The Vanguard of the Atlantic World
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More than any other single writer, thinker, revolutionary, or politician, Francisco Bilbao embodied the spirit of American republican modernity. His writings and thought depicted an Atlantic world consumed by a titanic struggle between modernity and retrogression, republicanism and monarchy, universalism and aristocracy, independence and imperialism, rationalism and ultramontanism, liberty and slavery, civilization and barbarism. How Spanish Americans like Bilbao created a shared imagination of the republican Atlantic world and that world’s heroes and villains is this chapter’s main subject. Although not unknown today, Bilbao has not received the same scholarly attention as other nineteenth-century letrados.¹ Yet Bilbao is a much more interesting figure and, I would argue, a more original thinker than Sarmiento, Alberdi, Alamán, Samper, or Sierra. His radical republicanism and universalism prefigures almost all of the key contributions of the considerably more celebrated José Martí. Bilbao challenged Europe’s claims to modernity much more thoroughly than did Rubén Darío’s cultured modernism.² With his radical reconfiguration of modernity, Bilbao was one of the most important and innovative thinkers not only of Latin America, but also of the nineteenth-century world.

Francisco Bilbao was born on 9 January 1823 in Santiago to a father from Chile and a mother from Buenos Aires. Bilbao’s education began at home;
his father, Rafael Bilbao, had trained as a lawyer but worked as merchant and a government official. Rafael had long ago sided with the opposition against the dominant conservative politics in Chile, standing with those in favor of reform, the “democratic system,” and a break from imitating the metropole. Indeed, Francisco’s peripatetic Atlantic life began as a result of Rafael’s radical views: as an eleven-year-old boy, Francisco would accompany his father into exile in Lima in 1834, not returning to Chile until 1839. Within a few years after Francisco’s return he would be infamous.

Bilbao entered the Instituto Nacional after his return and studied to become a lawyer. At school and in the local literary society, he found teachers such as the Venezuelan Andrés Bello, the Chilean José Victorino Lastarria, and the Argentinean Vicente López. Bilbao also absorbed European works of history and philosophy by Gibbon, Voltaire, Rousseau, Volney, Dupin, Herder, Vico, Coussin, Quinet, Michelet, and especially the liberal defrocked priest Lamennais (whose work Bilbao translated into Spanish). Bilbao first gained public notice by speaking at the funeral of the anticlerical politician José Miguel Infante in 1844; his oration provoked an outcry from the capital’s Roman Catholic hierarchy. During the resulting confrontation between the clergy and Bilbao’s fellow young rationalists, Bilbao wrote “Sociabilidad Chilena,” in which he attacked the Church, the Chilean oligarchy, and the
hacienda system. He was only twenty-one. The clergy reacted with fury. Santiago’s fiscal (prosecutor) filed charges against Bilbao of blasphemy, immorality, and sedition. Many of his friends abandoned him as priests denounced him from the pulpit, but his own family stood by him, his father praising him for “favoring oppressed humanity.” On the day of Bilbao’s trial, spectators filled the tribunal and plaza central, and when Bilbao appeared shouts of “Viva el Defensor del Pueblo!” rang out. As revolutionaries have throughout history, Bilbao used the trial to further promulgate his ideas, defending himself by arguing that his suggested radical reforms of still extant colonial institutions were the only path to progress. The court acquitted Bilbao of sedition but convicted him of blasphemy and immorality, punishing the young author with a fine of 1,200 pesos or—failing payment—six months in prison. Bilbao did not have the money and turned himself over for incarceration, but his friends quickly raised the necessary funds from the assembled crowd. His supporters then carried Bilbao through the streets of Santiago, shouting and clamoring riotously along.

Bilbao was now famous, confronting a clergy and an entrenched conservative political elite that would be his lifelong sworn enemies. Although he seemed to enjoy the support of the young intelligentsia, the state and Church struck back, expelling Bilbao from the Instituto Nacional, punishing his supporters among the student body and faculty, and confiscating and destroying copies of his essay. Bilbao left Santiago, first for Valparaiso and soon afterward for Europe, to continue his education.

Like most intellectuals of his generation reared under Europhile modernity, Bilbao looked to France for guidance. He arrived in Paris in 1845 eager to study with the historians Edgar Quinet and Jules Michelet, and to meet Hugues-Félicité de Lamennais in person. While infatuated with Paris, Bilbao quickly realized that he had not left behind in Chile the struggles between the forces of progress and retrogression; the same battle raged in France. Quinet’s class at the Sorbonne was soon closed by Louis Philippe’s government, the French professor observing that Bilbao had fled Chile under persecution of the “Jesuit spirit” only to find that same spirit dominant in France. The events of this time molded Bilbao’s imagination. News of Poland’s rebellion against Prussia reached Paris in March of 1846, inflaming passions throughout the city. Of course, the events of 1848 would stun the Atlantic world as a whole. That year is regularly cited as massively influential in Latin America, but Bilbao was significantly disillusioned by it. He saw the year’s events in France as a failure of republicanism, especially the French
refusal to aid Hungary or Poland. Although most Latin American intellectuals who took the grand tour of the Old World returned with an intense Europhilia, Bilbao journeyed back to America filled with doubts about Europe's place in the modern world, doubts that blossomed into his embrace of America as the future of humanity.

Bilbao returned to Chile in 1850, taking a post in the office of Statistics while considering his options. He had become increasingly disenchanted with traditional politics, as neither faction in Chile seemed to represent republicanism and democracy. Chilean politics instead appeared to be just a contest among caudillos, hungry for power. Bilbao had become convinced that only a complete change in the pueblo's manner of thinking would make progress possible. Critically, the Catholic Church's stranglehold over education must be broken. Bilbao's anticlericalism and rationalism would be hallmarks of his thought. The Church represented only barbarism and the colonial past to him, and he believed it was embraced by postindependence leaders as a way to control the masses. In April 1850 Bilbao helped found Santiago's Sociedad de la Igualdad (Society of Equality) in order to make connections with the capital's artisans and put into practice his ideas about education. Only an alliance with the people could create true republicanism and break apart the old oligarchic politics. The society promoted universal suffrage and universal fraternity, reason over the Church's teachings, and the pueblo's sovereignty. Bilbao's continuing attacks on Catholicism led the Church to excommunicate him, causing many of his Liberal allies to abandon him. Some sought to expel him from the Society of Equality, but the society's members decided to allow him to remain. Nevertheless, the society faced growing hostility from Chile's conservative government, including armed attacks on its meetings by presumed state agents and sympathizers. By November 1850, only a few months after its founding, the Chilean state disbanded the society for subversion.

Many members of the Society of Equality, including Bilbao, concluded that open revolt remained their last option. Bilbao actively participated in the planned coup of Pedro Alcántara Urriola against President Manuel Bulnes in April 1851, but betrayal and poor organization doomed the rebellion. Bilbao fled the country, settling in Peru. He had to promise Peruvian President José Rufino Echenique that he would not involve himself in local politics, but Bilbao could not resist. Soon he was agitating for slavery's abolition and fulminating against the Jesuits. He was forced into exile again in Guayaquil, Ecuador, but he returned to Peru because his father was im-
prisoned in Lima. He then joined the successful revolt against Echenique led by Ramón Castilla, but his anticlericalism made him an unpopular and dangerous figure. He went again into exile in 1855, returning once more to Europe.\textsuperscript{16}

Bilbao had left Europe already disillusioned with the Old World’s self-proclaimed civilization, and his return to France in 1855 strongly confirmed his doubts about the long-trumpeted European superiority. France under Napoleon III seemed but a pale shadow of its former glory, now ruled by a petty, laughable tyrant; it had become a society suspicious of foreigners, having abandoned universal fraternity in favor of a paranoid police state. According to his brother, Manuel, instead of the modern, all Francisco found was “silence about the blood” of Napoleon’s rule and the “terrible future” that awaited France.\textsuperscript{17} Europe was no longer the future or the guide to civilization, but simply a corrupt collection of aristocrats, monarchs, and empires, all wallowing in a medieval feudalism. Bilbao now fully embraced his vision of America as the future of humanity that would spread liberty and equality across the globe to regenerate a decadent Europe.

Bilbao sailed again for America, arriving in 1857 in Buenos Aires, where he would live until his death. He quickly became embroiled in local politics, to his eventual disquiet. He lent his skills to the Federalists, whom he saw as looking to the United States and American unity, instead of the Unitarians, whom he claimed imitated Europe. He saw Juan Manuel de Rosas as a nothing but a dictator who had falsely exploited federalist sentiment, but he thought the new federalists represented American republicanism. Bilbao would eventually break with Justo José de Urquiza and other federalists over their caudillismo, but he would continue to agitate for slavery’s abolition in Brazil, for support of Mexico against the French (the subject of some of his finest and most powerful writings), and for reason and individual sovereignty in relation to God (which would lead the bishop of Buenos Aires to attack Bilbao in a pastoral).\textsuperscript{18} Thousands of miles to the north, Chihuahua’s\textit{La Alianza de la Frontera} would celebrate his book condemning European aggression and backwardness, \textit{La América en peligro}.\textsuperscript{19} After years of wandering, Bilbao would finally find some domestic happiness, marrying Pilar Guido y Spano in 1863. However, their only son would die in infancy, and Bilbao’s lifelong battle with illness would intensify. Suffering from pneumonia and perhaps also tuberculosis, and coughing up terrifying volumes of blood, Bilbao would succumb on 19 February 1865, dying with his brother and wife by his side. Manuel gave perhaps the most fitting eulogy, declaring his
beloved brother had worked his whole life to inaugurate the “paradise of humanity: the Republic.”  

The Struggle for the Soul of the Atlantic World

One of Bilbao’s earliest biographers lamented that Bilbao never achieved independence from the thinking of his mentors, such as Lamennais, Quinet, and Michelet, a view also held by a number of subsequent scholars. However, I argue that Bilbao was a critically original thinker in terms of the importance of American republicanism and modernity. His writing helped inspire and in general best exemplified the discourse I have called American republican modernity. Bilbao and his legion of comrades, writing in capitals and provinces from Argentina and Chile to the United States, imagined an Atlantic world involved in a vast and titanic struggle of civilizations, pitting America, modernity, liberty, and equality against Europe, retrogression, despotism, slavery, and aristocracy. The quotidian discourse of mid-century Spanish America reveals a clearly defined Atlantic imagination of heroes and villains contending for the future of humanity.

Bilbao imagined this epic contest taking place in the hearts of men (thus his visceral hostility to ultramontane Catholicism) but also within and between peoples and nations. He saw the French invasion of Mexico as part of a plan to destroy the independence of nations, with the ultimate goal “the extermination of the Republic in the world.” Although Bilbao’s rhetoric was overheated, he foresaw the coming wave of European imperialism more clearly than most. Of course, on the side of the angels were many European peoples and nations, and on the side of the devils many Americans; allying with the French were those conservative Americans who pined for monarchy, for dictatorship, for a return to the colonial order, and, crucially, to “dominate and civilize the masses.” Geography was ultimately less important than visions of modernity: in Bilbao’s words, “American civilization versus European civilization.” Bilbao was specific about the sides and terms of this conflict that spanned oceans and continents, fought “from Mexico to Chile”: “Political faith against religious faith, reason against religion, hope against tradition, union against isolation, federalism against centralism, labor against land, the logic of sovereignty against oligarchic constitutions.”

For American republican modernity’s supporters, their most tenacious and powerful enemies were the conservative clergy and their “retrograde and fanatical” followers. Bilbao was rabidly anti-Catholic, seeing the Church
as the largest obstacle to progress. For Bilbao, Catholicism was compatible only with monarchies and theocracies since it insisted on blind obedience to authorities and denied reason and the pueblo’s sovereignty, both of which were central to republicanism. Thus Latin America’s Catholicism helped explain any problems and setbacks that republicanism faced in the Americas.27 Bilbao blamed Paul and the subsequent Catholic hierarchy for distorting Jesus’s true message. Instead of the Nazarene’s “social revolution,” the Church promoted the “enslavement of women” and an authoritarian despotism.28

Liberals across Spanish America shared Bilbao’s preoccupations, often engaging in ferocious attacks on the Church and especially the Vatican. A Bogota newspaper declared that of 262 legitimate popes, 153 were incompetent, corrupt, or unfaithful. The paper asked what other institution in world history had such a poor record.29 Mexico City’s La Opinión Nacional equated the clergy and militarism with a feudal past and celebrated Liberal martyrs, such as Melchor Ocampo, who had died so that “man should be the priest of his own conscience.”30 Liberals saw conservative religiosity as a means of enslaving the masses, and they classified zealots as “enemies of democratic institutions” and “executioners of humanity and civilization.”31 However, some Liberals had faith that the pueblo, or at least groups such as artisans, had escaped the clerics’ sway by distinguishing “between religion and fanaticism.”32

Within the discourses of both liberalism and American republican modernity, a wide variety of approaches to religion and the Catholic Church coexisted. Most Liberals claimed they were not anti-Christian, instead embracing a religion that promoted charity, the Golden Rule, fraternity, science, public health, and enlightenment while rejecting fanaticism and intolerance.33 In both Mexico and Colombia, Liberals viewed the Church hierarchy as the staunchest opponent of all progress, motivated by both retrograde views and a desire to protect its own power and wealth and that of the Conservative “aristocracy” with which the Church was allied.34 Some made a clear distinction between religion and “the Church,” the latter equated with the Inquisition, indulgences, and taxes.35 Others embraced Catholicism; for example, José Manuel Estrada espoused many ideas of American republicanism but combined them with Catholicism, which tempered liberty with morality.36 In general, however, many saw the Church as impeding modernity. Those who planned to reestablish the Jesuits in the Americas, for example, were assumed to “want to detain the course of the century.”37

While the nuances of rationalism, religion, and the Church’s temporal power engendered endless debate, at moments of crisis the lines between
progressives and retrogrades became clear. During the 1876–77 Colombian civil war, sparked by debates over secular education, priests openly revolted with Conservatives. The Liberal president of Cauca State, César Conto, wondered: “Is there anything more absurd than the attempt to start a religious war in America in the last third of the nineteenth century?”

During Mexico’s War of the Reform, Liberals described Conservatives as barbaric religious fanatics who “only are happy under the whip of their master, passively eating the bitter bread of the slave.” Maximilian’s invasion similarly crystallized anticlerical feelings. Morelia’s La Guerra accused Conservatives of treason for inviting the French to invade, claiming that Conservatives had plotted “to saturate our atmosphere with the black smoke of the inquisitorial bonfires.”

As debates about the Church suggest, seeing Latin America’s civil wars and electoral and ideological contests as central to an Atlantic-wide campaign between the past and the present was not just a trope of Bilbao, but widespread. As early as the 1840s, when Europhile modernity was still dominant, some began to imagine an international republican struggle that engulfed the Old and New Worlds, as we saw in Montevideo. By the 1860s such conceptions were widespread, and Latin America was no longer just part of this struggle but the key to its success. Mexico’s La Chinaca understood the wars of the 1860s to be tightly interconnected: on one side stood Mexico, Cuban patriots, and the U.S. North in the Civil War; on the other side stood the Confederacy, England, France, and Spain (desperate to keep Cuba). This vast international struggle pitted aristocrats, monarchs, and imperialists against “the fraternity of everything intelligent, progressive and democratic in the world.”

For the Liberal politician Eduardo Urueta, celebrating President Benito Juárez’s triumphant entrance into Mexico City after Maximilian’s defeat, on the enemy side stood the clergy, military despots, “the rich,” European powers, and even the United States, if it returned to expansionism.

This international struggle was reflected internally in the numerous civil wars between Liberals and Conservatives, not just in Colombia and Mexico but across the New World. Instead of cataloging New World states’ ills and failures, as under Europhile modernity, newspapers now eagerly tracked new liberal revolutions that would add more Spanish American nations to the American republican fraternity.
lar” learning many lessons. Slavery had been abolished in the United States, Mexico was victorious, and in Europe “the pueblos . . . told their sovereigns: enough oppression, enough of armies. When will you allow us to enjoy our liberties and rights?”46 In this vision, the struggle between civilization and barbarism in the Atlantic world was not between cultured urban letrados and barbaric backland plebeians, but an international contest between republicanism and monarchy, between citizens and aristocrats, between freedom and slavery, and between sister republics and European empires.47 Although some scholars see the Age of Revolution as marking the last moment when Spanish America and North America shared a common experience, midcentury writers still saw a common project and destiny for the Americas.48

Rhetoric contrasting America and Europe was so ubiquitous that it could be appropriated for commercial exploitation, with advertisements exploiting this struggle for material gain. A North American photographer working in Lima stated in an advertisement: “It is undeniable that there exists a vast European conspiracy against the liberties of America and it is also undeniable that the best way to defeat it is Union and mutual protection.” Therefore, reaching not a little, he suggested that Limeños have their photographs taken at his shop as a way of expressing American solidarity.49 More important, this discourse regularly appeared in speeches meant for general consumption. The Atlantic imaginary was not only shared by the letrados but was also a common referent throughout the public sphere.

France’s invasion of Mexico confirmed the “European conspiracy” to destroy American republicanism. Mexicans warned that Maximilian’s invasion was an attack on “all the interests of the Republics of the immense American continent.”50 Many Mexicans actively hoped (and even assumed) that the United States would directly intervene in the war as their ally; after all, the Old World threatened them all, and mutual protection was the duty of sister republics and in the spirit of the Monroe Doctrine (as interpreted by Spanish Americans).51 It was, of course, Mexican monarchists who opposed any U.S. involvement during the French Intervention, claiming the Monroe Doctrine and protestations against monarchy were only a cover for U.S. ambition.52

The U.S. Civil War’s bloody spectacle acted both to atone for past U.S. aggression (as Ulysses S. Grant noted, the United States seemed to paying a dreadful price for its sins) and to reanimate the idea of the sister republics. Spanish American papers eagerly followed the course of the war, celebrating Union victories.53 Spanish Americans understood the war as no different than their own struggles between Liberals and Conservatives, between those pushing for expanded citizenship and rights and those seeking to restrict
Moreover, the Confederacy was linked not just with Conservatives but also with U.S. filibustering and European imperialism. Latin Americans assumed that England and France under Napoleon favored an independent Confederacy. As Spain, England, and France invaded Veracruz in 1861 to recoup Mexico’s defaulted loans, La Guerra speculated that England had really joined the invasion to position its navy to break the Union blockades of Confederate ports. The paper predicted that if this were true, “a continental war will erupt.” Mexican papers reported rumors that the Confederacy’s long-range goals included invasions of Mexico and Cuba. Many Mexicans (and North Americans) thought the Confederacy would ally itself with Maximilian’s French invaders. La Bandera Nacional reported that the French had sided with the Confederacy and clamored for the Union to join Mexico in common cause to rid the New World of European monarchical imperialism, even claiming that a friendly North American army would be welcome on Mexican soil. Some North Americans agreed; the Union’s military governor of Texas urged U.S. support for Mexico and linked the Confederacy with Maximilian’s monarchy and French imperialism. Bilbao clearly saw the U.S. Civil War as a struggle to end slavery, closely linked internationally with Mexico’s resistance against French imperialism. In Mexico, such an understanding was common. For example, in the celebratory speech cited above, Urueta applauded the U.S. “great war of abolition.” Bilbao, often suspicious of U.S. imperial intentions, in 1863 celebrated a now possible “alliance with the United States, purified of slavery,” that would make American civilization invincible against its European and domestic enemies. A competing identity of pan-American republicanism challenged racial nationalists’ promotion of divisions between Latin America and North America.

The Americas’ triumph in this struggle seemed secured by the dual victories of the Union over the Confederacy and Mexico over France. In the banner year of 1866, the tide seemed to have turned inexorably in favor of liberty: “Any attempt to compromise the development of the free peoples of the Americas will now be useless and sterile.” In a speech, the professor and diplomat Jesús Escobar y Armendáriz celebrated Mexican and and U.S. triumphs over European reaction: “Its [Europe’s] efforts to sustain the rebellion in the United States and perpetuate slavery are in vain. Grant has made Richmond [the Confederacy’s capital] surrender and the world has celebrated.” The Mexican Congress asserted that Mexico’s victorious resistance to French colonialism had helped secure the future of all the Americas and shown Europe the vitality of American “progress.” Now, the Ameri-
can republics would unite in an alliance “for the good of civilization and
humanity.” Meeting in Baltimore to celebrate Mexico’s triumph, soldiers
from the U.S. Grand Army of the Republic extolled Maximilian’s execution
as having “erased with one blow monarchy’s prestige in our continent.”
Matías Romero, the Mexican ambassador to the United States, replied that
the French invasion had been not just an attack on Mexico but “an attempt to
overthrow popular government and the free institutions of this continent.”
Americans, North and South, imagined the New World as at the vanguard of
civilization, facing Europe’s retrograde institutions with a moral and physi-
cal force that could not be denied.

Visions Competing with American Republican
Modernity after Midcentury

Those Conservatives and letrados opposed to American republican modernity
also imagined an Atlantic world in a grand contest between civilization and
barbarism. However, for Conservatives, on the side of the angels were those
defending a Christian civilization that protected an orderly, hierarchical so-
ciety against barbarous subalterns and their revolutionary Liberal leaders,
whose plans would lead only to anarchy and dissolution. Most letrados, be-
they self-declared Conservatives such as Lucas Alamán or writers more as-
associated with Liberalism such as Sarmiento or Juan Bautista Alberdi, tended
to look to Europe for validation and were suspicious of popular sovereignty;
in this regard, Bilbao was more the exception than the norm for the lettered
elite. However, in this section I mostly will concentrate not on letrados but
on the counternarratives to American republican modernity in the public
sphere of the street and in the political arena during the moment of Amer-
ican republican modernity’s ascension (1850s–1870s). These conservative
visions drew on Europhile modernity, with its focus on European high cul-
ture, education, and manners, but they also prefigured many aspects of an
emerging Western modernity, which emphasized economic progress, tech-
nological evolution, state power, and racial hierarchy. Even during its heyday,
American republican modernity always competed with other discourses of
civilization for supremacy in the public sphere.

While American republican modernity celebrated the Americas, Conser-
vatives were much more likely to still look to Europe for a path to the future,
as epitomized by Maximilian’s invitation—“true civilization” could come
only from Europe. Juan Almonte and José Mariano de Salas thanked Na-
poleon III and Maximilian for bringing order to Mexico and for sacrificing
“their blood and treasure, without any other ambition than to elevate us to
the level of the most civilized pueblos.” Mexico’s La Sociedad declared it was in “cultured Europe” that the “lights of the century” shown most brightly, and Europe’s “civilizing influence” was still needed to reform Asia, Africa, and the Americas. Upon hearing news of Maximilian’s execution, colonial Cuba’s Diario de la Marina worked itself into hysteria, demanding “a crusade of European civilization against Mexican barbarism.” If that was not possible, then Mexico must be completely isolated from “civilized peoples” so it could not spread its infection of barbarism and anarchy.73

For many Mexican, Cuban, and Brazilian Conservatives, if not for Colombians or most Spanish Americans, monarchy defined European civilization. As Erika Pani has discussed, Maximilian’s monarchy was not an aberration or only a foreign imposition, but represented long-standing political currents. Diario de la Marina declared that civilization was based on two great principles, “law and authority,” and supported by two great institutions, the Church and monarchy. The paper smugly noted how orderly Cuba was becoming “more wealthy, more civilized” every day because the “principle of authority” reigned,” while the rest of the Americas regressed into fratricidal bloodshed. Mexico’s Assembly of Notables, who gathered in 1863 to formally establish a monarchy, argued that Mexico should imitate the most powerful nations in “Western Europe.” The assembly did not reject the idea of modernity, claiming to support “modern monarchies”; the “magic word” of monarchy was the only sure path to “civilization.” Brazilians argued that Mexican Conservatives had looked to their country’s orderly monarchy for a political model to escape republican anarchy. Many Spanish America letrados—even those such as Alberdi who were not publicly associated with conservatism—were also suspicious of republicanism, fretting that Europeans would learn about the extent of “our backwardness and our misery.” Sarmiento dismissed claims of American centrality in 1865: “South America is too low down in the human current” for European governments to pay any attention to it. The Colombian letrado José María Vergara y Vergara mocked those Americans who thought the “universe” looked to them, derisively snorting: “The universe is watching the new opera premiering in Paris.” In an unpublished essay written in the 1860s, Alberdi went even further, arguing that Americans must embrace Europe in every way possible, including monarchism, “not because monarchy is better than a republic in itself, but because it is the government that prevails in civilized Europe, with which we must live united in order to have civilization.” In short, America was “backward” while Europe was “the only known civilization.”

Around midcentury, American republican modernity’s opponents shared
that discourse’s insistence that the question of modernity was essentially a political one; they just differed on the types of politics, the definition of liberty, and the role of popular groups. If monarchy was unacceptable, then republicanism should at least be orderly and led by educated elites. The Church should play a central role in limiting democratic excesses. Alamán declared that only the Church stood as a bulwark against these nefarious modern ideologies of irreligiosity and open class warfare. La Sociedad declared that the Church was the “cornerstone of society” and “the dike against the torrent of immorality.” Furthermore, “the Pope, as temporal sovereign, represents property and public power: on these two bases society rests.” Without religion, society would descend into depravity and socialism: “A civilized barbarism will triumph in the world,” just as barbarians overran Rome. Hundreds of residents of Ipiales, Colombia, petitioned against a plan for secular public education; the petitioners declared that if society abandoned its religious principles, “we will regress to being barbarians, yes barbarians.”

If religion provided one of the key cultural touchstones for Conservatives, opposition to American republican modernity’s universalism was another. Conservatives and letrados talked more openly about race—in this period, before scientific racism became dominant, still largely understood as an amalgam of cultural, legal, and biological traits—and its importance in defining civilization. Under Maximilian’s rule, Durango’s El Telégrafo declared that Mexico’s problems were due to the “absolute lack of homogeneity” of race: “Our society is formed of three races that are entirely unfriendly and separate from one another, due to their education, customs, language and even memories.” The difference among these races was the difference between “civilization and barbarism.” Nonwhites were unfit for citizenship, generally drunken, and ignorant of political life. Colombian Conservatives regularly cast doubt on Afro-Colombians’ fitness for citizenship, claiming that the latter were “ignorant men” who “do not deserve the title of true Granadans.” Race also provided Conservatives with a way to deal with the horrifying doctrine of equality. Cali’s Ariete argued that God had created inequality among men and “never will the color black be equal to the color white.” The powerful Conservative politician Sergio Arboleda, who openly spoke of “inferior races,” even condemned legal equality: “I see another obstacle to industrial progress in the titular absolute equality with which the three races that form our pueblo should obey the same legislation.” He urged a return to Spanish legislation that recognized “the fact of inequality in our races.” Some Conservatives still felt restrained, at least in the
midcentury public sphere of the street, from openly embracing a codified racism, given the preeminence of the idea of racial equality in the wars of independence. Soon, however, Western modernity’s scientific racism would encourage public discussion of race and modernity.

Conservatives blamed the fetishization of equality, the presence of barbaric races, and the decline in religious sentiment for fomenting chaos and anarchy. Disorder was the most important rebuttal to American republican modernity’s claims to the future. Although most Conservatives did not support monarchy, they certainly sympathized with many monarchists’ critiques of republican-induced anarchy. Mexico’s Assembly of Notables argued that republicanism’s chief failures in Mexico included the decline of authority and the concomitant disorder that had sunk Mexico into “unspeakable barbarism.” The assembly mocked the “delights of liberty” that republicanism had bought to Mexico: extortion, violence, injustice, robbery, arson, and death. In a public address in 1868, Ignacio Gutiérrez Vergara—the Conservative governor of Cundinamarca, Colombia—argued that security and protection of property was “the primary goal of the government in every civilized society.” He declared that “peace and order are the fathers of prosperity” and that their attainment marks all “civilized nations.” He planned to achieve this order by encouraging public opinion to limit those involved in politics, which should be only the elect few, a guiding principle of Conservatives’ views of subalterns’ role. Employing one of the most potent metaphors of midcentury, Gutiérrez compared progress to a locomotive, with peace and order acting as the rails that guided it. Without this guidance, progress could lead to catastrophe.

Order was an end in itself, of course, but it was also crucial to instigating the economic development that was becoming modernity’s hallmark in the North Atlantic. In an 1861 speech, Ignacio del Campo—later an official under Porfirio Díaz—argued that Mexico must prepare to be “linked to the civilized world by the telegraph and railroads,” which would bring “marvelous machines” and commerce from afar by establishing peace, order, and guarantees of favorable treatment for foreigners. Campo thought that Mexico had to look elsewhere for a technological and commercial modernity. This was a discordant note in 1861, representing an important elite, but minority, view; however, two decades later, it would become hegemonic in the Mexican public sphere. Liberals’ own concerns about order after the French Intervention would soon drive many to radically rethink their commitment to republican modernity. It would still be some time before economic development became the hegemonic definition of modernity;
however, such an idea was germinating even while American republican modernity reigned supreme.

In the 1860s and 1870s, the solutions to the problem of anarchy were still inchoate—including religion, discipline, and monarchy—yet they were beginning to coalesce around ideas that would become central to Western modernity’s political project in the last quarter of the century: a massive augmentation in the state’s power and a reduction in popular participation. Conservatives (and many Liberals) had long decried the state’s weakness. The Conservative paper La Cruz argued that the form of government—be it democracy, aristocracy, or monarchy—did not matter; the only important point was that it effectively exercised authority. While Liberals celebrated popular sovereignty, Conservatives dismissed it: “The crowd, with a leader to direct it, is not government.” Conservatives equated overparticipation in politics with barbarism. For example, one Caleño wrote to Colombian President Mariano Ospina in 1859 to warn him of the coming “democratic explosion” planned by Liberals meeting in their Democratic Societies. However, he assured the president that the “property-owning and civilized people” supported him and his calls for order, while only “men without morality or fortune” composed the opposition.

Conservatives were often horrified by the poor—especially blacks or Indians—voting. After denigrating blacks who had come into Cali to vote as drunken, sinister creatures of the forest, “as in Africa,” Pedro José Piedrahíta lamented that the Liberals “want to sink us in the stinking mud while the civilized world looks on.” In 1861 El Porvenir wailed that if the Liberal “hordes” won the civil war, property would disappear: “Everyone will be poor, everyone will be equal.” The paper mocked “these fathers of democracy” for whom “property is theft” and “authority is tyranny,” “the family is a farce,” and “religion a lie.” Although the technology, strategy, resources, and even ideology required for a more powerful state were still largely lacking around midcentury, there was a growing sense that the masses’ influence on the nation and state must be sharply curtailed. Pasto’s Conservative Governor Antonio José Chaves emphasized the need to strengthen the police and the law’s authority, which while perhaps “repressive,” would work to establish the “morality” that was the essential base of progress. He warned that
“without morality there is neither civilization nor industry.” Chaves was more than willing to trade some repression for order, and he saw civilization as resting not on rights but on the morality of the population, a morality that force and authority could instill.

Liberals in the public sphere tended to express confidence in the nation, but Conservatives had their doubts. The Colombian letrado Arceocio Escobar argued that a true Colombian nation did not exist: “Why? Because the barbarism of the pueblo impedes it.” Under democracy, Colombia risked becoming an oclocracia—the rule of the mob—resulting in “the tyranny of the ignorant and depraved masses.” Escobar adopted Europhile modernity’s intense fear of democracy and of a racially and culturally suspect lower class, which made a true nation—a white and European nation—impossible. Pasto’s El Espectador would have concurred with Escobar’s views of the apocalyptic dangers of a demagogic democracy. During the 1859–62 civil war, the paper saw the rebellion against Conservative rule as upending “the constraints of morality, respect for the law, inviolability of marriage, the sanctity of the family and the security of property, all these bases upon which society rests.” In short, Conservatives fought for “the cause of civilization over barbarism.” El Espectador presented the main alternative to American republican modernity as, under Europhile modernity, mostly concerned with morality, religion, and culture but also worrying about order and state power, prefiguring the rise of Western modernity late in the century. These Conservatives’ visions would burgeon in the 1870s, especially as many Liberals became disenchanted with their republican experiments and increasingly eyed the North Atlantic when searching for a path to the future; yet in the 1850s and 1860s, the radical republican imagination of American progress still reigned in the public sphere. While Conservatives looked to figures such as Maximilian, Napoleon III, and Pope Pius IX to save their vision of civilization, American republicans celebrated a pantheon of heroes fighting for liberty and equality.

The Legion of Honor and Bestiary of the Atlantic Imagination

While the midcentury public sphere envisioned a general contest between Europe and America, the discourse of American republican modernity contained a complex imaginary of both American and European heroes, villains, and victims. Listeners to speeches and readers of newspapers easily identified common references to both individuals and countries as allies on the side of good or opponents aligned with tyranny. This roll call mostly focused on actors and states in the Americas and Europe, but it occasionally
touched on Africa and Asia. Of course, at any one moment individuals and nation-states might figure more or less prominently, but at midcentury certain peoples and places shone brightly in Spanish Americans’ understanding of the world.

In some ways, given the broad strokes with which most writers and orators painted, nations—along with symbols such as the liberty tree, liberty cap, and the Marseillaise—were more powerful referents than individuals. As long as American states were governed by generally republican institutions, they were all sister republics, even if some were behind others on the road to modernity. For example, by 1856 Bilbao saw Colombia as best representing “all the great conquests of the modern spirit.” Cuban and Brazil stood as anomalies, although American republicans hoped that each would soon join the sister republics’ ranks. During the French Intervention, some Mexicans argued that after defeating their invaders, they should extend the fight against imperialism and Europe by removing the Spanish from Cuba and Puerto Rico. Colombian politicians actively debated direct involvement in support of Cuban patriot rebels, and in 1871 the government of Cauca State reported that some citizens had departed for Cuba to join the rebellion. Under the headline “Progress,” one Mexican paper welcomed rumors of republican revolts in Brazil, “wishing the insurgents the best of luck.” Haiti now also tended to stand apart, signifying now mostly a race war instead of a republic. At times some would remember Haiti’s brave struggle against France, but the country was mostly forgotten and effaced from the fraternity of republics. Of course, the United States remained a problem. We have already discussed the country’s wavering commitment to the ideal of sister republics. Bilbao and others feared the unbridled individualism in the United States (decades before José Enrique Rodó published Ariel), its filibustering imperialism, its retention of slavery, and its racism against blacks and Indians. However, in general, American republicans still looked on the United States as “the first Republic.” Yet essentially the United States was no different than other republics: a universal fraternity of man should unite all Americans. After the French invasion, El Independiente of Chile (in an article circulated in Mexico), argued against the European-imposed idea that the “Latin race” should be opposed to “the Anglo-Saxon race,” which had only been developed to justify the French invasion. Instead of embracing “latinism,” the New World should adopt “the American sentiment” and “the fraternity of all peoples.” As we will explore later, the championing of hispanismo and a Latin identity was not only a project of emancipation from gringo imperialism, but also a Conservative
effort tied to European imperialism and the promotion of whiteness and a Europeanized cultural vision of civilization.

In Europe it was the new nations, yearning for statehood, that garnered the most sympathies. Latin Americans celebrated certain nations—Italy, Poland, Ireland, Greece, and Hungary—as representing transnational republican fraternity in contrast to the older empires that oppressed them.\textsuperscript{119} Poland was an eternal victim of retrograde, monarchical repression and thus worthy of republican sympathy.\textsuperscript{120} In the face of the French invasion, a Mexican paper declared that “our cause is that of unhappy Poland,” which, like Mexico, faced attack from “barbarous enemies.”\textsuperscript{121} Italy was the great hope, a seed of American liberty that would sprout in European monarchies’ decrepit pleasure garden. Popayán’s La Unión declared that Italy would become the “sentinel of American rights, stationed at the gates of European monarchies.”\textsuperscript{122} Cali’s El Caucano, which regularly fulminated against European cupidity and barbarism, declared: “When we speak of the Old World, we do not speak of you, young Italy! You are the America of Europe.”\textsuperscript{123}

Countering Italy, Ireland, Poland, Greece, and Hungary were the despotic trio of Russia, the Habsburg Empire (“the prison keeper of nations”), and the formerly tyrannical but now largely impotent Spain.\textsuperscript{124} For Bilbao, the oppressor states included Russia, Austria, Prussia, and—after the invasion of Mexico—France.\textsuperscript{125} Russia occupied the zenith of despotism in the American imagination. Even more conservative and Eurocentric papers such as Cuba’s Diario de la Marina could employ czarist Russia as a metaphor for the most barbaric oppression and Poland as its most suffering victim, if at other times the czar was celebrated as the most enlightened of rulers.\textsuperscript{126} The Atlantic world was widely enough imagined to be employed in speeches to soldiers. In an oration to celebrate the entry of Republican troops in Querétaro in 1867, for example, Juan de Dios Burgos compared the victory to an imagined Poland, rising from its oppression to confront the despotic czar.\textsuperscript{127}

England and France (at least until its Mexican adventure) held more contradictory places, neither unqualified heroes nor villains. Bilbao saw England as deserving praise for its liberty at home but condemnation for its tyrannical foreign policy.\textsuperscript{128} England was clearly prosperous and had a long tradition of rights; wealthier Liberals also found appealing its strong property laws and limited democracy—which, although perhaps unacceptable by American standards, surpassed that of most of Europe.\textsuperscript{129} Celebrated for its enterprise and tradition of rights, England was still a monarchy and colonial power.\textsuperscript{130} A paper from Durango warned that Ireland and India would “imitate one day Mexican heroism” and revolt against England.\textsuperscript{131}
France was even more problematic than England. France was seen as having a glorious republican history, and though it was now obscured by fools and pretenders such as Napoleon III, there was always the hope that the French people would awaken from their slumber and throw off the monarchical yoke. American republicans fondly recalled the glories of French revolutionary triumph, appropriating French symbols for their own ends. In 1850 the Democratic Society marched through the streets of Cali, “singing their Marseillaise.” The French fascinated Americans for having decapitated their monarch, but many realized that this republicanism had not endured and that France had returned again and again to despotic rule. Although modern historians often categorize caudillos as a particularly Latin American problem, nineteenth-century Spanish Americans thought of it as a more universal contagion, one that plagued Europe equally—for example, in the case of Napoleon and his pretenders. However, while the French had killed one king, America had ensured the death of kingship: “If America has not decapitated kings, it has decapitated monarchies.”

Early in his career, Bilbao had thought the French the origin and epitome of modernity, but his time in Europe and the rise of Napoleon III, along with the maturation of his own thought, soured Bilbao on Paris. Bilbao claimed that although France was the “initiating nation” on the path of liberty, it had soon stumbled; except for a few months, the French “have never practiced liberty.” After the French Intervention, such condemnations became the norm. Mexicans celebrated the French revolutionary past but lamented that the country of the Marseillaise, Victor Hugo, and regicide was now the land of despotism, the clergy, imperialism, and rule by a petty despot. Although once France had led the way on the path to modernity, its people now could do nothing more but “cry for their lost liberty.” While many Spanish Americans acknowledged Europe’s, and especially France’s, past achievements in republicanism and rights, they noted that such movements had long since failed on the far side of the Atlantic.

Spain, due to its weakness, was not generally seen as a villain because of its current actions, but it was blamed by Americans for the colonial past. Bilbao castigated Spain for the legion of difficulties the Americas faced: “With Spain came Catholicism, monarchy, feudalism, the Inquisition, isolation, silence, depravity, the genius of exterminating intolerance and the culture of blind obedience.” In short, “Spain is the Middle Ages. We are the future.” Escobar y Armendáriz declared in a speech that with the coming of Cortés “the slavery of our fathers began.” In general, Spain’s significance lay in its past actions, not in its rather sad present state. Although Bilbao
harshly condemned Spanish colonialism, he simply mocked contemporary Spain for its despotism and backwardness.144

American republicanism had less interest in Asia and Africa. If considered at all, such peoples were seen either as victims of European oppression, deserving sympathy, or—following a long-standing European tradition—as the subjects of despotic states, outside the flow of history.145 The great struggle centered around the Atlantic basin, pitting America against Europe; but a large part of the eastern Atlantic, Africa, seemed forgotten. However, as we saw in the last chapter, many Spanish Americans did condemn European imperialism in Africa and Asia. Bilbao argued that European despots engaged in imperialism to distract their populaces from oppression at home.146 Although mainly concerned with the Americas, he also condemned European imperialism in Rome, India, China, and Algeria.147 In speeches, other orators also excoriated European aggression in Asia and Africa, especially in China and Algeria.148 However, American republicanism embraced its own version of Orientalism, casting China and especially the Ottoman Empire as autocratic and backward regimes, doomed to fade as history progressed.149 Curiously, the Orient also figured as simply part and parcel of the Old World. Thus, in contrast to Said’s study, Europe and the East merged as retrograde.150 After Maximilian’s execution, when Mexicans mocked the intense mourning in Europe’s courts, they took delight in noting how “the sultan of Constantinople is heartbroken over Maximilian’s sad end.”151

In general, the globe’s nations were arrayed in a vast struggle of liberty, republicanism, and modernity against despotism, monarchy, and retrogression. European powers were oppressors: of their own people, of those subject nations yearning for independence, of their remaining and new colonies.

Of course, famous and infamous individuals strode the historical stage, as themselves but also as symbols and proxies in the Atlantic arena. After the assassination of the Mexican Liberal Melchor Ocampo by Leonardo Marquez, Ocampo’s comrades quickly presented his murder not only as an event in Mexican history, but as part of the centuries-long struggle between the partisans of progressive republicanism and their Conservative enemies. This “Conservative Party” had murdered Ocampo just as it had Socrates, Jesus of Nazareth, and Savonarola and, more locally, Hidalgo, Guerrero, and Morelos. Thus the classical world, the biblical world, and the modern world formed a singular chain of meaning, sites of a long struggle that had found a new theater in Mexico. The list of villains included many religious figures and institutions, led by the Inquisition and many popes and stretching from Herod to Ignacio de Loyola. Joining them were such Europeans as Philip II
of Spain, Charles IX of France, and various Austrian potentates. The list also included figures from New World history, such as Cortés (the vilification of Cortés began long before twentieth-century indigenismo) and the general and viceroy of New Spain, Félix María Calleja del Rey. Finally, such nefarious men were joined by the contemporary Mexicans who continued the struggle against liberty and equality, such as Alamán and the assassin Márquez. At such moments as Ocampo’s martyrdom, these names of heroes and villains would be drawn up in great lists, in which the living and dead, the classical philosopher and contemporary politician, the European and American were placed side by side as part of a millennium-long battle spanning the Atlantic world that was culminating in the nineteenth century.

Certain villains constantly reappeared in this discourse, luminaries whom American republicans loved to hate. Spanish American scoundrels included Argentina’s false federalist and demagogue Rosas, Paraguay’s López, Venezuela’s Monagas family, Ecuador’s Flores, Chile’s O’Higgins and Bulnes, and Mexico’s Iturbide and Santa Anna. Some, including Bilbao, even saw Bolívar as having betrayed the masses in his quest for political order and condemned him for his autocratic, Napoleonic tendencies (although, of course, he remained the Liberator for others). Brazil and its emperors were the Latin American exception, condemned for both their continued embrace of slavery and of monarchy. Concerning North America, filibusters, especially the notorious William Walker, were decidedly villains, promoting a European-style imperialism and racism while violating American republican fraternity. Although most European kings and emperors, from Nero to Louis XIV, and many popes, especially Pius IX, earned condemnation, a few figures enjoyed special prominence. Of course, after the French Intervention, partisans of American republicanism across the New World universally scorned Maximilian. His patron, Napoleon III, became a figure not just of hatred, but also of mockery—“the pygmy.”

American republicanism celebrated a pantheon of heroes as well, drawing connections across time and space. Bilbao could celebrate two seemingly distant figures in a single phrase: “Túpac Amaru and Washington initiated the torrent” of rebellion that engendered independence. The association of an Andean leader of indigenous revolt and a U.S. Founding Father might seem strange to present-day readers, but for Bilbao they were allies in the struggle for American liberty. In general, Jefferson and Washington represented the best of the North American republican experiment. Ranking with these North Americans were Spanish American heroes of independence, especially Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla in Mexico. After the defeat of
the French, Juárez emerged as a major emblem of American republicanism: as one Mexican noted, “Juárez, independence, liberty and democracy are, for us, the same thing.” From Spanish Democrats in Europe to Unionists in the United States and Liberals in Bogotá, Atlantic republicans celebrated Juárez as having joined with “the immortals, Washington and Lincoln,” as champions of liberty.

Yet American republicanism’s most powerful symbol was not American by birth, but nonetheless tightly linked to the American continents: Giuseppe Garibaldi. While other Europeans, such as Kossuth, Mazzini, and Castelar, were also viewed as fraternal democrats, none sparked the fires of the mind as did Garibaldi. Bilbao called Garibaldi “the embodiment of the spirit of universal democracy.” In 1859 R. M. Arana, a Liberal partisan, wrote to the president of Cauca State, Tomás Mosquera, promising local support for Mosquera’s planned rebellion against the Conservative government. Arana claimed that his followers “possess an Italian soul” and that Mosquera would be “our Garibaldi,” leading them from triumph to triumph, “carrying liberty to the oppressed pueblos.” In 1863, as Mexico prepared to battle the French, the Junta Patriótica of Mexico City named “José Garibaldi” as its honorary president. During the French Intervention, La Chinaca equated the Mexican struggle against foreign domination and a retrograde clergy with that of Garibaldi. Indeed, Garibaldi’s anticlericalism, if not as central to his appeal as his republicanism, had a wide approval. He was frequently written about in American newspapers—at least one of which bore his name—that eagerly followed his campaigns for liberty against papal and imperial power until his death in 1882. Garibaldi stood as a hero for struggling against “the Austrian yoke” that condemned his brothers to “slavery,” in the context of an Atlantic world in which his former American compatriots had already succeeded in this fight against aristocracy and imperial power.

While Garibaldi’s legend loomed over the Americas, it was of particular import in Uruguay. Montevideanos remembered him as “the great democrat of the century” whose loss was felt by the entire world—he was a “universal” hero. After his death in 1882, there were four days of mourning in Montevideo, with funeral services, parades, the closure of public offices, cannonades, and numerous other tributes to the man “who in both worlds had fought for the cause of liberty.” An orator at his funeral service asserted: “Garibaldi was in modern times the most austere and tireless apostle of the Universal Republic.” He was a saint in “the cult of democracy.” Angel Floro Costa denounced those who claimed Garibaldi as mainly Ital-
ian: “Garibaldi is a Oriental citizen” (Uruguay is also known as la República Oriental). Moreover, just as Uruguay owed much to Garibaldi, Garibaldi owed much to New World, “where his spirit received the poetic education of liberty.” Garibaldi had first heard in Montevideo the “magic eloquence” that he used to inspire Italians. However, for Conservatives, Garibaldi was a
villain: anticlerical, a pirate, an anarchist. At his death, the bishop of Montevideo took revenge, denying permission to hold honorary funeral services in the cathedral. Perhaps fittingly, this slap engendered new demands for the separation of church and state in Uruguay, in the hope that the Church’s “insipid and retrograde fanaticism” would be destroyed by “the incessant progress of ideas.”

Across the Americas, Garibaldi had become the symbol of American republican modernity. There is no irony in a European filling this role, for in spite of the rancorous rhetoric contrasting America and Europe, most committed republicans saw the struggle against monarchy as uniting peoples around the Atlantic, physically embodied by the Hero of Two Worlds. Despite Garibaldi’s begrudging acquiescence to monarchy in Europe, in the Americas he remained a champion of the “republican idea.” Not surpris-
ingly, the Garibaldi of the American imagination was a much purer, uncompromised champion of the republic, liberty, and equality than the complex real man and politician. Long after the power of radical republican ideas had faded in Latin America, when Joseph Conrad created his old Garibaldino as an isolated expatriate, seeing no connection between his struggle and local affairs, Garibaldi’s memory would still linger among real Latin Americans.¹⁸¹ Soldiers in a federalist revolt in southern Brazil took the name Legión Garibaldina in 1893.¹⁸² Garibaldi’s grandson fought in the Mexican Revolution.¹⁸³ The photographer and activist Tina Modotti worked for the Giuseppe Garibaldi Anti-Fascist Alliance in the early 1940s after her return to Mexico.¹⁸⁴ Avenues and squares and statues across the Americas bear his name, from Buenos Aires’s Garibaldi Street to his monument in Washington Square Park in New York City. These echoes remind us that although largely erased from historical memory, American republican modernity’s remnants still bear witness to the powerful emancipatory struggle of a previous age, and they may not be as lost as those opposing a liberating universalism might wish.