

ABSTRACTS FOR THE CONFERENCE 'THE MUSES OF THE LAND'
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Elise Bartosik-Vélez

Dickinson College

bartosie@dickinson.edu

“Bolívar at the Roman Forum: Republican Visions and Dreams of Empire”

According to tradition, in 1805 as Simón Bolívar looked upon the ruins of the Roman Forum, he swore to liberate his homeland from Spanish political domination. The famous ruins of the Forum are an important element of Tito Salas's painting of this foundational scene in Venezuelan history, which hangs on the ceiling of the National Pantheon. Simón Rodríguez's reconstruction of Bolívar's oath includes the Liberator's interpretation of Roman history and his contention that only in the New World could Rome's potential be realized.

As Spanish Americans like Bolívar looked to build their own independent nation-states, Rome provided inspiration and a political model. In my paper, I seek to explore what exactly about the Roman example inspired Americans: the Republic or the Empire. Often those who referred to Rome mentioned both the Republic *and* the Empire, as did Bolívar in his famous oath. Indeed, the Forum contains archaeological remnants of both the imperial and the republican periods in Roman history. Spanish American discourse referring to Rome often involved a mixture of references to the Republic and the Empire, a mixture that was conducive to the context of the political transition from colony to nation-state where the idea of empire had not simply ceased to exist but rather was strategically placed in the very scaffolding that was used in the construction of the new republics.

This is part of a larger project comparing the legacy of Rome in British and Spanish America during their respective independence and early national periods. Analyzing the meaning of Rome in both the Hispanic and British intellectual traditions in which early American nationalists participated, as well as understanding the political and cultural contexts of Spanish and British America during this time, requires a daunting command of material. Working together with a team of scholars in different fields (the history of Rome, Spain, England, and the Americas) would be ideal, but I have yet to collaborate with others largely because of constraints imposed by the academy. A lesser challenge has been the uneven nature of my access to primary material from British and Spanish America (databases containing British American material are searchable by word but there are few similar databases of Spanish American source material).

Adam G. Beaver
 Department of History
 Princeton University

“Phoenician Colonists and Anti-Romanism in the Iberian Renaissance”

In his 1575 *Antigüedades de España*, Ambrosio de Morales paused to recount his father's pioneering discovery ca. 1503 of the ruins of a lost Roman city in southern Iberia. Riding one day between Arcos and Jeréz, the elder Morales spotted an anomalous hilltop known to locals as “Carixa.” Though a medical doctor by profession, Morales' father also knew his Ptolemy and Pliny; and so, according to Morales junior, it was no surprise that he instantly recognized the hill as the site of the Roman settlement of Larissa, a hunch borne out by subsequent excavations.

When Spanish antiquarians related stories like that of Doctor Morales' happenstance encounter with ancient Larissa, they were also making an argument about the nobility of their homeland: to contemporaries, the ubiquity of Roman ruins proved Iberia's glorious past as a seat of Western civilization. Physical confirmation of ancient Iberia's Roman pedigree was especially important to Renaissance Spaniards, who lamented the fact that Muslim rule in the medieval Peninsula had shattered the precious links connecting them to their ancient ancestors and cast the very “Europeanness” of Spain into doubt.

And yet, antiquarian treatises like Morales' also reported on the discovery of an ever-increasing number of non-Roman, non-Christian objects in Iberian soil. Urns, coins, settlements, even the lost harbor of Tartessos: these exotic relics were interpreted—often correctly, as it turns out—as evidence of a vast and *vetustissima* history of Phoenician, Carthaginian, or Hebrew civilization in the Peninsula. How did Spain's antiquarians, ordinarily so preoccupied with establishing their nation's Christian, European pedigree, respond to the irruption of ancient Asian or African conquerors into the Spanish record? In this paper, I will connect Renaissance theories about the joint Phoenician-Israelite colonization of Iberia ca. 1000 BCE, and the increasing aversion of Iberian humanists to the evidence of Roman colonization, to sixteenth-century Spaniards' contemporary attitudes towards both their converted Jewish and Muslim neighbors and their American empire.

Annick Benavides

Department of Art and Art History
University of New Mexico

“Deifying Pachamama”

Deifying Pachamama charts the ideological mobilization of a personified Mother-Earth deity in the Andes, from the Late Horizon (1438 - 1534) into modernity. Deifying Pachamama employs a rigorous interdisciplinary juxtaposition of the Pachamama cult as described in colonial chronicles, against the modern Pachamama cult documented by anthropologists and ethnographers. In place of propagating a speculative continuity between ancient and contemporary Pachamama cults, the paper exposes disparities between the two, refuting the popular conception that Pachamama veneration has endured from the genesis of agriculture in the Americas until today. Evidence suggests that during the Late Horizon, the term ‘pachamama’ did not allude to a personified Mother-Earth deity. Instead, Pachamama likely described uncultivated ground, sacred in its potential to provide sustenance, but never idolized until the arrival of the Spanish in Peru.

Spanish chroniclers describe various indigenous fertility rites as ceremonies honoring a Mother-Earth deity (Pachamama) in their attempt to render puzzling aspects of Andean religion comprehensible. European ecclesiastics conceptualized Pachamama as an Andean version of the ancient mother earth goddess of Greece and Rome. She was also positioned as a precursor to the Virgin Mary. The colonial proliferation of the Pachamama cult devalued paqarisqa (place of ancestral emergence from landscape) and mallqui (ancestor-mummy) veneration - both believed to be capable of influencing the fertility of the earth by Andeans. The Spanish were cognizant that Andeans claimed hereditary rights to land and its resources through mallqui and paqarisqa cults. Shifting veneration of the mallquis and paqarisqa towards Pachamama undermined indigenous land rights and ancient networks of social cohesion. Drawings from the mestizo chroniclers Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala and Pachacuti Yamqui speak to this historically tangled interface between Roman and Greek mythology, Andean ancestor worship, and the Virgin.

Though the colonial enterprise concocted Pachamama as a Mother-Earth deity, the modern cult should not be apprehended as a regrettable relic of Spanish hegemony. Veneration of Pachamama has successfully absorbed both Ancient Mediterranean and Andean fertility deities.

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Anibal A. Biglieri
 University of Kentucky
 biglieri@uky.edu

**“Antigone as Foundational Myth of Spanish American History:
 the Case of Argentina”**

Among the several adaptations of Sophocles' *Antigone* in Argentina there are three plays that show some remarkable similarities: they are *Antígona Vélez* (1951) by Leopoldo Marechal (1900-70), *El límite* (1958) by Alberto de Zavalía (1911-88), and *La cabeza en la jaula* (1963) by David Cureses (1935-2006). Chronologically, the actions of these plays take place in different periods of the Spanish American history: Cureses' play, in Guaduas (Colombia), during the wars of independence from Spain in the XVIII/XIX centuries; Marechal's, during the 1820s in the Buenos Aires plains (*pampas*), and Zavalía's, in 1841 referring to the execution and burial of Marco Avellaneda in 1841 as a consequence of his rebellion against Juan Manuel de Rosas. In these plays, the conflicts revolve around the freedom from the grip of the colonial power, Spain (Cureses), the conquest and domination of the indigenous population (Marechal), or the tyranny of the Rosas government (Zavalía).

It is the main purpose of this paper to show how these three plays (following Sophocles but adapting his *Antigone* to the Spanish American historical realities) stage masterfully the conflict between *civilization* and *barbarism* not as an abstract question, but as lived conflict that affects human beings in their lives and for which they also die. Despite the fact that these plays deal with different times and epochs, the three playwrights reinterpret those facts based on that antinomy articulated for the first time by Domingo F. Sarmiento (1811-88) in *Facundo o civilización y barbarie*, published in 1845, during Rosas' dictatorship (1835-52).

The all-encompassing opposition between *civilization* and *barbarism* can be analyzed in light of Charles Segal's concept of *megatext* as “a complex network of interrelated symbols, patterns, and structures that encode the values of the culture into an extensive and comprehensive system”. For the Argentine authors that fundamental opposition would subsume all the other dichotomies, giving the history of the country its ultimate meaning. It is a sort of ultimate context from which all the explanations would derive, and in this sense it can be argued that it is also, for these playwrights, the foundational *myth* of the history of Spanish America.

Michael E. Brumbaugh
 Department of Classics
 Tulane University

“A World Apart: Plato and the Guaraní”

José Manuel Peramás' 1793 treatise *De Administratione Guaranica Comparate ad Rem Publicam Platonis Commentarius* (DAG) performs a systematic comparison between the life of the native Guaraní living in the Jesuit missions of Paraguay and a Platonic republic based on civic prescriptions drawn from the *Republic* and *Laws*. In a move reminiscent of the opening of Caesar's *De Bello Gallico* (1), Peramás begins his description of the Guaraní by citing the remoteness of their society from the corrupting influence of cultural contact with outsiders (DAG 7). In this paper, I argue that Peramás' development of the theme of remoteness in his ethnography of the Guaraní is more significant than a simple recapitulation of the popular, idealizing notion of the 'State of Nature' projected onto indigenous peoples of the Americas (e.g. Greenblatt, 1991; Pagden, 1993). Instead, he parallels this insistence on remoteness with a concerted effort to defamiliarize aspects of Greco-Roman political thought claimed as foundational in 18th century European discourses on republicanism. By holding both the Americas and antiquity at arm's length, Peramás aims radically to reorient the didactic value of both in an attempt to stave off the mounting revolutionary fervor in France that threatens, as he sees it, to plunge the world back into a state of Ovidian chaos (DAG 316).

The author's insistence on the didactic value of Guaraní civic life for European society complicates our picture of the dominant colonialist discourse on the 'New World' and the directionality of cultural influence. This paper invites reflection on the interaction between postcolonial theory and reception studies. Picking up on issues raised in the work of scholars such as Laird (*Epic of America*, 2006) and, to a greater extent, Greenwood (*Afro-Greeks*, 2010), we re-consider the complex socio-cultural ramifications of the introduction and repurposing of Greco-Roman thought in colonial and post-colonial contexts.

Theodore Cohen

Latin American Studies Center and Department of History
University of Maryland, College Park

**“Ancient Greek Aesthetics, Indigeneity, and Africanness
after the Mexican Revolution, 1910-1940”**

This paper examines how two Mexican intellectuals—caricaturist and modern art curator Marius de Zayas (1880-1961) and modernist composer Gerónimo Baqueiro Foster (1898-1967)—crafted theories of primitivism rooted in Ancient Greek aesthetics to understand indigenous and African cultural production in the years after the Mexican Revolution of 1910. Historical discussions of Mexico’s relationship to the Western Tradition traditionally highlight the nationalist desire to create a whiter, more modern, and less indigenous Mexico: a nation modelled on Washington D.C., Paris, Rome, and Athens. Neo-Classical architecture, historical monuments with references to Greece and Rome, and a pedagogical emphasis on Classics have frequently been cited to indicate how pre- and post-revolutionary Mexican statesman and cultural producers mimicked Western (read: white) modernity. Responding to these arguments, this paper shows how de Zayas and Baqueiro Foster made reference to Ancient Greece to construct indigeneity and Africanness as a means to produce alternative forms of modern culture and identity. For de Zayas, Ancient Greek, indigenous, and African arts were primitive and could be understood through evolutionary theories that allowed modernist artists to remake Western art. In this analysis of culture and race, he claimed that there was no single relationship among Greek, indigenous, and African vernacular arts. Conversely, Baqueiro Foster embraced Ancient Greek music—particularly Pythagorean ideas of harmony—as a means to define indigenous and African-descended musics simultaneously as primitive. His use of Ancient Greek harmonics also gave him the tools to transpose these vernacular stylings into modernist, ethnographically-informed compositions that, from his evolutionary perspective, rendered Mexico modern and culturally pluralist. By examining de Zayas’s and Baqueiro Foster’s published works as well as Baqueiro Foster’s manuscripts, this paper unpacks the complex and at times contradictory ways in which post-revolutionary Mexican cultural producers used Ancient Greek aesthetics to classify and modernize indigeneity and Africanness. Using de Zayas’s and Baqueiro Foster’s evolutionary schemata as points of departure, this paper also examines how modernist invocations of the primitive and the Western Tradition situated post-revolutionary Mexico in the modern world.

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Dan-el Padilla Peralta
 Stanford University
 dpadilla@stanford.edu

**“Athens and Sparta of the New World:
 Classical confrontations in Santo Domingo”**

To date, the island of Hispaniola has received little attention in studies of the classical tradition. In (partial) redress of this oversight, I propose to examine two powerful ideological appropriations of ancient Greece in Hispanophone Santo Domingo: first, colonial Santo Domingo’s encomiation as “Athens of the New World”; second, the independent Dominican Republic’s re-invention as “Sparta of the New World.” My paper explains how these two discourses have exerted and continue to exert a powerful subterranean influence on Dominican debates about statehood and race.

In the opening section of my paper, I examine how the “Athenian” discourse emerges from and is articulated to specific transitional moments in the Dominican Republic’s history. The foundation of Santo Domingo’s first university in 1538 enhanced the young colonial city’s status as a center for intellectual activity and—later fame would have it—ushered in the proverbial designation of Santo Domingo as the “Athens of the New World” (*Atenas del Nuevo Mundo*). As it turns out, however, there is no extant literary source from the 16th or 17th century in which the term is applied to Santo Domingo. I suggest that we instead understand the appellation as an artifact of the 19th-century Dominican independence struggle against the Republic of Haiti. In support of my claim, I document how the Dominican artists and poets who invoked the ideal of Athens intentionally sought to legitimate their country’s aspirations to sovereignty by appealing to a classically European—and, crucially, *non-black*—legacy.

The more sinister dimensions of this cultural-nationalistic program come to the fore in a complementary discourse: the Dominican Republic as Sparta *rediviva*. In the second section of my paper, I show how this discourse rose to prominence under the dictatorship of Rafael Leónidas Trujillo (1930-1961). First I focus on Trujillo’s self-credentialization as Spartan, by (middle) name and through public oratory. Next I proceed to a text that best exemplifies the Spartan “turn”: Angel del Rosario Pérez’s *La exterminación añorada* (1957), which calls on Dominicans and their Leader to become “the Sparta of the New World.” For Rosario Pérez, the Haitian menace required perpetual readiness, vigilance, and military preparation—hence the appositeness of the Spartan ideal. I emphasize why it is no idle coincidence that this work is published and circulated under Trujillo: twenty years before its publication, the dictator, an avowed and unrepentant anti-Haitian, had ordered a massacre that killed up to 20,000 Haitians in five days.

The paper concludes with some final observations on the force of these discourses in contemporary Dominican politics; these remarks are intended (1) as prolegomena to a future in-depth study (2) as a call for greater scholarly engagement with the living presence of ancient Greece and Rome in the construction of Latin American nationalisms.

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Antonio Río Torres-Murciano

National Autonomous University of Mexico

antonio_rio@enesmorelia.unam.mx

**“Pagan Love Stories about Redemption: Mythological *Autos Sacramentales*
from José de Valdivieso to Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz.”**

This paper is aimed at studying the ways in which pagan love fables are filled with Christian significance in the mythological *autos sacramentales* written during the 17th century, which without doubt constitute a very peculiar chapter in the history of the reception of the Greek and Roman cultural heritage in the Spanish-speaking world. Since the general interpretative mechanisms that underlie Christian allegorical readings of classical myth have been well studied, our task will consist of comparing the *autos* one to another in order to explain the modes in which concrete mythical stories are used as vehicles for representing Christian dogma. Indeed, a close reading of the *autos* permits to find an allegorical pattern on which most of them are based: the story of Redemption is dramatized as a love conquest of an ancient heroine, identified with the Human Nature or the Human Soul, by an ancient hero identified with Christ. This scheme can be observed in José de Valdivieso's *Psiques y Cupido*, in the *Polifemo* of Juan Pérez de Montalbán, in Tirso de Molina's *El laberinto de Creta*, in *El robo de Elena y destrucción de Troya*, attributed to Francisco de Rojas Zorrilla, and in Manuel del Campo's *El vencimiento de Turno*, as well as in seven of the ten mythological *autos* written by Pedro Calderón de la Barca. This design is often complicated by the introduction of a third character, identified with the Devil or the World, who opposes the hero and can be either father or suitor of the heroine. In the second case, the fight between Christ and the Devil over the Human Soul is staged as a mythical love triangle. A remarkably original version of this arrangement is offered by Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz in *El divino Narciso*, where, instead of a woman whose love is disputed by two men, we have a man (Narcissus, identified, as usual, with Christ) whose love is disputed by two women (Eco, identified with the Devil, and the Human Nature, a pure personification not connected with any character from the classical myth).