a broader national tapestry.

Finally, I hope that the insights arising from this thesis shed light on the Venezuelan situation today. The country has recently seen anti-government protest – originating predominantly among the middle and upper classes – that has resulted in violence, represented regularly in the media, and calls for Maduro to step down as president.¹⁰ Yet those who conclude from these reports that Venezuela is in crisis misread the politics of a society where extremism and melodrama have long been commonplace. In 1928, Rómulo Betancourt participated in student protests that were brutally repressed by the military dictatorship of Juan Vicente Gómez; decades later, Betancourt himself deployed the army to Caracas' Universidad Central amid prevailing demands for his resignation, along with several direct attempts to remove him from power. Opposition figures decried Hugo Chávez's government as a dictatorship in 2010 as well as his intentions to establish one well before he had assumed power in 1999. In the Venezuelan context, then, contemporary hyperbole indicates the workings of politics as usual. And despite the extreme antagonism between opposition and government leaders, this thesis has shown that Venezuela's politicians are often more negotiable than they appear to be. In 1999, Chávez spoke grandly of state-led national development under his Bolivarian Revolution, all the while allowing opposition historians to take control of the foundational documents of the revolution in the Bolívar Archive with financial support from private enterprises. Despite warnings of his brash intentions to establish an

¹⁰ See, for example, William Neuman, "Fears Spread That Venezuela is Approaching Bloody Face-off," *The New York Times*, accessed March 11, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/12/world/americas/fears-spread-that-venezuela-is-approaching-bloody-face-off.html?ref=williamneuman&_r=0; Francisco Toro, "Venezuela: The Game Changed Last Night," *Caracas Chronicles*, accessed February 22, 2014, <http://caracaschronicles.com/2014/02/20/venezuela-the-game-changed-last-night/>.

authoritarian state, the fact is that Chávez was not a ruthless firebrand. He was a gifted, crafty politician who sought for his impoverished constituency some of the country's spoils. Yet he pursued this goal through existing channels, empowering marginalized groups through referenda, social programs, and, historiographically, through incorporation into national history. Though Chávez's 2010 decree aroused great commotion in the media, archivists on both sides testified that the transfer itself was peaceful.

What does all this mean for Venezuela's current situation? While Maduro and opposition leader Henrique Capriles openly condemn each other, the truth is that, media sensationalism aside, the two are likely more capable of reaching compromise than they would ever concede publically. The Bolívar Archive is not and has never been the focal point of opposition protest or of governmental authority. But the same elements that contributed to broader unrest and politicization in 1962, 1999, 2010, infusing the dynamics underlying the archival decrees and transfers, continue today. By looking at these transfers more broadly then, we gain insight into society writ large.

And what is the state of the Bolívar Archive today? In addition to digitizing the documents and making them accessible online, the archive's director, Jorge Berrueta, told me, officials took a further step which he considered unprecedented: putting the archives on the left edge of the reading room, enclosed in protective glass where they would be visible to all. In the darkness that envelops the space, one can see the archive's gray boxes hanging on red shelves, each with their special stamp, a photo of Bolívar. When an archivist enters – to check the humidity, or upload a scanned image to the archive's webpage – a dull, white light illuminates the slate-colored walls and off-white floors.

“Perhaps it’s a rare thing in other countries, to have papers of that magnitude in a place where the people can see how they are being used,” Berrueta said. “Those collections are always filled with mystery, with the idea that there are secrets inside them. In this case, we say, the secrets are hidden where everyone can see them.”¹¹

For all the symbolic weight attributed to the archive, the AGN reading room on the other side of the glass is quite simple: bare walls, low ceilings, narrow red-wood tables. Air-conditioning neutralizes the Caracas heat. Gloved researchers, wearing jackets, wait patiently for documents brought to them by archivists dressed in red. Despite the solemnity, researchers smile and sometimes talk animatedly; in the afternoon, one of the archivist’s young daughters visits after school. “Attending to the public is hard,” Berrueta admits. “I always tell my coworkers: we’re human beings; if you’re in a bad mood, let us know so you don’t act hostile ... because the fact is, we really can’t do anything here with an empty room.”¹² Berrueta himself often passes through the reading room, chatting with archivists and researchers, offering comments about different documents. Returning to his office, he passes a black-and-white image of Bolívar hanging by the entrance: the Liberator’s dark hair is bountiful, his jaw defined, his expression somber. Below the picture, emblazoned on the off white wall, reads a letter from the keeper of Bolívar’s archive, detailing the archive’s varied contents as of September 1830 – just two months before Bolívar ordered that they be burned. It is a strange epigraph for papers that have journeyed from Colombia to Jamaica; from their author’s natal house to the Bolivarian Society; from the National Academy of History to the AGN. In their central berth in the National Archives, in the heart of his nation’s

¹¹ Jorge Berrueta, AGN, Interview by author (Spanish), Tape Recording, Caracas, July 26, 2013.

¹² Ibid.

capital, the archive begs a simple question: given the reverence paid to Simón Bolívar, by right and left, dictators and democrats, Venezuelan presidents and American writers, why was his will so blatantly disregarded?

Archives are power, infused with symbolism; to control them, in some sense, is to exercise a very real political influence in society. Throughout modern Venezuelan history, Bolívar has served as a talisman with which presidents have advanced broader cultural initiatives, consolidated state power, and reclaimed political significance on behalf of favored groups. The disparate elements of these projects, as this thesis has shown, cohered around the Bolívar Archive: at times of political tension, the archive was invoked as a symbol through which politicians and regimes expressed differing visions of Bolívar, of history, and of Venezuela. Even in our age of digitization, the physical, foundational, transnational archive of Simón Bolívar remains an important form of political capital – one far too valuable to be destroyed.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES

ARCHIVES AND LIBRARIES

Archivo de la Academia Nacional de la Historia (AANH), Caracas, Venezuela

Fondo Archivo del Libertador

File 1: *Transferencia de 1999*

File 2: *Transferencia de 2010*

Archivo del Libertador (AL), Caracas, Venezuela, accessible online at www.archivodellibertador.gob.ve

Volume 13: Período 1 julio 1818 al 15 febrero 1819, Correspondencia Oficial

Volume 19: Período 1 septiembre al 31 diciembre 1821, Correspondencia Oficial

Volume 34: Período 2 enero al 26 diciembre, O.C.B.

Volume 35: Período 1 enero al 27 diciembre 1829, O.C.B.

Volume 36: Período 2 enero al 11 diciembre 1830, O.C.B.

Archivo General de la Nación (AGN), Caracas, Venezuela

Archivo de la Revolución: Fondo Documental del Pueblo

Box 1: *Masacres*, César Barazarte

Box 2: *Masacres*, César Barazarte

Box 32: *Desaparecidos*, Judith Valencia

Box 38: *Masacres*, César Barazarte

Box 77: *Desaparecidos*, Lucia Darza

Box 80: *Masacres*, César Barazarte

Box 243: *Masacres*, Silvia Ernesto

Box 286: *Masacres*, Luis Rodríguez

Box 321: *Masacres*, Zerpa Oswaldo

Box 326: *Estudiantes*, Barreto Irma

Box 382: *Estudiantes*, Judith Valencia

Box 420: *Desaparecidos*, AGN

Biblioteca de la Academia Nacional de la Historia (BANH), Caracas, Venezuela

Boletín de la Academia Nacional de la Historia, 1926-2013

Biblioteca de la Sociedad Bolivariana de Venezuela (BSB), Caracas, Venezuela

Revista de la Sociedad Bolivariana de Venezuela, 1950-2013
Escritos del Libertador, Volume I-XXVII

Hemeroteca de la Academia Nacional de la Historia (HANH), Caracas, Venezuela

Hemeroteca de la Biblioteca Nacional (HBN), Caracas, Venezuela

John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum (JFKL), Boston, Massachusetts, USA, accessible online at www.jfklibrary.org/

White House Photograph Collection, Series 1
Papers of John F. Kennedy, Speech Files, Series 3

Sala de Lectura de la Biblioteca Nacional (SLBN), Caracas, Venezuela

Fondo *Gacetas Oficiales*

Decreto Presidencial nro. 803,
Gaceta Oficial de la República de Venezuela (nro. 26.906),
Caracas, 23 de julio de 1962, año
XC, mes X, p. 199.830

Decreto Presidencial nro. 3.211,
Gaceta Oficial de la República de Venezuela (nro. 36.629), 26 de
enero de 1999, año CXXVII, mes
IV, p. 307.816

Decreto Presidencial nro. 5.643,
Gaceta Oficial de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela (nro.
38.792), Caracas, 18 de octubre,
2007, año CXXXV, mes I, pp.
29-31

Decreto Presidencial nro. 7.375,
Gaceta Oficial de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela (nro.
39.402), Caracas, 13 de abril de
2010, año CXXXVII, mes VII, p.
375.796-8

NEWS OUTLETS AND MAGAZINES

Associated Press
Aporrea
Brown University News Service
Caracas Chronicles
Correo del Orinoco
El Desafío de la Historia
The Devil's Excrement
The Economist
El Farol
Foreign Policy
El Globo
Globovisión
The Guardian
La Maracucha
Memorias de Venezuela
El Nacional
The New Yorker
The New York Times
Noticias24
El País
Prensa Miraflores
Revista Shell
Tal Cual
The Times of India
Time Magazine
Últimas Noticias
El Universal
Venezolana de Televisión
Venezuela Analysis
Venezuelan Politics and Human Rights
The Washington Post

INTERVIEWS

Two members of the investigation department of the National Academy of History (ANH) asked to remain anonymous, and have been assigned an identification for citation. All interviews were conducted in Caracas and in Spanish, unless otherwise noted.

Andara, Consuelo, June 18, 2013

ANH01, July 29, 2013

ANH02, July 29, 2013

Anzola, Agustín, May 29, 2013

Berrueta, Jorge, July 26, 2013

Blazquez, Marcos, May 11, 2013

Brito, Maria Gabriela, August 7, 2013

Cabrera, Alexis, May 31, 2013

Carrera Damas, Germán, July 30, 2013

Castillo, Victor, May 13, 2013

Correa, Pedro, June 18, 2013

Durand, Guillermo, May 29, 2013

Febrés Cordero, Siro Humberto, May 31, 2013 (conducted in English)

Fermín, César, June 6, 2013

Fichi, Rusel, May 11, 2013

Fuenmayor, Marcos, August 2, 2013

García, Ilmer, June 6, 2013

González, Hancer, Mérida, Venezuela, June 27, 2013

González Deluca, Maria Elena, July 23, 2013

Hazen, Dan, Cambridge, MA, USA, January 8, 2014 (conducted in English)

Hinestrosa, Tulio, May 29, 2013 (conducted in English)

Iribarren, Mariana, May 29, 2013

Lezama, Migdalia, July 11, 2013

Ojeda, Félix, August 8, 2013

Medina, Marilyn, July 29, 2013

Mondolfi, Edgardo, June 18, 2013

Morón Guillermo, June 21, 2013

Noguera, Carlos, May 9, 2013

Pellicer, Luis Felipe, August 9, 2013

Quintero, Inés, July 25, 2013

Rodríguez, Carlos, August 5, 2013

de Rogatis, Antonietta, July 29, 2013

Rojas, Lillian, May 7, 2013

Straka, Tomás, July 12, 2013

Súarez, Carlos, May 8, 2013

Vaamonde, Gustavo, July 9, 2013

Villegas, Hector, June 8, 2013

Yajure, Orlando, June 6, 2013

Zambrano, Alexander, August 7, 2013

Zamora, Ingrid, May 13, 2013

Zamora, Isabel, July 4, 2013

PUBLISHED AND VIDEO PRIMARY SOURCES (SPANISH)

4-F: Desplome del parlamento puntofijista. Caracas: Fondo Editorial William Lara, 2012.

Archivo Del Libertador (Indice). Caracas: Italgráfica, C.A., 1961.

Archivo General de la Nación. *Guía del Archivo General de la Nación.* Caracas: Archivo General de la Nación, 2011.

Betancourt, Rómulo. "Discurso de Toma de Posesión Presidencial Ante El Congreso Nacional (1959)." Constitución Web.

<http://constitucionweb.blogspot.com/2010/07/discurso-de-toma-de-posesion.html> (accessed November 17, 2013).

_____. *La Revolución Democrática en Venezuela (1959-1964)*. 4 Vols. Caracas: Imprenta Nacional, 1968.

_____. *Rómulo Betancourt y la siembra del petróleo: sus principales escritos de economía política, 1927-1976*. Edited by Guersindo Rodríguez. Caracas: Editorial Arte, 2012.

_____. "Mensaje de año Nuevo, 1962." Caracas: Publicaciones de la Secretaría General de la República, 1962.

_____. *Antología Política*. Edited by Aníbal Romero, Elizabeth Tinoco, and María Teresa Romero. Caracas: Editorial Fundación Rómulo Betancourt, 1990.

Blanco-Fombona, R. ed. *Cartas de Bolívar: 1823-1824-1825*, ed. R. Blanco-Fombona. Madrid: Editorial-América, 1921.

Blanco Muñoz, Agustín and Herma Marksman. *Habla Herma Marksman: Hugo Chávez me utilizó*. Caracas: Catedra Pio Tamayo: Centro de Estudios de Historia Actual, 2004.

Blanco Muñoz, Agustín and Hugo Chávez Frías. *Habla el Comandante*. Caracas: Catedra Pio Tamayo, CEHA/IIES/FACES/UCV, 1998.

Blanco Muñoz, Agustín and Marcos Pérez Jiménez. *La Dictadura: Habla el General Marcos Pérez Jiménez*. Caracas: Centro de Estudios de Historia Actual, FACES-UCV, 1983.

Bolívar, Simón. *Cartas de Bolívar (1799-1822)*. París y Buenos Aires: Sociedad de Ediciones Lous-Michaud, 1913.

Caldera, Rafael. *Compromiso Solidario*, 4 Vols. Caracas: Ediciones de la Presidencia de la República, 1999.

Centro Nacional de Historia. *Conciencia Campaña de Carabobo: La estrategia que liberó a Venezuela*. Caracas: Centro Nacional de Historia, 2012.

Chávez Frías, Hugo. "Discurso de Toma de Posesión." Biblioteca Hugo Chávez. <http://www.analitica.com/bitblioteca/hchavez/toma.asp> (accessed December 24, 2013).

- _____. *Evolución de la bandera de Venezuela, 1797-1930*. Caracas: Consejo Nacional de Seguridad y Defensa, 1989.
- _____. *Selección de discursos del presidente de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela, Hugo Chávez Frías, 1999-2012*. Caracas: Ediciones de la Presidencia, 2012.
- Cómite Ejecutivo del Bicentenario de Simón Bolívar. *Bolívar: El libro del sesquicentenario, 1830-1980*. Caracas: Ediciones de la Presidencia de la República, 1980.
- Dávila, Luis Ricardo, ed. *Betancourt: Antología Política, Volume 7, 1959-1964*. Caracas: Fundación Rómulo Betancourt, 2007.
- “Discurso Memorable, Día Toma Posesión 02-FEB-1999.” YouTube video, 2:00:58. Posted by Mario González Ortega, March 24, 2013. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4p_tDYgFRAY&feature=youtube_gdata_player (accessed January 6, 2014).
- Fundación Creole. *Fundación Creole, 1956-1964*. Caracas: Imprenta Nacional, 1964.
- “Galería 2.” Photo. Dr. Rafael Caldera: Vida, obra y vigencia de su pensamiento <http://rafaelcaldera.com/index.php?route=information/gallery&album=10> (accessed online, March 1, 2014).
- Garrido, Alberto. *Documentos de la Revolución Bolivariana*. Caracas: Producciones Karol, 2002.
- Herrera de Weishaar, M.L. and Carmen Alida Soto. *Guía del Archivo General de la Nación*. Caracas: Archivo General de la Nación, 1984.
- Lecuna, Vicente ed. *Papeles de Bolívar publicados por Vicente Lecuna*. Caracas: Litografía del Comercio, 1917.
- _____. *Cartas del Libertador*. New York: The Colonial Press, 1948.
- Martí, José. “Our America.” Published in *El Partido Liberal* (Mexico City), March 5, 1892. Compiled by J.A. Sierra. <http://www.historyofcuba.com/history/marti/America.htm> (accessed February 24, 2014).
- “Misión.” www.celarg.org.ve (accessed February 5, 2014).
- Ojeda, Fabricio. “Carta de Reununcia de Fabricio Ojeda.” <http://www.cedema.org/ver.php?id=2105> (accessed November 23, 2013).

- “Pacto de Punto Fijo.” Biblioteca Venezuela.
http://www.analitica.com/bitbliblioteca/venezuela/punto_fijo.asp (accessed November 24, 2013).
- “Plan de Barranquilla.” Biblioteca Venezuela.
http://www.analitica.com/biblioteca/venezuela/plan_de_barranquilla.asp (accessed November 24, 2013).
- “Premio Internacional de Ensayo Mariano Picón Salas.” www.celarg.org.ve (accessed February 5, 2014).
- “Premio Libertador al Pensamiento Crítico.” www.celarg.org.ve (accessed February 5, 2014).
- Rangel, José Vicente. *De Yare a Miraflores, el mismo subversivo: Entrevistas al comandante Hugo Chávez Frías (1992-2012)*. Caracas: Ediciones Correo del Orinoco, 2013.
- “Verdicto a la 1.^a edición del Premio Internacional sobre la Emancipación,” Caracas, April 16, 2010. www.celarg.org.ve (accessed September 29, 2013).

PUBLISHED PRIMARY SOURCES (ENGLISH)

- Alexander, Robert Jackson. *Venezuela's Voice for Democracy: Conversations and Correspondence with Rómulo Betancourt*. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1990.
- Bolívar, Simón. *El Libertador: Writings of Simón Bolívar*. Edited by David Bushnell. Translation by Frederick Fornoff. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- Castro, Fidel. “Fidel Castro 13 March Anniversary Speech.”
<http://lanic.utexas.edu/project/castro/db/1967/19670314.html> (accessed November 20, 2013).
- Chávez Frías, Hugo and Martha Harnecker. *Understanding the Venezuelan Revolution: Hugo Chávez Talks to Marta Harnecker*. Translated by Chesa Boudin. New York: Monthly Review Press, 2005.
- Foreign Relations of the United States, The American Republics (1946)*. Accessed online, March 2, 2014,
<http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1946v11>.
- FRUS, 1955-1957, American Republics: Central and South America*. Accessed online, November 24, 2013,
<http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS195557v07>.

FRUS, 1958–1960, Cuba, p. 386-7. Accessed online, November 20, 2013, <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS195860v06>.

Fundación Centro Nacional de Historia, ed. *Nacionalismo, soberanía y antiimperialismo*. Caracas: Centro Nacional de Historia, 2011.

Inter-American Economic and Social Council. *Evaluation of the 1963-1966 National Plan of Venezuela: Report Presented to the Venezuelan Government*. Washington, D.C.: Alliance for Progress, 1963.

Organization of American States. "Eighth Meeting of Consultation of Ministers of Foreign Affairs," January 22, 1962." <http://www.oas.org/consejo/MEETINGS%20OF%20CONSULTATION/Actas/Acta%208.pdf> (accessed November 23, 2013).

Organization of American States. "Ninth Meeting of Consultation of Ministers of Foreign Affairs," July 21, 1964." <http://www.oas.org/consejo/MEETINGS%20OF%20CONSULTATION/Actas/Acta%209.pdf> (accessed November 23, 2013).

Taylor, Wayne and John Lindeman. *The Creole Petroleum Corporation in Venezuela*. Washington, D.C.: National Planning Association, 1955.

Trinkunas, Harold and Jennifer McCoy. "The Carter Center: Observation of the 1998 Venezuelan Elections," February 1999." <http://www.cartercenter.org/documents/1151.pdf> (accessed February 27, 2014).

SECONDARY SOURCES

PUBLISHED SOURCES (SPANISH)

Almarza, Angel Rafael. "Dos siglos de historias mal contadas." In *El relato invariable: independencia, mito y nación*, edited by Inés Quintero, 125-154. Caracas: Editorial Alfa, 2011.

Amodio, Emanuele. *Relaciones interétnicas e identidades indígenas en Venezuela: Procesos históricos, territorios y culturas*. Caracas: Centro Nacional de Historia, 2010.

Amor y Vásquez, José. *El Tapaboca*. Providence [R.I.]: John Carter Brown Library, 2000.

- Aragol, Yasmín Rada and Orlando José Contreras. *Protesta estudiantil y represión en Venezuela, 1983-1993*. Caracas: Archivo General de la Nación, 2010.
- Barrios, Héctor Bencomo. *Bolívar ante la política*. Caracas: Archivo General de la Nación, 2010.
- Bautista, Lorena Puerta. *Los paisajes petroleros del Zulia en la mirada alemana (1920-1940)*. Caracas: Archivo General de la Nación, 2010.
- Bautista Urbaneja, Diego. *Pueblo Y Petróleo En La Política Venezolana Del Siglo XX*. Caracas: Monte Ávila Editores Latinoamericana, 1992.
- Berrueta, Jorge and Álvaro Arismendi. *La fiel guerrilla del rey: El accionar guerrillero en la Provincia de Caracas como factor determinante en los planes de reconquista española*. Caracas: Archivo General de la Nación, 2011.
- Bonilla-Molia, Luis and Haiman El Troudi. *Historia de la Revolución Bolivariana: Pequeña crónica, 1948-2004*. Caracas: Ministerio de Comunicación e Información, 2004.
- Caballero, Manuel. *Por qué no soy bolivariano: una reflexión antipatriótica*. Caracas: Editorial Alfa, 2006.
- _____. *Rómulo Betancourt: político de nación*. Caracas: Alfadil, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2004.
- _____. *Las crisis de la Venezuela contemporánea: 1903-1992*. Caracas: Monte Ávila Editores Latinoamericana, 1998.
- Cabieses Donoso, Manuel. *Venezuela, okey!* Santiago de Chile: Ediciones del Litoral, 1963.
- Capriles Ayala, Carlos. "Prolegómenos Al Adventimiento de La Democracia." In *Todos Los Golpes a La Democracia Venezolana*, by Carlos Capriles Ayala and Rafael Del Naranco, 101-132. Caracas: Consorcio de Ediciones Capriles, 1992.
- Carpio Castillo, Rubén. *Acción Democrática, 1941-1971: bosquejo histórico de un partido*. Caracas: Ediciones República, 1971.
- Carrera Damas, German. *El culto a Bolívar: esbozo para un estudio de la historias de las ideas en Venezuela*. Caracas: Editorial Alfa, 2013

- _____. *El Bolivarianismo-Militarismo: una ideología de reemplazo*. Caracas: Ala de Cuervo, 2005.
- _____, ed. *Historia de la historiografía venezolana (textos para su estudio)*. Caracas: Ediciones de la Biblioteca UCV, 1965.
- _____. *Historia contemporánea de Venezuela: bases metodológicas*. Caracas: Ediciones de la Biblioteca UCV, 1977.
- Castellanos, Rafael Ramón. *Hugo Chávez Frías y la Revolución Bolivariana: Bibliografía*. Caracas: Fundación Editorial El erro y La rana, 2010.
- Castillo, Ocarina. *Los años del buldozer: ideología y política, 1948-1958*. Caracas: Fondo Editorial Tropykos, 1990.
- Centro Nacional de Historia, *De Punto Fijo a la Revolución Bolivariana, 1958-2003*. Caracas: Centro Nacional de Historia, 2012.
- _____. *Castro en la caricatura mundial*. Caracas: Centro Nacional de Historia, 2008.
- Chacón Vargas, Ramón Vicente. *La población de la provincia de Caracas, o provincia de Venezuela en vísperas de la guerra de independencia, 1800-1812*. Caracas: Fundación Centro Nacional de Historia, 2009.
- Consalvi, Simón Alberto. *El 18 de octubre de 1945*. Caracas: Editorial Seix Barral, 1979.
- “Control de cambios en Venezuela | GestioPolis.”
<http://www.gestiopolis.com/recursos/documentos/fulldocs/eco/ccv.htm>
(accessed November 29, 2013).
- Elizalde, Rosa Miriam and Luis Báez. *Chávez nuestro*. La Habana: Casa Editora Abril, 2004.
- Ellner, Steve. *El fenómeno Chávez: sus orígenes y su impacto*. Caracas: Centro Nacional de Historia, 2011.
- Farías, Eduardo Arcila. *Las estadísticas de Castro: Primera década del siglo XX*. Caracas: Fundación Centro Nacional de Historia, 2009.
- de Freitas, Leonor. *Centenario del 19 de abril (1810-1910)*. Caracas: Archivo General de la Nación, 2010.
- Fundación Rómulo Betancourt. *Rómulo Betancourt: Historia y contemporaneidad*. Caracas: Fundación Rómulo Betancourt, 1989.

- _____. *Contribución a la bibliografía de Rómulo Betancourt*. Caracas: Fundación Rómulo Betancourt, 1981.
- García Ponce, Guillermo. *Relatos de la lucha armada (1960-1967): La insurrección (1960-1962)*. Valencia: Vadell Hermanos Editores, 1977.
- Golinger, Eva. *El código Chávez: Descifrando la intervención de los Estados Unidos en Venezuela*. La Habana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 2005.
- González Deluca, María Elena. *Historia e historiadores de Venezuela en la segunda mitad del siglo XX*. Caracas: Academia Nacional de Historia, 2007.
- _____. "Historia, usos, mitos, demonios y magia revolucionaria." *Revista Venezolana de Economía y Ciencias Sociales*, v. 11 n. 2 (May 2005): 159-186.
- González, Emilis. *Las escritoras corianas del período finisecular (XIX) y su agenda oculta*. Caracas: Fundación Centro de Estudios Latinamericanos Rómulo Gallegos, 2010.
- Grases, Pedro. *El Archivo de Bolívar: manuscritos y ediciones*. Caracas: Editorial de la Universidad Simón Bolívar, 1978.
- Grisanti, Angel. *El Archivo del Libertador*. Caracas: Imprenta Nacional, 1956.
- "Homenaje: Cristóbal L. Mendoza: Trayectoria Y Voluntad." *Revista de Historia de América* 85 (January 1, 1978): 5-6.
- Iribarren, Mariana. *Oficio de alarife*. Caracas: Centro Nacional de Historia, 2010.
- Izard, Miguel. *Nicuatreros ni montoneros, Llaneros*. Caracas: Archivo General de la Nación, 2011.
- JARM. "Dolar Frente Al Bolívar Desde 1960-2010." *Economía Y Finanzas*. <http://economistajarm.blogspot.com/2010/01/dolar-frente-al-bolivar-desde-1960-2010.html> (accessed November 29, 2013).
- Krauze, Enrique. *El poder y el delirio*. Caracas: Editorial Alfa, 2008.
- López Bohórquez, Alí Henrique. "Historia contemporánea inmediata de Venezuela: Notas para una aproximación historiográfica." *Nuestro Sur* Año 3, Número 4 (January-February 2012): 69-97.
- López, Félix. *Dos siglos de mitos mal curados*. Caracas: Fundación Centro de Estudios Latinamericanos Rómulo Gallegos, 2010.

- López Maya, Margarita. *Del viernes negro al referendo revocatorio*. Caracas: Alfadil Editores, 2005.
- Magallanes, Rodolfo. “El gobierno de Hugo Chávez: ¿qué lo distingue de los anteriores?” *Revista Politeia*, Instituto de Estudios Políticos, UCV, N° 42, Vol. 32 (2009): 97-137.
- Medina, Marilyn. *Colección Muñoz-Tébar: Fondo documental y propuestas para su estudio*. Caracas: Academia Nacional de Historia, 2008.
- Meza, Alfredo and Sandra Lafuente. *El acertijo de abril: relato periodístico de la breve caída de Hugo Chávez*. Caracas: La Hoja del Norte, 2012.
- Mondolfi, Edgardo. *El Día Del Atentado: El Frustrado Magnicidio Contra Rómulo Betancourt*. Caracas: Editorial Alfa, 2013.
- Montilla Azuaje, Jonathan. *Fidelidad al rey lejano: Conmemoraciones regias y legitimación política en la ciudad de Caracas (1788-1808)*. Caracas: Archivo General de la Nación, 2011.
- Morales, Otoniel. *América Latina y El Caribe en la agenda de la política exterior estadounidense entre 1920-2004*. Caracas: Centro Nacional de Historia, 2009.
- Morón, Guillermo. *Historia de Venezuela*. Caracas: Los Libros de El Nacional, 2012.
- _____. *Memorial de agravios*. Caracas: Editorial Alfa, 2005.
- Paz, Juan and Miño Cepeda. *Deuda histórica e historia inmediata en América Latina*. Caracas: Centro Nacional de Historia, 2009.
- Pérez Alfonzo, Juan Pablo, ed. *La dinámica del petróleo en el progreso de Venezuela: ponente Juan Pablo Pérez Alfonzo*. Caracas: Dirección de Cultura, Universidad Central de Venezuela, 1965.
- Pino Iturrieta, Elías. *El divino Bolívar: ensayo sobre una religión republicana*. Madrid: Catarata, 2003.
- Polanco, Tomás. *El general de tres soles*. Caracas: Editorial Arte, 1985.
- Rodríguez, Manuel Almeida. *A mi barrio le ronca el mambo: Historia del barrio Matica Abajo*. Caracas: Archivo General de la Nación, 2010.
- Sánchez Otero, Germán. *Abril sin censura: Golpe de estado en Venezuela: memorias*. Caracas: Ediciones Correo del Orinoco, 2012.

- Sañudo, José Rafael. *Estudios sobre la vida de Bolívar*. Santa Fe de Bogotá: Planeta Colombiana Editorial, 1995.
- Straka, Tomás. *La épica del desencanto: bolivarianismo, historiografía y política en Venezuela*. Caracas: Editorial Alfa, 2009.
- Uzcátegui, Alejandro Cardozo, ed. *Chavismo: entre la utopía y la pesadilla*. Mérida [Venezuela]: Editorial Nuevos Aires, 2012.
- Vargas Arenas, Iraida. *Mujeres en tiempos de cambio*. Caracas: Centro Nacional de Historia, 2010.
- Vázquez, Belin and César Pérez Jiménez. *Estado liberal y gubernamentalidad en Venezuela*. Caracas: Centro Nacional de Historia, 2012.
- Velásquez, Ramón, J.F. Sucre Figarella, and Blas Bruni Celli. *Betancourt en la historia de Venezuela del siglo XX*. Caracas: Ediciones Centauro, 1980.
- Vergara Sierra, Ana Joanna. *Camino a la libertad: Esclavos combatientes en tiempos de Independencia*. Caracas: ARchivo General de la Nación, 2011.
- Villegas Poljak, Ernesto. *Abril, golpe adentro*. Caracas: Fundación para la Cultura y las Artes, 2012.
- Zago, Angela. *La Rebelión de los Angeles*. Caracas: Fuentes Editores, 1992.

PUBLISHED SOURCES (ENGLISH)

- Arana, Marie. *Bolívar: American Liberator*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2013.
- Bastian, Jeannette Allis. "Whispers in the Archives: Finding the Voices of the Colonized in the Records of the Colonizer." In Margaret Procter, Michael Cook, and Caroline Williams, eds. *Political Pressure and the Archival Records*, 25-43. Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2005.
- Berger, Stephen. "The Role of National Archives in Constructing National Master Narratives in Europe." *Archival Science* 13:1 (2013): 1-22.
- Berglund, Susan. "The Fundacion John Boulton," *Latin American Research Review* 21, no. 2 (January 1, 1986): 137-141.
- Betancourt, Rómulo. *Venezuela, Oil, and Politics*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1979.
- Blotner, Joseph. *Faulkner: A Biography*. Oxford [M.I.]: Univ. Press of Mississippi, 2005.

- Blouin Jr., Francis X. and William G. Rosenberg. *Processing the Past: Contesting Authority in History and the Archives*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.
- _____, eds. *Archives, Documentation, and Institutions of Social Memory: Essays from the Sawyer Seminar*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006.
- Bradley, Harriet. "The Seductions of the Archive: Voices Lost and Found." *History of the Human Sciences* 12:2 (1999): 107-112.
- Bruce, Ian. *The Real Venezuela: Making Socialism in the Twenty-First Century*. London: Pluto Press, 2008.
- Brunk, Samuel and Ben Fallaw, eds. *Heroes and Hero Cults in Latin America*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006.
- Burns, Kathryn. *Into the Archive: Writing and Power in Colonial Peru*. Durham [N.C.]: Duke University Press, 2010.
- Burton, Antoinette M. ed. *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions, and the Writing of History*. Durham [N.C.]: Duke University Press, 2005.
- Bushnell, David and Lester Langley, eds. *Simón Bolívar: Essays on the Life and Legacy of the Liberator*. Lanham [M.D.]: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2008.
- Carroll, Rory. *Comandante: Hugo Chávez's Venezuela*. New York: Penguin, 2013.
- Ciccariello-Maher, George. *We Created Chávez: A People's History of the Venezuelan Revolution*. Durham [N.C.]: Duke University Press, 2013.
- C. L. M. "Fundacion 'Eugenio Mendoza' (Venezuela)." *Revista de Historia de América* no. 33 (June 1, 1952): 195-196.
- Cook, Terry. "Remembering the Future: Appraisal of Records and the Role of Archives in Constructing Social Memory." In *Archives, Documentation, and Institutions of Social Memory: Essays from the Sawyer Seminar*, edited by Francis X. Blouin Jr. and William G. Rosenberg, 169-181. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006.
- Cooper, Frederick. "Memories of Colonization: Commemoration, Preservation, and Erasure in an African Archive." In *Archives, Documentation, and Institutions of Social Memory: Essays from the Sawyer Seminar*, edited by Francis X. Blouin Jr. and William G. Rosenberg, 257-266. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006.

- Coronil, Fernando. *The Magical State: Nature, Money, and Modernity in Venezuela*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997.
- Darnton, Robert. *The Great Cat Massacre: And Other Episodes in French Cultural History*. New York: Basic Books, 1984.
- _____. "The Good Way to Do History." *The New York Review of Books* 61, no. 1 (January 9, 2014). Accessed online, February 14, 2014, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2014/jan/09/good-way-history/>.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*. Translated by Eric Prenowitz. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.
- Díaz, Junot. *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*. England: CPI Bookmarque, Croydon, 2008.
- Dirks, Nicholas. "Annals of the Archive: Ethnographic Notes on the Sources of History." In *From the Margins: Historical Anthropology and its Futures*, edited by Brian Axel, 47-65. Durham [N.C.]: Duke University Press, 2002.
- Dominguez, Jorge I. *To Make a World Safe for Revolution: Cuba's Foreign Policy*. Cambridge [M.A.]: Harvard University Press, 1989.
- Donia, Robert J. "The New Masters of Memory: Libraries, Archives, and Museums in Postcommunist Bosnia-Herzegovina." In *Archives, Documentation, and Institutions of Social Memory: Essays from the Sawyer Seminar*, edited by Francis X. Blouin Jr. and William G. Rosenberg, 393-401. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006.
- Eley, Geoff. *A Crooked Line: From Cultural History to the History of Society*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005.
- Ellner, Steve. "Venezuelan Revisionist Political History, 1908-1958: New Motives and Criteria for Analyzing the Past." *Latin American Research Review* 30:2 (1995): 91-121.
- _____. *Venezuela's Movimiento Al Socialismo*. Durham [N.C.]: Duke University Press, 1988.
- _____. *Rethinking Venezuelan Politics: Class, Conflict, and the Chávez Phenomenon*. London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2008.
- Ellner, Steve and Miguel Tinker Salas eds. *Latin American Perspectives*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (March 2005), Venezuelan Exceptionalism Revisted: The Unraveling of Venezuela's Model Democracy.

- Ewell, Judith. *Venezuela: A Century of Change*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984.
- _____. *The Indictment of a Dictator: The Extradition and Trial of Marcos Pérez Jiménez*. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1981.
- Fernandes, Sujatha. *Who Can Stop the Drums?: Urban Social Movements in Chávez's Venezuela*. Durham [N.C.]: Duke University Press, 2010.
- Foucault, Michel. *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*. Translated by A.M. Sheridan Smith. New York: Vintage Books, 2010.
- Fukuyama, Francis. *The End of History and the Last Man*. New York: Free Press, 1992.
- García Márquez, Gabriel. *The General in His Labyrinth: A Novel*. New York: Random House LLC, 1990.
- Garton Ash, Timothy. *The File: A Personal History*. New York: Vintage, 1997.
- Glauert, Earl T. "Ricardo Rojas and the Emergence of Argentine Cultural Nationalism." *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, Vol. 43, No. 1 (Feb. 1963): 9-12. doi: 10.2307/2510433.
- Goebel, Michael. *Argentina's Partisan Past: Nationalism and the Politics of History*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011.
- Gott, Richard. *Hugo Chávez and the Bolivarian Revolution*. London: Verso, 2005.
- _____. *Guerrilla Movements in Latin America*. London: Seagull Books, 2008.
- Grandin, Greg. "Your Americanism and Mine: Americanism and Anti-Americanism in the Americas." *The American Historical Review* 111, no. 4 (October 1, 2006): 1044. doi:10.1086/ahr.111.4.1042.
- Grant Belnap, Jeffrey and Raul A. Fernández, eds. *José Martí's "Our America": From National to Hemispheric Cultural Studies*. Durham [N.C.]: Duke University Press, 1998.
- Hardy, Charles. *Cowboy in Caracas*. Willimantic [C.T.]: Curbstone Press, 2007.
- Harris, Verne. "The Archival Sliver: A Perspective on the Construction of Social Memory in Archives and the Transition from Apartheid to Democracy." In *Refiguring the Archive*, edited by Carolyn Hamilton, Verne Harris, Michele Pickover, Graeme Reid, Razia Saleh, and Jane Taylor, 135-151. Cape Town: David Philip Publishers, 2002.

- Hellinger, Daniel C. *Venezuela: Tarnished Democracy*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1991.
- Indexmundi. CIA World Factbook.
<http://www.indexmundi.com/g/g.aspx?v=69&c=ve&l=en> (accessed February 27, 2014).
- Jackson Alexander, Robert. *Rómulo Betancourt and the Transformation of Venezuela*. New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1982.
- _____. *Labor Parties of Latin America*. New York City: League for Industrial Democracy, 1942.
- Jimerson, Randall C. "Documents and Archives in Early America." *Archivaria* 60 (2006): 235-258.
- Jones, Bart. *¡Hugo! From Mud Hut to Perpetual Revolution: The Hugo Chávez Story*. London: The Bodley Head, 2008.
- Josias, Anthea. "Toward an Understanding of Archives as a Feature of Collective Memory." *Archival Science* 11 (2011): 95-112.
- Karl, Terry Lynn. *The Paradox of Plenty: Oil Booms and Petro-States*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.
- Ketelaar, Eric. "Archival Temples, Archival Prisons: Modes of Power and Protection," *Archival Science* 2 (2002): 221-238.
- Koppes, Clayton R. "The Good Neighbor Policy and the Nationalization of Mexican Oil: A Reinterpretation." *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 69, No. 1 (June, 1982): 62-81. JSTOR (187752).
- Lieuwen, Edwin. *Petroleum in Venezuela: A History*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1954.
- Liss, Sheldon B. *Diplomacy & Dependency: Venezuela, the United States, and the Americas*. Salisbury [N.C.]: Documentary Publications, 1978.
- Logan, Joy. "From Borges to Tourism: Mendoza and the Nation in Martín Kohan's *El Informe: San Martín y el otro cruce de los Andes*." *Confluencia*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (Spring 2012): 2-15. Academic Search Premier, EBSCOhost (76253072).
- Lombardi, John V. *The Decline and Abolition of Negro Slavery in Venezuela (1820-1854)*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1971.

- _____. *Venezuela: The Search for Order, the Dream of Progress*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982.
- Lynch, John. *Simón Bolívar and the Age of Revolution*. London: University of London Institute of Latin American Studies, 1983.
- _____. *Simón Bolívar: A Life*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006.
- _____. *San Martín: Argentine Soldier, American Hero*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009.
- Lynch, Michael. "Archives in Formation: Privileged Spaces, Popular Archives, and Paper Trails." *History of Human Sciences* 12:2 (1999): 65-87.
- Marcano, Cristina and Alberto Barrera Tyszka. *Hugo Chávez*. Translated by Kristina Cordero. New York: Random House, 2004.
- Marx, Karl. "Bolívar y Ponte." Originally published in *The New American Cyclopaedia*, Vol. III, 1858. Accessed February 15, 2014, <http://www.marxistsfr.org/archive/marx/works/1858/01/bolivar.htm>.
- Mbembe, Achille. "The Power of the Archive and its Limits." In *Refiguring the Archive*, edited by Carolyn Hamilton, Verne Harris, Michele Pickover, Graeme Reid, Razia Saleh, and Jane Taylor, 19-20. Cape Town: David Philip Publishers, 2002.
- McBeth, Brian. *Juan Vicente Gómez and the Oil Companies in Venezuela, 1908-1935*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.
- _____. *Gunboats, Corruption, and Claims: Foreign Intervention in Venezuela, 1899-1908*. Westport [C.T.]: Greenwood Press, 2001.
- Meyer, Lorenzo. *Mexico and the United States in the Oil Controversy, 1917-1942*. Translated by Muriel Vasconcellos. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1977.
- Morin, Thomas D. *Mariano Pincón Salas*. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1979.
- Nelson, Brian A. *The Silence and the Scorpion: The Coup Against Chavez and the Making of Modern Venezuela*. New York: Nation Books, 2012.
- O'Donnell, Guillermo. "Toward an Alternative Conceptualization of South American Politics." In *Promise of Development: Theories of Change in Latin America*, edited by Peter Klarén and Thomas J. Bossert, 239-275. Boulder [C.O.]: Westview Press, 1986.

- Officer, Lawrence H. "Exchange Rates Between the United States Dollar and Forty-one Currencies." MeasuringWorth.
<http://www.measuringworth.com/exchangeglobal/> (accessed January 6, 2014).
- O'Toole, James M. "Cortes' Notary: The Symbolic Power of Records." *Archival Science* 2 (2002): 45-61.
- Perry, Adele. "The Colonial Archive on Trial: Possession, Dispossession, and History in *Delgamuukw v. British Columbia*." In *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions, and the Writing of History*, edited by Antoinette Burton, 325-350. Durham [N.C.]: Duke University Press, 2005.
- Peterson, Trudy. "Macro Archives, Micro States." *Archivaria* 50 (2000): 41-51.
- Ponnhia, Thomas and Jonathan Eastwood, eds. *The Revolution in Venezuela: Social and Political Change under Chávez*. Cambridge [M.A.]: Harvard University David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies, 2011.
- Postero, Nancy. "Andean Utopias in Evo Morales's Bolivia." *Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies* Vol. 2, No. 1 (April 2007): 1-28.
<http://www.anthro.ucsd.edu/faculty-staff/profiles/documents/LACESandeanutopias.pdf> (accessed February 25, 2014).
- Potter, Claire Bond and Renee Christine Romano. *Doing Recent History: On Privacy, Copyright, Video Games, Institutional Review Boards, Activist Scholarship, and History That Talks Back*. Athens [G.A.]: University of Georgia Press, 2012.
- Quintero, Inés. "El Archivo del Libertador." Paper presented at the conference "Britain and the Independence of the Bolivarian Republics," London, May 9, 2012. Translated by Aris da Silva and Ana Suarez Vidal.
<http://bolivariantimes.blogspot.com/2012/09/full-transcript-with-photos-of-britain.html> (accessed February 12, 2014).
- Rabe, Stephen. *The Road to OPEC: United States Relations with Venezuela, 1919-1976*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982.
- _____. *The Most Dangerous Area in the World: John F. Kennedy Confronts Communist Revolution in Latin America*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999.
- Racine, Karen. *Francisco de Miranda: A Transatlantic Life in the Age of Revolution*. Wilmington [D.E.]: SR Books, 2003.

- Rein, Raanan. "Peronist Nationalism and the Hispanic Heritage in Argentina." In Moshe Gammer, ed., *Community, Identity, and the State: Comparing Africa, Eurasia, Latin America and the Middle East*. London: Routledge, 2004.
- Ridener, John. *From Polders to Postmodernism: A Concise History of Archival Theory*. Duluth [M.N.]: Litwin Books, 2009.
- Roque Ramírez, Horacio N. "A Living Archive of Desire: Teresita la Campesina and the Embodiment of Queer Latino Community Histories. In *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions, and the Writing of History*, edited by Antoinette Burton, 111-135. Durham [N.C.]: Duke University Press, 2005.
- Rosenzweig, Roy. "Scarcity or Abundance? Preserving the Past in a Digital Era." *American Historical Review* 108:3 (2003): 735-762.
- Rothschild, Emma. "The Archives of Universal History." *Journal of World History* 19:3 (2008): 375-401.
- Rubin, Andrew N. *Archives of Authority: Empire, Culture, and the Cold War*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012.
- Sachs, Albie. "Archives, Truth, and Reconciliation." *Archivaria* 62 (2006): 1-14.
- Schlesinger Jr., Arthur. *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2002.
- _____. "On the Writing of Contemporary History." *The Atlantic* (March 1967). Accessed online, February 14, 2014, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1967/03/on-the-writing-of-contemporary-history/305731/>.
- Schwartz, Joan M. and Terry Cook. "Archives, Records, and Power: The Making of Modern Memory." *Archival Science* 2 (2002): 1-19.
- Sigmund, Paul E. *Multinationals in Latin America: The Politics of Nationalization*. Madison [W.I.]: University of Wisconsin Press, 1980.
- Singh, Kelvin. "Oil Politics in Venezuela during the Lopez Contreras Administration (1936-1941)." *Journal of Latin American Studies* 21, no. 1 (February 1, 1989): 89-104.
- Steedman, Carolyn. *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History*. New Brunswick [N.J.]: Rutgers University Press, 2002.
- _____. "'Something She Called a Fever': Michelet, Derrida, and Dust (Or, in the Archives with Michelet and Derrida)." In *Archives, Documentation, and*

- Institutions of Social Memory: Essays from the Sawyer Seminar*, edited by Francis X. Blouin Jr. and William G. Rosenberg, 4-19. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006.
- Stoler, Ann Laura. *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009.
- Taffet, Jeffrey. *Foreign Aid as Foreign Policy: The Alliance for Progress in Latin America*. New York: Routledge, 2007.
- The Lives of Others*, DVD. Directed by Florian Henckel Von Donnersmarck. Munich: Wiedemann & Berg Film Produktion, 2006.
- The Revolution Will Not Be Televised*. Film. Directed by Kim Bartley and Donnacha O'Brien (Ireland: Vitagraph Films, 2003). YouTube video, 1:14:31. Posted by Halomaster7, Nov. 5, 2009. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Id--ZFTjR5c> (accessed January 27, 2014).
- Tinker Salas, Miguel. *The Enduring Legacy: Oil, Culture, and Society in Venezuela*. Durham [N.C.]: Duke University Press, 2009.
- _____. "Staying the Course: United States Oil Companies in Venezuela, 1945-1958." *Latin American Perspectives* 32, no. 2 (March 1, 2005): 150.
- Titei, Alina. "Caudillismo: Identity Landmark of Hispanic American Authoritarian Political Culture." *Philobiblon: Transylvanian Journal of Multidisciplinary Research in Humanities* Vol. 18, No. 2: 283-296. *Academic Search Premier, EBSCOhost* (92976070).
- Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1995.
- Tulchin, Joseph S. with Gary Bland, eds. *Venezuela in the Wake of Radical Reform*. London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1993.
- Van Witsen, Leo. *Costuming for Opera: Who Wears What and Why, Volume 2*. Metuchen [N.J.]: Scarecrow Press, 1994.
- Wallace, David A. and Lance Stuchell. "Understanding the 9/11 Commission Archive: Control, Access, and the Politics of Manipulation." *Archival Science* 10:2 (2010): 141-189.
- Wareham, Evelyn. "Our Own Identity, Our Own Taonga, Our Own Self Coming Back": Indigenous Voices in New Zealand Record-Keeping." *Archivaria* 52 (2001): 26-46.

Weld, Kirsten. *Paper Cadavers: The Archives of Dictatorship in Guatemala*. Durham [N.C.]: Duke University Press, 2014.

_____. "Dignifying the *Guerrillero*, Not the Assassin: Rewriting a History of Criminal Subversion in Postwar Guatemala." *Radical History Review* Issue 113 (Spring 2012): 35-54.

Weber, Max. *The Theory Of Social And Economic Organization*. Translated by A. M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2009.

Wilpert, Gergory. *Changing Venezuela by Taking Power*. London: Verso, 2007.

_____. *Coup Against Chávez in Venezuela: The Best International Reports of What Really Happened in April 2002*. Caracas: Fundación Venezolana para la Justicia Global, 2003.

X-Ray of a Lie. Film. Directed by Wolfgang Schlak (Venezuela: Wolfproductions, C.A., 2004). YouTube video, 1:21:11. Posted by Eduardo Lander, April 12, 2012. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DtDI7SuHRkM> (accessed January 27, 2014).

Zeuske, Michael. *Simón Bolívar: History and Myth*. Translated by Steven Randall and Lisa Neal. Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2013.