Contents

List of figures xi

Acknowledgments xiii

Note xv

Introduction: a Republic of Letters beyond Europe 1

I. Networks, projects, and learned communities in eighteenth-century Mexico

Chapter 1: Collecting news to make communities 23

The art of connecting 28

Public opinion in action 37

The library of the common reader 40

Spaces of literary sociability 44

The periodical as archive 51

Chapter 2: Building a library without walls: the emergence of a collective project 61

Two unwelcome letters from Spain 64

Preparing a response: a work in progress 71

The library of viceregal scholars on display 74

A collective mapping of Mexico's scholarly sphere 79
Academic fictions: placing *Bibliotheca Mexicana* on stage 87

II. Constructing past and present Republics of Letters

Chapter 3: The search for ancient Mexico: making a Republic of Letters without letters 97
Documents and objects of knowledge in ancient Mexico 104
An *Indio* and an *Español* meet in Michoacán 117
Historical artifices 123
Nezahualcoyotl's reflections 129
The death of an ancient scholarly republic 135

Chapter 4: A *criollo* tree of knowledge 145
A *casta* painting of *criollos* 149
Defending *criollo* academic culture 159
Political defenses of *criollos* and the arms of letters 173
Giants and the tree of knowledge 190
A surreptitious Republic of Letters 195

III. Redefining Mexico's Republic of Letters

Chapter 5: The scholarly city of God 207
A letter from a sugarcane crusher: championing scholasticism with modern ideas 213
Rousseau in Mexico? 222
Heresies against the (Catholic) Republic of Letters 230
The solitude of the cell: a scholar in transition 236
The progress of faith and knowledge 241
The exile of God 247
Against *hirco-servus* and *ens rationis* 251

Chapter 6: Escaping scholasticism 263
New spaces of knowledge 270
Reading Voltaire's flying fish 280
Criticism as restitution 290
Reaching a new public 302
Aristotle expelled from the republic 310
From fictional guerrillas to revolution 317
Epilogue: unexpected encounters 327
Bibliography 339
Index 373