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The Posts of Coloniality

Where is the Republic, where is the city I have founded? (Simón Bolívar, May 25, 1826)

In more senses than one, Bolívar has been a wildly fluctuating currency, especially in the South American nation of his birth, which he liberated from colonial rule. I shall turn to an exploration of this problematic statement and the volatile fate of one of America's foremost heroes of decolonization. But first I should like to discuss briefly our current theorizations and logomachies through the term *postcolonial*.

My aim, ultimately, is two-fold: to concur with those who suspect and eschew the blithe usage of the term postcolonial and its variants and, secondly, to map the site of a naturally would-be postcolonial moment. In that primal locus of colonial supersession, we shall see the ironic impossibilities of postcoloniality as theoretical inscription and as empirical construct. The shape of that impossibility in the specific context I shall be exploring becomes illustrative of postcoloniality's ironies in colonized cultures that have attained nationhood as independent states. We may not be dealing with a paradigm necessarily, but the particular case I shall discuss is certainly instructive on how postcoloniality as such is interdicted at its point of genesis. My strong claim will be that the "post" of coloniality is not its aftermath but its posterity, a locus of its transmittal into the future with up-dated vigor.¹

Academic discourse inexorably gravitates toward maximal inclusion. The systemic gravity with which it construes its object has a penchant for ideational constructions that carry generalizable viability, if not universal validity. This may well be the way academic discourse seeks its legitimation, the way it authorizes itself as diagnostic agency and professional institution. We know, of course, that the inclusive or generalizable does not necessarily attain the *caché* of the universal; that where its object of discourse and representation is concerned, generality comes at the cost of reification and reduction of that object, with the object often more reflective of the instrument or theory of its rendering than anything else.

1 Ella Shohat has described the process as "a regeneration of colonialism through other means" (107).

The more alert academicians realize that this may well be an inevitability and that the adequacy of the theory or discourse of representation to the represented object is less than optimal. If we have not learned anything else in the past three decades of theorizing and discursive strategies, we certainly should have arrived at an appreciation of this predicament. Critique is the exercise of clarification of conditions that are operative in any given context and, as trained critics, academics should have a high degree of awareness of their own conditions of enablement in what they profess and in how they theorize the object of their professions. I construct these observations in the subjunctive voice of hypothesis only because, as in any guild or institution, those who forge the instruments of representation or the discursive lexicon for theoretical constructions are not always the same individuals who deploy them, and often there is not even an identifiable source for some of these constructs. Their usage, therefore, circulates uncritically as fungible coinage given and taken at face value more often than not.

The term *postcolonial* has certainly endured a similar fate in this regard and, with few exceptions, its academic usage has tended to be blithely oblivious to the contextual specificities, political nuances, and historical repercussions of the term. Necessarily reductive as theoretical construct, especially when used in this fashion, postcolonialism blends particular histories and individual geographies into undifferentiated homogeneity, rendering the world into a monolith reflective of the term's pre-critical usage. There are, of course, notable exceptions among academic critics who have scrupulously teased out the nuances of the term and who have used it with varying degrees of alertness. Anne McClintock is certainly among them, and her succinct critique of the term is one of the most lucid I have read. Endowed with "academic clout and professional marketability," McClintock notes astutely, "the term also signals a reluctance to surrender the privilege of seeing the world in terms of a singular and ahistorical abstraction" (86). And Ella Shohat admonishes us that "the concept of the 'post-colonial' must be interrogated and contextualized historically, geopolitically, and culturally" (111).

While it is often claimed that postcolonial theory sets up a challenge to the progressivist, linear march of history whose grand scheme had a colonial era programmed within its template, the temporal reference in the term ineluctably reasserts the very historical scheme it would seek to question. In this "rehearsing [of] the Enlightenment trope of sequential, 'linear' progress" (85), as McClintock phrases it, the term postcolonialism undermines its own efficacy. This is a key irony, one of the ironies of postcolonial discourse, as Linda Hutcheon has referred to it in discussing postcolonialism's relationship to postmodernism. Hutcheon speaks of the "inherent semantic and structural doubleness" of irony as "convenient trope for the paradoxical dualities of both postmodern complicitous critique and post-colonial doubled identity and history" (73).

Irony, of course, achieves its viability when operating as self-aware strategy that does its double duty as, for example, when "working within existing discourses and contesting them at the same time" (Hutcheon, 73). In order for the discourse and theorization of postcoloniality to function as irony, then, those engaged in them must have not only a contestatory aim, but they must be conscious also, to the extent possible, of their own position, complicitous or otherwise, and the repercussive nuances of their own intervention in the phenomenon of the postcolonial. Failing this, irony devolves into paradox by virtue of making dupes of those who should fail to negotiate the equivocal turns of its duplicity. In these circumstances, those who exercise the discourse and theorize on the practice of postcolonialism, like many engaged in the struggle of decolonization itself, become inadvertently complicitous in a state of affairs they seek to question. One of the most fascinating ironies, in this sense, is that the term postcolonial should encounter such a hospitable environment in the academic marketplace of the United States of America at a time when the U.S.A. has emerged as the preeminent, and some would say sole, hegemonic power in the world.

At this juncture, when speaking of the prefix post in postcolonial, McClintock notes suggestively that it "reduces the cultures of peoples beyond colonialism to *prepositional* time. The term confers on colonialism the prestige of history proper; colonialism is the determining marker of history ... the world's multitudinous cultures are marked, not positively by what distinguishes them, but by a subordinate, retrospective relation to linear, European time" (86). I would venture a mild extension to McClintock's observation by pointing out that more than a *prepositional* time of grammar and temporal conjugation, the prefix "post" forces the cultures deemed postcolonial into a *postposterior* predicament where ontologically their history is pre-determined for posterity.

With these caveats, I should like to place the discursive construct we term postcolonial at a site of inscription where its repercussions are tested by empirical entailments. This is an Enlightenment-engendered context: Spanish America's wars of liberation from colonialism that, in the linear logic of historical progress, should have led naturally to the subsequent stage of postcolonialism. With this concrete instance, I hope to demonstrate how, as McClintock puts it, "colonialism returns at the moment of its disappearance," not just in theory and discourse, but in historical actuality. My demonstration will rely on a reading, often against the grain, of certain foundational documents of nationhood and national independence inscribed on the cusp of colonialism and decolonization by someone officially proclaimed "The Liberator," Simón Bolívar.

Specificity and historical grounding are the most consistently prescribed *modus operandi* by the cognoscenti to those who would engage the phenomenon of postcolonialism. Under the pressure of such scrutiny, the specific instance of a liberation struggle that would emancipate a whole continent leaves one wondering whether there is any necessary link between political independence

and postcoloniality. Reading the proclamations, manifestos, correspondence, and constitutional drafts of one of history's most visible figures of national emancipation, and reading these in the context of the historical conditions that surrounded them and the historical events that followed in their wake, one certainly appreciates the degree of abstraction and disconnectedness to actual worldly events that obtain in the construct referred to by the term postcolonial, either as a discursive formulation or as a chronological designator that points to an aftermath of a colonial era; either as oppositional postcoloniality or as the complicitous kind.

Amílcar Cabral notes that a liberation movement must "go beyond the achievement of political independence to the superior level of complete liberation of the productive forces and the construction of economic, social and cultural progress of the people" (39). When one considers postcoloniality in terms of the notion put forth by Cabral here, it is not difficult to realize that such a state is but a utopian desideratum of theory and rhetoric. The Grand Liberator Simón Bolívar himself came to this eventual realization. The fault lines of his emancipatory discourse already betrayed the contradictions between national independence and postcoloniality all along, and certainly after the colonial armies had been vanquished and a postcolonial era should have naturally ensued.

Simón José Antonio de la Santísima Trinidad Bolívar would be the dream of the wide-eyed votaries of ethnic hybridity. A genetic mixture of Basque, German, Negro, and Indian, he is the primal embodiment of *mestizaje*, that racial melange of the Americas which so often has been used as shibboleth for racist dreams of cultural salvation and, just as often, for cover of diverse racist agendas. *Mestizaje* is a "neutral" ground where, historically, all are made equal but also where differences are neutralized even as they are deepened, and where the possibilities for all contestatory claims become equally neutered. But for those who would wager all on the stakes of hybridity, Bolívar is the counterexample when it comes to ideological and political yield of thoroughbred genetics. If contradiction between biology and culture needed an embodiment, Bolívar would certainly figure as exemplar. While the irony did not escape him, he did seem to feel thoroughly absolved by the mere passing mention of its paradox, other questions of identity construction and emancipation becoming paramount for him.

Paradigmatic of the settler culture grafted on to conquered geography, Bolívar would settle emphatically into the received ideological formations of his conqueror's patrimony. He thus emerges as instrument of extended coloniality just as emphatically as he jousts to supersede colonialism. Inextricably posted to the crucible of colonial culture, postcolonialism would assail his most noble ideals with its corrosive contradictions. In the end, not only his ideals but also his body would endure the indelible stigmata of so much acrimoniousness, as would the body politic engendered by his tenacious struggle. The causticity of his legacy has proved undying indeed. And it is one of the poetic ironies of

language that the twists of fate would have his most elaborate statement on the dawning of a postcolonial era associated with bitterness. I am referring to his February 15, 1819 inaugural address delivered at Angostura (today called Ciudad Bolívar) to the Second National Congress of Venezuela. It is a wide-ranging address worthy of one who would describe himself four years later in cosmic terms, "I am like the sun; I cast my rays in all directions" (Letter to Francisco de Paula Santander, July 5, 1823; Bolívar 1: xxiv). As multidirectional as it might be, of course, the sun does not see its own shadow, or its blind spots.

Latin by genealogy and Anglosaxon through elective affinity, Bolívar recurs time and again to his two favorite models, Rome and Great Britain, the ancient and the modern paradigms of European colonial empire par excellence. The first is to be recalled as referential index, the latter to be emulated *mutatis mutandis*, without differential specificities of culture, history, and character going unattended. Spain as hegemonic daemon to be exorcised occupies an intermediate locus, too decrepit to be tolerated and too benighted for the modern era of Enlightenment. His two most significant books which merited special mention in his final will and testament are *The Social Contract* by Rousseau and *The Art of War* by Montecuculi, "given me as a gift by my friend General Wilson, which formerly belonged to the library of Napoleon" (Bolívar 2: 767).

Here, then, is the predicament of the problematic postcoloniality Bolívar himself describes as "this paradox":

America, in separating from the Spanish monarchy, found herself in a situation similar to that of the Roman Empire when its enormous framework fell to pieces in the midst of the ancient world. Each Roman division then formed an independent nation in keeping with its location or interests; but this situation differed from America's in that those members proceeded to reestablish their former associations. We, on the contrary, do not even retain the vestiges of our original being. We are not Europeans; we are not Indians; we are but a mixed species of aborigines and Spaniards. Americans by birth and Europeans by law, we find ourselves engaged in a dual conflict: we are disputing with the natives for titles of ownership, and at the same time we are struggling to maintain ourselves in the country that gave us birth against the opposition of the invaders. Thus our position is most extraordinary and complicated. But there is more. As our role has always been strictly passive and our political existence nil, we find that our quest for liberty is now even more difficult of accomplishment; for we, having been placed in a state lower than slavery, had been robbed not only of our freedom but also of the right to exercise an active domestic tyranny. (Bolívar 1: 175-76)

Bolívar's contemporary and successor *caudillos*, or strongmen, would amply make up for this last deprivation. But the point he is pressing is the lack of a political culture due to the absence of precedent for the Creole, non-native Spaniards born in the Spanish colonies.

The significance of "this paradox" for our contemporary discourse on postcolonialism in this instructive passage is manifold. I shall discuss the paradoxical

impassé Bolívar suggestively poses in only three of its imbricated facets: a) *Epistemic*: how do we know our place?; b) *Ontological*: who/what are we?; and c) *Political*: what are the repercussions of our agency and of our responses to the first two questions? Certainly the rhetorical and ideological implications of Bolívar's discourse undergird the questions I have extrapolated here and are inextricably embedded in each of these facets as well.

Such questions become most resonant and take on greatest urgency in transitional times such as during struggles of independence. The anxiety attending these queries is not lost at all even in the grandiloquent rhetoric of Bolívar's declamation. Bolívar refers to his address as "*a Plan of a Constitution*," and the constitution in question is clearly more than a document of by-laws. It is an emancipatory discourse, a foundational endeavor, a construction "plan" for constituting a collective identity at a defining moment. It is as well a desperate attempt at self-salvaging, inasmuch as the rebel troops have been routed and the newly declared Republic of Venezuela has been lost for the second time, as has the integrity of a concerted and consensual effort on the part of those fighting for independence.

Despite the fact that Bolívar had already rehearsed this collective self-characterization some four years earlier in what is known as "The Jamaica Letter," September 6, 1815, in nearly identical words and with the same sense of melancholy (Bolívar 1: 110), the urgency is not at all diminished. This is because not only is the occasion pressing, but the constitutive content of the effort yields unstable results. The epistemic question of how one knows beaches on negative ground. There are no lines of filiation that can be traced as conduits to collective self-knowing: we are not Romans, nor have we "former associations" to reestablish. The ontological query founders equally on who we are not: we do "not retain even the vestiges of our original being. We are not Europeans; we are not Indians." The political question runs into conflictual claims of entitlements and appropriated histories: "Americans by birth and Europeans by law, we find ourselves engaged in a dual conflict: we are disputing with the natives for titles of ownership, and at the same time we are struggling to maintain ourselves ... against the opposition of the invaders." The question of the indigenous people and the titles of ownership to appropriated native lands would rarely surface in Bolívar's writings again, either because of an insurmountable blind spot or because of the assumption that the dispute "for titles of ownership" was resolved, *de facto*, if not *de jure*, in the settler's and Creole's favor.

Having perceived that the predicament he describes is indeed paradoxical, the mechanisms for coping with the untenable situation Bolívar puts forth compound paradox, swallowing up in the process the perspicacity that discerned the incongruities in the first place. The predicament of coloniality and supersession become exacerbated, the *impassé* catastrophizes into *petits dénouements* of evermore provisional and refractory immediacy. The result is the internecine

struggles of mini-civil wars, or uncivil mini-wars, the factionalism of vested interests and the fratricidal settling of scores. History instructs us that if something we call postcoloniality, of settler or of indigenous peoples, does indeed have any constants, this baneful result would appear to be the most constant of all.

Clearly, in the case of Bolívar and his specific context this is the unsettling of the settler colony. The question now becomes, does the apprehension of self-displacement lead to a postcolonial situation, in the sense of putting a colonial era behind one? Or does it lead to a more tenacious entrenchment on that anxious and interstitial ground to which claims have to be staked anew? And, if so, what are the instruments of this contestation and its tenacities? In short, does the history of Bolívar's South America put coloniality behind it or does it actually fall back on it at this transitional juncture? The historical record would suggest that the answer to both questions is yes. Yes, Bolívar's writings and the history of the period indicate that the colony struggling for independence in a sense does get its colonial phase behind it, but not to leave it behind. It uses it instead as backing, as a fall-back position from which to forge a new era that evinces greater continuity than rupture with the colonial past. Certainly the evidence in the writings of Bolívar and history itself would confirm this to be the case in the social structures and economic realities that ensued from the wars of liberation. One suspects that the case of Bolívar and Spanish South America may not be unique in this regard as far as settler colonies are concerned, even though the constitutive elements of that continuity, the instruments and processes of transition and reiteration may vary from one geographical context and historical period to another.

What is it, then, that compounds the paradox described by Bolívar and makes the Liberator himself the dupe of its contradictions? The most direct answer would be programmatic constancy, a system. And certainly Bolívar was faithfully wedded to a system. He was a sedulous adherent to his eighteenth-century European readings. His intellectual formation, begun at an early age of orphanhood under the tutelage of Simón Rodríguez, the "eccentric disciple of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment," to whom Bolívar would write many years later, on January 19, 1824: "You molded my heart for liberty, justice, greatness, and beauty. I have followed the path you traced for me. You were my pilot, though you remained upon the shores of Europe" (Bolívar 2: 424). Grounded on the Enlightenment, as Bolívar himself suggestively indicates, his endeavors are "piloted" from "the shores of Europe," which in his case translates as the French and English philosophies of social order, governance, liberty, Nature, and progress, in short, what has been referred to as Modern Europe's Master Narrative of History. His lexicon is suffused with its language, his perspicacity manifests the same blind spots, with the most egregious blindness being the fact that he was indeed reinscribing a coloniality he sought to displace, only now with an up-

graded configuration and a modern efficacy, as opposed to the creaking colonial instruments of retrograde and outmoded Spain.

One cannot accuse Bolívar unconditionally of total blindness to indigenous America and to the historic claims of the Indians. And, in this regard, he displays, obliquely, an interesting insight into the fate of the indigenous people in a letter of 1825 to the poet José Joaquín Olmedo, whom he declares the poet laureate of the Revolution. In that letter, the Liberator turned-critic of poetic composition, displays an acute learning of the neoclassical poetic precepts and prosody of his time, a wide familiarity with classical and modern poets then common among the educated elite. He refers Olmedo to Homer, Pindar, Horace, Boileau, Milton, Pope, Voltaire, among others. But, most of all, he manifests in the same letter an apprehension of the natives' predicament, even as he is loathe to grant that the native peoples might have a place in the national life of an emancipated culture he and his fellow-revolutionaries are engaged in forging out of a colonial empire. It is revealing inasmuch as Bolívar betrays here in very articulate fashion the sort of past he wishes to mobilize, the identities he seeks to put forth, and the political vision he wishes the poet to summon. He is especially keen in his critique since, after all, he is the subject of the poem, and the final version of the ode indicates that Olmedo took Bolívar's comments on his draft to heart. Here is what Bolívar had to say, in part:

You have prepared too small a frame in which to place a giant who takes up the whole picture and whose very shadow blots out other characters. The Inca Huaina-Capac appears to be the theme of the poem: his is the genius and gist of it: he, in brief, is its hero. On the other hand, it hardly seems proper for him to praise indirectly the religion that destroyed him, and it appears even less proper that he does not desire the reestablishment of his throne, but, instead, gives preference to foreign intruders who, although they are the avengers of his blood, are nonetheless the descendants of the destroyers of his empire. Such disinterestedness is not human. Nature must govern all rules of behavior, and this is contrary to Nature.... Line 360 has overtones of prose — I may be mistaken, but, if I am, why did you make me King?... There are other eminent poets from whom you could derive greater inspiration than that to be found in the Inca [Huaina-Capac], who in truth could sing nothing but the *yaravís*. Pope, the poet of your school, could teach you how to avoid pitfalls that Homer himself could not escape.... Pursue, my beloved poet, the happy course upon which the Muses have launched you with your translation of Pope and your *Ode to Bolívar*. (Bolívar 2: 520-22)

If "Nature must govern all rules of behavior," clearly it is not in the Nature of the new nation to include the Naturals of precolonial America within it. Coloniality for Bolívar obviously means the coloniality of peoples whose ancestors colonized the continent, a human geography of colonials, and any postcoloniality is to be the history of settlement and of settlers, that is, of colonization and of the colonizers. Those originally colonized are erased from the history of emancipation and independent nationhood. It follows that the models of the new

nations' poetic culture must likewise be taken from the European world (Pope, whom Olmedo had translated). The reference to his depiction as King is obviously a touchy subject, since Bolívar was often accused by his many detractors of advocating a monarchy which he was to head. If not ambivalent, Bolívar was often ambiguous on this score, an ambiguity with which his adversaries made much hay.

Bolívar would protest, as early as the third year of the revolutionary wars which spanned more than two decades, "[it] is essential that a government mold itself, so to speak, to the nature of the circumstances, the times, and the men that comprise it" (Bolívar 1: 21). In the same pamphlet, written on December 15, 1812 on the unhappy fate of the first republican government in Venezuela, he would note: "The codes consulted by our magistrates were not those which could teach them the practical science of government but were those devised by certain benevolent visionaries, who, creating fantastic republics in their imaginations, have sought to attain political perfection, assuming the perfectibility of the human race. Thus we were given philosophers for leaders, philanthropy for legislation, dialectic for tactics, and sophists for soldiers. Through such a distortion of principles, the social order was thoroughly shaken, and from that time on the State made giant strides toward its general dissolution, which, indeed, shortly came to pass" (Bolívar 1: 18-19).

What sort of precedents and paradigms of governance, then, does Bolívar consider appropriate "to the nature of the circumstances, the times, and the men that comprise" the incipient nations' struggle to supplant the colonial hegemony of empire? In this Bolívar is consistent with the poetic precedents he urged upon the "poet laureate" of the wars of independence José Joaquín Olmedo. He is most explicit in his 1819 inaugural address to the Second National Congress of Venezuela at Angostura, which I have already cited:

Here, Legislators, is the place to repeat what the eloquent Volney says in the preface of his *Ruins of Palmyra*: "To the newborn peoples of the Spanish Indies, to the generous leaders who guide them toward freedom: may the mistakes and misfortunes of the Old World teach wisdom and happiness to the New." May the teachings of experience be not lost; and may the schools of Greece, Rome, France, England, and North America instruct us in the difficult science of creating and preserving nations through laws that are proper, just, legitimate, and, above all, useful. We must never forget that the excellence of a government lies not in its theories, not in its form or mechanism, but in its being suited to the nature and character of the nation for which it is instituted. Among the ancient and modern nations, Rome and Great Britain are the most outstanding. Both were born to govern and to be free and both were built not on ostentatious forms of freedom, but upon solid institutions. Thus I recommend to you, Representatives, the study of the British Constitution, for that body of laws appears destined to bring about the greatest possible good for the peoples that adopt it.... Nothing in our fundamental laws would have to be altered were we to adopt a legislative power similar to that held by the British Parliament. (Bolívar 1: 184-85)

At a defining moment of monumental acts of decolonization, the invocation of Rome and Great Britain "as the most outstanding" models for a "postcolonial" independent America is incongruous indeed. The paradox escapes Bolívar altogether, even though his keen sense of Europe's past sees the nature and history of both Rome and Great Britain as a hegemonic history of imperial colonization and governance over large parts of world geography. Nowhere is this clearer than in Bolívar's July 10, 1824 letter to Francisco de Paula Santander, Vice President of Colombia and Bolívar's political nemesis, one of many. He writes of Great Britain, "he is another Roman Empire at the end of her republican period and on the threshold of becoming an empire" (Bolívar 2: 516). Written sixty years before the European powers convened to map the carving up of Africa and the Near East and to launch Great Britain into the region and beyond the Indian Ocean, Bolívar's precognition is prophetic indeed. And yet, in the very discourse of emancipation from colonialism, Bolívar would have the future of a postcolonial America yoked to a previous colonial power in America on the "threshold of becoming an empire," again.

Bolívar's explanation, in the same letter, is revealing not only for the particular instance of Spanish America. It is instructive as well for the dilemma of the decolonization process in many parts of the world and it speaks to the interdependencies crucial to newly independent nations, forged usually in a dialectical arrangement invariably at the cost of compromise and capitulation of emancipatory principles on the part of new nations. Bolívar's letter and the relationship, political and economic, with Great Britain that ensued certainly bear this out. Here is Bolívar's explanation that sees a slide from emancipatory principle to the pragmatics of Realpolitik:

What interests me most is the English mission. Briceño tells me that, in exchange for their recognizing us they have asked us to sacrifice some of our political principles. This is a serious matter. I know not how you and the others propose to deal with it. If we sacrifice our political principles, those of us who will be responsible will lose our popularity. If we do not sacrifice them, England will dissolve us like so much vapor, for, I repeat, her hegemony is sovereign and absolute.... The entire Holy Alliance quails before Great Britain. How are we to exist if we do not bind ourselves to her? She is another Roman Empire at the end of her Republican period and at the threshold of becoming an empire. (Bolívar 2:516)

The real is, so to speak, history. Bolívar's diagnosis of Great Britain's position in the Europe of his day is uncannily accurate. And his pragmatism in cleaving to the British cause may have assured a *de jure* independence, but it would lead to a neocolonial phase that would determine the future course of the new republics and make a sham of the notion of postcoloniality as aftermath of imperial hegemony in the Americas. In fact, from the remove of a few short years, it became quite obvious that with as much rhetoric of liberation and

emancipatory discourse as were expended, Spanish American independence was in good measure an incidental by-product of Europe's colonialist jockeying for political preeminence and economic expansion, with Great Britain, as Bolívar keenly observed, getting the upper hand and the lion's share of the Spanish American market. Britain had in fact cracked Spain's economic monopoly of its American colonies by the end of the eighteenth century.² The Napoleonic adventure in Spain and the rest of Europe, the foundering of the Spanish monarchy, and the subsequent economic blockade of Europe, left Great Britain with the freedom and the necessity of looking to the American continent for markets and for primary products. By the time the wars for decolonization broke out in the northern region of South America, not only was there a brisk trade between British Jamaica and Cartagena, but there was already a federated, commercial class with vested interests throughout the region that bedeviled Bolívar's efforts at realizing the dream of a Gran Colombia that would have made the new nations into a continental united states of South America with a central government.³

British and other European interests would eventually be curbed in no uncertain terms by the United States of America. Bolívar had already grown wise to that "neutrality act" of December 2, 1823, known as the Monroe Doctrine, which was adopted by all the American states at the Congress of Panama in 1826. By August 5, 1826, when writing to Colonel Patrick Campbell, the British Chargé d'Affaires in Bogotá, Bolívar indicates that he has already detected the U.S. spirit behind the words of that neutrality act, which in large measure would determine the subservient status of Spanish American interests to Anglo America and thereby further a backyard-sort of neocoloniality. In his letter to Colonel Campbell, Bolívar would write, with much foresight, of "the United States, who seem destined by Providence to plague America with torments in the name of freedom" (Bolívar 2: 732).

I offer the case of Simón Bolívar because it may well be illustrative of emancipatory programs that only manage to reinscribe the imperial archive and its hegemonic discourse.⁴ Whether other such endeavors manage to do otherwise is a question to be answered through the examination of specific instances of decolonizing attempts. A repeating of the history of colonialism it seeks to displace, in the end Bolívar's discourse of liberation proves a palimpsest of

2 For a discussion of Great Britain's role in the economy of the region at the end of the eighteenth century, see McFarlane.

3 For a statistical and documentary discussion of commerce between Great Britain and what would become the nation of Colombia, see Palacios.

4 For an incisive discussion of discourses of neocolonialism, for which Bolívar's serves as founding precedent, see Fernández Retamar. For a novelistic treatment of Bolívar and his vicissitudes, particularly in the latter part of his life, see García Márquez.

domination, yet another post of coloniality inasmuch as it emanates from the mythos of a colonialist template, that is, the discourse of the Enlightenment and its program of progress and modernization.

In this sense, far from being a counter-discourse, Bolívar's ends by being homologous to the discourse of empire, really a transfer of the structures of domination from an outmoded colonial system, Spain's, to an updated version that evolved from the Age of Reason among those European countries and the United States who bought, or perforce were bought, into its program. In a self-declared postmodern era, the vicissitudes of a theoretical construct called post-colonialism might suggest that we too, along with our discourses, may still be, despite our myriad posts, under the aegis of modernity and its colonialisms.

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Towards the Greening of Literary Studies

The grace that is the health of creatures can only be held in common. In healing the scattered members come together.

In health the flesh is graced, the holy enters the world.

... The most creative works are all strategies of this health. (Wendell Berry, "Healing")

The transformative rhetoric of the ecology movement is characterized by therapeutic metaphors, such as healing the wounds, reclaiming the earth, saving the planet. In *Building the Green Movement* (1986), Rudolf Bahro asks a poignant question: how is it that a broken people expect to heal the planet? "Transformations" after all, "can come only from the transformed" (34). What are the implications of such metaphors of healing for the institutions of Literature and Criticism? How does (or might) the writing and reading of books contribute to ecological harmony in the psychological, social and natural spheres? The term "greening" is generally used to refer to the healing process of transforming the sensibilities of the peoples of industrialized societies (Berleant 137-38; Lahar 197). What might "the greening of literary studies" mean? The daunting problem we now face is how to bring about *voluntary* personal and social change. As Malcolm MacEwen writes in *The Greening of a Red* (1991): "history has no precedent for carrying through such a profound change, one that challenges so many established and selfish habits and interests, in a short time and in a global economy" (292). As a specialist in literary studies, I am most interested in the problematics of ecological rhetoric. What do phrases, such as "at home with nature" or "in harmony with nature" mean? What political agendas do they carry? What behaviours do they generate? What is meant by an "ecological sensibility"? How is it to be created and sustained? And, in general, now that we are entering the age of ecology, what role should literature and criticism play in effecting good changes in the structure of human psychology and society?