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### **The Other at War: Performing the Spanish-Cuban-American War on U.S. and Cuban Stages**

Juan R. Recondo

*The Graduate Center, City University of New York*

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THE OTHER AT WAR: PERFORMING THE SPANISH-CUBAN-AMERICAN WAR ON  
U.S. AND CUBAN STAGES

by

Juan R. Recondo

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Theatre in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2018

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Theatre in satisfaction of  
the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

## ABSTRACT

The Other at War: Performing the Spanish-Cuban-American War on U.S. and Cuban Stages

by

Juan R. Recondo

Adviser: Jean Graham-Jones

The Spanish-Cuban-American War, declared by the United States on April 25, 1898, marks a colonial shift in the history of the Caribbean and solidified the expansionist thrust of the United States outside national borders. Theatres in turn-of-the-century New York, which at this point was one of the theatrical centers of the nation, debated for audiences the imperialist character of the U.S. The Cuban struggle and the resulting Spanish-Cuban-American War permeated U.S. drama, thereby portraying a Caribbean in need of salvation by the military intervention of the United States. New York stages of the time became locations where various cultural representations came into contact.

Those voices silenced in New York theatres also negotiated their identity through the construction of a U.S. Otherness. Cuban theatre around the time of the war portrayed a complex picture of the invading nation and the contradictions in its humanitarian mission to liberate the island from Spain. Cuban playwrights conceived their national identity in opposition and parallel to the United States. Their construction of a staged American otherness questioned U.S. imperialism amidst the invasion. This project establishes a dialogue between the representation of Caribbean Otherness on New York stages and American Otherness in plays produced in La

Habana to examine how national stages commented on the encounter of nations that resulted from the Spanish-Cuban-American War.

I contend that the representation of Caribbean difference in turn-of-the-century U.S. theatre about the Spanish-Cuban-American War must be examined alongside Cuban performances of American Otherness. By focusing on difference, this comparative analysis will not only reveal how the United States envisioned itself as an overseas empire, but also how theatres in La Habana questioned the U.S. humanitarian mission in the Caribbean.

## Acknowledgments

This has been a process that has taken many years. Yet the long journey has been worth it due to the love and support of so many people along the way. I have a tendency to focus on the details when thinking about those I love and respect. These details are just a peek into the profound impact that all of them have had on my work and my emotional wellbeing.

To the members of my committee: David, your conversations that first semester opened my eyes to the beauty of historical narrative. Marvin, thanks to you I was able to literally walk to the theatres of nineteenth-century New York City. You turned theatre fantasy into reality. Jean, you have been my guide through this experience. You are the border and the voice that I most engage with in my writing. Your presence is felt in all my academic projects.

The Theatre Department at the Graduate Center has been a space of inspiration. Jim Wilson's advice and Lynette Gibson's assistance made the department feel as a home. Here, I also found my New York family: Meg and Rob, thank you for Christmas and your love; Catherine, thank you for the thoughtful conversation; Carly, thank you for Baruch and making me laugh; and Linell, thank you for the sweetness of strawberry-rhubarb pie during one of our darkest moments. Furthermore, I would like to show my gratitude for every conversation that I had with my students from the Borough of Manhattan Community College, Baruch College, LaGuardia Community College, and New York University.

Regardless of our distance, my Puerto Rican family never left my side. When I first arrived to New York, Papito's mustachioed encouragement, Rafael's profound decency, Rosibel's explosion of madness, and Beatriz's energizing happiness always brought me to tears. Sheila's grace and Richard's big laugh will always bring back the spirit of parranda. The siblings that I acquired along the road, Angel, Marinellie, and Griselle, are constant reminders of the

beauty of my island home. Alanis's painful absence, Kahel's tenderness, Daniel's generosity, Juancho's serenity, and Aleco's smile have taught me lessons never addressed in any doctoral course. Cache's brilliant conversations, Esther's inappropriate humor, Gloria's endearing toughness, and Peter's mastery of every game in existence always make me smile. My academic family from the University of Puerto Rico has been present every step of the way: the first serious conversations about cinema that I ever had with Rodi; Diane's love for American cinema, the reason for my obsession with Orson Welles; María Cristina's introduction to film theory, which simply blew my mind; and Lowell's examination of Caribbean theatre and performance that made me reconsider everything I knew about my corner on this planet. The Puerto Rico that all of you represent is hidden between the lines of this dissertation.

Finally, to the people whose presence redefined my existence. Mamita, not one day has gone by without a phone call from you. Those trips to the movies and the theatre led me to this. Otto, your twelve years in my life have taught me the face of true wisdom. Doña Geo, you may be absent from this plane of existence, but you are always present in every moment of laughter. And Edna, thank you for holding my hand, for your dolls, for your understanding, for your criticism, for your unrelenting perseverance, for every evening and every morning, y por hacer de Nueva York otro lado de nuestra patria.

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## Timeline of the Spanish-Cuban-American War in Cuba:

- 1844: Also known as “el año del cuero” (the Year of the Lash) for the extreme whippings that Spanish authorities used against intellectual and slave co-conspirators involved in “la conspiración de la escalera” (the Ladder Conspiracy).
- 1849: La Junta Promovedora de los Intereses Políticos de Cuba (the Committee to Promote Cuban Political Interests), or the Cuban Junta, is established in New York City to rally for financial and political support for revolutionary actions in Cuba.
- 1868: El Grito de Yara (the Yara Revolt) is declared from Carlos Manuel de Céspedes’s sugar plantation, La Demajagua. This event initiated the armed struggle known as the Ten Years’ War (ended in 1878).
- 1869: The insurgent army names Céspedes the President of the Republic of Cuba in Arms.
- 1870: Céspedes sends his brother-in-law, Revolutionary General Manuel Quesada, to the U.S. to devise a strategy to smuggle arms into Cuba. For this purpose, Quesada purchases a U.S. ship, the *Virgin* (later registered as the *Virginius*).
- 1873: The *Virginius* is seized by the Spanish authorities close to Jamaica for smuggling arms into Cuba. Céspedes’s brother, Pedro María, thirty-four U.S. citizens, and nineteen British nationals are executed.
- Céspedes is ousted as leader of the rebellion and President of the Republic of Cuba in Arms. Salvador Cisneros Betancourt is named president.
- 1874: Spanish forces kill Céspedes in his mountain refuge.
- 1878: The Ten Years’ War ends with the Pact of Zanjón.
- 1895: Cuban rebels initiate el Grito de Baire (the Baire Revolt) under the intellectual leadership of José Martí on February 24.
- José Martí is killed at the Battle of Dos Ríos on May 19.
- 1896: Evangelina Cossío y Cisneros is imprisoned for treason by the Spanish authorities.
- 1897: With the aid of Karl Decker, a U.S. journalist sent by William Randolph Hearst, Cossío y Cisneros escapes from prison and flees to New York.
- 1898: The U.S. battleship *Maine* explodes off the shores of La Habana on February 15.
- U.S. President William McKinley signs the Teller Amendment on April 20, guaranteeing that U.S. military forces will leave Cuba after the island’s independence.

The U.S. declares war on Spain on April 25.

The Rough Riders Battalion led by Theodore Roosevelt fight the Spanish army in San Juan Hill on July 1.

The U.S. Navy, led by Rear Admiral Winfield Scott Schley, intercepts the Spanish fleet, led by Admiral Pascual Cervera y Topete, as they depart from Santiago de Cuba July 3.

The city of Santiago de Cuba is under siege by the U.S. military between July 3 and July 13.

Spain surrenders in Santiago de Cuba on July 16.

The Treaty of Paris officially ends the Spanish-Cuban-American War on December 10.

1901: President McKinley signs the Platt Amendment on March 2. This provision, which replaced the Teller Amendment, gives the U.S. government claims over some territories in Cuba and the right to intervene in island affairs.

1902: The 1901 Cuban Constitution takes effect on May 20 and Tomás Estrada Palma is named President of the Cuban Republic.

## **Introduction: Confronting Mambises and Negritos with National Fire**

### The U.S. and Cuban Theatres of War

During the second half of the nineteenth century and up to the early 1900s, many U.S. and Cuban theatre artists on the island and in the Diaspora referenced in their work earlier revolutions and the concluding Spanish-Cuban-American War. They amazed audiences with the exoticism of the Caribbean island, to find support for the Cuban cause, and to comment on the events of the day. A deep examination of this theatre about the war must necessarily establish a transnational dialogue between plays performed in La Habana and New York City.<sup>1</sup> I contend that these U.S. and Cuban cultural texts represent complex notions of nation, imperialism, and alterity if analyzed as part of a shared transatlantic space determined by Cuba's fight for independence from Spain and the U.S. neocolonial project in the Caribbean. The exploration of thematic points of contact between U.S. and Cuban theatre reveals how stages during the second half of the nineteenth century became locations where various cultures coexisted and how each portrayed these encounters in uniquely nuanced ways. The works examined in this dissertation, and which could have been staged as early as the 1870s and as late as the early 1900s, negotiated the political realities of both Cuba and the U.S. by portraying historical turning points in the island's fight for independence from Spain. The events reflected in these plays include El Grito de Yara in 1868, which led to the Ten Years' War (1868-78); the Virginius Affair in 1873; Evangelina Cossío y Cisnero's rescue from a Cuban prison in 1897; the 1895 Cuban Revolution; the subsequent Spanish-Cuban-American War in 1898; and the change of command from the Spanish military to the invading U.S. forces. The plays are historical documents that allow twenty-first-century historians to question the conventional narrative of the "splendid little war,"

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout my project, I will use the term "Spanish-Cuban-American War," which I borrow from historians Philip S. Foner and Louis A. Pérez, to challenge the exclusion of the Cubans and other Caribbean people from the traditional "Spanish-American War."

which posits the U.S. as the paragon of heroism when it intervened in the Caribbean to save the defenseless Cubans from the bloodthirsty Spanish military.<sup>2</sup> Although a superficial glance of these texts might lead scholars to focus only on their seeming simplicity, U.S. melodrama, pyrodramas, Teatro Mambí, and Teatro Bufo brought the realities of the war to multiple audiences eager for information about island revolutionaries and Usonian invaders.

The plays that I include bring forth a more culturally, socially, and politically complex conflict between images, between ways of reading and deciphering difference, and between modes of consumption and resistance. My goal is to use the Spanish-Cuban-American War as an interpretive tool to understand how cultural expressions created and staged in New York and La Habana, and which used the conflict as a backdrop, can be read through the connections forged by the U.S. neocolonial project in the Caribbean.<sup>3</sup> I focus on possible performances in La Habana since the city was not only the official capital of Cuba but also its cultural center. I also decided to analyze theatre stagings in New York for two reasons. The first is because early in the nineteenth century, New York City had become the theatre capital of the U.S., catering to a diversity of audiences from vaudeville and melodrama to opera. The second reason is that much of the Cuban revolutionary activity during the nineteenth century was planned in New York City. The headquarters of the Cuban Liberation Army were established and located in the city. Therefore, New York connects U.S. theatrical activity to revolutionary and performative expressions in Cuba. Yet even when New York served as an actual physical location where Cuban revolutionary sentiment and the diversity of U.S. views coincided, the Spanish-Cuban-

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<sup>2</sup>Although historians such as Philip S. Foner have affirmed that Theodore S. Roosevelt playfully referred to the Spanish-Cuban-American War as “the splendid little war,” it was really Secretary of State John Hay who, in a letter to Roosevelt, used the name for the first time. See “Credit ‘Splendid Little War’ to John Hay,” *The New York Times*, July 9, 1991.

<sup>3</sup> This specific analytical frame is inspired by Paul Gilroy’s idea of the Black Atlantic and Joseph Roach’s concept of the circum-Atlantic. Both scholars use a transnational frame of analysis to establish cultural connections; the former focuses on African Diasporas from the West Indies to England while the latter examines a diversity of performative instances with intercultural links formed through the terrible Middle Passage.

American War was in effect an imaginary space in which diverse cultures came into contact. Treating the war in such a way allows me to employ a transnational approach to analyze U.S. plays in conjunction with Cuban works. In doing so, I echo Jill Lane's argument that American studies must "[draw] on a pluralistic frame [...] to understand the history and social scope of life in America."<sup>4</sup> She clarifies that her concept of "America" does not make a distinction between "nuestra América (Luso-hispanic, mestizo, *autóctono*, or 'colored') [and] 'their' America (Anglo, white, hegemonic, and neocolonial)." Her approach takes into account the "multiple Americas" and their "long history of struggle over land, language, resources, and power that created and continue to maintain such divisions in the first place."<sup>5</sup> Lane challenges the scholarly focus of American Studies on the U.S. and champions the exploration of the history of the Americas that clash and coexist within the geographic area that also includes Latin America and the Caribbean. Her analysis does not emphasize mediation, but rather underscores the constant tension of these transnational encounters. In my project, this interpretive frame is essential to examining the intercultural connections that resulted from the Spanish-Cuban-American War. Cuban and U.S. stages performed unique takes on national identity by dramatizing an Otherness, which audiences witnessed with wonder and fear due to what awaited them across the sea.

My project's main focus is on how different types of theatrical spectacles presented in New York and Cuba perform the nation and construct alterity, while setting down a dialogue between them. My reading of this theatre is influenced by Joseph Roach's idea of the circum-Atlantic cultural connection, which he defines as an "exchange [that] does not deny Eurocolonial initiatives their place in this history [...] but [...] regards the results of those initiatives as the

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<sup>4</sup> Jill Lane, *Blackface Cuba, 1840-1895* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 7.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 7.

insufficiently acknowledged cocreations of an oceanic interculture.”<sup>6</sup> Roach’s emphasis is on how performance enacts memory and creates subversive surrogates that challenge racial and ethnic identity politics in the U.S. I propose to utilize the Spanish-Cuban-American War in the same way that Roach uses the circum-Atlantic, but focus more on the immediate cultural, racial, and ethnic encounters that arose from the U.S. invasion in the Caribbean. How did nineteenth-century U.S. theatre artists perform alterity? How did Cuban theatre artists perform the invading U.S. other?

My project necessarily entails a study of how U.S. and Cuban performances were read and were made readable to diverse audiences.<sup>7</sup> To theorize about the “readability” of a text, one must also analyze how something is commodified and consumed, especially since I deal with how difference is constructed in theatre during the initial stages of the U.S. invasion in the Caribbean and how Cubans negotiated their racial diversity with the invading presence. The performances of race and nation in specific U.S. and Cuban theatrical texts about the Spanish-Cuban-American War portray a complex and at times contradictory image of alterity, especially when these are considered within the points of contact launched by the encounter of nations in the Caribbean. These texts open up new ways of interpretation when analyzed alongside other productions of their time and the experience of U.S. neocolonialism in Cuba. In this introduction, I begin by reviewing the history of the war as it took place in Cuba. I continue by examining the different genres covered in my dissertation, so I can then review the literature that constitutes the theoretical framework of my project. Finally, I conclude with a detailed explanation of how I

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<sup>6</sup> Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 5.

<sup>7</sup> I borrow the concept of “readability” from Mary Louise Pratt’s *Imperial Eyes Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992). Pratt uses it to refer to Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala’s text, *The First New Chronicle and Good Government*, and how colonial meaning-making has become the subject of scholarly investigation due to its readability today. I apply the concept to understand how different types of texts and performances are made “readable” to audiences. Although there are clear differences between reading a document and viewing a performance, the “readability” of a performance text pertains to how a spectator interprets or assigns meaning (“meaning making”) to theatrical elements in the context of the Spanish-Cuban-American War.

organize this project and an overview of the chapters.

### The Spanish-Cuban-American War in History

Since the Spanish-Cuban-American War is central to this discussion, one must first try to fully understand its history even before the U.S. became involved in the conflict. While the U.S. expanded its southern and western borders throughout the nineteenth century, Cubans were already fighting a revolution for independence from imperial Spain. In 1868, Carlos Manuel de Céspedes, the owner of a sugar plantation called La Demajagua, freed his slaves and initiated an armed struggle for Cuban independence through El Grito de Yara. Famous revolutionary leaders, such as the Cuban Antonio Maceo and the Dominican Máximo Gómez, fought alongside Céspedes in this campaign, which lasted exactly ten years. This revolutionary drive united the Spanish Caribbean in their attempt to achieve independence from Spain. Also in 1868, revolutionaries in Puerto Rico took to arms in Lares, a midwestern town, but were shortly defeated by Spanish authorities due to an infiltrator. This short-lived revolution came to be known as El Grito de Lares. The Cuban and Puerto Rican fights for liberation did not end there but flourished on the islands and among the Diaspora in New York, where Caribbean thinkers such as Eugenio María de Hostos and José Martí continued laying the foundations for a revolution. Although geographical and physical borders separate these islands, the Puerto Rican and Cuban anticolonial fervor eliminated any frontiers.

On February 24, 1895, Cuban forces revolted once again against the Spanish authorities and the Cuban war for independence began with El Grito de Baire. The war for independence included fighters from Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic and took place all over the island. The most significant victory was achieved by the revolutionary armies of General Calixto García, who defeated the Spanish forces in the Eastern part of the island. This conflict would

have ended soon with the defeat of Spain and a revolutionary victory that did not fit U.S. economic interests in the area. In the United States, popular support for the Cuban cause was at an all-time high, but the government, which had remained officially “neutral,” realized that Spain’s control over its colonies was rapidly diminishing. Although the McKinley administration constantly intervened against Cuban efforts to support the war from the U.S., government officials were aware that the Spanish defeat in Cuba was imminent and that this would represent a great opportunity to expand U.S. borders into the Caribbean. So as the Cuban conflict raged on, the United States sent the battleship *Maine* to La Habana to protect its own economic interests. After the explosion of the *Maine* on February 15, 1898, which was conveniently blamed on a Spanish mine, the United States officially declared war on Spain on April 25.<sup>8</sup> The Spanish army had been so significantly weakened by the Cuban revolutionaries that the ill-prepared U.S. army was able to defeat them in a few months. Spain finally surrendered in Santiago de Cuba on July 16. Subsequently, the United States government became involved in island politics through the addition of the Platt Amendment to the Cuban Constitution and the imposition of a U.S. military government on the island in 1906.<sup>9</sup>

Conventional histories of the Spanish-Cuban-American War posit the U.S. as heroes that Cubans welcomed for their support against Spain. Nevertheless, historical accounts such as Philip S. Foner’s two-volume work, which is an exhaustive look into the U.S.-Cuban relations

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<sup>8</sup> The real reason for the explosion of the U.S.S. *Maine* has never been clarified. Apart from the Spanish mine theory, it has been speculated that the explosion may have been provoked by Cuban rebels interested in U.S. involvement in the war or that the ship exploded due to technical problems. I favor Louis A. Pérez’s approach to the issue of the *Maine* in his book *The War of 1898: The United States & Cuba in History and Historiography*. Rather than theorizing about the possibilities, Pérez questions the centrality that the explosion had as a cause for the Spanish-Cuban-American War, thereby revealing how U.S. politicians of the time and historians throughout the twentieth century strove to fit the war into a cohesive narrative. This focus reveals how the explosion of the warship has been used to cover the neocolonial drive that pushed the U.S. to war with Spain for Cuba.

<sup>9</sup>The Platt Amendment was passed by the United States Congress in 1901 and it stipulated that the U.S. government had a claim over some territories on the island and the right to intervene in Cuban affairs to safeguard economic and political stability. This provision replaced the less invasive Teller Amendment, which was approved by the United States Congress in 1898 and guaranteed that after the defeat of Spain, the island would be left under the control of its people. See Pérez, *The War of 1898: The United States & Cuba in History and Historiography*, 28-35.

throughout the nineteenth century, and Tulio Halperín Donghi's comprehensive examination of the region in his *The Contemporary History of Latin America* challenge simplistic takes on U.S. involvement in Latin America. Louis A. Pérez's work on nineteenth-century Cuban history and the depiction of Cuban identity in U.S. imagery served to contextualize U.S. theatre about the war. In relation to Cuba, Ada Ferrer's research on race relations on the island throughout the nineteenth century and George Auxier's and Rodrigo Lazo's studies of the Cuban Diaspora and the Junta in the U.S. provide this project with a deep look into the conflicts of Cuban society at the time of the war. These historians influenced the way in which I use U.S. melodrama and pyrodramas and Cuban Teatro Mambí and Teatro Bufo to comment on events related to the Cuban revolutions of the nineteenth century and the U.S. involvement. The plays reproduced for audiences the myth of homogeneous national identities and the silenced sectors that clamored to be heard.

#### Melodramatic Fires and Mambises Negritos

During the second half of the nineteenth century, the popular U.S. stage became an instrument to inform audiences about current events, thereby entertaining a nation that observed with curiosity the fight for Cuba Libre. Therefore, melodramas, which were the most popular entertainment in the nineteenth century, participated in the construction of nation by championing U.S. might.<sup>10</sup> In his book, *Melodrama and the Myth of America*, Jeffrey D. Mason argues that this theatrical genre is "not a fixed literary generality but rather an attitude and, more often, the product of that attitude, both of them functions of culture and society, and both flexible

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<sup>10</sup> I am using various histories and studies that deal with melodrama in Europe and the U.S. The most central to this discussion are Daniel Gerould's edited essay collection *American Melodrama* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983) and *Melodrama* (New York: New York Literary Forum, 1980); and Jeffrey D. Mason's *Melodrama and the Myth of America* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993). Among more recent works, I consult Tice L. Miller's *Entertaining the Nation: American Drama in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University, 2007) and Ralph J. Poole and Ilka Saal's *Passionate Politics: The Cultural Work of American Melodrama from the Early Republic to the Present* (Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008).

in time and space.”<sup>11</sup> According to Mason, melodramas represent an attitude that is inherently linked to the form that each genre assumes in specific national venues. This attitude and the form through which it is expressed can evolve into something new, as is clear in how European and U.S. melodrama respond to very different social, cultural, and political realities. In melodrama, as in the other genres analyzed in my dissertation, U.S. artists and audiences constantly question and negotiate their identity as a nation. In his article, “The Americanization of Melodrama,” Daniel Gerould states that “[a]ddressing the same broad public as contemporary cinema and television, the melodramatic stage offered the citizens of the new nation the first ‘moving’ pictures of their lives. In so doing, the theatre determined to a large degree how Americans saw their world and imagined their place in it.”<sup>12</sup> Gerould connects melodrama to cinema in the way that these media reflect U.S. spectators’ lives, their position in the world, and, I would add, various constructions of alterity in opposition to which the nation is defined. Thus, the performance of nation in melodramas about the Cuban revolutions of the nineteenth century and the Spanish-Cuban-American War tapped into how the masses envision the role of the U.S. as liberator of an oppressed Caribbean.

In negotiating the nation, U.S. melodrama inevitably touched on the subject of race. In their introduction to *Passionate Politics: The Cultural Work of American Melodrama from the Early Republic to the Present*, Ralph J. Poole and Ilka Saal state that “whereas European melodrama is more concerned with articulating [...] struggles within the realms of class and gender, it is especially American melodrama that has consistently turned to conceptions and anxieties of race.”<sup>13</sup> The focus on race gave U.S. melodrama a unique national character. In my

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<sup>11</sup> Jeffrey D. Mason, *Melodrama and the Myth of America* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993), 16.

<sup>12</sup> Daniel C. Gerould, “The Americanization of Melodrama,” in *American Melodrama*, ed. Daniel Gerould (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), 7.

<sup>13</sup> Ralph J. Poole and Ilka Saal, “Passionate Politics: An Introduction,” in *Passionate Politics: The Cultural Work of*

project, I analyze how melodrama performed racial and ethnic identities in the Caribbean. This distinction is very important because the plays that I examine reveal ambivalent ideas of race in Cuba. For example, many Anglo-Americans referred to Cubans using the same racial epithets with which they referred to African Americans. In contrast, other U.S. sectors emphasized the similarities between Cubans and Anglo-Americans, demonstrating how, as Ada Ferrer puts it, “in the late nineteenth century the status of Cubans in racial terms was highly indeterminate.”<sup>14</sup> How was this racial uncertainty performed in the melodramas of the time in the U.S.? How did racial difference vary in melodramas staged in New York and written by a U.S. or a Cuban playwright? How did Cuban playwrights negotiate Cuban identity for U.S. audiences? Did the U.S. invasion influence conceptions of race in Cuba? Can we achieve another reading of the construction of race in U.S. melodramas related to the Spanish-Cuban-American War if we consider them through a comparative analysis with performances of race in the Caribbean? U.S. melodrama’s departure from the romantic situations of European melodrama, which had predominated on national stages even before the American Revolution in the eighteenth century, resulted in an exciting theatre filled with sensational moments that reflected current events reported in the press.

The action of the U.S. melodramas examined in my dissertation revolves around the conflicts that culminated in the Spanish-Cuban-American War. Archibald C. Gunter’s *Cuba: A Drama in Six Acts and Seven Tableaux* is an unpublished script where the protagonists must travel to Cuba to save a young U.S. lawyer from being executed by the Spanish militia.<sup>15</sup> *Cuba* is

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*American Melodrama from the Early Republic to the Present*, ed. Ralph J. Poole and Ilka Saal (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholar Publishing, 2008), 11.

<sup>14</sup> Ada Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba: Race, Nation, and Revolution, 1868-1898* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 190.

<sup>15</sup> Archibald C. Gunter, *Cuba: A Drama in Six Acts and Seven Tableaux* (unpublished manuscript, entered into the Library of Congress, Washington D.C., 1872).

an essential play to consider since it emphasizes the differences between a New York family's affluence and Cuba's plight due to Spanish corruption, thereby establishing a clear opposition between the U.S. and the Caribbean. On the other hand, William W. Lapoint's *Loyal Hearts: A Patriotic Melo-Drama* focuses on how the Spanish-Cuban-American War is not only about liberating the island, but also about uniting the North and South after the Civil War.<sup>16</sup> Lapoint's play ennobles the U.S. involvement in the Caribbean, an attitude that permeates many of the historical accounts of the war, by making evident how the nation can look beyond its past political rift to aid Cuba. Finally, Frank Dumont's *The Cuban Spy* depicts the racial and ethnic diversity of the U.S. and how these identities are able to come together to fight for the Cuban cause under the leadership of white Usonian masculinity.<sup>17</sup> Theatre historians such as Daniel Gerould, Peter Brooks, Jeffrey Mason, Wylie Sypher, and Bruce McConachie have been central to my study of U.S. melodrama as a form that reflects the nation's character as it embarked on its imperial mission in the Caribbean. Melodrama's affirmation of the nation's technical supremacy and its role of gendarme of the Caribbean was also clear in other types of entertainment such as pyrodramas.

Pyrodramas performed the U.S. technical supremacy and bolstered its imperial identity. Pyrodramas were fiery spectacles that took place mostly in Manhattan Beach, New York. They depicted historical battles or sensational current events with casts of hundreds. At the center of each of these performances, there was a huge fireworks display and complicated pyrotechnics fitting a story about a spectacular battle or the end of a civilization. Before coming to New York, Henry J. Pain was famous for his "fire plays," as he referred to them, which he started staging at

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<sup>16</sup> William W. Lapoint, *Loyal Hearts: A Patriotic Melo-Drama* (Vermont: Buck Printing Co., 1900).

<sup>17</sup> Frank Dumont, *The Cuban Spy: A Comedy-Drama in Four Acts* (Philadelphia: The Penn Publishing Company, 1915).

the Belle Vue Gardens in Manchester, England.<sup>18</sup> In his *Annals of the New York Stage*, George Odell wrote that on September 10, 1881, Pain “was to employ a ‘grand set piece,’ [...] representing Westminster Abbey, the Houses of Parliament, and Big Ben, with 2,500 large coloured rockets.”<sup>19</sup> Odell describes a grand spectacle that allowed the masses to witness a fiery portrait of London. This description gives us an idea of the technical work and detail involved in Pain’s stagings of the burning of Pompeii or of a battle in the Spanish-Cuban-American War.

David Mayer examines how pyrodramas exuded patriotism when they were performed for the masses at Belle Vue Gardens. Mayer writes:

There a further pleasure offered: an anglocentric view of the world, a hierarchy of nations, civilised and savage, with Britain at the apex, an entertainment which unbidden expressed the dominant ideologies of colonialism and imperialism. Belle Vue’s spectacles were nationalistic, patriotic, by today’s standards blatantly racist, morally and politically reassuring, and crudely but effectively informative and propagandistic. Many of the dramas depicted British troops in action against the Crown’s enemies in territories explored or colonised within previous decades, or defending hegemonies disputed by rival empires.<sup>20</sup>

The nationalistic spirit that characterized these English “fire plays” was consonant with Pain’s

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<sup>18</sup> It is a challenge for a researcher to write about pyrodramas. There is a dearth of secondary sources about these spectacles, possibly because low-brow popular entertainment still suffers from the indifference of academia and historians. This is precisely what inspired me to write about these spectacles, which also used the Spanish-Cuban-American War as one of their themes. Among the limited number of sources that I have found, the most helpful have been Margaret Malamud’s “Roman Entertainments for the Masses in Turn-of-the-Century New York” and David Mayer’s “The World on Fire...Pyrodramas at Belle Vue Gardens, Manchester, c. 1850-1950.” I also use Maria Wyke’s discussion in *Projecting the Past: Ancient Rome, Cinema and History* and David Mayer’s “Romans in Britain 1886-1910: Pain’s ‘The Last Days of Pompeii.’”

<sup>19</sup> George C.D. Odell, *Annals of the New York Stage* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1940), 11:409.

<sup>20</sup> David Mayer, “The World on Fire...Pyrodramas at Belle Vue Gardens, Manchester, c. 1850-1950,” in *Popular Imperialism and the Military, 1850-1950*, ed. John M. MacKenzie (New York: Manchester University Press, 1992), 179.

pyrodramas in the U.S. and reflected the validity that the performance of empire acquired in the final decades of the nineteenth century. While earlier in the history of the young nation, the Roman Empire was considered to be a metaphor for the decadence and oppression of British rule; in the late nineteenth century, Rome became the zenith for a developing U.S. imperial identity. In Manhattan Beach, Pain directed his “fire play” *The Last Days of Pompeii*, where the corruption of Rome was punished through fiery special effects every summer night.<sup>21</sup> Pain’s pyrodramas staged imperial Rome through a lavish spectacle that the working-class and immigrant masses could afford, thereby becoming witnesses to the punishment of the Roman people’s corruption. Even when Pain’s shows condemned the lavish decay of the Roman Empire, pyrodramas such as *Cuba* and *The Battle of San Juan and Destruction of Cervera’s Fleet* demonstrated the identification of the U.S. masses with an imperial identity.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, they established the crucial connection between empire and the power of technology to subdue the decadence of the Old World, which defined the nation’s imperial mission in Cuba during the Spanish-Cuban-American War.

Pain’s two pyrodramas that dealt with the Spanish-Cuban-American War, *Cuba* and *The Battle of San Juan and Destruction of Cervera’s Fleet*, silence the Caribbean island in particular ways. *Cuba* orientalizes the island through its performance of a Cubanismo that directly descends from George Bizet’s *Carmen* and so rejects any links to reality. *The Battle of San Juan* portrays a series of important battles between the U.S. military and the Spanish forces during the war, yet obliterates any Cuban participation. Pain’s patriotic championing belittles Cuba by keeping it absent from its own history, an attitude that was also present in how Cuban

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<sup>21</sup> Margaret Malamud, “Roman Entertainments for the Masses in Turn-of-the-Century New York,” *The Classical World* 95, no. 1 (Autumn, 2001): 49-50.

<sup>22</sup> Richard Neville, book for *Cuba*, Pain’s Amphitheatre, Manhattan Beach, 1896; Richard Neville, book for *The Battle of San Juan and Destruction of Cervera’s Fleet*, Pain’s Amphitheatre, Manhattan Beach, 1899.

representatives were left out by the U.S. in their peace negotiations with Spain. Although pyrodramas have not been at the center of scholarly interest, the work of historians such as David Mayer, Margaret Malamud, and Maria Wyke was significant to understanding how these fiery spectacles entertained the masses while championing the U.S. as the international symbol of democracy. The desire to explore Americanness was not unique to U.S. theatre. Teatro Mambí and Teatro Bufo also responded to similar national needs to define Cubanía, a goal relevant to both the Diaspora in the U.S. and audiences in Cuba.

The Cuban Teatro Mambí was the type of serious revolutionary theatre that condemned the injustice of the Spanish colonial order and of the later U.S. neocolonial presence.<sup>23</sup> It was rarely staged in Cuba before the defeat of Spain in 1898 because Spanish authorities banned the genre from island stages. However, Teatro Mambí became a powerful weapon for the Cuban Junta in the United States to rally for support of the Cuban cause and as an affirmation of a revolutionary Cubanía.<sup>24</sup> Teatro Mambí followed the theatrical tradition of European melodrama and Spanish Romantic theatre. In “The Theatre in Romantic Spain,” David T. Gies enumerates some of the characteristics of Romantic theatre in general that influenced the Spanish stage after the 1830s. Romantic plays were distinguished by dichotomous relations between concepts, such as good and evil, and blurred the lines between politics, society, and the personal.<sup>25</sup> In Teatro Mambí, the characters do not possess any psychological depth and simply become vehicles for

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<sup>23</sup> *Mambí* was a term Cubans used to refer to the revolutionaries during the final decades of the nineteenth century. *Mambí* was also used to designate the type of theatre that supported the ideals of the revolution.

<sup>24</sup> According to George Auxier, the Junta was established in the U.S by the Cuban Diaspora settled along the East Coast in September, 1895. This program was an offshoot of the Cuban Revolutionary Party in the U.S. See Auxier, “The Propaganda Activities of the Cuban Junta in Precipitating the Spanish-American War, 1895-1898,” 286-87. On the other hand, Rodrigo Lazo argues that the Junta started operations in 1849. Yet its political mission shifted from espousing the ideals on social justice of the Cuban insurgency in the 1850s to a more U.S.-annexationist outlook in the late 1860s. See Lazo, *Writing to Cuba*, 94-95. Both historians agree that during the 1890s, the Junta considered that it was more practical for the revolution to acquire the moral and financial support of the U.S. Therefore, they organized various clubs around the nation to rally for the sympathy of U.S. citizens.

<sup>25</sup> David T. Gies, *The Cambridge History of Spanish Literature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 355.

the revolutionary ideals. In many, the oppression of the Spanish regime takes over the personal space of the home, and so the lives of Cuban characters become a justification for the revolution.

In Cuba, any theatre that treated seriously social and political issues was banned by Spanish censors.<sup>26</sup> Censorship was felt even more acutely in neighboring Puerto Rico since it considerably diminished and almost eliminated the production of plays that treated contemporary national issues. There were notable exceptions, such as Alejandro Tapia y Rivera's *La cuarterona* (*The Quadroon*), written in Puerto Rico in 1867. Still, as Camilla Stevens observes, the playwright delves into the issue of race, but the action takes place in Cuba. Stevens contends that Tapia y Rivera avoided the topic of race and prejudice in Puerto Rico and so is considered by many as conservative, even when his play may arguably possess a transgressive dimension.<sup>27</sup> Ironically, even when Tapia y Rivera's play is set in Cuba, Teatro Mambí, the revolutionary theatre that championed a new nation independent from Spain, remained generally mute about the subject of race on the island. Just as in U.S. melodrama, where the white protagonist represented the nation, a trend that also defines Teatro Mambí's typical use of white Cubans, Teatro Bufo's most iconic character, the Negrito, represented a Cubanía that laughed at white Cuba, European culture, and the U.S. invasion.

While Teatro Mambí was a subversive and passionate theatrical mouthpiece for revolutionary ideals, Teatro Bufo became that artistic front that challenged the peninsular cultural domination on island stages. Unlike Teatro Mambí, Bufos were not explicitly political. Nevertheless, the form's popularity throughout the Spanish-speaking Caribbean and the subversive laughter provoked by its satire of Cuban society and current events attracted the

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<sup>26</sup> The most significant Cuban theatre history texts that I have used are Rine Leal's *Breve historia del teatro cubano*, Jill Lane's *Blackface Cuba, 1840-1895*, and Inés María Martiatu's *Bufo y nación: Interpelaciones desde el presente*.

<sup>27</sup> Camilla Stevens, "'Ponernos el espejo por delante': Staging Race in Alejandro Tapia y Rivera's *La cuarterona*," in *Revista canadiense de estudios hispánicos* 31, no. 2 (2007): 234.

attention of censors under both Spanish and U.S. authorities. The leading voice among historians of the Teatro Bufo, Rine Leal, states:

El nacimiento oficial de los bufos ocurre la noche de mayo de 1868 en el [Teatro] Villanueva. Pero desde meses antes un grupo de guaracheros se reunía en Cuarteles 18, en el modesto cuarto de Francisco Valdés Ramírez, un local que distaba mucho del cenáculo de Domingo del Monte [...].<sup>28</sup>

The bufo officially originated in the evening of May 1868 at the Villanueva Theatre. Yet months before, a group of guaracha music players met at Cuarteles 18, in Francisco Valdés Ramírez's modest room, a locale that was very different to Domingo del Monte's cultural meetings [...].<sup>29</sup>

Leal traces the origin of the Bufos to the specific month and year of their birth. Moreover, he emphasizes the contrast between the genre's humble beginnings and populist background and Domingo del Monte's literary and political salons during the first half of the nineteenth century.<sup>30</sup> This opposition severs any connections between Bufo and topics that dealt with high culture, politics, and contemporary society. Although this is not a reflection of the rest of Leal's examination of the Bufos, a superficial consideration of the genre may lead one to believe that the comic form is very far from having any contact with the cultural, political, and social environment of Cuba at the time. Yet this particular brand of blackface performance carried a

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<sup>28</sup>Rine Leal, "Prologo: La chancleta y el cotorno," in *Teatro bufo, siglo XIX: Antología* (La Habana, Cuba: Editorial Arte y Literatura, 1975), 1:29.

<sup>29</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine.

<sup>30</sup> Domingo del Monte (1804-1853) was a highly influential Cuban intellectual and abolitionist during the first half of the nineteenth century. He conducted a series of literary salons in his home whose discussions revolved around culture, politics, and social issues. In the 1840s, the Spanish authorities accused del Monte of being involved in what the government called the Ladder Conspiracy. His supposed co-conspirators, which included intellectuals and slaves, among others, were persecuted and many were tortured and executed. No evidence to support these charges has survived and many historians believe that the Spanish authorities on the island fabricated the conspiracy to arrest every individual who they considered a threat to the political status quo. Although the Spanish authorities arrested many of the apparent collaborators, del Monte managed to flee into exile. See Robert L. Paquette, *Sugar Is Made with Blood: The Conspiracy of La Escalera and the Conflict Between Empires Over Slavery in Cuba* (Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1988).

deeper revolutionary force primarily represented through the figure of the Negrito, the character that Cuban artists may have borrowed from U.S. blackface troupes that toured the island. The topics of race and national identity became central to plays coming out of the Cuban Teatro Bufo tradition. These plays, which mostly followed a musical revue tradition, popularized various stereotypes and used blackface on stage to create racialized comedic performances that commented on contemporary issues. Teatro Bufo was the most popular theatrical expression during the final decades of the nineteenth century and captivated Cuban and Puerto Rican audiences.

The Teatro Mambí and Bufo performances that I examine here directly engage with the U.S. presence. Desiderio Fajardo-Ortiz's *La emigración al Caney* (*The Migration to Caney*) focuses on how a group of Cubans survive both the U.S. siege of the city of Santiago de Cuba and Spanish persecution.<sup>31</sup> As is typical of Teatro Mambí, the protagonists represent revolutionary ideals of family, bravery, and resistance to Spanish inequity. Fajardo-Ortiz's *La Fuga de Evangelina* (*Evangelina's Escape*) is another Teatro Mambí play that depicts the real dramatic escape of Evangelina Cossío y Cisneros from a Spanish prison with the aid of a U.S. reporter.<sup>32</sup> Although these plays were written for Cuban audiences, Adolfo Pierra's *The Cuban Patriots* is a Teatro Mambí play written in English to inform U.S. audiences about the revolution.<sup>33</sup> The play, which was probably staged as part of the activities of the Cuban Junta in New York, revolves around the Cespedes family and how they reflect U.S. ideals of democracy and justice within the context of the Ten Years' War. Finally, Ignacio Sarachaga's *¡Arriba con el himno!* (*Hurray for the Anthem!*) is a Bufo that takes place after the end of the Spanish-Cuban-

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<sup>31</sup>Desiderio Fajardo Ortiz, *La emigración al Caney*, in *Teatro Mambí*, ed. Rine Leal (La Habana, Cuba: Editorial Letras Cubanas, 1978), 343-429.

<sup>32</sup> Desiderio Fajardo Ortiz, *La fuga de Evangelina: Jugete en un acto y cuatro cuadros* (New York: Casa Editorial Alfred W. Howes, 1898).

<sup>33</sup> Adolfo Pierra, *The Cuban Patriots* (Philadelphia: publisher unknown, 1878).

American War and portrays the moment when the island passed from Spain to the U.S.<sup>34</sup> In the show, Luis, who may have been performed as the Negrito, is the tour guide who takes Mr. Handkerchief, the U.S. representative, on a visit to various sites around Cuba. These Cuban plays shed light on the complex ways in which Cubans on the island and in the Diaspora perceived the U.S. involvement in the revolution and the nation's subsequent take-over. Rine Leal's extensive work on nineteenth-century Cuban theatre has been a constant source of inspiration for me. Jill Lane's and Inés María Martiatu's research on Teatro Bufo has been crucial for my understanding of the intersections of race and performance in nineteenth-century Cuban culture. Every theatre genre examined in this dissertation not only entertained, but also educated the masses about revolution, newly arrived Otherness (be it immigrants in the U.S. or Usonian invaders in Cuba), and the democratic ideals that opposed European decadence.

The educational aspect of U.S. and Cuban theatre reveals how the stage in general had become a point of contact for a diversity of national, racial, and ethnic identities, especially when the goal of specific performances was to define the parameters through which to enact the nation(s) for audiences.<sup>35</sup> In Frank Dumont's play, *The Cuban Spy*, which was published in 1915,

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<sup>34</sup>Ignacio Sarachaga, *¡Arriba con el himno!*, in *Teatro bufo, siglo XIX: Antología*, ed. Rine Leal (La Habana, Cuba: Editorial Arte y Literatura, 1975), 1:277-330.

<sup>35</sup> In her book, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, Mary Louise Pratt defines the "contact zones" as "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination –like colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today" (4). I will consider the Spanish-Cuban-American War as a "contact zone" or an imaginary space that encompasses the U.S. and Cuba. This "contact zone" forced the encounter of various nations thereby creating clashes between performances of identity and alterity. Pratt further explores this in her chapter "In the Neocolony: Destiny, Destination, and the Traffic in Meaning" in *Coloniality at Large: Latin America and the Postcolonial Debate*, eds. Mabel Moraña, Enrique Dussel, and Carlos A. Jáuregui (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 459-77. There she expands on the exploitative relation between the neocolonial power and the colonized country, which is kept as an underdeveloped producer of raw material. Nevertheless, the neocolony creates new ways of theorizing that resist the coloniality of power at play. Although Cuba and Puerto Rico were still not a neocolony of the United States, Caribbean artists already resisted the invasion in their work thereby exposing the challenges to that contact. In order to limit the scope of my work, I consider neither Spain's involvement in the conflict, Puerto Rico's role in the war, nor the Philippine theatre of war. Although these are significant aspects related to the events of 1898, these would add new dimensions to my use of "contact zones." Therefore, I will only focus on the cultural clashes during the initial stages of the U.S. neocolonial mission in Cuba.

the identities of the characters represent United States diversity: two Irish immigrants, a Dutchman, an African American, the young Cuban heroine, and the Spanish villain. Despite such representational diversity, the protagonist, who serves as an example of nobility, civilization, and paternalism, is a young white man with a distinctively Anglo-American name, Richard Carson. In the cast of characters, Carson is described as “a young American aiding the patriots,” thereby legitimizing Cuba’s fight for independence from Spain with the blessing of the white establishment in the United States.<sup>36</sup> If a white Usonian man is presented as the symbol of the nation, alterity is inevitably defined in opposition to him. The performance of difference affirms the virtues of the United States, while at the same time it educates the immigrant masses about the “American way.”<sup>37</sup> On the other hand, in Ignacio Sarachaga’s *¡Arriba con el himno! (Hurray for the Anthem!)*, a Bufo that dealt with the Usonian invasion after the end of the war, the representation of U.S. white masculinity, Mr. Handkerchief, is taken on a tour of La Habana guided by Luis, a racially ambivalent character who may have been performed as the mythical Negrito. While Luis’s racial identity may have been whitened as a negotiation with the U.S. presence, the character questions the influence of the invading forces in Cuba. Furthermore, the Usonian character’s name emasculates the invaders who are not represented by their apparent military prowess, but by a handkerchief, a symbol of conventional delicate femininity. The symbol of Cubanía is thereby defined in opposition to the effeminate Handkerchief, whose intentions are seen with a degree of suspicion. A dialogue between melodrama’s and Bufo’s representations of the nation highlights how both the U.S. and Cuba confronted in particular

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<sup>36</sup> Dumont, *The Cuban Spy*, 2.

<sup>37</sup> These melodramas about the Spanish-Cuban-American War were plausibly being staged in New York during the final two decades of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth century. In his essay, “The Hieroglyphic Stage: American Theatre and Society, Post-Civil War to 1945,” Thomas Postlewait explains that immigration into the U.S. escalated between the 1840s and the 1920s. These Diasporas originating from all parts of the world (Latin America, Scandinavia, and Eastern Europe, among many others) established their own theatres that spoke to their own experiences in the host country. We can therefore conclude that these immigrant communities not only produced theatre, but also formed a considerable portion of the theatre-going and film-viewing public.

ways a newly arrived Otherness. These encounters did not serve to calmly challenge or affirm identity politics in houses where invisible fourth walls divided actors from audiences who passively witnessed. All formed part of a *theatre of war* with an ideological depth where battles were fought, identities were violently negotiated, savagery was repelled by the paternalistic representatives of U.S. whiteness, and audiences were called to action in the support of an island's liberation.

### Theorizing Transatlantic Theatre Encounters

The stagings of the Cuban revolutions and the Spanish-Cuban-American War negotiated for audiences the imperialist character of the United States and the new identities that were subjected to its neocolonial mission.<sup>38</sup> Tulio Halperín Donghi asserts that even before the war, the U.S. neocolonial order was working its way into Cuba. Halperín Donghi writes:

Cuba [...] experienced a new type of participation in the economy. [...] U.S. capital flowed directly into productive enterprises: the sugar mills and plantations themselves. In this fashion, the colony that had yet to escape direct political domination from Spain was already coming under a different kind of domination from the United States. In the new Cuban economy taking shape after the Ten Years' War, more than one Spanish American country could glimpse the outlines of its own future.<sup>39</sup>

The U.S. neocolonial order and its economic domination were not fully attained in Cuba until the conclusion of the Spanish-Cuban-American War. The future of Spanish American countries, to which Halperín Donghi refers, also brings to light the creation of the forced contact between

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<sup>38</sup> The two principal texts that I am using to discuss the U.S. neocolony in Cuba are Tulio Halperín Donghi's *The Contemporary History of Latin America*, trans. John Charles Chasteen (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1993) and *Problems in Modern Latin American History*, edited by James A. Wood (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014).

<sup>39</sup> Donghi, *The Contemporary History of Latin America*, 157.

nations that clashed and coexisted. The theatre about the war enacted these burgeoning encounters, which defined how the different nations viewed themselves through the designation of alterity evidencing contradictory readings of self and Otherness.

The clash between the U.S. and Cuba depicted in the theatre envisioned the Spanish-Cuban-American War as a contact zone. For Mary Louise Pratt, contact zones are not only located in the colonies, but wherever unequal exercises of power are enacted, as they also are in the colonial metropolises. Such contact was made evident when the Spanish first landed in Cuba in the fifteenth century, when the U.S. military intervened in the Cuban Revolution in 1898, and in the theatres of New York City and La Habana. In contact zones, marginal and dominant cultures come together and, through the process of transculturation, colonized communities consciously and unconsciously appropriate elements from the colonizing cultures to create a unique expression that evinces the encounter.<sup>40</sup> In his book *The Exhaustion of Difference*, Alberto Moreiras problematizes the concept of transculturation by scrutinizing its uncritical examination of culture. According to Moreiras, transculturation is used by critics such as Pratt and Angel Rama to analyze the genealogy of a Latin American expression constituted by the distinct histories of the oppressors and the oppressed. He argues that

[...] as a genealogical critical apparatus for a certain cultural and historical expression, [transculturation] will have extreme difficulty protecting itself from the history it attempts to critique or vanquish for the sake of the history it attempts to preserve in mediated form, because both histories, and not just the

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<sup>40</sup> “The term ‘transculturation’ in the title sums up my efforts in this direction. Ethnographers have used this term to describe how subordinated or marginal groups select and invent from materials transmitted to them by a dominant or metropolitan culture. While subjugated peoples cannot readily control what emanates from the dominant culture, they do determine to varying extents what they absorb into their own, and what they use it for. Transculturation is a phenomenon of the contact zone. In the context of this book, the concept serves to raise several sets of questions. How are metropolitan modes of representation received and appropriated on the periphery?” Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 6.

latter, are simultaneously part of its own constitution: transculturation cannot step outside of itself to establish clear-cut “objective” or disengaged distinctions. [...] Without its explicit critique, transculturation loses its edge and is good, at best, as a concept for factual analysis.<sup>41</sup>

Moreira contends that the lack of a critical dimension turns transculturation into a paradox that does not challenge or question the relations of power within a Latin American expression, but simply observes them without any identifiable end. As a result, transculturation lacks a radical questioning of the relation between the multiple cultural systems that constitute a Latin American representation. Furthermore, the foundation of Pratt’s definition of contact zones and transculturation establishes an inevitable dichotomy through the designation of centers of power and periphery. If one is to limit the definition of the contact zones to the confrontation between dominant and marginal communities, what other expressions are left out of the equation? How can we consider the Diasporas, whose locations add complexity because they are negotiating an identity not only within the dominant cultural system of the host nation, but also alongside other peripheral national identities that come into mutual contact? How do we theorize marginal racial communities within the colony that suffer the subjugation from the invading colonial nation and a colonial élite? How can we open the contact zones to establish a dialogue between U.S. and Cuban cultural expressions that challenge the binary relation between dominant and peripheral?

Andrew Smith takes a crucial position in this conversation as he analyzes the trajectory of Postcolonial Literary Studies. He argues that this area of study

claims its novelty and its authority [...] in the idea that as people move, the cultural center also moves, not in any specific direction, but in a diffusing,

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<sup>41</sup> Alberto Moreiras, *The Exhaustion of Difference: The Politics of Latin American Cultural Studies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 187.

outward spread. [...] Increasingly, cultural products are exposed as hybrid, as tying together influences from many traditions, as existing not so much *in* a specific place and time as *between* different places at once.<sup>42</sup>

Smith emphasizes the element of migrancy and of the in-between position as key to understanding expressions that come out of a deterritorialized idea of culture. There is no longer the coming together of two systems, one dominant and the other subjugated, but of different cultures that defy the geographical borders of nations and what Néstor García Canclini refers to as *patrimony*, staged in locations such as museums and portraying the false idea of a unified national history.<sup>43</sup> Smith uses an intercultural focus and García Canclini an intracultural one to define hybridity as an arena of struggle and not just in the unproblematic mixing together as the term might conventionally suggest.<sup>44</sup> I will employ these concepts to propose the Spanish-Cuban-American War as a location made up of inter- and intracultural physical and imaginary settings where different racial and national identities come into contact and confront each other. Mobility and migrancy are key terms to my analysis. But when we talk about mobility, do we mean only human mobility? Is that the only “good” that travels across national borders? Do identities enter into conflict only in expressions coming out of the Diasporas? Another key question to consider in this conversation should be: how do commodities and consumption practices construct the Caribbean as a location opposed to the U.S.?

In her book, *Consuming the Caribbean: From Arawaks to Zombies*, Mimi Sheller argues

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<sup>42</sup> Andrew Smith, “Migrancy, Hybridity, Postcolonial Literary Studies,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary Studies*, ed. Neil Lazarus (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 245.

<sup>43</sup> Néstor García Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity*, trans. Christopher L. Chiappari and Silvia L. López (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995).

<sup>44</sup> Both Smith and García Canclini’s use of “hybridity” comes close to the constant cultural conflict that occurs in Walter D. Mignolo’s “colonial difference,” which he defines as “the space where local histories inventing and implementing global designs meet local histories, the space in which global designs have to be adapted, adopted, rejected, integrated, or ignored. The colonial difference is, finally, the physical as well as imaginary location where the colonality of power is at work in the confrontation of two kinds of local histories [...]” *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), ix.

that the way the Caribbean is linked to other places is through “everyday practices of consumption.”<sup>45</sup> These practices, which include the mobility of commodities beyond the geographical borders of the Caribbean, must be analyzed because they are crucial to the “constitution of world systems of consumption.” In a departure from Antonio Benítez-Rojo’s romantic view of a Caribbean essence permeating all cultures, for Sheller the Caribbean is envisioned by or comes in contact with the U.S. not only through the constant mobility of people, but also through the flows of knowledge, images, and capital.<sup>46</sup> The Cuban revolutions of the nineteenth century and the Spanish-Cuban-American War occasioned countless forms of movement of physical and non-physical “goods” across borders. These international events manifested themselves in different locations in the U.S. and Cuba. Therefore, it is crucial to analyze U.S. cultural expressions about the encounters enforced by the Spanish-Cuban-American War from a Caribbean point of view, thereby challenging binary relations of center and periphery and the Western interpretive regime.

In Pratt’s essay “In the Neocolony: Destiny, Destination, and the Traffic in Meaning,” she questions the “interpretive monopoly” of imperial centers by analyzing how colonial voices theorize the neocolony. Pratt defines the American neocolony in the following way:

It is internally self-administering and charged with developing and maintaining its own institutions. It occupies an economic circuit in which it is a

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<sup>45</sup> Mimi Sheller, *Consuming the Caribbean: From Arawaks to Zombies* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 4.

<sup>46</sup> Antonio Benítez-Rojo writes: “The words ‘a certain way’ are the signs of my intention to give meaning to this text as an object of rereading, of a ‘certain kind of’ reading.’ In my reading, the link that really counts is the one made by the Caribbean machine, whose flux, whose noise, whose presence covers the map of world history’s contingencies, through the great changes in economic discourse to the vast collisions of races and cultures that humankind has seen.” *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective*, trans. James E. Maraniss (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 4-5. Although Benítez-Rojo mentions that the Caribbean is connected to countless other nations and cultural expressions through economic factors, he tends to focus more on the Caribbean as an essence (“a certain kind of way”). This argument is significant since it shows that the Caribbean is not limited by geographical borders, yet it lacks a concreteness that Mimi Sheller adds to her analysis through the use of consumption practices and commodification.

producer/exporter of raw materials, and a consumer/importer of manufactured goods. [...] It develops and sustains two forms of cultural capital: the local/national and the metropolitan/universal. The relation between these is that of minor to major. The normative cultural referent is that of the metropole, which establishes the minor status of the local. [...] [T]he writers [from the colonies] are [...] working through the configuration of relationships that is the neocolony. This working through, a decolonizing operation, is a distinctive, energizing aspect of Latin American modernisms. The focus of these readings is on mobility and travel, specifically on how writers work with and on the patterns of movement that configure the neocolony.<sup>47</sup>

Pratt contends that the neocolony is maintained as an underdeveloped exporter and producer of raw materials and manufactured goods. Nevertheless, voices from the neocolony create new ways of theorizing that resist the domination of metropolitan expressions. These ways of seeing exist within modernity yet *delink* the creation of knowledge from the Occidental world view or from what Walter Mignolo refers to as the coloniality of knowledge.<sup>48</sup> In his article, “Citizenship, Knowledge, and the Limits of Humanity,” Mignolo defines coloniality as “a logic of imperial oppression.”<sup>49</sup> The voices articulated from the Caribbean challenge the coloniality of power and knowledge of the U.S. and add important interpretive dimensions to U.S. performances analyzed in my project.

In order to open up my project to these other interpretive dimensions, I consider how race

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<sup>47</sup> Mary Louise Pratt, “In the Neocolony: Destiny, Destination, and the Traffic in Meaning,” in *Coloniality at Large: Latin America and the Postcolonial Debate*, ed. Mabel Moraña, Enrique Dussel, and Carlos A. Jáuregui (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 464-65.

<sup>48</sup> Walter Mignolo defines “delinking” as not being “*outside* of either modernity or Christian, Liberal, Capitalist, and Marxist hegemony but disengaging from the naturalized assumptions that make of these four macronarratives ‘un pensee unique’ [...]” He considers “delinking” as an “epistemic decolonial shift.” “Citizenship, Knowledge, and the Limits of Humanity,” 313.

<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*, 312.

and difference are performed within the colonial setting to comment on U.S. theatre. I address questions such as: how are race and gender performed during times of revolution against Spain? How are performances of Cuban identity negotiated within the metropolis by Caribbean writers and audiences? How do native Caribbean theatre artists perform the U.S. Other? How are these images read and how are they commodified for Cuban and U.S. audiences? This focus sheds a new light on how the U.S. performs alterity by viewing it through a Caribbean lens.

Late nineteenth-century Cuban performance is the embodiment of an idea or an identity. An actor onstage, a particular person, or a whole community consciously or unconsciously makes a decision to represent through its own or other body/ies a specific position in the world. This definition poses various problems. Is there a universal concept of performance through which we can analyze every type of embodiment around the world? Can we use the same performance criteria to analyze theatrical performances in New York and representations of race in Cuba's nineteenth-century Teatro Bufo? By focusing on performance, is my project participating in the same imperialistic structures that I question? In defining performance, I must also analyze my own position as historian and critic in the field. Richard Schechner addresses the issue of the imperialistic dimensions of Performance Studies by denying their links. Schechner argues:

Imperialist means expanding an empire, enforcing its codes and values against and over the will and desire of subjugated peoples; it means paying homage and taxes –direct or indirect– to the imperial center; it means permanent economic, political, and social inequality enforced by armies “stationed” wherever. Imperialism is cognate with racism, both personal and institutional. To call performance studies imperialist is to disregard the discipline's

instrumentality in engaging and including performance practices, scholars, and theories from all over the world. [...] To dub [Performance Studies] imperialist is to engage in a hyperbole of metaphor.<sup>50</sup>

Schechner's appreciation of Performance Studies opens up the field to other performative traditions all over the world. For him, the field does not participate in any type of imperialism because it does not enforce a relation of power with performance practices due to its inclusiveness. On the other hand, Jon McKenzie warns that Performance Studies is still a field that produces knowledge and, as a result, designates difference, objects of study, and conclusions, which can ultimately impose an institutional and cultural hegemony.<sup>51</sup> How can one depart from an analysis of performance that participates in certain types of imperialism or in a coloniality of knowledge?

There is a risk in Performance Studies and Postcolonial Studies of turning subjugated knowledges and performances into cultural commodities by attempting to study them through a Western critical lens. Bell hooks brings up a crucial point in this conversation when she argues that "the commodification of difference promotes paradigms of consumption wherein whatever difference the Other inhabits is eradicated, *via* exchange, by a consumer cannibalism that not only displaces the Other but denies the significance of that Other's history through a process of decontextualization."<sup>52</sup> Hooks proposes that to transcend the commodification of difference, the Other's history must be analyzed within its own context. The method used to analyze any performance must be contextualized in order to understand it within specific local and historical paradigms, thereby challenging Schechner's universalist view of Performance Studies. Jill Lane

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<sup>50</sup> Richard Schechner et al., "Is Performance Studies Imperialist? Part 3: A Forum," *TDR: The Drama Review* 51, no. 4 (2007): 8.

<sup>51</sup> Jon McKenzie, "Is Performance Studies Imperialist?" *TDR: The Drama Review* 50, no. 4 (2006): 8.

<sup>52</sup>bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Boston: South End Press, 1992), 31.

brings hooks's ideas further into the realm of performance when she asserts:

A perspective attentive to the interrelationship of race, colonialism, and performance [...] in the Americas reveals [...] a history of the display and enforced performance of nonwhite peoples –in the work fields of slavery, on the auction block, in freak shows, in world's fairs– to serve and please a white colonial gaze, from the indigenous actors in New Spain forced by Franciscan friars to enact dramas that depicted their own defeat, to the long history of black performance across the diaspora created by slavery. We find the history of theatres in the Americas does not simply or easily trace the teleologies of so-called national expression in Mexico, Brazil, Cuba, or the U.S., and certainly not any form of ostensibly continental expression: it is first a history of the struggle over performance as a site of power itself.<sup>53</sup>

According to Lane, there are many instances where different types of performance were employed to coerce and enslave nonwhite peoples throughout history. Nonetheless, she demonstrates that performance is a site of colonial difference since it is an embodiment of conflict between different identities. Furthermore, just as Roach uses performance to create intercultural links through his concept of the circum-Atlantic, Lane considers performance as a space that reveals the encounters between oppressors and oppressed.

I analyze the various forms of performance in my project by considering them as contact zones where diverse conceptions of identity collide. I will focus on how performance is used to advance an imperialistic process and to construct an Other; but I will also emphasize how some performances counteract neocolonialism and become a voice, no matter how flawed, that challenges marginality. At times, these two qualities will even appear in one specific

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<sup>53</sup> Jill Lane, "Keywords in Latin American Performance," *Theatre Journal* 56, no. 3 (Oct. 2004): 458.

performance, foregrounding the ambiguity in certain expressions. These sites become a microcosm of the diverse conflicts that occurred in the United States and Cuba within the historical context of the Spanish-Cuban-American War. The reading of these nineteenth-century U.S. texts through a Caribbean perspective of the time reveals the ideological depths of the coloniality of power.

My reading of nineteenth-century U.S. theatre texts from a Caribbean perspective underscores the multiple contradictory visions of the involvement of the U.S. in the Spanish-Cuban-American War. My project serves the dual purpose of challenging the Western coloniality of knowledge that presides over the interpretation of these nineteenth-century U.S. texts and questioning the homogenizing of Cuban and Puerto Rican reception of the military invasion. Nevertheless, for me a question still lingers, how can we consider nineteenth-century U.S. theatre through a Caribbean lens? Did the Caribbean diaspora in the U.S. or islanders in Cuba come into contact with U.S. performances of race? How did Cuban theatre artists respond to issues of race in their communities? How did the U.S. invasion impact Cubans' theatrical performances of race? These questions are central to my dissertation because I consider how the approaching U.S. invasion impacted the Caribbean, an event that Cuban theatre clearly reflects. Therefore, I use Cuban theatrical and critical texts that in many ways comment on race and the U.S. presence in the Caribbean to ultimately theorize about how the nation and alterity were performed for U.S. and Cuban audiences in the nineteenth century.

#### Chapter Division and Selection Rationale

The organization of chapters in my dissertation responds to the various themes that I explore in U.S. and Cuban theatre. My project focuses on performances possibly staged in New York and Cuba during the second half of the nineteenth century and the initial decade of the

twentieth century. The texts are thematically linked to revolutionary events in Cuba and the resulting Spanish-Cuban-American War. These enact historical, political, social, and cultural discourses of the time that came into play in the war. The plays problematize the construction of national identity and alterity in light of the encounters between Cuba and the U.S. throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. My project is an exploration of how Cuban theatre artists and audiences of the time may have interpreted or responded to U.S. conceptions of nation and Otherness in the U.S. as enacted on the stage.

My argument has to do with how the Spanish-Cuban-American War brought about performances of race and nation in New York stages, how performances of alterity were made readable and may have been read by diverse audiences, and how the coloniality of power and knowledge is challenged by Cuban theatre. As discussed before, I consider the plays within the context of the war. I find that a thematic division, rather than a chronological one, has been more beneficial for my analysis. This approach has allowed me to create a thematic dialogue between U.S. and Cuban theatre to ultimately address the following questions: how did specific theatrical genres bring about themes that affirmed and challenged the hierarchies of power? How were nations and identities Othered through the performance of the U.S. imperial project? How did Cubans respond through performative and critical means? How was alterity made readable to a diversity of audiences within one nation? These are among the central questions addressed in my dissertation.

Rather than trying to be all-inclusive, the goal of my project has been to establish a theatrical genealogy of points of contact centered on the Spanish-Cuban-American War. I have used several criteria in choosing performances and plays. First, I study theatrical texts that can be directly or indirectly linked to the Spanish-Cuban-American War. Although a performance may

have taken place before or after 1898, these texts must display elements or points of view that are relevant to the encounter of nations during the war and which foreground issues of race, empire, neocolonialism, modernity, and alterity. Second, the plays performed in Cuba and the U.S. reflect a transnational encounter between cultures on the stage or even beyond the stage itself. This focus has allowed me to analyze a diversity of strategies and motives involved in how foreign elements are made readable to various audiences.

The theatre that I have chosen to study poses a challenge due to the fact that popular entertainment was not always central in the annals of history. For most U.S. and Cuban plays, I present only dates of publication since there are no records that show when or if they were staged. This certainly imposes limitations to my analysis of these texts. Performance practices in the U.S. and Cuban theatre of the time are central to my discussion on how the nations envisioned their national identity and designated alterity. Melodramatic conventions in U.S. theatre have been analyzed by significant theatre scholars and the existence of secondary sources aids me in theorizing how these plays participate in performing issues related to the Spanish-Cuban-American War. The historical construction of performances in Cuba prior to the twentieth century is even more difficult. Nevertheless, I hypothesize about performance dates based on publication years and the events depicted in the works. This is crucial to understand how individual stagings reflect the historical relation between the U.S. and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean in different stages of the conflict.

The issue of performance dates becomes more acute when dealing with plays and critical theory by Cubans. In Cuba, most nineteenth-century theatre that dealt with contemporary issues was subjected to censorship. The existence of records that evidence the performance dates of the plays analyzed in my project is significant because they show the type of censorship that Cuban

theatre artists were subjected to under the Spanish and the U.S. regimes. Overall, the consideration of dates of performance is crucial to understand the changing political context around the time of the war in the U.S. and Cuba.

Another issue that arises is that the selection of melodramas performed in the U.S. related to the Spanish-Cuban-American War is limited. It is also easier to find works written by U.S. playwrights than by Cuban playwrights in the metropolis. Still I have analyzed or referenced all the works that I have been able to locate to reconstruct a number of scenarios that give the reader a glimpse into how the coloniality of power was enacted during the initial stages of the U.S. expansion in the Caribbean. In relation to pyrodramas, there is a serious lack of primary sources dealing with these spectacles because they were not considered to be serious theatre. Yet I think that a good critique of these fiery shows can be constructed with the information scattered throughout newspapers of the time and the limited analytical focus that they have received. My work as a historian has been to address these lacunae and continue building upon them. The challenge for the academic or researcher who works within these fields of study is reconstructing performances, venues, and audiences in order to explore the complexities of the theatre experience in much more detail.

In my first chapter, “The Posthegemonic in Melodramatic Invasions and Theatrical Revolutions,” I argue that U.S. melodramatic performances of the nation in Archibald Gunter’s unpublished manuscript, *Cuba: A Drama in Six Acts and Seven Tableaux*, and William Lapoint’s *Loyal Hearts: A Patriotic Melo-Drama* must be analyzed alongside the designation of U.S. alterity in Desiderio Fajardo Ortiz’s *La emigración al Caney* and *La fuga de Evangelina*. At this particular historical turning point, any performance of nation in the U.S. that references the Spanish-Cuban-American War will inevitably designate a Cuban Other, even if that other

remains completely absent from the play. At the same time, Teatro Mambí brings forth a revolutionary Cuban identity that is not only defined against the Spanish oppressor, but also against the approaching U.S. intervention in the island. In the U.S. plays, Gunter sets the action during the Ten Years' War to mark a difference between the chaotic lack of justice in Cuba and the superiority of the democratic ideal in the U.S. In Lapoint's play, the military intervention in Cuba demonstrates the noble character of the U.S. and ultimately assuages Southern resentment towards the North after the Civil War. These playwrights use the Cuban cause to condemn the Spanish regime and to bolster democratic ideals. In contrast, Desiderio Fajardo Ortiz's plays question the nobility of the U.S. involvement. While, in *La emigración al Caney*, a family must face hunger and Spanish officers in order to survive the U.S. siege on the city of Santiago de Cuba, in *La fuga de Evangelina* a young Cuban woman escapes a Spanish prison with the aid of an American journalist. In both plays, the U.S. participates in the Cuban characters' liberation, but these ultimately carry a cost: the United States' control over the Cuban government and the journalist's interests in selling more papers. This dialogue between U.S. melodrama and Cuban Teatro Mambí addresses questions such as: how is U.S. and Cuban Otherness portrayed on national stages? How is the nation constituted through U.S. and Cuban theatre in light of the conflict on the island? How does each national theatre consider racial and ethnic differences within the exploration of national identity?

In my second chapter, "Negotiating between Cubanía and Cubanismo for a Transnational Audience," I explore the difference between Cubanía, a performance of identity that entails Cuban agency and aligns itself with the revolutionary spirit, and Cubanismo, a blanket term for any imagined expression of identity that references the island. While Cubanía serves to identify the people in more nuanced ways, Cubanismo simply stands as an empty sign that brings forth

convenient ideas of identity and that justifies the U.S. invasion. In this chapter, I focus on Adolfo Pierra's Mambí play, *The Cuban Patriots*. This work was written in English to find support for the Cuban cause in the U.S. Even when the play consciously negotiated Cubanía in light of the racial politics in the U.S., Fajardo Ortiz managed to express a very complex, albeit whitened, vision of a revolution where slavery is abolished and Blacks fight alongside the whites who owned them. The play does not idealize the revolution, yet it constructs an island that is similar to the United States. On the other hand, Frank Dumont's *The Cuban Spy* presents a series of racial identities that coexisted in the U.S. at the time. The young Cuban heroine, Elinora or Little Cuba, is constructed as the brave revolutionary referenced in the title and not the conventional Anglo-American female character in distress so common in U.S. melodramas of the time. Elinora reflects a Cubanismo whose only salvation from Spain can be achieved through U.S. protection, represented by the young white hero, Richard Carson. How do a performed Cubanía and Cubanismo affirmed and challenged racial conceptions on national stages? How does Pierra's play fit the goals of the Cuban Junta in the U.S.? How can we consider the construction of race in Dumont's melodrama alongside the racial politics in Pierra's Mambí play? What types of audiences did these plays address?

In my third chapter, "Burning Cubas and Laughing Negritos," I argue that Henry J. Pain's pyrodramas *Cuba* and *The Battle of San Juan and Destruction of Cervera's Fleet* portray Cuba as an extension of the frontier myth in need of the U.S. civilizing mission. These spectacles, which were staged in Manhattan Beach in the summers of 1897 and 1899 respectively, used sensational pyrotechnics to build a Caribbean island for audiences to ultimately punish the decadence of the Old World colonial regime represented by Spain. I use Ignacio Sarachaga's Bufo, *¡Arriba con el himno!*, to respond to Pain's championing of U.S.

superiority. In Sarachaga's play, the popular Negrito of Bufo tradition, represented in the character of Luis, introduces the Usonian Mr. Handkerchief to many aspects of Cuban theatrical and musical culture, politics, and society. In the end, Mr. Handkerchief shouts triumphantly as the U.S. flag is lowered and the Cuban flag comes up. At this historical point in Cuba, how are U.S. citizens seen during the occupation of the island? How was this presence made readable to audiences? How did Cubans negotiate identity with the U.S. presence? How does the conception of the U.S. as a technological power justify the nation's role as gendarme of the Caribbean?

In my conclusion, "Beyond Empire: The Spanish-Cuban-American War and Its Theatrical Legacy," I will begin to close my discussion of the theatre linked to this conflict by analyzing how the same war was portrayed in late-twentieth-century theatre. In the U.S., Elinor Fuchs and Joyce Antler wrote the play *Year One of the Empire*, which was published in 1973.<sup>54</sup> It mostly focuses on the war in the Philippines and the political turmoil in the U.S. government that led to the nation's imperialistic politics. Nevertheless, the beginning of the play deals with the war as it took place in the Caribbean. Fuchs and Antler intertwine theatre and history to create a theatrical experience for audiences that speaks to their shared history as nation. The question of audience continues being central to my project. Which communities within the U.S. do Fuchs and Antler address given the focus of their play? Does the play address the diversity of nations involved in the various theatres of war that took place in 1898? The text is a history of the politics of turn-of-the-century U.S., but is there an implied historical objectivity at its base that continues to silence an Other through the indirect designation of alterity? In order to explore these questions, I will establish a dialogue between *Year One of the Empire* and Reinaldo Montero's *Los equívocos morales (Moral Errors)*,<sup>55</sup> which was staged by Grupo Teatro

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<sup>54</sup> Elinor Fuchs and Joyce Antler, *Year One of the Empire* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1973).

<sup>55</sup> Reinaldo Montero, *Los equívocos morales: Comedia del cerco de Santiago* (La Habana: Editorial Letras Cubanas,

Escambray in La Habana, Cuba in 1997. Questions such as how is U.S. alterity performed in these plays and how do audiences respond to it will continue to be explored. Furthermore, I will address the question of the ongoing presence of the war in Cuba and its almost complete disappearance from contemporary U.S. culture.

My dissertation contributes to various interests within theatre scholarship and history. Even when transculturation has been a subject of interest to many historians, my project proposes to use this theoretical tool to examine the U.S. and Cuban theatre about the Spanish-Cuban-American War. Therefore my dissertation represents an innovative addition to the history of the period. Furthermore, I expand on Latin American and Caribbean theatre history by studying not only nineteenth-century Cuban theatre, but also considering it within the contexts of nineteenth-century U.S. melodrama. Finally, I explore pyrodrama, a popular theatre form that has been generally ignored by U.S. theatre scholars.

Historians such as Louis Pérez, Ada Ferrer, and Tulio Halperín Donghi, among others, explore different aspects of the Spanish-Cuban-American War and how it defined the history of the region. Yet there is a range of approaches that scholars must continue to explore in order to reach a better understanding of how 1898 was such a defining turning point in the history of the U.S. and Cuba. Many may take theatre as an art form whose entertainment values serve to help audiences forget about the realities of their world. It is undeniable that melodrama, pyrodramas, Teatro Bufo, and Teatro Mambí meant to attract spectators through the pleasure of experiencing a live performance. Nevertheless, this drama serves as a window through which we can observe not only how the U.S. and Cuba constructed and dealt with each other's differences, but also how both countries envisioned the heterogeneous multitudes that made up their own concepts of nation. Thus, nineteenth-century popular entertainment becomes a lens through which twenty-

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1998).

first-century scholars can scrutinize the exercise of power generated around the Spanish-Cuban-American War.

## **Chapter 1: The Posthegemonic in Melodramatic Invasions and Theatrical Revolutions**

### Introduction: Constructing Nation by Performing Alterity

In this chapter I argue that one must explore the concept of nation in the plays of U.S. melodramatists Archibald Gunter and William Lapoint alongside the designation of U.S. alterity in two plays by Cuban playwright Desiderio Fajardo Ortiz. Any analysis of how nineteenth-century Cuban theatre about the Spanish-Cuban-American War portrayed U.S. Otherness must also examine the performance of nation in U.S. melodramas of the time. An intercultural dialogue exposes the complexities and limitations of patriotism, neocolonialism, and difference in dramatic expressions from both Americas. The representation of alterity not only reveals the prejudices within certain social contexts but also challenges the exercise of neocolonial power in oppressed environments. The four plays examined in this chapter feature performances of difference coming from Cuba and the U.S. expose the parameters of how a community or a nation defines itself, the margins within its borders and beyond, and the negotiations involved when coming into contact with Otherness. At a time when different cultural systems came into contact during and after the 1898 U.S. intervention in the Cuban revolution, any performative expression of nation originating in either of the two countries directly or indirectly commented on alterity.<sup>1</sup> Likewise, any consideration of difference will unavoidably reflect back on theatrical performances in which the nation is constituted. Turn-of-the-century stages in La Habana and New York thus became locations where transatlantic identities were constantly contested and where the exercise of colonial power was simultaneously affirmed and challenged.

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<sup>1</sup> I use “performative expression” rather than drama or theatre because I agree with Lane’s assessment of the performative elements that exist across diverse media formats. Although my main focus is on Cuban and U.S. plays, I intend to use “performative” as a broader denomination to comment on how nation and alterity are culturally constituted and to theorize about the historical contexts in which theatrical performances were staged.

To fully understand the portrayal of Usonian alterity in Cuban theatre about the war and the performance of nation in U.S. melodrama of the time, one must examine these expressions through a transatlantic dialogue between two Americas. An intercultural analysis that crosses the geographical borders of one America sheds light on how nationalism and difference relate to each other even when they originated in diverse points across the Atlantic. In this chapter, I will begin by engaging with various theoretical approaches to prove how diverse nations can participate in a transatlantic community through neocolonial encounters. I will then establish a dialogue between Archibald C. Gunter's *Cuba: A Drama in Six Acts and Seven Tableaux* and Desiderio Fajardo Ortiz's *La fuga de Evangelina (Evangelina's Escape)*, two plays that revolve around the duality that defines the U.S. as performed in both U.S. and Cuban theatres.<sup>2</sup> Both dramas are connected in relation to action because they involve rescue missions conducted by representatives of the U.S. to free characters who are imprisoned by the Spanish. In the former, a young American woman must rescue her fiancé from a Spanish prison in Cuba with the aid of island revolutionaries. The latter dramatizes the true story of Evangelina Cossío y Cisneros, a young woman imprisoned by the Spanish in Cuba and who was dramatically rescued by a U.S. journalist in 1897. These plays offer an overt indictment of the Spanish government in Cuba, but they also indirectly criticize the U.S. as a capitalist country. Finally, I will examine Fajardo-Ortiz's *La emigración al Caney (The Migration to El Caney)* and William W. Lapoint's *Loyal Hearts: A Patriotic Melo-Drama* by focusing on how they perform the U.S.<sup>3</sup> In the former, the Cuban characters only bring up the U.S. at the end of the play as they escape the Spanish forces

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<sup>2</sup> Archibald C. Gunter, *Cuba: A Drama in Six Acts and Seven Tableaux* (unpublished manuscript, entered into the Library of Congress, Washington D.C., 1872); Desiderio Fajardo Ortiz, *La fuga de Evangelina: Jugete en un acto y cuatro cuadros* (New York: Casa Editorial Alfred W. Howes, 1898).

<sup>3</sup> Desiderio Fajardo Ortiz, *La emigración al Caney*, in *Teatro Mambí*, ed. Rine Leal (La Habana, Cuba: Editorial Letras Cubanas, 1978), 343-429; William W. Lapoint, *Loyal Hearts: A Patriotic Melo-Drama* (Vermont: Buck Printing Co., 1900).

to El Caney. The allusion reveals how the play Others the U.S. either as a savior or/and as a neocolonial presence on the island. On the other hand, *Loyal Hearts* is an American melodrama that constructs a racially diverse and unstable society in the U.S., thereby contradicting the Cuban playwright's somewhat simplistic Othering of the nation.

### Transatlantic Identities

In *Melodrama and the Myth of America*, Jeffrey Mason explains his book's mission in considering theatre in the United States, yet his enforced macronarrative of "America" inadvertently participates in the erasure of other communities and nations. He writes:

I study the performances of American plays, written for American subjects and produced in America by American artists and for American audiences, and enjoying long and successful runs because of the enthusiastic support of those audiences, I am studying what certain Americans wanted other Americans, and the world at large, to believe that they believed about America as such. Theatre becomes an intricate and reflexive exercise in cultural self-definition.<sup>4</sup>

Mason refers to the U.S. as America, a common misconception that erases the remaining regions which lie to the north, south, or around the continent. Yet if one rereads the passage and replaces the writer's univocal America with the pluralistic concept of the Americas, Mason's words affirm that the diverse national theatres from any of the countries that constitute the region address the racial and ethnic diversity within the audiences that spread throughout the landmass and beyond. Mason is correct in arguing that the theatre of the U.S. exists within specific political, social, cultural, and economic contexts, thereby representing a particular perspective of the nation from the peoples that participated in the theatrical experience. Yet with the more capacious concept of the Americas, U.S. melodramas and Cuban Mambí plays delineate separate

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<sup>4</sup> Jeffrey D. Mason, *Melodrama and the Myth of America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 2.

national definitions that necessarily stand opposite to performed or apparently absent diverse alterities. In the late nineteenth century, when the U.S. expanded its neocolonial web across the gulf into the Caribbean, the performance of nation also became the embodiment of a silenced marginality.

In my interpretation of Mason's assertion, turn-of-the-century national performances originating in Cuba or the U.S. exist within what could be explained through an expansion of Benedict Anderson's "imagined communities." Anderson contends:

[The nation] is an imagined political community –and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion. [...] The nation is imagined as *limited* because even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps even a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations. [...] Finally, it is imagined as a community, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings.<sup>5</sup>

Anderson envisions the nation, and nationalism for that matter, as a community imagined by all its constituents. This is not an idealized observation since it also includes the marginalization of

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<sup>5</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1983), 5-7.

certain peoples who nonetheless belong within the “imagined community.” Mason would likely agree with Anderson’s view since he states that nineteenth-century melodrama in the U.S. communicates an idea of the nation because it establishes a “communion” with a Usonian world that is limited to the borders of the “imagined community,” as emphasized in the erroneous repetition of “America.” On the other hand, in *Blackface Cuba*, Jill Lane complicates Anderson’s concept by questioning which particular sector is the one imagining the overall community. In reference to how the practice of theatrical blackface in nineteenth-century Cuba is both an inclusion and a silencing of Afro-Cuban identity in the larger national discourse, Lane states that “for those whose imaginations don’t matter (that is, materialize), this protonational ‘imagined community’ is a surreal and deeply compromised place to live indeed [...]”<sup>6</sup> Therefore certain peoples marked by ethnicity, race, and gender, among others, are ultimately excluded from the white masculinist imaginings of Cuba.

Anderson’s theory and Lane’s suitable challenge are limited by a nationalist undercurrent consonant with the former’s principal objective of examining nationhood. In an effort to broaden the argument, I consider in this chapter how even diverse nations can participate in a broader “imagined community” through neocolonial encounters. This transnational expansion of Anderson’s thesis acknowledges marginalized sectors within the nation and beyond, as in one country’s exercise of power over another. A seeming sense of international community or, in Anderson’s terminology, “horizontal comradeship,” drove the U.S. to intervene in the Cuban revolution of 1898. In analyzing the diverse metaphors that justify the nation’s intervention in Cuba, Louis A. Pérez writes:

The proposition of power exercised as generous purpose was celebrated as an attribute of character –national character, to be precise: what made Americans

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<sup>6</sup> Lane, *Blackface Cuba*, 148.

American. This was to act out self-identified attributes of national character both as means of internal consensus and mode of international conduct: more specifically, as cultural source of a foreign policy in which self-proclaimed national virtues served as the principal formulation with which to propound national interests. [...] These notions must be viewed as the formative pronouncements of the American purpose abroad. They suggest in form and function a creation myth, that is, the ‘birth’ of a new international entity, charged with salvation of the world.<sup>7</sup>

This imposition of “national virtues” abroad served to police nations and set the foundations of the U.S. neocolonial drive in the Caribbean under a mask of generosity. It also coerced transatlantic communal connections where subjugated communities would live by “what made Americans American,” even when these precepts were challenged from many fronts in and beyond the U.S. At the same time, definitions of nation within the U.S. addressed these newly arrived communities and Othered peoples through the same national efforts of educating and/or civilizing them in the ways of “America.” Dominant communities within the U.S. determined the shape of that imagined America, which also referenced the broader community of nations that in 1898 included Cuba. Yet at the same time those Caribbean Others visualized a unique concept of the U.S. with which they had to coexist and against which they negotiated diverse national identities.

For my project, it is crucial to find a middle point between Anderson’s “imagined community” and Walter Mignolo’s “colonial difference,” which he defines as:

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<sup>7</sup> Louis A. Pérez, *Cuba in the American Imagination: Metaphor and the Imperial Ethos* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 6-7.

[...] the space where coloniality of power is enacted. It is also the space where the restitution of subaltern knowledge is taking place and where border thinking is emerging. The colonial difference is the space where local histories inventing and implementing global designs meet local histories, the space in which global designs have to be adapted, adopted, rejected, integrated, or ignored. The colonial difference is, finally, the physical as well as imaginary location where the coloniality of power is at work in the confrontation of two kinds of local histories displayed in different spaces and times across the planet.<sup>8</sup>

Unlike Anderson's concept, Mignolo's refers to the space where the violent encounters, negotiations, and the struggles to overcome subjugation take place. As an imaginary location, the Spanish-Cuban-American War is the colonial difference that encompasses every physical location where its battles were fought (as in Santiago de Cuba, where Cuban forces were excluded from negotiations of surrender between the U.S. and Spain) as well as virtual locations where it was represented (as in New York City and La Habana theatres, where nation and alterity struggled onstage for definition). Mignolo's colonial difference points to a space of violent subjugation and resistance, yet it does not address the type of neocolonial imposition that the U.S. exercised over Cuba veiled under the nation's magnanimous aid to the island. The United States did not enter the Caribbean as Spanish Conquistadores did at the end of the fifteenth century, with their forceful establishment of a religious, civilizing, and Occidentalizing machine; the U.S. landed as a liberating force precisely from an old-world imperialism. This is not to imply that subjugations were not enforced by the U.S., but that the nation seemingly treated Cuba as if it was part of an "overseas imagined community" in need of the U.S.'s help, while it

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<sup>8</sup> Walter Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000), ix.

nefariously imposed its own imperialistic agenda. This transnational expansion is based on one country's exercise of power over the other, which is exactly where Mignolo's "colonial difference" becomes useful to my analysis.

Among my principal aims in this project is, then, to examine how the rationalizing of nation and alterity participates in a constant transatlantic movement, especially as a product of a neocolonial imposition. In *The Darker Side of Western Modernity*, Walter Mignolo theorizes about how the exportation of a knowledge that furthers imperial power is exported to the colonial difference to replace a "deviant or non-modern" knowledge.<sup>9</sup> These discourses cross borders, exercise power, and designate alterities since, as Mimi Sheller affirms, "movement can often become a means by which boundaries are enforced rather than undone."<sup>10</sup> Sheller echoes Antonio Benítez-Rojo's arguments as she states that it is precisely through "mobility and flow" that the Caribbean, and I would argue how also all of the Americas, including the U.S., are formed.<sup>11</sup> Sheller does not limit this flux to persons or objects, but also addresses how ideas, conceptions of the world, and, I would add, negotiations with difference circulate across physical and geographical borders thereby constituting the Caribbean.<sup>12</sup> Sheller's argument empowers the colonized voice since the transatlantic passage of knowledge is actually an exchange through which imperial discourses encounter the flowing of defiant difference. Her position on the Caribbean further challenges Anderson's hermetic study of the nation as an isolated "imagined community." In this chapter, I build on Sheller's and Mignolo's arguments and Mason's mistaken reference to the U.S., to examine how the Americas that coexist in the United States are

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<sup>9</sup> Walter Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity* (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2011), 13.

<sup>10</sup> Mimi Sheller, *Consuming the Caribbean: From Arawaks to Zombies* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 136. This idea is also argued by Sara Ahmed in her introduction to *Uprootings/Regroundings: Questions of Home and Migration*, eds. Sara Ahmed, Claudia Castañeda, Anne-Marie Fortier, and Mimi Sheller (New York: Berg, 2003).

<sup>11</sup> Antonio Benítez-Rojo, *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective*, trans. James Maraniss (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1996).

<sup>12</sup> Sheller, *Consuming the Caribbean*, 6-7.

constituted through a never-ending flow of conceptions within that turn-of-the-century neocolonial world. This diversity of voices permeates even the centers of power that govern the U.S., such as in Congress.

During the nineteenth century, U.S. nationalism and its derivative expression of manifest destiny ignited and justified the nation's expansionist endeavors. This spreading of "Americanness" beyond its frontiers widened the grasp of U.S. imperialism and established points of contact with other national identities.<sup>13</sup> In relation to the Caribbean, this contact had been established even before the Spanish-Cuban-American War. For example, on February 22, 1859, *The Congressional Globe* reported that, while discussing the possible future purchase of Cuba by the U.S., Jacob Collamer, a senator from Vermont, expounded on what Ohio senator, George E. Pugh, identified as the nation's need for the island:

[...] the moment this nation ceases to grow by expanding its territory, this nation commences its decadence –dying it shall die. Therefore, the consequence surely flowing from that is, when we come to Cuba and want to take that, and expansion is necessary in that direction, or we think it is, one of two alternatives is presented to us: we must take it, or we commence dying. That is the necessity. [...] The time has come, it says, for us to take Cuba.<sup>14</sup>

Critiquing Pugh's message, Collamer illustrates how; for the Ohio senator, the Caribbean island was central to the imperial nation, not only as a mere possession but as the U.S.'s *raison d'être*. Nevertheless, Senator Collamer concludes his address with the following words:

It is assumed here, as I think, that Cuba will consent to all this; that they desire to be annexed to us. Where do we find evidence of that? [...] Let us build the

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<sup>13</sup> I am using "points of contact" in reference to Mary Louise Pratt's ideas of the "contact zones." See note 35 in the Introduction.

<sup>14</sup> *The Congressional Globe*, Feb 21, 1859, 1186, <https://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage>.

pyramid of our greatness, not on shifting sands, not upon a constantly changing basis, by enlarging its borders and going for expansion; but let it rise in unity, symmetry, and beauty, making a nation governed by its principles, not of filibustering, not of coveting other possessions, but governed by principles which shall command our respect, our patriotism, and love, at home, and the respect of nations abroad.<sup>15</sup>

In opposition to Pugh, the Vermont senator expresses a clear anti-imperialist stance in relation to Cuba since he asks Congress to focus more on strengthening the nation than on expanding it. As representative voices of state power, Pugh and Collamer reflect divergent positions on how the U.S. must interact with the Caribbean. They form part of what Jon Beasley-Murray would refer to as the posthegemonic. Beasley-Murray uses the term as a negation of Antonio Gramsci's idea of hegemony, where a state exercises dominance over a group either through their consent and/or, when this is not achieved, coercion. Gramsci's idea implies that the state is defined by a monolithic discourse that does not provide for difference. Pugh's and Collamer's views on Cuba reflect the centrality of the island in the U.S. decades prior to the Spanish-Cuban-American War, but do not completely fit a one-voice hegemonic agenda. On the other hand, Beasley-Murray's posthegemony goes beyond consent, coercion, and the state's unified voice by focusing on three concepts: *habit*, which he defines as "a collective, embodied feeling for the rules of the social game that is activated and reproduced beneath consciousness;" *affect* or "the impersonal and embodied flow of intensities that undermines any concept of a rational subject who could provide or withdraw his or her consent;" and the *multitude* as "the subject of a constituent power

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 1186.

that is prior to the constituted power of the state and the sovereign.”<sup>16</sup> Following this idea, Cuba forms part of a habit that permeates Usonian thinking in general throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. The island as a ubiquitous presence in the nation’s culture brings about an affect or a socially linked chain of diverse reactions, which included but were not limited to Cuba as a good to be consumed or as a voice respected for its specificity. These affects were not limited to the centers of power in the U.S., but also coexisted within and between the numerous Americas that came into contact to form a transatlantic multitude, which designated notions of the ideal nation, national unities, and Otherness. Beasley-Murray’s posthegemony is useful to examine how the U.S., as a conglomeration of heterogeneous identities, visualized itself through its unstable dialogue with Cuba, and not necessarily as a monolithic expression of a white masculine state. Even when deceptively simple, the U.S. and Cuban plays that will be examined are not the hegemonic mouthpieces of power. They are the expressions that expose an affective web of a multitude of voices that constantly collide against each other to reveal a contradicting idea of the North American nation.

#### Of Daring Escapes and Usonian Heroes

Archibald C. Gunter’s *Cuba: A Drama in Six Acts and Seven Tableaux* and Desiderio Fajardo Ortiz’s *La fuga de Evangelina (Evangelina’s Escape)* represent U.S. characters whose apparent altruistic impulses are always counterbalanced by their prejudices and capitalistic interests. Although Senator Collamer’s words reflect a certain respect for the voice of the Cuban nation and its decision to become part of the U.S., the construction of the theatrical island still reflects the shortcomings of a capitalist society. In *Cuba: A Drama in Six Acts and Seven Tableaux*, a performance script written by Gunter in 1872 and plausibly performed in New York,

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<sup>16</sup>Jon Beasley-Murray, *Posthegemony: Political Theory and Latin America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 2011), x.

Santiago de Cuba is constantly counterpoised to New York City and the U.S. in general.<sup>17</sup> The play opens in a swanky New York City apartment owned by the rich Grey family. Alfred Grey's two daughters, Blanche and her half-sister, Laura Morales, are conversing about their respective beaux. Laura's love interest, Luis Cespedes, is a Cuban rebel whose father owns a plantation in Santiago de Cuba.<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, Blanche's suitor, Howard Temple, is a young lawyer who will travel to Cuba to settle Laura's father's estate. Cespedes is in love with Laura, but he feels that he cannot formalize their relationship since, according to Blanche, he is too kind to ask her half-sister to marry him when she is an heiress to an estate in Cuba and possesses a fortune in the U.S. On the other hand, Temple will wait to return from his business trip to Cuba to declare his intentions with Blanche, which he discusses with her before leaving for the island. Yet Ignacio Ortez, the Spanish gentleman who appears to be a sincere friend to the Grey family, is also in love with Blanche.<sup>19</sup> The Spaniard, who unbeknownst to the Greys is a spy for the Spanish government, devises a plan to frame Temple while he is in Cuba by making the Spanish authorities believe that he is Luis Cespedes. He succeeds and Temple is captured and imprisoned at El Morro in Santiago. With Blanche's aid, Temple tries to escape, but he is captured. After the escape attempt, Temple is about to be executed by the Spanish soldiers when Cespedes arrives accompanied by a band of rebels who kill the Spanish shooting squad. In the end, Ortez's

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<sup>17</sup> Archibald C. Gunter, *Cuba: A Drama in Six Acts and Seven Tableaux* (unpublished manuscript: entered into the Library of Congress, Washington D.C., 1872). The text was possibly a performance script. Although it was written in San Francisco, there is evidence that another of Gunter's work, *The Red Widow*, a dramatization of one of his novels, *Mr. Barnes in New York*, was performed in New York City ("Broadway Theatre," *The New York Times*, Oct. 16, 1888).

<sup>18</sup> In Spanish, the last name "Céspedes" is accentuated. Yet Gunter does not use the diacritic, an error that makes evident the playwright's limited knowledge of the Spanish language. When I refer to any Cespedes family member in the play, I will not accentuate to remain loyal to the text. Nevertheless, I will use the accentuated version of the last name when I refer to the historical Céspedes family.

<sup>19</sup> Ignacio Ortiz is a common name in Spanish that Gunter misspells in the play. The incorrectly spelled "Ignacio Ortez" uncovers the oversimplifying and facile vilification of the Spanish character and the envisioning of Spain as the political antagonist of the U.S. in relation to Cuba even decades before the actual war.

villainy is uncovered and both couples are finally united. Interestingly, the playwright uses this melodramatic mold to recount real events from the war in Cuba.

In an attempt to attract audiences, nineteenth-century U.S. playwrights like Gunter referenced current events to add realism and a certain exoticism to their theatre. According to Tice L. Miller, between the 1840s and '60s, audiences “demand[ed] in their drama what they were reading in their newspapers: lively and saucy stories that made some connection to their lives and their age.”<sup>20</sup> Gunter’s *Cuba* alludes to actual revolutionaries involved in and events that took place during the Ten Years’ War (1868-1878). The character of Luis Cespedes is based on the nineteenth-century Cuban revolutionary Carlos Manuel de Céspedes, who ignited the ten-year conflict. El Grito de Yara (Cry of Yara) was declared on October 10, 1868, when Céspedes, who owned La Demajagua sugar plantation, liberated his slaves as an initial act of rebellion and invited them to join the revolt. In the play, Juan Cespedes, the young revolutionary’s father, lives with his daughter, Maria, on their plantation. When the Spanish authorities come to arrest his son Luis, whom Temple is impersonating so that the young revolutionary can escape, they arrest Temple and burn down the house. The real Céspedes’s defiance of the slavery system and of Spain is completely erased from the play when the Cespedes are simply victimized by the Spaniards’ cruelty. In yet another reference to the real revolutionary leader, the play begins with the sad news that Luis has lost his fifteen-year-old brother who, alongside some U.S. citizens, was executed when their ship, the *Virginus*, was captured by the Spanish authorities. The historical event occurred in 1873 when Céspedes’s brother, Pedro María de Céspedes, was captured on the *Virginus*, a steamer used by Cuban rebels to bring arms to the island. U.S. and British citizens were also executed by the Spanish authorities on the island. The incident would

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<sup>20</sup> Tice L. Miller, *Entertaining the Nation: American Drama in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2007), 92-93.

surely have escalated into a war between Spain and the U.S. if it had not been resolved through diplomacy.<sup>21</sup> In Gunter's play, the event is used as an element to further expose Spanish cruelty against Cubans in general and the Cespedes in particular. In the first act, Luis is worried that the news of his young brother's execution will destroy his elderly father's health. As their Cuban home burns at the end of the second act, a Spanish officer reveals the son's death to Cespedes senior, who collapses while his daughter states: "My father murdered by the bullets in the heart of his dead son."<sup>22</sup> The constant reference to Carlos Manuel de Céspedes through the character of Luis Cespedes adds realism to the play, which ends up locating the melodrama in a seemingly authentic island scenario for U.S. audiences. Nevertheless, the rebellious nature of the real life figure is bypassed by the melodramatic treatment of the incidents used to establish those connections. When the Spanish burn the Cespedes home, agency is thereby expunged from Céspedes's subversive act of liberating the slaves in the name of revolution. The son's death adds further pathos to the already sad scene. Furthermore, the discovery of the news at such a late point in the action opposes a technologically advanced U.S. against an underdeveloped Cuba.

In *Cuba*, the *Virginius* affair dominates the front pages of every newspaper in New York. A clear relation is thus established between the New York press and the play, which becomes a performed source of information for theatre audiences on the Cuban conflict. This link is explored further in the play through the character of George Dennison, a U.S. journalist covering the revolution in Cuba. He first appears at the Cespedes' plantation with Temple. When the reporter is warned by Temple that Juan Cespedes does not know about his younger son's execution, Dennison cannot believe that such misinformation could happen in the nineteenth

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<sup>21</sup> Timothy S. Wolters, *Information at Sea: Shipboard Command and Control in the U.S. Navy, From Mobile Bay to Okinawa* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), 6-9.

<sup>22</sup> Gunter, *Cuba*, 48.

century. Temple reminds him that “this is a retired spot and Cuba is not the United States.”<sup>23</sup> The *Virginius* affair is not only used in the play to justify Luis Cespedes’s revolutionary drive as an act of revenge against the Spanish, but also to contrast Cuba to the technologically advanced U.S. society. Temple’s observation is founded in truth because communication was not so accessible at the time in Cuba, and even more so when living far from La Habana, its capital city. During the late 1860s, the U.S. developed technologies, such as the telegraph, the transatlantic cable, and the railroad, which catapulted the spread of U.S. mass culture throughout the nation and beyond. Robert Rydell and Rob Kroes argue that mass culture and, I would add, mass media in part developed to unite the various Americas coexisting in the U.S. at the time. They state that

[w]ith the massive increase in immigration in the last half of the nineteenth century, the American population as a whole trebled, while the industrial labor force doubled. [...] In this social context, new technologies of production [...] and new institutions of distribution and consumption [...] reconfigured American culture around values associated with leisure and amusement.<sup>24</sup>

Applying Rydell and Kroes’s argument to the play, I find that the news spreads throughout the Usonian (Blanche Grey and Howard Temple) and the Cuban (Laura Morales and Luis Cespedes) communities in the U.S., thereby establishing links of information between them in a progressively capitalist economy. Regardless of its element of truth, the portrayal of the U.S. as an advanced society in opposition to an underdeveloped Cuba is a leitmotif in U.S. melodramas that reference the Cuban revolution and the resulting Spanish-Cuban-American War.

The difference established in the play between Cuba and the U.S. also comments on the limitations of the nation’s capitalistic society. In the play, Blanche Grey tries to use her money

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<sup>23</sup>Gunter, *Cuba*, 29.

<sup>24</sup> Robert W. Rydell and Rob Kroes, *Buffalo Bill in Bologna: The Americanization of the World, 1869-1922* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 8.

and expensive jewelry to buy Temple's freedom since he has been imprisoned at El Morro. She gives the valuables to Ortez because she still ignores his true intentions, but the use of money to buy justice in Cuba does not produce the expected results. The villain shares part of the loot with a corrupt soldier, who he has paid to make sure that Temple is killed. Ironically, at the end of the final act, which takes place in the Greys' New York City apartment, Ortez's evil is unmasked as he is confronted by Temple and the Cespedes in front of Blanche's family. Mr. Grey promises to convict the Spaniard at the expense of his own fortune. In the heat of the moment, George Dennison adds: "Hang it! A Bohemian is not a capitalist, but I'll go a weeks [sic] salary on that myself. Ortez if you hope to escape with so much money against you, you have a very imperfect idea of American justice."<sup>25</sup> In this instance, Dennison questions the capitalist nature of the nation since the character admits that justice can indeed be bought in the U.S. This information cannot be taken as a direct indictment, either from the character or from the playwright, of the young democracy since the play never gives an indication of criticism of this nature. However, the line positions the U.S. on the same level of the corrupt Spanish government in Cuba by inadvertently asserting that justice can be purchased in both countries. Similarly, at a later moment in the nineteenth century, José Martí, the Cuban intellectual leader of the Cuban revolutions of the 1890s, condemns Latin American countries for wanting to copy the apparent prosperity of the U.S.:

[...] Yankeemanía is the innocent fruit of some small burst of pleasure, like one who judges the essence of a house [...] by the smiling luxury of the parlor, or the champagne and carnations on the table set for guests. For you must suffer, do without, work, love in vain, study with all your courage and freedom, keep vigil with the poor, weep with the miserable, hate the brutality of wealth, live in the

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<sup>25</sup> Gunter, *Cuba*, 14.

palace and in the tenement [...], in the private box at the theater, decorated with gold and jasper, and in the cold, bare wings; and only then can you, with some glimmering of accuracy, give an opinion on this greedy, authoritarian republic, and the growing lustfulness of the United States.<sup>26</sup>

Martí criticizes the “Yankeemanía” sweeping across Latin America precisely because the U.S. is an array of experiences that invalidates the idea of a unified nation. Martí’s writing cannot be interpreted as hegemonic, or as an imposition of the state’s view on U.S. civil society, because it exists on the margins of the nation. It exposes the U.S. as an expression of colonial difference since it paints the nation as a space characterized by the struggle between greed and the experience of pleasure, and between the exploitation and the misery of the poor. Martí’s clarity about his position as an immigrant and outsider allows him to see the neocolonial capabilities of the U.S., expressed through his distrust of “Yankeemanía” and the problems that this feeling poses to Latin American nations. *Cuba: A Drama in Six Acts and Seven Tableaux* portrays the U.S. as both technologically advanced and dominated by those who possess financial means, an assessment echoed in Martí’s writing. Therefore portraying the melodrama as a hegemonic tool is too limiting since *Cuba* also expresses a somewhat self-critical view. This aspect locates the play within the affective network more consonant with Beasley-Murray’s posthegemony. The fact that Martí’s writing echoes the ideas that Gunter uses to designate a relationship between the U.S. and Cuba, demonstrates how the play belongs among the multitude of voices that coexist in the transnational imagined community.

Martí’s ambiguous vision of the U.S. is evidenced in the character of Blanche Grey, whose family represents the nation. As mentioned before, the Greys symbolize a capitalistic and

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<sup>26</sup> José Martí, “The Truth About the United States,” in *José Martí: Selected Writings*, ed. and trans. Esther Allen (New York: Penguin Books, 2002), 331-32.

powerful national spirit that will use any means possible to punish Ortez, the Spaniard whose villainy almost killed Blanche's paramour. A difference is established between the Cespedes, represented by Juan (father) and Maria (daughter), and the Greys, represented by Mr. Grey (father) and Blanche (daughter). In both cases, each nation is symbolized by a similar father-daughter family unit, even though their reactions against Spanish injustice are completely opposite. Unlike the Cespedes, who stand for a victimized Cuba ravaged by the Spanish, the Usonian Greys are a force who will stop at nothing to make their enemies pay. The latter represent the young nation as an international force who polices the world. Yet Blanche's wrath is not limited to Spanish villainy since, at times, it is also directed towards Laura, her kind and somewhat meek half sister. Laura's father was Spanish and so she has inherited an estate in Cuba; for this reason Howard Temple travels to the island as Laura's legal representative. The following dialogue points towards those cracks in Blanche's gentility, which reveal the character's darker side:

Laura: I heard you crying.

Blanche: And you were mean enough to listen to me.

Laura: From love.

Blanche: It might have been expected from a Spaniard.

Laura: Only half a Spaniard and the other half the same blood as yours.

Blanche. You insult my dead father.

Blanche: If your father had not died he would have left Miss Laura Morales no property in Cuba for Howard to settle up [...].

Laura: If my father had not died Miss Blanche Grey would never have been born.

Blanche: And she doesn't thank him much for that. [...] Scratch a Russian and you find the Tartar. Scratch a Spaniard and you find...

Laura: What!

Blanche: Temper, what you are showing now? <sup>27</sup>

Blanche is desperate since they do not know the whereabouts of Temple and so Laura becomes the object of her frustrations. Her attack exposes Blanche's resentments toward the Spanish, comparing them to the Tartars, an ethnic minority that lived at the margins of Russian society during the nineteenth century. Blanche's comparison is never really completed and alludes to her sister's temper only when Laura confronts her. The playwright's depiction of the U.S. is not simplistic since, even though it is somewhat idealized, certain realities are consciously or unconsciously reflected through Blanche's latent racism. To have a better understanding of the impact of this scene, one must consider how audiences perceived it. Regardless of her Spanish blood, the viewer is pushed into sympathizing with the character of Laura due to her gentleness and love. So when Blanche mistreats and Others her sister by equating her with a Tartar, the Usonian character is inevitably resented. As a representation of the nation consonant with Martí's ambiguousness, Blanche both lovingly accepts her half sister in a demonstration of equality and rejects her for being a symbol of Spanish alterity.

Similar to Gunter's *Cuba: A Drama in Six Acts and Seven Tableaux*, Desiderio Fajardo Ortiz's play, *La fuga de Evangelina (Evangelina's Escape)*, depicts the U.S. as a powerful nation that aids Cuba with an ultimate hidden agenda.<sup>28</sup> As in *Cuba*, the actions of the U.S. are symbolized by one figure or family. The play was staged at the Carnegie Lyceum in New York

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<sup>27</sup>Gunter, *Cuba*, 55.

<sup>28</sup> Desiderio Fajardo Ortiz was born in Santiago de Cuba in 1862. He used the pseudonym, El Cautivo (The Captive), because he was paralyzed and so he felt confined to his wheelchair throughout his life. Fajardo Ortiz was very active in the revolutionary movement and traveled throughout Latin America to raise funds for the cause.

on January 22, 1898. It depicts the real-life story of Evangelina Cossío y Cisneros, who was framed by the Spanish and then imprisoned in 1896 for cooperating with the revolution. When William Randolph Hearst's newspaper editors heard of this, they not only used the story to gather support for the Cuban cause, but they also arranged a rescue mission to save the young woman. With the help of U.S. diplomats and Karl Decker, a journalist sent by Hearst, Evangelina escaped from jail in 1897 and ultimately fled Cuba for New York. The young woman became a symbol of the rebellion and earned the name of "la virgen de la traición" (the virgin of treason).<sup>29</sup> In the play, Evangelina Cossío is transformed into a symbol of the rebellious island. The character of Mr. Durval, the Usonian reporter who works for *The Journal* (a direct reference to Decker and Hearst's *New York Journal*), risks his own life to rescue Evangelina. Mr. Durval is a symbol of U.S. Otherness because the character portrays how Fajardo Ortiz views the nation. In performance, the character could have also represented the Cuban immigrant's perspective of the U.S. since it was performed by Guillermo Díaz, a Cuban actor. Therefore the text and the performance work in conjunction to make Mr. Durval into a communal expression of alterity. In both the written text and in its performance, language and linguistic patterns are the most distinctive elements to differentiate national Otherness. In the actual production, Mr. Durval's English would not even need a Usonian accent in order to appropriately portray the idea that the character is neither a Spaniard nor a Cuban. Regardless of the actor's plausible heavy Cuban accent, the simple fact that the character speaks English in a play written in Spanish would immediately mark the performance for its U.S. alterity.

Another way of marking Mr. Durval's difference is if the actor explored the character's comedic possibilities in the actual production. When Mr. Durval enters the jail, his linguistic Otherness produces funny moments in the text, thereby creating a contrast to the more serious

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<sup>29</sup> Antonio Pérez Rioja, *Los Yankees en Cuba* (Habana, Cuba: Tipografía Los Niños Huérfano, 1897), 21.

characters imprisoned in their cells. Durval is being escorted by the Spanish jailer to meet the women in the prison and every time the Usonian hears something in Spanish, he says “all right.” The jailer, who seems to be suspicious of the foreign presence, always responds by wondering what Durval may have said. In their last exchange, the jailer even affirms that he will have to report this to the general. Interestingly, this is an attempt to make fun not of Mr. Durval, but of the Spanish jailer. Evangelina has a similar dialogue with Durval, and even though he speaks Spanish well with her (he feigns ignorance with the jailer), he constantly struggles with the gender of words in Spanish (“gran prudencio[a]” or “un[a] escalero[a]”). Yet in this dialogue, there is no comedic effect because of the seriousness of the situation and it only emphasizes Durval’s linguistic alterity. The tonal duality of the character in the text and in its plausible performance also defines the reasons why he is visiting Evangelina.

Mr. Durval seeks to help the Cuban heroine escape. Micaela, Evangelina’s jailmate and confidant, reminds her that Durval “lo ha previsto todo ya” (has planned for everything).<sup>30</sup> Their trust of the Usonian character mirrors the Spanish distrust precisely for the same reasons: the U.S. is interested in intervening and liberating Cuba from the Spanish. Durval’s intricate plan includes bringing sweets laced with narcotics to be distributed to Evangelina’s cellmates so that they do not interfere with her escape. After they fall asleep, Durval will pass a plank from a window of the building next to the jail and Evangelina will crawl through her window to freedom. A waiting boat will take them to New York. Before the rescue, Evangelina expresses to Micaela how overcome she is by Durval’s sacrifice for her since he is risking his own life. Yet Micaela lets her know the truth about the situation: “¡Animo, pues, hija mía!/No hay tiempo de vacilar./ El *Journal* se hará famoso,/ tú obtendrás tu libertad,/ y los que aquí soportamos/ a tanto rudo patán,/ gozaremos lo indecible/ viendo su rabia infernal [...]” (“Cheer up, sweetie! There is

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<sup>30</sup>Fajardo Ortiz, *La fuga de Evangelina*, 13.

no time to lose. The *Journal* will be famous, you will obtain freedom, and those of us who stay behind and put up with such abusive bullies will immensely enjoy watching their infernal anger [...]”.<sup>31</sup> Micaela wisely uncovers Durval’s agenda, to make his newspaper famous and to defy the Spanish authorities. So the Usonian’s interest in Evangelina Cossío is not her freedom, but the readership that the newspaper will attract. The play ends in a tableau that shows “la diosa de la Libertad” (the goddess of Liberty), or the Statue of Liberty, with Evangelina at her right “protegida por ella” (“being protected by her”). The Cuban girl is then under the Statue of Liberty’s torch, a symbol of enlightenment and of protection. Durval is located at the left of “la diosa,” with a raised copy of *The Journal*.<sup>32</sup> In her left hand, the statue holds the plaque with the date of U.S. independence, a direct reference to what the future holds for the island of Cuba and how it will be linked to the U.S. nation. As in Gunter’s *Cuba*, the U.S. is associated with the power of the press and the media, which the final tableau links to the freedom that reigns over the nation. In the same way that *Cuba: A Drama in Six Acts and Seven Tableaux* manipulates current events to construct Cuban difference and attract theatre audiences, Durval travels to Cuba to spark an event not for an altruistic end, but to feed U.S. readers with a sensationalist story. *La fuga de Evangelina*’s final image reveals the duality that Martí examined, a U.S. that both offers Evangelina and Cubans in general an access to freedom from Spain but that ultimately turns the Caribbean into a good ready for consumption.

In both national theatres, the U.S. is constructed in opposition to Cuba. This need for the nation to constantly define itself against the island imbues U.S. melodrama of the time related to

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<sup>31</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

<sup>32</sup> Fajardo Ortiz, *La fuga de Evangelina*, 29.

the Cuban conflict and the subsequent war. In her column in the *New York Dramatic Mirror*, The Matinee Girl wrote:<sup>33</sup>

I haven't yet seen a Cuban play that suited me. There's too much local color in all those I have seen. In some of them it's put on with a shovel.

What's the matter with a play beginning in New York –the first act laid right here in the heart of the city, with the Tenderloin and the Bowery within reach– and then by one of those mysterious dispensations of Providence which playwrights know all about, transplant the people –up-to-date New York women and men– right into the thick of the fight.

Have a cane field fire, and a machete charge, and a prison escape, and then for the last act have the Cuban girl brought up to New York on a steam yacht, and with a beautiful moonlight effect on the deck, have her fall on her knees in sight of Hatteras with the folds of the American flag waving over her.<sup>34</sup>

The reporter could be referencing Desiderio Fajardo Ortiz's *La fuga de Evangelina*, given the playwright's decision to set the action in both Cuba and the United States, even when the latter is only referenced in the final tableau. The writer argues that she is tired of "local color" or Cuban plays which only take place on the island. She thus rejects Cuban plays in which there are no direct representations of the U.S. mainland. However, the critic does not consider that, even when the U.S. is not represented in a Cuban play about the Spanish-Cuban-American War, it is still a strong dramatic presence that participates in the definition of Cubanía. The involvement of

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<sup>33</sup> "Matinee Girl" was a section in *The New York Dramatic Mirror* to which a number of writers contributed under the direction of Ada Patterson. Dixie Hines and Harry Prescott Hanaford, eds., *Who's Who in Music and Drama* (New York: H.P. Hanaford, 1914), 244-45.

<sup>34</sup>"The Matinee Girl," in *The New York Dramatic Mirror*, Oct. 23, 1897.

the U.S. in the Cuban conflict throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century meant a constant negotiation for Cuban immigrants in the mainland and islanders with a nation whose help was both welcomed and mistrusted due to its imperialist consequences.<sup>35</sup> Nevertheless, the *Matinee Girl* indirectly champions U.S. drama, specifically because most of the plays written by Usonian playwrights that deal with Cuba set the action in both countries. The reporter's attitude towards these Cuban plays reveals a resistance to the construction of the island through native voices thereby designating the opposition between both Americas as a constant factor in the theatre. Along these lines, Louis Pérez states:

[...] conventionally wise [Usonians] were indeed persuaded that possession of Cuba was indispensable to the 'actual existence' of the United States [...]. [P]recisely because Cuba revealed itself as a 'figment of the imagination,' the island inscribed itself deeply into the very certainties by which Americans arrived at a sense of themselves as a nationality and as a nation.<sup>36</sup>

Pérez's assertion echoes Senator Pugh's ideas in uncovering the island's central role in how the nation is staged as the protector of the Caribbean. Pérez's contention illustrates *The Matinee Girl*'s problem with plays whose action is limited to the island. For her, a dramatic reimagining of the island cannot exclude the participation of the U.S. since Cuba is at the center of how the nation "arrives at a sense" of itself. For the *New York Dramatic Mirror* reporter it is not sufficient that Cuba is redefined by Cuban playwrights to be consumed by national audiences; the U.S. must also occupy an active role within a reimagining of the island, which will ultimately reflect on the character of the imperial nation. At the same time, Cuban plays mirror this same

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<sup>35</sup>This issue is further explored in the next chapter.

<sup>36</sup>Pérez, *Cuba in the American Imagination*, 2.

relationship by defining Cubanía in opposition to the U.S., performed as an invasive force with a neocolonial agenda.

#### Of the Invisible Presence and the Many Identities of the U.S.

Fajardo Ortiz's *La emigración al Caney* (*The Migration to Caney*) and William Lapoint's *Loyal Hearts* portray the U.S. in opposing ways, the former as an absence that was both welcomed and distrusted and the latter as a multivocal society to be consumed by audiences to the North of the Mason Dixon Line. Hence the Othering of the Cuban play is questioned by the U.S. melodrama's problematic portrayal of the diversity of the Americas that coexisted within the Post-Civil War United States.

In Fajardo Ortiz's *La emigración al Caney*, the U.S. partly represents the protection that the Cuban people needed from the Spanish army's oppression. The play depicts the crucial moment of the battle of Santiago, the last confrontation between the Spanish army, the Cuban rebels, and the U.S. forces. The play was composed after *La fuga de Evangelina* and it debuted at the Teatro Oriente in Santiago de Cuba in 1898, probably in honor of the Spanish-Cuban-American War's final battle, which took place in the city. On July 3, 1898, Santiago was surrounded by battalions led by Major General William Shafter and troops of Cuban rebels led by Calixto García. Rather than sacrificing soldiers' lives in a direct attack on the Spanish army holding the city, the U.S. general impeded all provisions of food and water from reaching the people of Santiago while continuing to fire shells at a distance. General José Toral, who was in charge of the Spanish troops in the city, met with Shafter on July 13 to negotiate the surrender of Santiago. On July 4, aggressions were brought to a halt to permit civilians to evacuate Santiago. *La emigración al Caney* is set in the city, where a family is trying to escape due to the famine and the continuous bombardment from the U.S. forces.

In the play, a Cuban family whose loyalties lie with the rebels survives within the chaos of the battle. Lola is the brave mother and Lico the cowardly father who refuses to fight against the Spanish for fear of losing his life. They have three children: Pepilla, who is very rebellious even when she is seriously ill, Tita, a small girl, and an unnamed baby. Other members of the family include Cachita, Lico's sister; Pitín, a young black boy who hangs around the house and goes on errands for them; and an elderly woman who remains offstage throughout the play. The family is in a terrible situation since they do not have any food, one of their daughters is sick, cannon fire continues exploding in the surrounding area, and they are under constant suspicion by the Spanish soldier Mateus, who appears from time to time to add tension to the action. Their only hope is to escape Santiago, yet this is very difficult because the Spanish authorities have refused to let the Cuban population leave the city. Thanks to the help of a generous Spanish soldier named Manuel, they eventually leave and they move to El Caney, a fortification outside the city limits originally used by the Spanish to defend Santiago but taken by U.S. troops on July 1.

Apart from some street scenes, most of the action takes place in the family house. This space is almost exclusively occupied by women since all Cuban men have joined the insurgency. The only men left behind are the Spanish military, the volunteers, or Criollos who fought for the Spanish army, old men who could not fight, boys, and cowards such as Lico. Therefore, the psychological depth that these women may lack is compensated by their power.<sup>37</sup> Just as in Fajardo Ortiz's *La fuga de Evangelina*, where the women become symbols of resistance to Spanish oppression since they are all in prison, in *La emigración al Caney* the women embody

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<sup>37</sup>The characters in Mambí theatre lack deep psychological motivations or any complexities. They represent political stances whose weaknesses and strengths only work to support the Cuban rebellion against Spain. The language tends to be heightened by a very romantic and political quality that does not have any realistic feel, but only voices the ideas of the revolution in poetic outbursts of emotion.

the voice of the revolution. One of the most powerful characters is the ill and weak Pepilla, who refuses to let her mother visit General Toral to beg for help in their grave situation. Pepilla argues:

Pues bien, de ellos no quiero/ ni la salud, ni la Gloria./ ¿A qué esta saña villana?  
¿Y por qué esta infame Guerra?/ ¿No es nuestra, acaso, esta tierra?/ ¿No es la  
libertad humana/ aspiración que no muere?/ ¡Ansían solo aniquilarnos!/ ¿Y hemos  
aún de humillarnos/ servilmente al que nos hiere?/ Yo afronto de todos modos/ su  
fiera saña iracunda./ ¡Por mí que el cielo se hunda/ y que nos sepulte a todos!

(From them, I want neither health nor glory. Why this villainous cruelty? And why this infamous war? Isn't this our land? Is not human freedom an undying aspiration? They only want to kill us! And we are to humiliate ourselves in front of those who injure us? No matter what, I will confront their fiery and wrathful cruelty. What do I care if the sky sinks and buries all of us!)<sup>38</sup>

Pepilla is willing to give her life for Cuban independence, especially because her boyfriend is fighting with the Mambí army. At another point, Pepilla's mother, Lola, teaches a lesson to her youngest daughter, Tita, who insists that they should ask their neighbors for some handouts since they seem to be well off. Lola states:

El más leve pensamiento/ siempre al deber constreñido,/ consolar al desvalido,/ y  
junto al lecho mugriento/ del enfermo abandonado/ que gime en dolor impío,/  
recibir el beso frío/ de un aliento congelado.../ Esa es la dicha, hermanada/ del  
alma con la nobleza,/ ésa es la sola grandeza,/ lo demás... ¡no vale nada!

(The slightest thought must always be subject to duty, to console the weak, and next to the dirty bed of the abandoned sick man who moans in merciless pain, to

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<sup>38</sup>Fajardo Ortiz, *La emigración al Caney*, 373.

receive the cold kiss from a frozen breath... That is the destiny that joins the soul with nobility, that is the sole greatness, anything else... is worthless!)"<sup>39</sup>

Pepilla's resistance to Spanish inequity is complemented by Lola's sacrifice for those who are unable to fend for themselves. Although there is a physical difference in both women that could be distinguished through performance, they are almost psychologically indivisible.

Unlike the brave women, Lico, the cowardly father, trembles whenever somebody says anything against the Spanish or when he hears an explosion. Even when his lack of courage is portrayed as shameful, his wife and daughter do not really condemn him for his shortcomings. The father is presented as a weak person who cannot help his condition. In both Fajardo Ortiz's plays, the women are not necessarily identified by a stereotypically delicate nature since they fight against the odds to survive. Nevertheless, they are tolerant of the weakness of Cuban characters, such as of Lico's cowardice. They also admire Pitín's bravery and constant help, regardless of his mischievousness and racial identity. This marks a difference between them and Mateus, the Spanish soldier who constantly accuses Pitín of being black, a laborer, and an insurgent. In those three supposed offenses, Mateus is positioned as the alterity against which the Cuban revolutionary society that the women represent is defined. In this sense, Lola and Pepilla represent the ideals of Martí's Cuba, one that is inclusive of racial and economic difference.

Through the combination of various theatrical genres, Fajardo Ortiz constructs a society of diversity in performance. *La emigración al Caney* is a perfect example of a Mambí play. *Mambí* was a term that Cubans used to refer to the revolutionaries during the final decades of the nineteenth century. The term was also used to designate the type of theatre that voiced the ideals of the revolution. According to Rine Leal,

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 400-1.

La escena mambí se desarrolló en el exilio y paradójicamente fue más cubana que nunca. Y al igual que los mismos insurrectos que adoptaron el término *mambí*—de sentido peyorativo para los españoles— y lo engrandecieron y asumieron con dignidad, el teatro independentista convirtió en héroes y mártires a los hombres que hacían la guerra y eran objeto de escarnio y burla por los opresores. Fue colocar nuestra historia en su verdadero lugar, invertir la imagen colonial y ofrecer un arte que nada debía a la Metrópoli.

(The mambí scene developed in exile and was paradoxically more Cuban than ever. And just as the insurgents who adopted the term *mambí*—which had pejorative connotations for the Spanish— and exalted and owned it with dignity, separatist theatre turned the men who fought in the war, and who were the object of derision and ridicule by the oppressors, into heroes and martyrs. It was to give our history its rightful place, to invert colonial imagery and present an art that did not owe anything to the Metropolis.)<sup>40</sup>

Although *La emigración al Caney* debuted in Cuba, Mambí theatre in general could not have been presented on the island under the Spanish regime due to its incendiary messages. Therefore, much of Mambí theatre was presented in the U.S. for the Cuban Diaspora, thereby establishing a direct dialogue with the host country where it was performed. Mambí theatre redefines Cuban history and, I would argue, stages a utopian revolutionary society that follows the example of the democracy and apparent inclusiveness that Martí admired, albeit suspiciously, in the United States. Interestingly, Fajardo Ortiz creates racial diversity through his inclusion of Pitín, the black child in the service of the family that generically functions as a link to the Teatro Bufo tradition in Cuba.

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<sup>40</sup>Rine Leal, *Teatro mambí* (La Habana, Cuba: Editorial Letras Cubanas, 1978), 13.

The topics of race and national identity characterized Teatro Bufo plays, which mostly followed a musical revue tradition. More importantly, Teatro Bufo popularized various stereotypes and used blackface on stage to create racialized comedic performances that commented on contemporary society, politics, and culture. It was the most popular theatrical expression during the final decades of the nineteenth century thereby captivating Cuban and even Puerto Rican audiences. Teatro Bufo became the theatrical expression of Cubanía since it stood for a “genuinely” Cuban form of drama that contrasted the European theatre produced on the island.<sup>41</sup> This element was plausibly used by Fajardo Ortiz to attract audiences of the Caribbean Diasporas and to oppose Cuban society to the racist and unequal social hierarchies of the Spanish.

As a character, Pitín embodies the elements of Teatro Bufo. He was most probably performed in blackface. Additionally, Pitín represents an element of subversive humor that constantly challenges Spanish authority through his comments and puns directed at Mateus. For example, at the end of the brief tenth scene of the first act, Pitín announces proudly that he is a Cuban patriot. Immediately after this, the next scene begins when Mateus comes in and has a conversation with Pitín:

Mateus: ¿Qué te sientes?

Pitín: [...] Me siento... muy español.

Mateus: Es la sangre que te tira, Moreno.

Pitín: ¡Jum! Sí, señor. (Aparte) ¡De cartulina!

Mateus: ¿Qué dices?

Pitín: ¡Na! Que se me cae el pantalón.

(Mateus: How are you feeling?)

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<sup>41</sup>Teatro Bufo will be further examined in the next chapter.

Pitín: [...] I feel... very Spanish.

Mateus: It's the blood that is calling you, Darkie.

Pitín: Hum! Yes, sir. (Aside) Of cardboard!

Mateus: What did you say?

Pitín: Nothin'! That my pants are falling down.)<sup>42</sup>

Although Pitín swears that he is a patriot in the prior scene, a definition that is backed up by his constant support of the family and mocking of Mateus, he declares that he is Spanish as soon as the soldier walks in. Pitín is making fun of Mateus, a fact that is evidenced when he says that the blood calling him is made from cardboard, hence not authentic. Pitín mocks Mateus's national pride and he is the only one who sees through the Spaniard's act, since the boy constantly calls him a *majá*, or snake, behind his back. At the end, when the family leaves Santiago, Mateus cowardly trails along, afraid of staying in the city and being killed by the U.S. soldiers or the Cuban rebels. This demonstrates that Pitín's opinion of the character was correct and that the Spaniard's pride was not to be trusted. Furthermore, Pitín does not only serve as a comic character, but is also always on the move trying to help the family by scouring for food and bringing the news of the war taking place around Santiago. He is braver than Lico, the father figure, because he sacrifices his life for them. The character of Pitín, one of the play's most complex, juggles both the Bufo-style comedy and the heroic patriotism of the Mambí. By assuming the duties and responsibilities of the father, the Black child becomes a surrogate father figure for the family.

The family in *La emigración al Caney* symbolizes the idealized revolutionary nation in Cuba and its racial diversity. This family/nation goes on a metaphorical journey from Santiago, the last stronghold of Spanish authority, to el Caney, which is under the control of the U.S.

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<sup>42</sup> Fajardo Ortiz, *La emigración al Caney*, 385-86.

forces and serves as a refuge for the group. Yet this safe haven has a darker reality, foreshadowed as a group of Cubans enter the space:

Un Moreno: Cuba en el Caney ta entrando.

Un Borracho: Si estaremos trabajando/ señores, para el inglés.

(A Black Man: Cuba's going into el Caney.

A Drunkard: Gentlemen, we are going to be working for the English.)<sup>43</sup>

This dialogue not only refers to the people as the nation, but also warns them about the neocolonial impositions of the U.S. “Trabajar para el inglés” (“working for the English”) is a popular saying in Spanish that means that they are going to be working for nothing. Although the reference to “the English” is obscure and may also refer to the British at the time of its first use, “el inglés” also refers to the official language of the U.S., whose military now occupies el Caney. So this detail could be interpreted as the only instance in which the United States is referenced in the play and, along those lines, that Cuban relations with the occupying nation will not really aid them in escaping the imperialist regime and colonial system that oppresses them. The drunkard warns Cubans that their escape from Santiago to el Caney is not an escape from their current situation, but a running towards more of the same. Although this problematic reference to the U.S. may have annoyed *The New York Dramatic Mirror's* Matinee Girl, the nation's pervasiveness in the Cuban revolution makes the U.S. a powerful presence in the play even if it is indirectly performed through language. Still the allusion is incomplete since the drunkard makes a reference to the U.S. by only mentioning the language spoken by its people.

In contrast to *La fuga de Evangelina*, where Mr. Durval is the symbol of the Usonian nation, Fajardo Ortiz's *La emigración al Caney* does not include an embodied representation of

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 427-28.

the U.S. By denying representation, this brief linguistic construction creates a U.S. alterity. There is a clear performative opposition between an embodied Cuban nation and a disembodied U.S.

Furthermore, the drunkard's words echo Martí's warning to "nuestra América" ("our America"):

Pero no augura, sino certifica el que observa cómo en los Estados Unidos, en vez de apretarse las causas de unión, se aflojan; en vez de resolverse los problemas de la humanidad, se reproducen; en vez de amalgamarse en la política nacional las localidades, la dividen y la enconan; en vez de robustecerse la democracia y salvarse del odio y miseria de las monarquías, se corrompe y aminora la democracia, y renacen, amenazantes, el odio y la miseria. Y no cumple con su deber quien lo calla, sino quien lo dice [...] para que por ignorancia, o deslumbramiento, o impaciencia no caigan los pueblos de casta española al consejo de la toga remilgada y el interés asustadizo, en la servidumbre inmoral y enervante de una civilización dañada y ajena. Es preciso que se sepa en nuestra América la verdad de los Estados Unidos.

(It is not foretelling, it is indeed certifying when one observes how in the United States, the reasons for union do not intensify, but weaken; humanity's problems are not solved, but reproduced; localities are not coming together through national politics, but they are divided and grow irritated; instead of achieving a robust democracy and being saved from the hate and misery of monarchies, the country is corrupted and democracy dwindles, and hate and misery menacingly revive. And one's duty is not fulfilled by remaining silent, but by speaking out [...] so that the peoples of Spanish descent do not fall prey out of ignorance, confusion, or impatience, due to the advice of the prudish toga or of fearful interests, to the

immoral and unnerving servitude of a broken and foreign civilization. It is crucial that the truth about the United States is made known in our America.)<sup>44</sup>

Ironically, although at times Martí champions the freedom and the democratic ideals of the nation, he vehemently criticized the exploitation, the racism, and the misery prevalent in the U.S. Through his use of the popular saying, the drunkard summarizes Martí's warning to "our America" by predicting how the U.S. will take over Cuba following Spain's example, regardless if their presence is perceived by the characters as a refuge from Spanish oppression. Still, the representation of the U.S. in the play suffers from the same pitfalls of using the term *America* to only designate the United States. This construction of alterity posits a power on a one-dimensional entity, to the point that the character does not even mention the country by name. Hence the playwright elides the multitude of voices that make up "el inglés," or the English language, and that opposes the diversity that characterizes the Cuban family unit in *La emigración al Caney*. In this case, U.S. alterity as a neocolonial and univocal monolith contrasts the equality and racial inclusiveness of revolutionary Cuba.

In the U.S., Cuba was seen as a haven of slavery and some government representatives considered its possibilities along those lines, especially in light of the Union's threat to slavery in the South. In his article "Nineteenth-Century United States Literary Culture and Transnationality," John Carlos Rowe asserts that before the 1860s the island's ports served as an entry point for the illegal market of African slaves and so "Cuba was understandably a site of proposed United States expansion, especially by proslavery interests."<sup>45</sup> As Rowe points out, the

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<sup>44</sup>José Martí, "La verdad sobre los Estados Unidos," in *Obras Completas*, ed. Jorge Quintana (Caracas, Venezuela: Litho-Tip C.A., 1964), 2:988-89.

<sup>45</sup>John Carlos Rowe, "Nineteenth-Century United States Literary Culture and Transnationality," *PMLA* 118 (Jan. 2003): 86, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/823201>. This is an argument also brought forth in Louis A. Pérez's *Cuba in the American Imagination* and Eric J. Sundquist's *To Wake Up the Nations: Race in the Making of American Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998).

main interest of the U.S. in Cuba was one of exploitation, which would support Micaela's statement about Durval in *La fuga de Evangelina* and the drunkard's warning in *La emigración al Caney*. In these plays, there is a clear distinction between both Americas, the precise contrast that the *New York Dramatic Mirror's* Matinee Girl identifies as local color in her article, thereby setting the U.S. in a position of privilege and power over the ravaged island. In a melodrama such as Abel Seaman's *In the Trenches*, the action begins in a swanky New York City apartment owned by the character of John Davis, described as "a New York capitalist."<sup>46</sup> This luxurious abode works to create a contrast between New York and the trenches referenced in the title of a war-torn Cuba. The U.S., represented by the New York City apartment, serves as a refuge for characters such as Madame Valdoza, a Cuban woman who has had to give up her son to a Spanish hoodlum. She tracked her son to the U.S. and so, for her, he is safe. For Seaman, the nation is once again a monolithic titan that protects the weak against Spanish villainy. Even when Fajardo Ortiz argues the opposite in his plays, both playwrights create in the end a univocal U.S. that denies the existence of other Americas. On the other hand, Rowe argues that Martin Delaney's novel, *Blake; or, The Huts of America*, published in serialized form between 1859 and 1862, provides an example of how Cuba is undeniably present in U.S. literary culture.<sup>47</sup> In the novel, the title character is a slave from the West Indies who, at some point, embarks to the island to ignite a rebellion against systematic slavery to ultimately establish a new Black nation. Inspired by the Haitian Revolution, Delaney, an African American abolitionist, not only bravely challenged the system from his racially marginalized position, but also constructed Cuba as a revolutionary space where blackness was empowered and from which white Usonians would be banished. Delaney's voice emanated from one of those Americas that inhabited the

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<sup>46</sup>Abel Seaman, *In the Trenches: A Drama of the Cuban War* (Boston: Walter H. Baker and Co., 1898), 2. Abel Seaman is a pseudonym used by Frank Eugene Chase.

<sup>47</sup> Martin Robison Delaney, *Blake; or, The Huts of America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970).

U.S. and so his views of race in the nation and on Cuba, and how they are linked in his novel, invalidated the simplistic Usonian alterity performed in Fajardo Ortiz's and Seaman's plays. *In the Trenches* and *Blake* ultimately perform an Othered space that serves as a marginalized extension of the U.S., yet also remains central to the future of the various Americas that coexisted in the nation. The diversity of revolutionary Cuba in Mambí plays is also reflected in the performance of nation in U.S. melodramas, thereby undermining the idea that these plays serve as hegemonic expressions.

In William Lapoint's four-act play, *Loyal Hearts: A Patriotic Melo-Drama*, the Cuban cause is the reason why Othered communities in the U.S. unify a divided nation as the result of the Civil War. Within the melodramatic model, the play explores the contradictory perspectives and diverse identities that coexisted in the postbellum U.S. and around the time of the Spanish-Cuban-American War. Most of the action in the play takes place in New Orleans. The U.S. South is staged as an Othered territory that reflects a very different vision of the nation and is principally aimed at Northern audiences. The action proves that the tensions of the Civil War were still felt and Southern characters express their resentment towards Yankees, who they fear are taking away their jobs and women. Southerners are constantly vigilant of the Northern presence and consider them to be guilty of any crime. Nevertheless, the two principal representatives of Southern whiteness in the play, Franklin Preston, described in the cast of characters as "a Southern Capitalist," and his daughter, Alice Preston, described as a "Southern Belle," are somewhat cowardly and weak-willed since they are easily manipulated by the Spanish villain, Count Vinzeo. The Spaniard possesses the most abhorrent personality traits; he is lascivious and conniving, constantly threatens women with physical violence, and conspires against the U.S. forces and the Cuban revolutionaries. Vinzeo is in love with Alice while,

unbeknownst to her, he blackmails her father for a fraudulent mortgage loan that he borrowed from the Count. On the other hand, the characters of Reuben Ryder, the conventional stage Yankee, his niece, May, and Walter French, the protagonist who owns a shipping business in competition with Preston's, are the principal representatives of the North. They are honest and dependable, always fight for what is just, and are not tolerated by the Southerners in the play. It is clear that the playwright's loyalties lie with the North, yet French endures a lot of abuse throughout the play. An incident central to the play's action is when Vinzeo has his two men try to kidnap Alice and frames French for the crime. Although the Northern hero comes in to save her, Vinzeo makes the Southern characters believe that French was the culprit. The incident resonates throughout the play because Alice discovers that French was the man she loved during the Civil War, even when she did not immediately recognize him since in the past he used another name, Carroll Gray. French still loves her, but now Alice despises him for his supposed actions. During the rest of the play, the Northern hero must face a number of challenges that include assuming the role of a stable boy to get close to Alice, fighting in the battle of Santiago disguised as a colonel of a Southern regiment, exposing the Spanish Count, and proving his innocence from the kidnapping charges. The Northern hero's plight for his love of the Southern belle conveys the play's central theme, announced in the title page as "The Story of the Re-union of North and South."

*Loyal Hearts* deals more directly with the tensions between the North and the South and is not directly interested in Cuba. Although the third act takes place in Santiago on the day of the famous battle that proved to be the downfall of Spain, the play presents only one Cuban character, Erico Aja, who appears briefly in the first act trying to find illegal passage to the island from the U.S. in one of French's ships and every time the action requires a Cuban

presence fighting the Spanish alongside the Usonian characters. The play's convoluted story focuses on the problems that arise due to Southerners' distrust of the North and the harmony achieved at the end with the defeat of the dastardly common enemy, the Spaniard. Cuba is then relegated to a further marginal position in the story and the South of the United States becomes the central representative of alterity.

*Loyal Hearts* does a worthy job of portraying the South in general and New Orleans in particular for Northern audiences. It is plausible that it was staged in New York City since it offers several views of Southern scenes. New York City was after all one of the theatrical centers of the Eastern U.S. and the play leads the Northern spectator on a romantic tour of the South. The first act takes place at the Planters Hotel, a historic nineteenth-century establishment on Canal Street that in the play is equipped with every type of technological luxury. The set directions in the play dictate that “[i]n one corner of the office have an arrangement to indicate the moving of the hotel elevator up and down the building” and that there is also a telegraph office that accommodates two operators with “machines at work.” These symbols of technical progress are part of U.S. performance at the time and reflect the type of young progressive nation that stands in opposition to the old-world empires of Europe. On the opposite side of the telegraph office, the front desk is exploding with the activity of bell boys moving back and forth while taking guests to their rooms. Even before any line of dialogue is delivered, audiences can witness “a busy day in a New Orleans hotel.” The directions warn that “[t]his should not be overdone,” pointing to the impression of reality that the playwright wants to communicate through the silent action.<sup>48</sup> Yet the portrayal of a “realistic” South is still aligned with a romanticized view consonant with that of its Northern spectators.

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<sup>48</sup>Lapoint, *Loyal Hearts*, 3-4.

The third scene of act four, which is the play's finale, invalidates the realistic effect produced in the first act. The final scene takes place in Alice Preston's country house in New Orleans. The set directions require: "Landscape backing. Set Cottage ballastrade [sic], rustic seat, swing, hammock. As scene opens have distant chime bells sound. Rear of Ballastrade is a high bridge."<sup>49</sup> These are all elements that the playwright uses synecdochically to identify the region, but they only work because audiences understood the economy of symbols. Therefore in this case, there is an understanding of how the South is theatrically represented to Northern audiences. These views are reminiscent of the filmed *réalités*, which in many cases offered U.S. spectators a look into exotic lands, primitive peoples, or battles fought in distant locales. The silent prologue and the set directions aim for the same effect of giving outsiders a look into the South. Just as with the *réalités*, the settings in *Loyal Hearts* inevitably exoticize the region and position Northern viewers in a space of power over that other side of the Mason Dixon line.

As in other plays about the war, *Loyal Hearts* constructs alterity not only to establish how U.S. society saw itself in relation to Cuba, but to portray certain national types that represent Otherness within the nation. Intracultural negotiations with difference are evident in the second scene of Act Two when French tries to join a Southern regiment on its way to fight in Cuba. The commanding officer refuses by stating: "We have no place for Yankees in the regiment."<sup>50</sup> Common sense makes one question French's intentions of joining the *Loyal Hearts* regiment since much of the conflict in the play is provoked by the post-Civil War Yankee invasion in the South. The commanding officer echoes the anger of almost every Southern character in the play towards the Northerners, who not only eradicated their way of life but are also seen as currently taking over their jobs, their opportunities, and even their women. When the officer consults with

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<sup>49</sup>Ibid., 83.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., 40.

his men whether or not they should admit the Yankee, they approve in unison thereby confirming the general idea in the play that the war to free Cuba would result in the unification of the North and the South. This play shows a constant offering of peace from every Yankee character towards the Southerners and the latter's angry rejection of resolution. Division seems to be conquered at last by a unified U.S. altruism towards the Cuban cause.

Nevertheless, the episode is not resolved there. Count Vinzeo maliciously spoils French's noble plans by revealing to the commanding officer of the Loyal Hearts the Yankee's true racial identity. According to the Count, French is really Black. This proves to be too much for the officer who prefers to believe the Spaniard over the protesting Usonian. At this point, the officer barks his final order to French: "You are under suspicion of being a Negro, leave the ranks."<sup>51</sup> French finally exits wishing the Southern soldiers to return unharmed from battle.

It is crucial to analyze the racial politics operating within this exchange. Walter French is identified as both a Yankee and an African American. Before his attempt to join the Loyal Hearts, he has a conversation with his brother, Rufus Gray, who admits to him that he cannot join the army because he is Black. French argues that it is worse to be a Yankee than African American. At this moment Vinzeo discovers French's real racial identity, since nobody else knew that his real name was Carrol Gray. As a Yankee, his identification is not problematic because Cuba, which was their ultimate destination, is the unifying cause in the play. This contradicts French's argument on racial difference. As a regiment that represents Southern whiteness, the Loyal Hearts will resist blackness within their nation. Furthermore, since French's skin is white, he seems to be the product of miscegenation, a further threat to Southern whiteness. In relation to how the play performs the South, is this representative of how the U.S.

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<sup>51</sup>Ibid., 41.

in general rejected Black soldiers or is this another instance of constructing an Othered view of the region as ravaged by racism in opposition to the more integrated North? The film *Colored Troops Disembarking* presents a clue to this dilemma.<sup>52</sup> The short scene captures the moment when a battalion of African American soldiers disembarks in Port Tampa, Florida, in 1898. They slowly walk down the trembling plank from the boat to the port and, as the summary of the film indicates, “it is laughable to see the extreme caution displayed by the soldiers clambering down.”<sup>53</sup> This summary could have plausibly been used as a script for the interlocutor who explained the scene and so the African American soldiers became buffoons, different from the heroic filmic depictions of white soldiers on the island. Furthermore, the performance of racial difference as clownish was of course common in both U.S. theatre and film well into the twentieth century.

Edison’s short film also points to the fact that even though Black men could not join White battalions headed for Cuba, they were able to enlist in special regiments mostly commanded by white officers. In his article “The Black Volunteers in the Spanish-American War,” Marvin E. Fletcher states that the Black soldiers who fought in Cuba were able to join due to President William McKinley’s call for states to recruit volunteers and because of the establishment of “immune” regiments.<sup>54</sup> Moreover, Black soldiers were present in the invasion to Cuba. *Colored Troops Disembarking* shows that French’s rejection from the men of the Loyal Hearts is not necessarily limited to the South, but part of the systematic racial inequality

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<sup>52</sup> William Paley, *Colored Troops Disembarking* (Edison Manufacturing Co., 1898), 35 mm film, from Library of Congress, *The Spanish American War in Motion Pictures*, MPEG video, 1:25, <http://www.loc.gov/item/00694179>.

<sup>53</sup> “Film Summary,” William Paley, *Colored Troops Disembarking*, <http://www.loc.gov/item/00694179>.

<sup>54</sup> U.S. government leaders were afraid that yellow fever, which they linked with the tropical climate of the Caribbean, would end the lives of many U.S. soldiers. To avoid this, they requested special regiments formed by men who had survived the disease because they believed that once a person contracted yellow fever, he would acquire immunity. As a result, more Black regiments were added. See Marvin E. Fletcher, “The Black Volunteers in the Spanish-American War,” in *Brothers to the Buffalo Soldiers: Perspectives on the African American Militia and Volunteers, 1865-1917*, ed. Bruce A. Glasrud (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2011), 131.

prevalent throughout the United States. Nevertheless, the play recognizes efforts of African American men in the war. In the Third Act, which is set in Santiago, the site of the big battle scene against the Spanish, Rufus Gray is present and valiantly gives his life to protect Alice from being shot. Although Rufus comes back in the final act and we discover that he was never killed in combat, his actions symbolize African American heroism in the Spanish-Cuban-American War. In another scene in Act Three, once the action moves to Santiago, French manages to join the Loyal Hearts as their colonel. This was decided by Colonel Weston, originally in charge of the regiment, and himself. As the melodramatic hero, the Northerner is a great leader who assures that he “fear[s] no trouble here for every man will be treated as [his] equal [...]”<sup>55</sup> When the men of the Loyal Hearts are ordered to assemble in front of French to meet their new leader, one of the soldiers angrily voices his objections: “We had a good Col. but he’s been fired out, we don’t want half niggers nor bluffin yanks a bossin us, aint I right boys?”<sup>56</sup> The soldier’s protests are received with cheers from the other men, thereby assuring that French’s rejection before they disembarked to Cuba and his racial identity will not be forgotten even if he is now in charge of the Loyal Hearts. The character of French is White, yet according to the rules of hypodescent, he belongs to the minority group because he apparently comes from racially-mixed parents.<sup>57</sup> Although in reality the U.S. sent a segregated military to fight in Cuba, a fact that would impede French from occupying the position of a commanding officer, the playwright establishes an imaginary opposition between racial politics of the North and the South. While the theatrical North represents racial harmony and equality for all men, one of the tenets of the young

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<sup>55</sup>Lapoint, *Loyal Hearts*, 48.

<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>57</sup> Conrad Phillip Kottak uses the term “hypodescent” to refer to the practice still dominant in the United States of appointing children to a minority status when these are the product of parents who belong to different racial identities. See *Mirror for Humanity: A Concise Introduction to Cultural Anthropology* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2012): 238.

democracy, the South symbolizes segregation. The South is evidently performed for Northern audiences as a territory unable to abandon antebellum ideas of race.

At this point, it seems that French's leadership will bring about the defeat of the U.S. forces in Cuba since the regiment will not follow his orders. Yet Alice Preston, who arrived to the island in search of Sherman, the stable boy with whom she'd fallen in love and who is really Walter French in disguise, delivers a speech that makes the Loyal Hearts regiment reconsider their disobedience:

[...] This man by some trick has become Col. of your Regiment. It is a severe blow my brave boys. The uniform makes you slaves in his power. Do not stain the fair name of the Loyal Hearts. Do your duty and you may soon be freed from the Yankee Col.<sup>58</sup>

After her words, the men start to march silently, demonstrating through their performance that they will follow Alice's orders. The Southern belle's words reveal one of the principal reasons why African Americans could not lead as officers in the military, which is the threat that they would occupy a position of mastery in the relations of power that permeated U.S. society. This vision is shared by Thomas Dixon's novel *The Clansman* and D. W. Griffith's later film based on the novel, *The Birth of a Nation*, where the product of a racially mixed union, the character of Silas Lynch, inherits the most reprehensible qualities of both racial identities.<sup>59</sup> As with *Loyal Hearts*, these works are located in the post-Reconstruction U.S. and look back at a specific romanticized vision of the South. In Dixon's case, Cathy Boeckmann argues that he "seeks to redraw black racial character in response to a conviction that northerners could not understand the South and its reaction to Reconstruction unless they could see African Americans as white

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<sup>58</sup>Lapoint, *Loyal Hearts*, 50.

<sup>59</sup>Thomas Dixon, *The Clansman: An Historical Romance of the Ku Klux Klan* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1970); *The Birth of a Nation*, directed by D. W. Griffith (1915; New York: Kino Video, 2002), DVD.

southerners see them.”<sup>60</sup> This argument can also be applied to Griffith’s film, in which blackness, especially when it occupies a position of power, is a threat to whiteness and social and political harmony. In Alice’s own words, slavery and the exercise of power are reversed since the white soldiers are wearing the military uniform and a mulatto is in charge of the regiment. She argues her position by referencing the slave system, since the Southern regiment must do their “duty” in order to “be freed” from their Northern colonel. Nevertheless, I argue that these scenes turn the South into a staged alterity that is consumed by Northern audiences, even when *Loyal Hearts* was written and plausibly performed for those same audiences who were about to read *The Clansman*. Although this vision of race was not limited to the South, audiences are forced to connect with Alice’s words and her reference to “duty,” which is to fight for Cuba.

In *Loyal Hearts*, Cuba represents the shared cause that will reunite the North and the South. Yet it also becomes a liminal space where racial purity is called into question. Although the play links segregation with the South, championing the North as a racial equalizer, the real subversion of racial roles takes place in Cuba and away from U.S. shores. The third act is set in Santiago de Cuba in July 1898, during the same battle that served as a backdrop to the action in Fajardo Ortiz’s *La emigración al Caney*. Audiences would have been immediately aware that the site of this act represents a victory over Spain. The decision to have French as a leader of a white, Southern regiment on the Caribbean battlefields thus adds somewhat to the feeling of triumph over segregation and over Old World hierarchies of power represented by Spain. Rufus Gray, Carroll’s black brother, also plays an important part in the triumph of the Usonian characters. Although he is not clearly part of the U.S. military since he is never counted as a soldier of any of the regiments, he does his duty to save the battalion and constantly looks over

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<sup>60</sup>Cathy Boeckmann, *A Question of Character: Scientific Racism and the Genres of American Fiction, 1892-1912* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2000), 64.

Alice. Rufus follows Alice's orders and even gives up his life to save her, yet he is not spared from ridicule. Apart from some serious twists in the action due to the war, the island becomes the stage for the funniest sequences in the play. For example, the comical Reuben Ryder struts around Santiago with his "Dewey pies," named after the character's admiration of Admiral George Dewey who had defeated the Spanish fleet in the Battle of Manila Bay on 1 May 1898. His Dewey pies, which appear to be normal pies, carry so much symbolic weight that Ryder manages to use them in order to disarm two men who are pointing revolvers at him. The two men give up and run away when Ryder holds up his pies and threatens to throw them. As this instance demonstrates, the intense action scenes in the Third Act are balanced with the broad humor, which revolves around the pies and the cart in which they are carried.

It is highly predictable that at some point race will become entangled with pie humor. In fact, Rufus's contact with the Dewey pies reduces the significance of his heroic actions. In the play, after Rufus sabotages the telegraph, Alice orders him to follow her at a distance since she will go with Vinzeo to spy on him thereby thwarting any attacks against the U.S. forces. At one point, Alice goes into a blockhouse that serves as the secret headquarters of the Spanish army. For this reason, Rufus secretly hides inside the pie cart and two Spanish allies take it into the blockhouse. This scene may not seem funny to modern audiences, but it carries a similar type of humor as that of the film *Colored Troops Disembarking*. In performance, the African American character is subjected to a ridiculous situation since he has to climb into a prop that already has elicited laughter. As in the film, the element of race is used to turn a situation marked by danger and requiring caution into a comedic capsule. Even after this apparently humorous moment, Rufus recovers French's stolen papers, which will ultimately exonerate Alice from charges of treason, and gives his life defending Alice from Vinzeo's men. Both Rufus and French, whose

racial identities would circumscribe them to strictly humorous and villainous roles respectively, defy their cultural stereotypes on the island even when both were rejected in the south of the United States.

When the action is resolved at the end of the play, some of the characters' revelations reestablish the actual racial status quo. The Fourth Act takes place after the war is over and begins in the office of the Secret Service in New Orleans. Tom Clark, who works for the agency, is keeping Alice under arrest since she is suspected of having aided the Spanish. Indeed, in the Third Act, she makes Vinzeo and some Spanish soldiers believe that she has joined them. Although as a result of her ruse, Alice manages to save the lives of many U.S. soldiers, Tom arrests her when she refuses to explain her actions. Alice is further incriminated by some papers in her possession, belonging to French and stolen from the U.S. camp by Vinzeo. Rufus regains these while he is hiding in the pie cart at the blockhouse and gives them to Alice as he dies from the gunshot wound. Most of the characters plead with Tom to free Alice. Yet, even though he receives telegraph messages directly from Theodore Roosevelt and Major General William Shafter defending Alice's innocence, Tom only yields when a presidential order arrives instructing him to release the prisoner. Nevertheless, his suspicions dissipate only when Rufus Gray reappears to explain that he found the stolen papers. Rufus also saves Alice's father. Among the papers that he recovered, there was a copy of Preston's fraudulent mortgage, which had been altered by Vinzeo. Rufus is clearly revived as a plot device to save Alice's and her father's reputation. Although he is welcomed by the characters as a savior, he is only brought back through *deus ex machina* and his heroic sacrifice is subverted by his cheerful return to New Orleans. Therefore, not only is the Black character refused official participation in the war, but his ultimate sacrifice in Cuba is suppressed at the service of the white Usonian characters.

French's mixed racial identity is also normalized in the U.S. when the character of Brewer reveals that he is not really Rufus Gray's biological brother. Brewer's revelation distances French's identity from Gray's Black family and so the hero's identity is whitened. Walter French goes through a number of aliases, including Carroll Gray, which appears to be his real name, and Frank Sherman. Each of these is also accompanied by a professional role, which include shipping company owner, stable boy, and colonel. Nevertheless, the role that is truly called into question is his apparent mixed race and, more specifically, when he tries to join the Loyal Hearts regiment and when he occupies a position of power in Cuba. The liquid quality of French's identity always helps him to succeed, but his racial identity becomes a hindrance to his goals. Rufus Gray's status as a war hero and Walter French's biracial identity are accommodated into the status quo when the action moves to the U.S. In similar ways, Southern characters seize their enmity towards the North and embrace a reunion. This reconciliation is performed at various points in the final act, but it is ultimately driven through when the Loyal Hearts regiment marches onstage headed by French.

Northern audiences would have witnessed how the South became subsumed by what Bruce McConachie refers to as "the patrician hegemony in the Northeast." McConachie asserts that this hegemony was invested by "the ideology of paternalism," which he illustrates in the following passage:

Paternalism centers authority in upper-class, mature males; it defines them as protectors, judges, and benefactors, and those under their control as socially irresponsible children. For most of the eighteenth century, paternalism provided much of the moral justification for familial, economic, and political

forms of authority, binding wives to husbands, servants to masters, and colonists (later citizens) to local elites.<sup>61</sup>

For McConachie, paternalism marginalized difference in eighteenth-century and, I would argue, nineteenth-century U.S. by establishing its mastery over diversity. New York audiences attending a performance of *Loyal Hearts* were able to witness the Otherness of the South due to their racial prejudice and their inability to let go of antebellum animosity and postbellum resentment towards the North. On the other hand, New York audiences could also witness a clear, albeit problematic, defiance of racial hierarchies in the U.S., similar to that which took place in the performed Cuba of Havana's Mambí theatre.

### Conclusion

*Loyal Hearts* cannot be distinguished as fully hegemonic because it underscores the coexistence of various Americas within and outside the U.S. For this reason, it becomes a reflection of Beasley-Murray's posthegemony. Even if the play's intentions are not to give voice to the marginal identities that it depicts, the text brings forth a U.S. composed of a racial and ethnic diversity, which extends to the Caribbean. The play portrays diverse alterities (Southern, Spanish, Cuban, African American, biracial) that reflected New York audiences, thereby functioning as an educational tool that ultimately upheld northern supremacy and paternalism. The Cuban cause finally unifies the U.S. and, as McConachie argues, difference is contained within the normative paternalism of the north. The performance of foreign and racial alterity in the U.S. bespeaks a specific conception of the nation. In *The Foreigner in Early American Drama*, Kent G. Gallagher states:

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<sup>61</sup>Bruce A. McConachie, *Melodramatic Formations: American Theatre and Society, 1820-1870* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1992), 2.

After the Revolution and into the nineteenth century, the attitudes toward foreigners which appeared in American drama may be broken into three categories: foreigners viewed and depicted sympathetically because of their innate humanity, because they accept American precepts, and for reasons more closely tied to form and genre than to political predilections.<sup>62</sup>

Although referring to earlier plays, Gallagher's categories are also relevant to later U.S. dramas. Yet these categories are not independent from each other and in reality work simultaneously to define performed alterity. The "innate humanity" of a foreign character makes it more palatable to U.S. audiences and indeed follows "American precepts" on virtue and modes of conduct, extending Anderson's "imagined communities" to also include an Other that is "Americanized" for the safeguarding of the nation. These characterizations are thereby adapted to fit the U.S. melodramatic formula. In *Loyal Hearts*, the characters of Rufus Gray and Erico Aja fit the categories set by Gallagher since they are configured to be safely consumed by audiences in the U.S. Strangely, Gallagher rejects that the political is involved in generic depictions and so fails to see how U.S. melodrama responds to its time.

On the other hand, Peter Brooks considers melodrama "as a mode of conception and expression, as a certain fictional system for making sense of experience, as a semantic field of force."<sup>63</sup> Brooks's idea of melodrama extends Gallagher's in the sense that the dramatic form becomes a way of interpreting national experience and so alterity is not limited to a generic formula but to the way that difference is read by contemporary society. The vision that constructs difference in both acceptable and reprehensible ways thus inevitably comments on a reality of the U.S. These performed racial and national alterities coexist and collide against each other,

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<sup>62</sup>Kent G. Gallagher, *The Foreigner in Early American Drama* (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1966), 112.

<sup>63</sup>Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), xvii.

bringing forth an unstable and problematic idea of U.S. society at the time, along the lines of how Fajardo Ortiz's idealized Cuban society addressed a genuine interaction of a multitude of identities in Cuba.

In either depicting the U.S. with nationalistic pride or as an alterity that arouses suspicion among Cuban audiences, the four plays that have been studied as the focus of this chapter demonstrate that theatre cannot be solely considered as a hegemonic tool of the state precisely because of the multitude of voices that affectively interact with each other in the performance of nation. These four plays portray the U.S. and Cuba as posthegemonic nations which were both defined within their national borders and by Othered voices from across the sea. In these texts, Mignolo's idea of the colonial difference is represented as a transnational space where the U.S. consumes the Caribbean and where Cuba challenges its Usonian invaders.

## Chapter 2: Negotiating between Cubanía and Cubanismo for a Transnational Audience

### Introduction: Mambí Cubanías and Melodramatic Cubanismos

The Cuban plays written to be staged in the U.S. as part of the political activities of the Cuban Junta enacted unique forms of *Cubanía*, a term that Fernando Ortiz, the Cuban anthropologist, defined in opposition to *Cubanismo*.<sup>1</sup> While the latter stands for “the generic condition of being Cuban,” Cubanía is “a cubanidad that is full, felt, conscious, and desired; a responsible cubanidad, a cubanidad with the three virtues said to be theological: faith, hope, and love.”<sup>2</sup> On one hand, Cubanía is the will to be different and an affirmation of identity that during the nineteenth century marked a separation between those fighting for an independent Cuba and those who identified as Spanish. On the other hand, Cubanismo is a blanket term that encompasses authentic and/or imagined (as in Cuban stereotypes in nineteenth-century U.S. melodrama) expressions that referenced the island. Cubanismo lacks the agency that Cubanía imparts to the Cuban body. In this chapter I argue that while the Cubanía of Adolfo Pierra’s play, *The Cuban Patriots*, negotiates its definition with a foreign presence by appropriating aspects of U.S. culture, the Cubanismo of Frank Dumont’s Usonian melodrama, *The Cuban Spy*, justifies the protectionist/imperialist attitude of the U.S. over Cuba.<sup>3</sup> Pierra’s play advances a Cubanía marked by a significant contradiction since its revolutionary appeal lies in how it accommodates the island to U.S. social and political standards, while never losing its stance against Spain’s

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<sup>1</sup> The Junta, formed in 1895, was the branch of the Cuban revolutionary government responsible for diplomatic relations with the U.S. and other nations. Its president elect was Tomás Estrada Palma and its headquarters were in New York City, where most of the group’s activities to bolster support for the revolution took place. The Junta and its relevance to Cuban theatre will be further explored later in this chapter.

<sup>2</sup> Fernando Ortiz, “The Human Factors of Cubanidad,” trans. João Felipe Gonçalves and Gregory Duff Morton, *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 4, no. 3 (2014): 460.

<sup>3</sup> Adolfo Pierra, *The Cuban Patriots: A Drama of the Struggle for Independence Actually Going on in the Gem of the Antilles* (Philadelphia: publisher unknown, 1873); Frank Dumont, *The Cuban Spy: A Comedy-Drama in Four Acts* (Philadelphia: The Penn Publishing Company, 1915).

imperialism.<sup>4</sup> In contrast to Pierra, Dumont's melodramatic heroine referenced in the title portrays a hollow Cubanismo whose revolutionary edge dissolves as soon as she comes into contact with the American protagonist. Nevertheless, Dumont's Cuban heroine retains her characteristic opposition to U.S. ideals of femininity, thereby bearing the mark of Otherness. While I use Cubanismo to reference the products of U.S. drama's Othering practices, I employ Cubanía to allude to Cuban expressions that negotiated and performed their revolutionary identities in the U.S.

The Cubanía that is the central focus in my project is one that deviates from the monolithic "theological" virtues of "faith, hope, and love" in Ortiz's definition. The Cuban anthropologist envisions Cubanía as a quasi-religious entity, which begs the questions: how open to change and difference is this concept? Does this locus of identity accept utterances that simultaneously defy Spanish imperialism while negotiating with U.S. neocolonialism? How does the neocolonial power perform a Cubanismo that may seem revolutionary while tearing away any possibility of action from the Cuban body? What are the differences between the Cubanía of Mambí theatre and the Cubanismo of U.S. melodrama?<sup>5</sup> In this chapter, I explore these lines of

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<sup>4</sup> Pierra's *The Cuban Patriots* was originally written in English since one of its primary goals may have been to disseminate the ideas of the revolution in the U.S. and to garner financial support. This linguistic preference also denotes the play's intention of portraying an island that was culturally, socially, and politically not that distant from the U.S. Spanish then becomes the language of the corrupt Spaniards while English serves as the perfect vehicle for revolutionary ideas of liberation.

<sup>5</sup> According to Philip S. Foner, the term *Mambí* originated during Santo Domingo's war for independence from Spain in 1846. Juan Ethninius Mamby, a Black Spanish officer, joined the insurgents and so the Spanish militia started referring to the Dominican revolutionaries as the "the men of Mamby," a description that was later reduced to Mambies. Many of these Spanish officers were relocated to Cuba during the Ten Years' War (1868-78) and they referred to the Cuban revolutionaries as *Mambises* (*The Spanish-Cuban-American War and the Birth of U.S. Imperialism 1895-1902* [New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972], 1:31). In his chronicles as a news correspondent in Cuba during the Ten Years' War, James J. O'Kelly describes Mambí-land as "a shadow-land, full of doubts and unrealities. It is a legend, and yet a fact. It is called by many names, yet few know where begins or ends its frontier. Spaniards call it the Manigua, or Los Montes, Americans talk of it as Free Cuba, and those who dwell within its confines, Cuba Libre, or the Mambi-Land" (*The Mambi-land; or, Adventures of a Herald Correspondent in Cuba* [Philadelphia: J.B Lippincott & Co., 1874], 12). In his complex definition of Mambí-land, O'Kelly mythifies the revolutionary concept of Mambí due to its ever-changing essence. O'Kelly's romantic definition of the region, alongside Foner's genealogical analysis of the concept, underscores the transnational connections of the nineteenth-century Caribbean revolutions. As a concept, Mambí was coined in the Dominican Republic, was popularized as a

questioning by focusing on a complex and contradictory performance of Cubanía present in Adolfo Pierra's *The Cuban Patriots*, which diverges from the simplistic Cubanismo at the center of Frank Dumont's *The Cuban Spy*, a U.S. "comedy-drama" about the 1890s Cuban revolution. Although there is no actual proof of when, where, and for whom these plays were performed, it is highly probable that Pierra's formed part of the activities of the Cuban Junta to gather support in the U.S. for independence. *The Cuban Patriots* neatly fits the Junta's annexationist agenda by emphasizing the island's exotic attractions, its similarities to the South of the United States, and its "submissive" Black populations.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, Dumont's play is typical of the theatre favored at the time in the U.S., especially since, in true melodramatic form, it provided a glimpse to audiences of an exotic war-torn land whose virtue is in need of protection by the all-American hero. Both plays emphasize racial and ethnic difference as well as particular ways of engaging with a Usonian and Cuban Other, and indirectly question the ideal location from which a revolutionary identity might arise.

In general, Mambí theatre performed an identity forced into a transnational coexistence with the U.S. because of the nation's ever-increasing involvement in matters of the revolution. Not only did islanders engage with an expanding Usonian Otherness in Cuba, but many Cubans fled to the U.S. to escape persecution from the Spanish authorities and to continue the fight for national liberation. Due to these encounters, much Cuban theatre championed and/or challenged a nationalist myth of racial purity that corresponded with the politics of race of the North American nation. This issue was central to the revolutionary movement on the island ever since

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revolutionary reference in Cuba, and defined a theatre genre that expressed the dynamic and energetic message of the Cuban revolution to the U.S. and beyond.

<sup>6</sup> Most of the representatives of the Cuban Junta did not openly discuss the organization's annexationist inclinations because they were aware that most revolutionaries on the island fought for an independent republic. The Junta strived for a united front rather than delve into the different conceptions of the island's future. See Gerald Poyo, *With all, and for the Good of all: The Emergence of Popular Nationalism in the Cuban Communities of the United States, 1848-1898*(Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1989), 28.

El Grito de Yara and permeates José Martí's writing about the future of América, the ideological base of the 1890s Cuban revolution.<sup>7</sup> Following his example, the Cuban insurgency advocated for the inexistence of racial difference in order to repudiate Spanish claims that the island could not be an independent nation precisely because of its mixed people and predominant Black population. The international community viewed the Cuban army as overpowered by Black men, a belief that affected the Junta's fight for the recognition of belligerency by the United States government. U.S. acceptance of the rights of Cubans to rebel against Spain would greatly benefit the insurgency since the action would bring diplomatic recognition to the revolutionary government and the diaspora could then legally transport arms and soldiers to the island. Yet the United States government during Grover Cleveland's and William McKinley's presidencies insisted on its neutrality, which ultimately favored Spain and penalized any aid missions departing from its coasts. These actions were due to the widespread fear that if Cubans achieved independence, the island would become another Haiti.<sup>8</sup> As U.S. involvement in the revolution augmented when it became clear to the international community that the insurgency would defeat Spain, the Cuban government assigned white officers to positions of power thereby portraying a whitened version of the island to the foreign presence.<sup>9</sup> *The Cuban Patriots* responds to this whitening drive, evident in its illustration of a white Criollo nobility that sympathizes with

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<sup>7</sup> Oscar Montero, "José Martí Against Race," in *The Cuban Republic and José Martí: Reception and Use of a National Symbol*, ed. Mauricio A. Font and Alfonso W. Quiroz (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2006), 95. On October 10, 1868, Carlos Manuel de Céspedes declared el Grito de Yara from his historically renowned sugar refinery, La Demajagua. This act of rebellion, which started with Céspedes's liberation of his own slaves, lasted for exactly ten years and so became known as the Ten Years' War.

<sup>8</sup> The fear of a slave revolution was present in the U.S. ever since Toussaint Louverture's uprising in Saint Domingue, which started in 1791 and concluded in 1804. Sixty years later, U.S. abolitionists still believed that the chaos of the Civil War could ignite another slave uprising of the magnitude of Saint Domingue. See Matthew J. Clavin, *Toussaint Louverture and the American Civil War* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011). The U.S. feared a race war in Cuba not only because of the repercussions it could have on the nation's post-bellum racial tensions, but also because it could affect its economic interests on the island. This last factor was determinant for the U.S. government's neutral role and its unofficial support of Spanish sovereignty in Cuba.

<sup>9</sup> Ada Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba: Race, Nation, and Revolution, 1868-1898* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 186-87.

the insurgency and looks over a recently liberated and still loyal Black population. The play maintains relations of power between the races and subverts Martí's ideal, thereby enacting problematic negotiations between a diversity of Cuban identities and the U.S. *The Cuban Patriots* makes evident how a transatlantic multitude of bodies entered into relations of power characterized by a constantly mutating state due to the indetermination of the island's political future links to the U.S. The Cubanía envisioned by Pierra's play reflects this complexity in contrast to the puerility of Dumont's melodramatic Cubanismo.

Throughout the nineteenth century, the U.S. gradually moved its imperial agenda closer to the Caribbean, and New York stages started representing the island's plight even before Cuba reluctantly began to endure the neocolonial presence. Melodrama, the then-reigning theatrical aesthetic in the U.S. (and throughout the Western world), was an opportune genre since it conventionally portrayed heroes who stood for virtue (the Cuban insurgency and its American supporters) confronting a villain (a Spaniard with a suspicious alliance to the island's authorities) intent on destroying them. Moreover, melodrama became a ubiquitous aesthetic that even permeated most fields of thought throughout the nineteenth century. In Wylie Sypher's view, "[T]he weaker 19<sup>th</sup> Century minds hovered near compromise. The stronger became revolutionary. The alternatives were too unequivocal to be unified or reconciled within the sensibility. The imagination was pressed away from the neutrality of the world toward overstatement."<sup>10</sup> This melodramatic overstatement determined not only the dramatic onstage opposition between hero and villain but also gave a particular virtuous hue to any expression of Cubanismo and, by extension, of U.S. Americanness even beyond theatres. U.S. melodrama echoed and influenced the nation's gaze on the outside world.

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<sup>10</sup> Wylie Sypher, "Aesthetic of Revolution: The Marxist Melodrama," in *The Kenyon Review* 10, no. 3 (Summer, 1948): 432.

While New York stages presented plays like Dumont's *The Cuban Spy*, where a Spanish villain threatened the chastity of a rebellious Cuban woman, the New York-based Cuban newspaper, *La patria (The Homeland)*, published an article titled "La demencia española" ("The Spanish Dementia"). In this 1898 editorial piece about the explosion of the *Maine* on February 15th, a few months before the publication of the article, the unidentified writer plainly sets the cast of characters in the melodramatic theatre of war in Cuba. The reporter states:

En la terrible crisis provocada por la voladura del *Maine*, como causa inmediata, lo que se ha puesto más de relieve es el contraste radical entre el temperamento del pueblo español y el pueblo americano. Mientras los españoles parecen poseídos del espíritu de demencia, el enérgico dominio de sí mismo que [han] demostrado [los Estados Unidos] ha podido revelar a los más indiferentes lo seguro que [están] de su fuerza incontrastable. "No somos un pueblo histérico" ha dicho el expresidente Harrison.

In the terrible crisis provoked by the explosion of the *Maine*, the immediate cause, what has come forward is the contrast between the temperament of the Spanish and the Americans. While the Spanish seem possessed by the spirit of dementia, the energetic self-control that the United States has shown reveals, even to the most indifferent, their confidence over their unmatched power. Ex-president Harrison has said: "We are not a hysterical people."<sup>11</sup>

Cuban journalists asserted the emotional instability of the Spanish in opposition to the U.S. government distinguished by self-control. The Old World's savage villainy threatened the Cubanismo of a virtuous Caribbean island in need of protection by the New World's cool heroism. As a "dominant mode of cultural production" throughout the nineteenth century,

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<sup>11</sup> "La demencia española," *La patria*, March 19, 1898. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

melodrama was constantly enforced into the historical narrative of the Cuban revolution by newspaper stories, the Edison films, and the communiqués of the Junta, among other mass media outlets.<sup>12</sup> Even Mambí theatre used the melodramatic model to clearly articulate the ideas of the revolution to U.S. audiences. Nevertheless, the melodramatic Cubanismo of Dumont's *The Cuban Spy*, symbolized by the rebellious Elinora, is a simplistic expression ripe for the taking by a white Usonian masculinity as opposed to the Cubanía of *The Cuban Patriots*, which voluntarily invites the American presence as it asserts the island's own triumph (not the U.S.'s) over Spanish iniquity. I begin by examining Jon Beasley-Murray's concept of the posthegemonic and its transnational character, central to my analysis of how Pierra's *The Cuban Patriots* performed Cubanía as an expression of an idealized multitude that resisted the oppressive power of Spain and how the Cubanismo in Dumont's work weakens the island's power through its portrayal of the revolution. I continue by discussing the role of the Junta in advancing the Cuban cause in the U.S. to then explore how Pierra's *The Cuban Patriots* conceived a revolutionary Cubanía that was politically, socially, and culturally aligned with a post-bellum U.S. I conclude by pondering how Dumont's *The Cuban Spy* personifies the island as a strong and rebellious woman who will do anything to protect a masculine U.S., thereby consolidating a melodramatic Cubanismo that rejects any actual connections to the island.

### The Posthegemonic and the Transatlantic Space

The way in which the U.S. envisioned the Cuban body as a location of virtue to be defended from a European oppressor legitimized the depiction of Cubanismo as an Othered victim in need of saving. By turning the Cuban conflict into a metaphor cemented by mass media, the U.S. government assumed the role of the selfless protector of the downtrodden

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<sup>12</sup> Ralph J. Poole and Ilka Saal, "Passionate Politics: An Introduction," in *Passionate Politics: The Cultural Work of American Melodrama from the Early Republic to the Present*, eds. Ralph J. Poole and Ilka Saal (Newcastle, U.K.: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008), 7.

thereby masking its real agenda: protecting American economic interests.<sup>13</sup> Powerless in front of a racially, culturally, and technologically “superior” Spain, representations of Cuba in melodrama undoubtedly justified to U.S. Americans why “inferior” Criollos and Blacks were not in power on the island. Uncle Sam’s army became the destined defender of Cubans’ right to justice and independence from their oppressors. Thus, the melodramatic narrative defined the national imaginary during the second half of the nineteenth century. The reference to melodrama does not limit the scope of this perspective to the theatre, since it was a dominant worldview that permeated cultural, social, scientific, and political endeavors throughout the nineteenth century.<sup>14</sup> Binaries that brought forth the either/or relationships of opposition were at the center of every social movement, from revolution and exploitation to nationalism and annexation, among others. It is fairly simple to grasp the war along melodramatic lines positing the Spanish villains against the victimized Cubans. Such a world is easier to understand from within a hegemonic frame of mind since those in power, the possessors of the prevailing narrative, ruled over the voiceless masses. Yet Cubans were going through a definitive historical transition where those who possessed the power to resist Spanish imperialism were not just a select few, but a whole nation united by a cause. Their voices even became part of the U.S. at the time, especially with the Cuban exile community mobilizing to support the revolution and in doing so exposing the limitations of a hegemonic reading of history.

As a commercially popular genre, melodrama could be viewed as a hegemonic instrument that guided the masses on how to think about any national endeavor and foreign events that had an impact on the U.S. Due to melodrama’s spectacular moments and exciting portrayal of exotic environments, which attracted audiences from every socioeconomic sphere,

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<sup>13</sup>Louis A. Pérez, *Cuba in the American Imagination* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 45.

<sup>14</sup> Sypher, “Aesthetic of Revolution.”

U.S. theatres entertained and informed the masses about the Cuban revolutions. Yet national playwrights were not the only ones writing about Cuba since the Junta also organized activities that used theatre to express their need for support. The hollow Cubanismo of U.S. melodrama clashed with the Cubanía of Mambí theatre staged in New York. While the former proved that the All-American hero needed to protect the subjugated island, the latter contended that the revolution needed U.S. aid to win the war and to give Cuba an economically stable future. Mambí theatre foregrounded Cubans and portrayed them as the leading voices within their own new government. Yet even among members of the Cuban community, there existed a rift between the insurgents, for whom independence was the goal, and the Criollo middle classes, who tended to favor annexation to the U.S. The struggle was not only between the villain and the hero, but also between opposing sides among the “victimized.” The annexationist camp, whose representatives were mostly members of the Junta in the U.S., preferred to avoid bringing up the island’s political future to maintain unity during the struggle. Nevertheless, the political inevitably infused Pierra’s *The Cuban Patriots*. We might ask if Pierra’s play adds to the definition of Cubanía, given that it ultimately embraces a conservative annexation. How do the conflicting Cuban fronts of independence and annexation coexist within the scope of a dominant ruling ideology? Within the nineteenth-century melodramatic mode, does Dumont’s *The Cuban Spy* present a Cubanismo that dominated how the masses envisioned the island from the U.S.? I contend that Jon Beasley-Murray’s concept of the posthegemonic is a more practical tool to examine the forces at play within the theatre at this historical moment because of the reconfiguration of power structures in the Caribbean space that extended from Cuba to the exile communities in New York.

As stated in Chapter 1, Beasley-Murray redefines Gramsci's concept of hegemony, in which all forms of cultural expression, from media and art to the normative constructs of family and sexuality, become forms of domination.<sup>15</sup> The hegemonic directs the people through an ideologically set path that affirms the rulers' power. Domination is further achieved by complementing ideological power with the physical force of the state thereby exercising and legitimizing its authority. Gramsci's idea restricts culture as an absolute expression of hegemony where only the ruling class directly or indirectly expresses its ideology to be followed by the dominated masses. As with Gayatri Spivak's seemingly Gramscian statement, "the subaltern cannot speak," a space is divided between those who have a voice that is heard and the voiceless, even if they could still be able to overturn these relations of power and dominate through their own hegemonic expressions.<sup>16</sup> For Gramsci, culture then only exists as a pure tool of the state. Yet, during the turn of the century, U.S. melodrama about Cuba did not necessarily voice the attitude of both Grover Cleveland's and William McKinley's administrations, which opposed the revolution and any type of intervention. At the same time, Pierra's *The Cuban Patriots* represents the political perspective of the Cuban Diaspora, which favored annexation to the U.S. in opposition to the insurgent army's resolute belief in total independence. Ironically, the diverse fronts of the Mambí army were as divided politically as the drama itself. While on one hand Desiderio Fajardo Ortiz's Mambí play *La emigración al Caney* (*The Migration to Caney*) ends in a warning about the U.S. intervention forces on the island, Pierra's characters welcome U.S. military officials with the natural delights that the island offers.<sup>17</sup> Both texts belong to the Mambí

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<sup>15</sup> Antonio Gramsci, *The Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings, 1916-1935*, ed. David Forgasc (New York: New York University Press, 2000).

<sup>16</sup> Gayatri Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, eds. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossbert (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 313.

<sup>17</sup> Desiderio Fajardo Ortiz, *La emigración al Caney*, in *Teatro Mambí*, ed. Rine Leal (La Habana, Cuba: Editorial Letras Cubanas, 1978), 343-429. I analyze the play in more detail in the first chapter.

tradition, yet following Gramsci's definition of hegemony, which one voices the circles of power at the head of the revolution? The coexistence of these two plays challenges Gramsci's beliefs due to its depiction of culture along binary definitions of power. In opposition to Gramsci, Jon Beasley-Murray denies that order is maintained through hegemony.

Beasley-Murray argues that the focus on the hegemonic binds any analysis to the *above* rather than the *below* since it is more interested in how the ideological is reproduced to legitimize power. He does not deny that the state coerces and oppresses its constituents, but rejects that its power is an immanent presence even when it is hidden behind a fantasy of transcendence. At this particular historical juncture, when Spain had already lost its hold on its Caribbean colonies because of the revolution and the U.S. forces were about to march into the Caribbean, an above/below reading of any cultural text muffles the voices that defy this duality. Furthermore, the hegemonic limits the voice that speaks through a cultural text to a single nationally specific representation of the above, rather than revealing the diversity of *transnational* discourses that also participate in a particular construction. In *Blurred Borders: Transnational Migration Between the Hispanic Caribbean and the United States*, Jorge Duany defines *transnationalism* as:

[...] the construction of dense social fields through the circulation of people, ideas, practices, money, goods, and information across nations. This circulation includes, but is not limited to, the physical movement of human bodies as well as other types of exchanges, which may or not be recurrent, such as travel, communication, and remittances.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Jorge Duany, *Blurred Borders: Transnational Migration Between the Hispanic Caribbean and the United States* (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 20-21.

As Duany contends, transnationalism highlights the multiple voices travelling from various national contexts that influence a social field. While transnationalism takes into account the border-crossing of knowledges, a hegemonic interpretation of a work remains stagnant due to its emphasis on the univocal *above*. An analysis that examines the transnational within any cultural text takes into account state-imposed ideologies alongside migrant discourses that defy territoriality. The efficiency of a posthegemonic reading calls attention to how the interaction of bodies materializes power across a transnational arena, perpetuating it through habit, and highlighting the power of the multitude. Affect, habit, and multitude are the three pillars that support Beasley-Murray's posthegemony and delineate the theoretical parameters of my examination of Cuban and U.S. drama.

Affect is a convenient concept with which to question the facile reading of the hegemonic in Mambí plays and U.S. melodrama. It not only foregrounds the instability of identity, but also exposes the univocal historical depiction of particular moments that affirm the participation of the powerful over the countless voices of the powerless. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's affective theory highlights how bodies are in constant movement or "becoming" into others. Deleuze affirms that "affects aren't feelings, they're becomings that spill over beyond whoever lives through them (thereby becoming someone else)."<sup>19</sup> Affect then invalidates a fixed identity as one more way for the state to structure and capture the constant mutability of the collective. Moreover affect is a suitable theoretical tool when examining texts that depict the 1890s Cuban conflict because of the plays' lack of a clear-cut and constraining position or identity that may appear to define the ethos of a people. The coexistence of Cubanismo and Cubanía, together with all the performative variables that the latter brought forth on particular stages in the U.S.

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<sup>19</sup> Gilles Deleuze, "On Philosophy," in *Negotiations 1972-1990*, trans. Martin Joughin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 137.

throughout the 1890s, also opened the possibilities of these plays as historical narratives that echo the mutability of the Cuban nation at this turning point in the history of the Caribbean. In relation to this particular issue, Beasley-Murray criticizes how the treatment of history as narrative “is the by-product of a process that selects, confines, and captures an affective flow that is in fact unpredictably mobile and in continuous variation.”<sup>20</sup> Historical writing posits the moment of change on a specific subject or collective, thereby ignoring the infinite affective exchanges between bodies. Beasley-Murray sheds light on the historiographical omission of the countless and contradicting voices that also work to shape the histories of a region and that are evident in the coexistence of Cubanismo and Cubanía. Furthermore, the Western tradition of tracing history as a linear narrative that erases the unpredictability of the countless movements that participate in an event.

The challenge to the historian is how to escape the limitations of systemic structure to emphasize the heterogeneous and constantly moving affective webs. In their article “On the Border with Deleuze and Guattari,” Keith Woodward and John Paul Jones III propose the border as an example of a liminal space where the becoming is never fully accomplished. They assert:

If the border metaphor is problematic for dealing with moments of heterogeneity because it tends to presuppose and fall back upon a unified transcendental identity on either of its sides, where, so to speak, do we begin? Deleuze and Guattari’s response is that we start with the fragmented pieces [...] [that] produce a whole that is *immanent to* the multiplicities that constitute an assemblage.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Jon Beasley-Murray, *Posthegemony: Political Theory and Latin America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 131.

<sup>21</sup> Keith Woodward and John Paul Jones III, “On the Border with Deleuze and Guattari,” in *B/ordering Space*, ed. Henk van Houtum, Olivier Kramsch, and Wolfgang Zierhofer (Aldershot, U.K.: Ashgate, 2005), 238.

Woodward and Jones envision the border as a metaphorical location positioned between two sites and so there is a constant negotiation with and mutation into an Other. Turn-of-the-century New York stages were indeed border locations in which Cubanía was in constant transformation because of the negotiations with the U.S. In this sense, the plays project the diverse communities that Cuban playwrights addressed in order to enact a Cubanía that would be consumed alongside a Cubanismo by U.S. and the Diaspora in the metropolis. As a result, Cuban drama circumvents the limitations of a univocal narrative history by highlighting the bodies with which it negotiates identity. These varied, constructed, and constantly changing perspectives formed a transnational habitus, which revolved around the U.S. imperial project in the Caribbean.

Another theoretical component in Beasley-Murray's posthegemony is habit, a useful tool since it highlights how numerous identities, ideas, and tastes travel across national and geographical borders. Pierre Bourdieu's *habitus* serves as a foundation for Beasley-Murray's idea. Bourdieu defines the habitus as an imaginary space of contradicting perceptions that struggle with each other thereby distinguishing a location or field.<sup>22</sup> It is inevitably interlaced with a symbolic power that is exercised by a structured system of taste. This space is not made unique by the cultural products created from within its boundaries, but by the diverse judgments that are generated and classified and which participate in the conception of those products. Furthermore, the habitus is not limited to a space demarcated by physical or political borders, but exists in a cultural field that encompasses groups which struggle within countless readings of a given expression. Beasley-Murray stresses the perseverance of the habitus when he asserts that as "the expression of an embodied common sense," it is almost immutable since it is hard to let

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<sup>22</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1984), 170.

go of habits.<sup>23</sup> Echoing Bourdieu, Beasley-Murray assures us that it is easier to change the social field. So a cultural object that means one thing at one point and may have a different definition at another demonstrates that the field where the object is exhibited has altered, yet the habitus persists. This is crucial to my analysis since Cuban dramatic expressions performed at different points in the nineteenth century and at different locations enact Cubanía in unique ways in how they respond to diverse conditions and also coexist with U.S. American expressions of Cubanismo. Nevertheless, there are still certain points of contact between these divergent expressions of Cuban identity even when each performance makes evident the negotiations with the new political conditions and how these relate to both the Cuban people and the Usonian invasion.

Around 1898, the Cuban revolutions and the subsequent war brought together various nations. Hence the continuation of a transatlantic world and culture, which started in the horrors of slave trafficking across the Middle Passage, revolved around the imperial presence of the United States during the late nineteenth century.<sup>24</sup> The drama conceived from within this colonial space reflects a unique and transnational habitus distinguished by the neocolonial encounter of nations. Multiple opposing voices participated within the U.S. theatre scene and so the plays also negotiated between and resonated with the multitude of judgments that defined the field. The colonial difference brought together countless peoples from all over the world into one space where they struggled and generated complex power relations among themselves.<sup>25</sup> Although Bourdieu underscores the relationship of a producer of goods and the critical eye of the

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<sup>23</sup> Beasley-Murray, *Posthegemony*, 178.

<sup>24</sup> Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).

<sup>25</sup> According to Walter D. Mignolo, colonial difference is “the classification of the planet in the modern/colonial imaginary, by enacting coloniality of power, an energy and machine to transform difference into values” (*Local Histories/Global Designs*, 13). The colonial difference is a physical location and, at the same time, an imaginary space since it is not circumscribed by physical borders. This transnational locale is conceived wherever the coloniality of power is enacted.

consumer, a creator develops a product targeting a number of palates. Hence the creation is inherently an articulation of the field. If analyzed in depth, turn-of-the-century Cuban theatre reveals a system of diverse taste profiles that corresponds with to a transnational community. Theatre artists enacted notions of Cubanía and Cubanismo to be consumed by various audiences. After all, the Cuban Diaspora was staging a drama aimed at winning support for the revolution by presenting a Cuba that was not as socially, politically, and culturally distant from the U.S. The work is not only conscious of its consumption, but also of the powerful Usonian consumers and politically dissatisfied Cubans who were unified as a multitude.

The third theoretical component that supports Beasley-Murray's posthegemony is the concept of multitude, a human network of conflictive identities and worldviews that may simultaneously trigger revolutions and impose neocolonial agendas. In their book, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri define multitude by theorizing about its difference to the *people* and the *masses*. They argue that the *people* "synthesizes or reduces [...] social differences into one identity."<sup>26</sup> The *masses* also function in the same way since, along with the *crowd* and the *mob*, they "are not singularities –and this is obvious from the fact that their differences so easily collapse into the indifference of the whole."<sup>27</sup> For Hardt and Negri, the heterogeneity of the multitude is compromised when it is either captured within the structure of the *people*, thereby restraining the affective power of bodies, and/or its diversity is eliminated when condemned to the position of the *masses*. Although Hardt and Negri argue that the multitude is unique because its strength lies precisely in its acceptance of difference from all its constituents, there is a unifying element that brings the

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<sup>26</sup> Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2004), 99.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 100.

bodies together. Hardt and Negri's idealization of the multitude is grounded by Beasley-Murray's examination of the limitations of the concept:

[...] the multitude is the culmination of a long history of struggle; it is the form of subjectivity that presses revolutionary demands on all fronts, presaging capitalism's terminal crisis [...]. Though the multitude initiates revolution, all too soon something goes wrong. What begins as immanence and liberation, as innovation and creativity, ends up as transcendence and normalization, as the state form and its repressive apparatuses.<sup>28</sup>

Beasley-Murray understands the capabilities of a revolutionary multitude yet sees how it could be redirected and aligned with the power of the state. In *Imperio e imperialismo (Empire and Imperialism)*, Atilio Borón also opposes Hardt and Negri's thesis for their indifference towards immigrants in countries like the U.S. who are marginalized and so do not fit into their romantic notions of the multitude.<sup>29</sup> Beasley-Murray and Borón demonstrate that the multitude is not an idealized unity of bodies, but a problematic, incomplete, and constantly mutable multiplicity of identities that forces the representatives of power and those who are subjected to that authority into a precarious coexistence. This idea of the multitude is fundamental to my use of posthegemony in understanding how Cubanía and Cubanismo correlated on U.S. stages around the time of the Spanish-Cuban-American War and even extended from New York to the actual theatre of war in the Caribbean. These varied performances of Cuban identity belong to a specific habitus distinguished by a transnational multitude that structured diverse relations of power from within the affective exchange of the colonial difference.

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<sup>28</sup> Beasley-Murray, *Posthegemony*, 229.

<sup>29</sup> Atilio Borón, *Imperio & imperialismo: Una lectura crítica de Michael Hardt y Antonio Negri* (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales, 2004), Prologue, <http://biblioteca.clacso.edu.ar/clacso/se/20100604021228/imperio.pdf>.

## Fighting Mambises in the U.S.

Although towards the end of the nineteenth century, Mambí theatre performed a revolutionary sense of Cubanía, many plays within this tradition reveal a constant negotiation with and integration within the U.S. because of their direct and/or indirect involvement in the fight against Spain. At the same time, Mambí plays by definition supported the revolution by denouncing Spanish imperialism and promoting independence. These texts shed light on the internal struggles of the Cuban insurgency. The Junta, a group composed by members of the Cuban Diaspora in the U.S., commissioned many of these plays to be staged in New York to raise funds and popular support for the cause. In his article “Propaganda Activities of the Cuban *Junta*,” George Auxier notes the effectiveness of this approach:

[t]he fruits of the *Junta*'s propaganda which followed later, in financial contributions, recruits, liberal interpretations of our neutrality laws, the establishment of a sentiment in Congress favoring the recognition of Cuban belligerency, and finally in armed American intervention, all showed that the *Junta* had indeed done its job well [...].<sup>30</sup>

Even when Auxier exaggerates the role of the Junta in the U.S.'s decision to intervene, the organization was indeed important in providing the insurgency with funds, men, and weapons and in rallying popular opinion to support the cause.<sup>31</sup> The tactics of the Junta centered among

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<sup>30</sup> George Auxier, “Propaganda Activities of the Cuban *Junta*,” *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 19, no. 3 (August 1939): 305.

<sup>31</sup> Congress had insistently proposed to both the Cleveland and McKinley administrations to recognize Cuba's right to belligerency. However, neither president was interested in defying Spain's authority in Cuba since both thought it would prove detrimental to the U.S. economic interests on the island. Furthermore, they thought that they would be safer if Spain was in control rather than a Cuban revolutionary government. The principal reason for the U.S. intervention was not due to popular support for the cause, the pressures exercised by Congress, the explosion of the *Maine*, or the De Lôme Letter, a document that the Junta brought to public attention in which the Spanish Ambassador, Don Enrique Dupuy De Lôme, wrote some unflattering statements about President McKinley. The United States intervened because of its self-interests. See Foner, *The Spanish-Cuban-American War and the Birth of U.S. Imperialism 1895-1902*.

other activities on the performance of Cuban revolutionary ideals through plays, poetry readings, and public speeches. Its main goal was to win moral and material support from U.S. sympathizers and therefore accomplish the nation's direct involvement in the revolution.<sup>32</sup> Yet this relationship between Cuban exiles in the U.S. was not always as harmonious as Auxier might lead one to think. The Junta had been advocating for the revolution in the U.S. since the 1840s, even when its message and tactics were highly criticized among Cubans in the Diaspora and on the island. During the 1850s, *El pueblo*, a newspaper which was very critical of the Junta's annexationist interests and, as a result, of its pro-slavery stance, denounced the organization's lack of support for a strong island-based insurgency. The newspaper's editor, Francisco Agüero Estrada, who had gone into exile due to his revolutionary activity in Cuba, even accused the Junta of hindering filibustering missions to the island and forgetting about the people's sacrifice while waiting to join the fight. As more Cubans arrived to the U.S., many of whom did not belong to the privileged classes, social resentment toward the Junta worsened.<sup>33</sup> At that point, the Junta gradually passed from having a predominantly annexationist attitude towards the U.S., to one of complete distrust towards the government and the nation's hesitation to interfere with Spain's authority. Reality cracked the idealized homogeneity of a revolutionary Cuban multitude.

During the 1850s, the Cuban Diaspora progressively moved away from less effective "pro-diplomacy separatist leadership" and apprehensive island Creole elites who seemed intimidated by an open revolt against Spain.<sup>34</sup> The Junta and revolutionary sectors on the island opened up their ranks to admit such disenfranchised people as slaves, whom post-bellum U.S.

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 287.

<sup>33</sup> Rodrigo Lazo, *Writing to Cuba: Filibustering and Cuban Exiles in the United States* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 94-95.

<sup>34</sup> Gerald E. Poyo, *With all, and for the Good of all: The Emergence of Popular Nationalism in the Cuban Communities of the United States, 1848-1898* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1989), 14.

had demonstrated were an asset rather than a hindrance, throughout the war of independence from Spain. This action defined the Junta as a more forceful separatist organization intent in including sectors such as Blacks and the impoverished masses, a move that affected the way the U.S. viewed the conflict for its echoes of the slave revolution in Haiti. Having an insurgency with a predominantly Black presence would be counterproductive to the Junta's original intentions of achieving annexation to the U.S. Yet the ideals that defined the organization of this period started dissipating as the more militant exiles abandoned the Junta and formed the Sociedad Republicana de Cuba y Puerto Rico (The Republican Society of Cuba and Puerto Rico) in 1865. As a result, the Junta's leadership fell again under the control of conservative reformers who favored annexation with the U.S.<sup>35</sup> Nevertheless, when revolution was declared in 1895, the Junta united its efforts to Martí's leadership of the nation in arms and so its annexationist ideals were left behind in favor of developing a united front.

It is important to note that during the 50s and 60s, the Junta's activities did not necessarily involve theatrical performances, as the official version of the organization did during the 1890s. But Mambí theatre performed in the United States expressed all these dissonant stances ranging from an openly critical stance on the imperial implications of the U.S. involvement in the conflict to the Junta's interest in making Cuba a U.S. territory. Cuban theatre in exile existed in a dialogue with the melodramatic Cubanismo performed on New York stages. A marked difference between Cubanía and the stereotypical Cubanismo is evident in the way the former performed identity within certain parameters of family, nationhood, and gender mores, among others, prevalent in the U.S. thereby creating links to the North American nation. On the other hand, the latter focused on performing an Other branded by its difference to culturally accepted ideals in the U.S. Hence Cuban and U.S. dramas entered into a habitus that considered

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 21.

the revolution as an act of heroism, even when both theatres clashed in their definition of Cuban identity. While the national identity that Mambí plays portray is a performance of the transatlantic interconnectedness that defies geographical, political, and physical borders, American melodrama about the war accentuated the difference between the saviors (U.S.) and the victims (Cuba). Onstage Cubanía exposed not only how Cuban society in general felt about its present, but also predicted how its future would be inevitably tied to the North American invaders, most evident in the Mambí theatre performed in the U.S.

#### The Blancos Versus an Almanegra in *The Cuban Patriots*

The action in Adolfo Pierra's play, *The Cuban Patriots*, takes place in 1868 right after the beginning of El Grito de Yara (the Yara Revolt). The character of Ricardo Agudo, a young Cuban man, returns to the island from the United States where he served in the Union Army during the Civil War. He informs his friend, Enrique Blanco, that he arrived in Cuba equipped with an arsenal, which the revolutionary General Quesada and his troops are awaiting. Ricardo tells his friend to meet him in the mountains because Enrique is very familiar with the area and Blanco's battalion is poorly armed. The initial conversation between the two insurgents reflects a conflict on an island which the noble Blanco family is striving to survive. The head of Enrique's family is his elderly father, Antonio Blanco, a rich *hacendado* who sympathizes with the revolution. He lives in his manor with his two young daughters, Conchita and Rosita, and the slaves who serve them. The family is under the constant threat of the Volunteers, whom Enrique describes as impoverished Spaniards who came to the island looking for fortune and became the fiercest enemies of the Cuban rebels. Now in their early twenties, Ricardo and Conchita are in love, yet the armed struggle keeps them apart. Furthermore, Colonel Almanegra, the Spanish villain, is in love with Conchita and will stop at nothing either to make the young woman fall in

love with him or to humiliate her into submission for rejecting him. When the Spanish army disrupts the peace in the noble household, the Blancos are forced to flee to the mountains to escape being captured. In the end, Almanegra's battalion shoots Don Antonio and he consequently dies. After the Spanish villain is apprehended by the Cuban insurgents, the play concludes with a patriotic call to support a free Cuba.

Adolfo Pierra uses elements of melodrama to make a foreign revolution recognizable to U.S. audiences. Theatre was the ideal medium especially along the East Coast because spectators craved entertainment, information about the latest events, and a look at the world beyond the United States, exactly what many melodramas provided in the nineteenth century.<sup>36</sup> Theatre artists used melodrama as shorthand through which most U.S. spectators understood their world. At the same time, audiences participated in determining the stories and the way that artists performed them. In his introduction to *Melodramatic Formations*, Bruce A. McConachie expands on the symbiotic relationship between theatre and audiences:

[...] groups of spectators and theatre performers produce each other from the inside out as artists-to-be-experienced and audiences-to-be-entertained in a given historical period. The result is what may be termed a theatrical formation, the mutual elaboration over time of historically specific audience groups and theatre practitioners participating in certain shared patterns of dramatic and theatrical action.<sup>37</sup>

Through *theatrical formations*, audiences' tastes and artists' desire to be experienced constituted a habitus, which ultimately defined the parameters in which to perform the island. This does not mean that audiences required a realistic staging of Cuba, but one that fit within a theatrical

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<sup>36</sup> Tice L. Miller, *Entertaining the Nation: American Drama in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2007), 92-93.

<sup>37</sup> Bruce A. McConachie, *Melodramatic Formations* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1992), xii.

language with which they were familiar. *The Cuban Patriots* presents a racially mixed Cuba (Criollos, Spaniards, Blacks) opening up to foreign visitors (U.S. military officials who visit the Blanco family) and marked by spectacular skirmishes mainly between the virtuous Blanco family and the dastardly and lustful Almanegra.<sup>38</sup> Pierra utilizes melodrama to tell the story of one of Cuba's most important revolutionaries through the most popular dramatic genre in the U.S.

In *The Cuban Patriots*, Pierra references Carlos Manuel de Céspedes, considered the father of El Grito de Yara and an inspiration to the insurgency, thereby underscoring the patriotism of the work. Just as Archibald C. Gunter with the Cespedes family in *Cuba*, discussed in the first chapter, Pierra models some of the problems that the Blancos face upon Céspedes's life.<sup>39</sup> The revolutionary hero was the owner of a sugar plantation in Cuba and became the principal leader of the 1868 Grito de Yara. He freed his slaves as an act of defiance against Spain, an action that initiated the Ten Years' War between the *criollos* and the *peninsulares*, or those Spanish who were not born on the island and were backed by the colonial authorities. In 1869, Céspedes was named the President of the Republic of Cuba in Arms by the insurgency. Nevertheless, he was ousted as leader of the rebellion in 1873 and killed by Spanish forces in 1874, when he was cornered in his mountain refuge. The revolt, which ended in 1878 with the Pact of Zanjón, attracted much international attention to the Cuban cause, albeit no official sanction from the U.S. government. In Pierra's *The Cuban Patriots*, Carlos Manuel de Céspedes

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<sup>38</sup> The Cuban family's last name, Blanco, means *white* and the villain's name, Almanegra, translates to "black soul." The names, which could have been possibly translated in a playbill if the work was ever performed for Anglo audiences, unequivocally established the characters' moral profile within melodrama's binary order.

<sup>39</sup> It is important to note that Céspedes is normally accentuated in Spanish. Yet in Gunter's *Cuba*, the last name is used without an accent, evidencing the playwright's ignorance of the Spanish language and of contemporary Cuban politics. This issue is further explored in the first chapter of the dissertation.

and the Ten Years' War are used as recognizable symbols of a revolutionary Cuba that defied Spanish colonialism while engaging in a blatant negotiation with U.S. society.

Pierra's play makes references to Céspedes and the Ten Years' War in various ways, and some of the characters even undergo situations that are recognizable depictions of the revolutionary leader's life. The character of Don Antonio Blanco bears many similarities to Céspedes and serves as the actual leader's theatrical surrogate. In *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance*, Joseph Roach defines his idea of surrogacy in the following way:

[...] [C]ulture reproduces and re-creates itself by a process that can be best described by the word *surrogation*. In the life of a community, the process of surrogation does not begin or end but continues as actual or perceived vacancies occur in the network of relations that constitutes the social fabric. Into the cavities created by loss through death or other forms of departure [...] survivors attempt to fit satisfactory alternates. Because collective memory works selectively, imaginatively, and often perversely, surrogation rarely if ever succeeds. [...] The fit cannot be exact.<sup>40</sup>

Following Roach's idea, Don Antonio is indeed a surrogate taking the place of the slain Céspedes, even if only as a stage character. The historical leader and the fictional Don Antonio are heads of state and family, respectively. Both patriarchs firmly believe in racial equality, a revolutionary sentiment in nineteenth-century Spanish Cuba. In Act II, after Enrique delivers the news to his father that Céspedes has been unanimously elected by the rebel government as the president of Cuba, Don Antonio admires the leader's devotion to the revolution. He then reads from the Cuban constitution: "All the inhabitants of the Republic of Cuba, without distinction on

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<sup>40</sup> Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 2.

account of race or color, shall be equally free.”<sup>41</sup> In performance, the mentioning of Céspedes’s name would not only bring him to the spectators’ attention, but also the character’s actions would become echoes of the revolutionary’s deeds. After Don Antonio reads from the constitution, the playwright solidifies the character’s identification with Céspedes when the elderly patriarch summons all his slaves and grants them their freedom with the following words: “By the sovereign will of the people of Free Cuba, as written down in this constitution, you are declared absolutely and unconditionally free.”<sup>42</sup> Don Antonio solemnly delivers freedom to his slaves as both the pater familias and as the voice of the revolution, thereby becoming one with Céspedes. In this way, the play staged Céspedes’s revolutionary action of liberating the slaves from his sugar plantation in La Demajagua, the event that initiated El Grito de Yara. U.S. audiences and the Cuban Diaspora were then able to witness the decisive moment that sparked the first real and enduring rebellion that brought the Cuban cause to international attention. Moreover, audiences could feel the pathos of Céspedes’s final fall through his theatrical surrogate’s death.

Carlos Manuel de Céspedes was killed by enemy fire in 1874. Some sources argue that he was gunned down while hiding in a mountain refuge, and others report that he was ambushed by a Spanish battalion in the middle of a skirmish. It is important to note that even though at this point Céspedes was no longer the president, his death struck a hard blow to revolutionary morale because he was considered the father of the revolution. In the play, Don Antonio is also shot and consequently dies. This incident deeply affects the family, and one of their loyal slaves, Perico, swears that he will avenge Master Antonio. In an anticlimactic turn of events, after everyone discovers the death of the patriarch, the Mambises bring in Almanegra, the one responsible for

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<sup>41</sup> Pierra, *The Cuban Patriots*, 25.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 26.

Don Antonio's murder. As the prisoner is led offstage, Ricardo Agudo pronounces the play's final words:

My countrymen! here, under the folds of this –our flag single-starred banner– by the blood of our noble martyrs –let us solemnly resolve never to lay down our arms until we shall wipe out the last vestige of Spanish tyranny in America. Cubans, three hearty cheers for Free Cuba!<sup>43</sup>

These words are not only followed by all the characters' "hurrahs," but also plausibly by audience cheers. The mention of "the blood of our noble martyrs" refers to Céspedes and to the martyrdom of his stage surrogate, Don Antonio. The bittersweet cheers at the end of the performance would reveal the Cuban Diaspora's emotional and physical investment in the real conflict. Such a political performance with a powerful revolutionary surrogate transformed theatre audiences into dangerous conspirators. In turn, Usonian audiences could feel indirectly involved in a conflict that took place in the Caribbean. The theatrical staging of an insurgency and the representation of its principal figure brought audiences in the metropolis into direct contact with a performance of a revolutionary Cubanía, which was made more palatable for U.S. spectators since a show will inevitably lack the stakes of the actual event. Furthermore, the play portrays Céspedes as the wise old father who gives his life for an ideal, a melodramatic convention that sanitizes the contradictions of the real person.

The revolutionary Cubanía performed by the stage surrogate of the Cuban leader revealed a negotiation with a new cultural system. Roach argues that the surrogate is never an exact copy of the original since the new one never quite satisfies the collective idealization of the first. In relation to the play, the surrogate is made to fit a specific habitus precisely because of the goal of Mambí theatre in the U.S., which was to win general support for the Cuban cause. The realities

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid., 45.

of Céspedes's life as the leader of the revolution of '68 are not referenced in any way by the stage surrogate. In 1873, when Céspedes was deposed as president of the nation in arms, he wrote in his diary that he was defamed by Tomás Estrada Palma, the future head of the Cuban Junta in New York after the Ten Years' War.<sup>44</sup> The deposed president was so disillusioned by the presiding revolutionary committee that when the messenger handed him the official papers relieving him from his post, Céspedes thanked him for returning his liberty.<sup>45</sup> His mention of the word "liberty" in that context reveals a disheartened leader who had lost hope in the direction that the revolution was following. The actual historical figure diverges from his theatrical surrogate, Don Antonio. *The Cuban Patriots* represents Cubanía in general and the leader of the Ten Years' War in particular in more hygienic ways to be consumed by U.S. audiences. Spectators felt the satisfaction of experiencing an enactment made enjoyable by theatrical tension and melodramatic conventions, which could never capture the reality of the original. Ironically, *The Cuban Patriots* did not portray the reality of the revolutionary leader that Estrada Palma maligned. The representation of Céspedes as the head of the new Cuba is enacted for the stage by the innocuous and noble Don Antonio, the head of the Blanco family. Don Antonio thus becomes the epitome of the revolutionary ideal, a symbol that is destroyed by Almanegra and the Spanish militia.

Almanegra threatens both Don Antonio's life and Conchita's virtuous innocence. Don Antonio's family represents a Cuba that is portrayed in the play as a paradisiacal location mercilessly ravaged by the Spanish. Yet the Caribbean setting becomes a liminal space

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<sup>44</sup> Before the end of the Ten Years' War, Tomás Estrada Palma became the president of the nation in arms after Cisneros Betancourt, but he was captured by Spanish forces in 1877. After he was released, Estrada Palma left for New York where he not only led the Cuban Junta, but also became the head of the revolution after José Martí's death. After the Spanish-Cuban-American War, Estrada Palma was named president of Cuba when the U.S. forces left the island in 1902.

<sup>45</sup> Carlos Manuel de Céspedes, *El diario perdido*, ed. Eusebio Leal Spengler (La Habana, Cuba: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1994), 140-41.

represented by its cultural and social connections to the U.S. The play opens at the Blanco home in Puerto Príncipe, currently named Camagüey and the birthplace of Ignacio Agramonte, one of the leaders of the Ten Years' War. This is a fact that could have plausibly been common knowledge to many members of the Cuban Diaspora and so gave the location of the Blanco hacienda a patriotic distinction. The manor is nevertheless portrayed as a combination of various architectural styles giving the actual home a hybrid identity. The stage direction describes the home in the following way:

Elegant drawing room [...]; walls painted white or a light color; [...] large window, shutters wide open, with light iron railing on street [...]; a piano, mahogany cane-bottomed sofa and rocking-chairs; round marble table with newspapers [...]; chandelier lighted [...].<sup>46</sup>

The drawing room evokes the splendor of a Southern manor with the piano and the chandelier yet grounds the action in the island by adding the detail of the window, the shutter, and the iron railing, all elements of a Spanish colonial architecture. The play invites U.S. audiences to experience a Cuba that is unique in its revolutionary pedigree, identifies with a white Spanish-influenced culture, and yet welcomes a Southern sensibility through its structural reference. Furthermore, the Blanco family, headed by the pater familias, his loyal and brave son, and his two virtuous daughters, add a Criollo whiteness enforced by the family name, which means “white” in Spanish. Although the nineteenth-century U.S. classified the island as inhabited by a racially mixed population, the Blancos serve as reminders that there was a white aristocratic presence that kept in check the population of Black slaves. The loyalty and humility of the Blanco's slaves, evident in their willingness to fight for their white owners even after their liberation, solidified the reference to the idealized U.S. South. The play emulates Usonian racial

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<sup>46</sup> Pierra, *The Cuban Patriots*, 7.

politics in that it supports the liberation of slaves yet never seriously threatens to overturn prevalent social and racial hierarchies.

*The Cuban Patriots* thus enacts a concept of Cubanía that fits within Usonian social and cultural frameworks. In the play, the Blanco family becomes a reflection of the idealized racially encompassing revolutionary Cuban state. Race interaction in the play is characterized by the slaves' loyalty to their white masters since the Blancos are very "decent" to them. In the scene when Don Antonio frees his slaves, the patriarch begins by asking them: "Boys, would you like to be free?"<sup>47</sup> This inane question, preceded by a blatant infantilizing of the Black characters, is a strategic dramaturgical ploy for the staged slaves to mouth their devotion to their masters. Perico, a slave who is very smart and possibly possessing a level of education, announces that he has been chosen by his peers to be their spokesperson. Enrique Blanco is impressed and comments that this may be the beginning of Perico's political career. With these words, Enrique opens the circles of power to permit an ex-slave to form part of a new Cuba. Yet Perico responds in the following way: "Brains and learning, Niño Enrique, are bound, sooner or later, to come foremost everywhere. I will ever be grateful to your condescension for my little learning."<sup>48</sup> Perico thanks Enrique for acknowledging his instruction, even when the slave admits that his master does this knowing how limited it is. The preamble to Perico's response undermines both the slave's intelligence through an exaggerated demonstration of humility and Enrique's sincere appreciation of the Black young man's future political involvement. Finally Perico delivers the following passionate and reasonably sound answer to Don Antonio's initial question to the slaves:

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<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 25.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 26.

You ask us whether we would like to be free. Ask us rather whether we would be raised from the condition of mere things –from the condition of a merchandise, to be owned and bartered, to the condition of men, and you will find the answer in your own heart.<sup>49</sup>

Perico recognizes that slavery objectifies the Black man and that, in order to become men, they must be liberated. Again considering Cuban society as a family, Black Cubans would pass from their infant-like position in the island's racial hierarchies to one of adult men. Yet throughout the rest of the play, their link to their position within the family and to traditional racial hierarchies is never truly severed. After Perico delivers his forceful support for freedom, he assures the Blancos that the ex-slaves will join the revolutionary army with the following line: "Lead on, Niño Enrique! We are eager for the fray."<sup>50</sup> Perico does not only revert to a past where the white *hacendado* still has control and power to lead Black Cubans, but he also rejects his problematic invitation into the circles of power by waiving the opportunity to lead his men. Furthermore, the title of "Niño Enrique" is still a reference to Enrique's position as owner of the slaves. *Niño*, which directly translates to "boy," was used in Spanish as a reference to the familial hierarchy. Enrique is not the Master, since that position is reserved for Don Antonio, but the second in command or "prince" of the household. *Niño* is different to Don Antonio's use of *boy* to refer to his slaves, which both infantilizes and reminds Black men of their social position as powerless and voiceless children in U.S. society. The reference to Enrique as *Niño* demonstrates his position in the family as heir and makes evident that racial hierarchies are still maintained after the slaves' liberation, a fact that is further confirmed when Don Antonio is shot and Perico

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

swears: “Master Antonio, I will avenge you!”<sup>51</sup> The slaves’ insistence on referring to Don Antonio as “Master Antonio” and to Enrique as “Niño Enrique,” even after their liberation, demonstrates that there is a persistent relation of power between the slaves and the members of the family.

The power structure points to a performed relationship of love and respect within a family unit that included its well-treated Black members. Although not biologically related to the family, the slaves are part of the Blanco unit, even if they are only a separate extension of it. This relation is always determined by the Black characters’ understanding and constant reminder of their place within the Blanco hacienda, even when the slaves continue feeling embraced by the family. After Don Antonio liberates them, Perico affirms: “we could not be blessed with better masters. We have been more fortunate on this score than the great majority of our brethren. Well fed, well clad, never overworked –few if any of us ever having felt the smart of the whip, our life has run comparatively smooth and happy.”<sup>52</sup> The slaves are then kept as infantilized members of the family, to the extent that some of them have been physically punished. This action is justified in the way that Perico declares that the family is a blessing and their chastisement is revealed alongside all the good things that the Blancos have provided for them. Hence Don Antonio is the gentle patriarch who humanely realigns his Black children’s behavior to fit their corresponding compartments within Cuban racial hierarchies. Camilla Stevens perceives the performed family as a reflection of the larger body polity that predominates in modern Cuban and Puerto Rican societies. She argues:

...these plays enable us to see the interconnectedness of the family and the nation and of the public and the private spheres. For playwrights, the family provides a

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<sup>51</sup>Ibid., 44.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., 26.

convenient trope that lends itself to the consideration of society at large because family structures and dynamics often mimic those of the nation. The male-dominated patriarchal family, for example, evokes the hierarchies of a larger collectivity: the paternalist political leader/father who implicitly assigns hierarchical roles to members of the national family.<sup>53</sup>

Stevens's argument not only relates to late twentieth-century Cuban and Puerto Rican drama but is also relevant to nineteenth-century theatre. In *The Cuban Patriots*, racial politics within the family unit reflect a larger Cuban society. El Grito de Yara was a racially inclusive movement, a characteristic that inspired Frederick Douglass, the African-American ex-slave and abolitionist leader, to declare: "the first gleam of the sword of freedom and independence in Cuba secured my sympathy with the revolutionary cause."<sup>54</sup> However, the racial hierarchies within the Blanco family portrayed a re-imagined white Cuba, stressed by the color of the family's last name, and challenged racialized conceptions of the revolution. The only Blackness that remains chaotic and problematic is the Spanish villain's. His last name, Almanegra, is Spanish for "black soul." The racial identifier in the slaves demonstrates their difference, yet they know their appointed place in Creole society and within the Blanco family. Racial difference in these characters does not defy white privilege. On the other hand, the villain's blackness is not a racial sign, but rather it stands for the Spanish pillage of Cuba and the Blancos. So, by displacing the villainy to Spain, racial anxieties are alleviated. In this way, the play calmed anxious U.S. theatregoers who may have envisioned an independent Cuba as a mulatto state and/or associated El Grito de Yara with

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<sup>53</sup> Camilla Stevens, *Family and Identity in Contemporary Cuban and Puerto Rican Drama* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004), 7.

<sup>54</sup> Frederick Douglass, "Frederick Douglass to S. R. Scottern, Esq., March 29, 1873," in *The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass*, ed. Philip S. Foner (New York: International, 1975), 4:303.

the Haitian Revolution. In *The Cuban Patriots*, Blackness symbolizes humility and loyalty to the white masters, whilst the symbolic blackness of the Spanish stands for cruelty and empire.

In its depiction of Black slaves within an idealized plantation environment, the play catered to Southern sympathizers who may have considered Cuba as an extension of the United States. Its protagonist, Ricardo Agudo, arrived from the U.S. after fighting with the Union Army in the Civil War. Cuba was thus performed in the play as a liminal location where Northern political ideals and a Southern aristocratic society meet, even if the island never really becomes a perfect Caribbean incarnation of the U.S. The staged island engendered an unfinished and mutating Cubanía whose affective uniqueness lay in its negotiations between a revolutionary sentiment, which stirred the island insurgency, and a conservative annexationist drive, the political motor of the Junta. *The Cuban Patriots* promised a future white-dominated island to a post-bellum U.S. while never losing sight of its revolutionary pedigree. Both Céspedes and Don Antonio called for racial equality and to abolish slavery within the post-independent state/family. This sentiment connected to U.S. audiences, who had recently experienced the triumph of the North over the South and the abolition of slavery. Racial integration seemed to define the movement for independence against Spain and bring a new revolutionary society closer to the democratic equality of the idealized North American republic. Nevertheless, a closer study of racial politics as enacted in the play reveals a deeper truth about how Cubanía was negotiated for the metropolis. Rodrigo Lazo argues that:

[...] independence fighters such as José Martí and General Antonio Maceo promoted the development of a Cuban citizen, not a racialized person, as the subject of the nation. [...] But whereas Martí proclaimed “There are no races” as a critique of nineteenth-century theories of essentialism, proannexation exiles in

the 1850s papered over the importance of race to make their project more palatable to a U.S. public facing its own national anxieties about the sectional balance of power and the future of slavery.<sup>55</sup>

The Cuban Diaspora sought to whiten the island in order to make it more palatable to U.S. interests. Ultimately, *The Cuban Patriots* performed a revolutionary Cuban identity that promoted a conservative independence from Spain while coming closer to the U.S. Regardless of the racial purity and the neocolonial future for which the play implicitly strives, these elements signal how Cubanía could not be distinguished as a monolithic concept, but as a definition that exists in a transnational space. Since it belongs within an affective network that crosses physical and political borders, Cubanía is never a finished concept. As it moves from shore to shore, it never ceases to exist within a constantly mutating state.

#### Little Cuba Embarks to Matanzas in *The Cuban Spy*

In *The Cuban Patriots*, Alfredo Pierra proposes to reimagine a Cuban identity that is anchored in the island as a border space. He conceives Cuba as a transatlantic border location where countless Americas meet, thereby creating a unique site marked by a multitude of cultures that struggle and coexist. His Cuba rejects the illusion of a pure and univocal identity. To achieve his goal, the playwright breaks with some of the dramatic tropes that prevailed in the theatre of the time surrounding the Spanish-Cuban-American War. In his introduction to the text, Pierra begins by distancing his play from the *Virginius* affair, an incident of international renown that involved the Céspedes family. Pierra assures the reader that

[t]his drama was not inspired under the excitement produced by the butcheries of the ill-fated Virginius prisoners; nor is its object to add fuel to the flame of just indignation enkindled by the revolting atrocities perpetrated by the Spaniards in

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<sup>55</sup> Lazo, *Writing to Cuba*, 142-43.

Cuba. [...] The aim of the play is to present a faithful picture of the stirring events, manners, and life in the Central Department of that unfortunate island during the first year of the present struggle for independence.<sup>56</sup>

The playwright intends to portray a story that does not revolve around the patriotic emotions of Cuban independence, but that can objectively perform the reality of the island at the time. However, Pierra's supposedly dispassionate depiction is constantly submerged in the ideals of the *Mambises*, and Don Antonio's final death, reminiscent of Céspedes's, adds to the fire already raging among Cubans due to the killing of their leader. This inevitably makes the play a blatant call to fight for the Cuban cause. So why does Adolfo Pierra deny any connection between his play and the *Virginus* affair when the work clearly indicts the Spanish and champions revolutionary indignation for the death of Don Blanco/Céspedes? This question plagued my mind as I examined Pierra's work and a plausible explanation to this mystery may be linked to the fact that the *Virginus* was a ship used by Cuban revolutionaries to transport guns and ammunition from the U.S. to Cuba. Pierra's cryptic self-distancing from the *Virginus* affair may have been connected to the ship's pirate status, since it disobeyed the U.S. neutrality policy in relation to the conflict in Cuba. The playwright's decision to seemingly keep away from the *Virginus*, while clearly referencing the infamous event, is a smuggling act that marked his role as a *border writer*, a term that Edwin Gentzler defines "as an implicated participant in the smuggling process, helping to trespass, steal, reinterpret, remap, and rethink cultural and artistic boundaries."<sup>57</sup> Following Gentzler's words, Pierra indeed maps the Caribbean world of the time through his use of English. To get to the bottom of Pierra's enigmatic denial in referencing the

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<sup>56</sup> Pierra, *The Cuban Patriots*, iii.

<sup>57</sup> Edwin Gentzler, *Translation and Identity in the Americas: New Directions in Translation Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 146.

maritime drama, I will begin by discussing the tragic outcome of the *Virginus* to then explore Frank Dumont's use of it in his comedy-drama, *The Cuban Spy*.

The *Virginus* was a U.S. vessel purchased by the Revolutionary General Manuel Quesada in Washington to traffic arms to the Cuban insurgents on the island.<sup>58</sup> In 1870, Quesada was sent by his brother-in-law, Carlos Manuel de Céspedes, at that time President of the Cuban nation in arms, to find a way around the U.S. policy of neutrality in the conflict with Spain. With funding provided by the Junta, Quesada bought the *Virgin* and registered it in the U.S. as the *Virginus*. Therefore, the vessel was officially a U.S. ship, identified as such by the flag waving on its highest mast. This must have been an act that raised suspicion among the Spanish navy. For many decades, Cuban patriots who had fled to the U.S. claimed dual citizenship (Cuban and U.S.) because, while living in the host country, they became citizens and did not inform the Spanish authorities of the change. They were then able to return to the island as Spanish citizens. But when they were arrested for insurgent activity, they would ask for diplomatic protection from the U.S. The Spanish authorities had in their hands a political dilemma since they could not judge these insurgents as harshly as they wanted. Nevertheless, U.S. protection did not always deter the Volunteers or the Spanish authorities from shooting dual-citizen offenders, since this stratagem incited Spaniards' resentment towards the North American nation. This might have also applied to the *Virginus*, which travelled under the aegis of the U.S. flag with a crew that did not obey the nation's policy of neutrality in the Cuban-Spanish conflict. The crew itself would likely have also been composed of Cuban rebels carrying dual citizenship. At the time of the seizure of the vessel on October 30, 1873, the U.S. and British citizens on board did not receive any diplomatic treatment from the Spanish officials.

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<sup>58</sup> The historical information in this section is taken primarily from two sources: Richard H. Bradford's *The Virginus Affair* (Boulder: Colorado Associated University Press, 1980) and Ron Soodalter's "To the Brink in Cuba 1873," in *Military History* 26, no. 4 (Oct-Nov 2009): 62.

The *Virginus* was intercepted by the Spanish *Tornado* close to the island of Jamaica. According to Jeanie Mort Walker, the biographer of Joseph Fry, the captain of the *Virginus*, Fry announced to the Spanish officer in charge that his ship was protected by the U.S. The Spaniard sneered at the news and declared, "I do not care what flag the ship carried; it is a pirate ship, and you are all my prisoners." At that point, they lowered the flag and "kicked and trampled upon it, and applied to it the most opprobrious epithets."<sup>59</sup> This action fraught with melodramatic flair marked the beginning of a tragic international incident. The crew was imprisoned and many were sentenced to death. At the heart of the affair was the Spanish Brigadier General and governor of Santiago, Juan Nepomuceno Burriel, whom Cubans referred to as "the butcher" and was described as "bombastic, violent, tyrannical, bloodthirsty, cruel and selfish."<sup>60</sup> Burriel's villainous dimensions were solidified when he used one of the prisoners, Pedro María de Céspedes, to force his brother, Carlos Manuel, into surrendering to the authorities. This would have meant a significant triumph for the Spanish government over the Cuban revolutionaries. Yet Carlos Manuel de Céspedes refused to surrender and so his brother Pedro María was executed along with the thirty-four U.S. citizens and nineteen British nationals who were part of the *Virginus* crew. According to the *Little Rock Daily Republican*, Burriel was relieved of his position as governor on December 30, 1873.<sup>61</sup> Years later, the *Galveston Daily News* reported on May 19, 1877, that in response to U.S. pressures, Burriel was awaiting trial in Madrid for his actions in the *Virginus* affair.<sup>62</sup> The incident resonated with the melodramatic and newspapers reported it with popular theatrical conventions of the time from U.S. and Cuban stages. The image always pointed to the base moral character of staged Spaniards who dared insult the North

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<sup>59</sup> Jeanie Mort Walker, *Life of Capt. Joseph Fry, the Cuban Martyr...* (Hartford: Burr, 1875), 234.

<sup>60</sup> "The Brute Burriel," *Baltimore Sun*, Nov. 20, 1873, 1; and "General J.N. Burriel," *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, Dec. 13, 1873, 235.

<sup>61</sup> "Butcher Burriel Relieved of His Command," *Little Rock Daily Republican*, December 31, 1873.

<sup>62</sup> "Burriel not yet Brought to Trial," *Galveston Daily News*, May 9, 1877.

American symbol of democracy and audiences' nationalist spirit. The sea vessel itself was a popular melodramatic trope of the time since it allowed for the performance to create an opposition between the exotic and war torn Caribbean island and the technologically advanced and civilized mainland. Almost every play about the Spanish-Cuban-American War written for U.S. stages involved a voyage from the North American coast to Cuba. Ironically, *The Cuban Patriots*, a play that begins with Pierra's words distancing the action from the *Virginius* affair, brings forth a Cubanía that attests to the internal conflicts of an identity negotiating with the U.S. presence. Yet Frank Dumont's *The Cuban Spy*, a play that begins on a ship at sea and thereby underscores the liminal location that promises a more nuanced expression of identity, silenced any transnational links through its performance of an empty Cubanismo in need of U.S. aid.

The action in *The Cuban Spy* opens on a blockade runner. The goal of this vessel is to smuggle guns and ammunition to the rebels in Cuba. The ship's crew and passengers are marked by their diversity and each of their identities reveals their role in the drama. The captain is an untrustworthy Spaniard named Roderigo Valdez, who turns out to be the play's villain. There is also the Irish comic type, Phelim McNab, the Dutch character Carl Weibee, and Jerry, the African American stereotype. Although Jerry's participation is limited to the very beginning of the play, after which he simply disappears for no apparent reason, the three characters defer to the power of the Usonian hero, Richard Carson. The ethnic and racial differences that constantly create conflict between McNab, Weibee, and Jerry demonstrate a comically unstable nation that could only come together through Carson's leadership and their collective mission to aid Cuba. But the most important character in the play is Elinora or, as some of the characters call her, Little Cuba, a young stowaway. During the first act, Valdez's men discover Elinora and are about to throw her into sea because of her illegal status on board. Carson predictably intervenes

and defends Little Cuba. As the confrontation escalates, Valdez comes in and orders his men to stand down until after he investigates the matter. This allows a moment of peace between Elinora and Carson, the perfect time for her character to reveal to the Usonian man that she is a spy. She claims that while Valdez may seem to be helping the Cubans by smuggling weapons for the insurgency, in reality he will betray them by handing over the weapons to the Spanish militia. The first act ends when Valdez orders his men to seize Richard and tie him to the muzzle of a cannon that is about to be fired. Elinora pleads for Carson's life and, when she is seized, manages to free herself and grab a revolver. As Valdez's men are about to jump her, Phelim and Carl come in pointing their guns at the Spanish. Finally, Elinora unties Richard mere seconds before the sensational firing of the cannon. True to melodramatic form, each of the four acts in the play ends in a similarly climactic fashion. Nevertheless, in contrast to U.S. melodramas of the time that conventionally staged exotic locales to astound theatregoers, Cuba, the setting for the next three acts of *The Cuban Spy*, is never really portrayed in as much alluring detail as in other dramas.

The setting on the ship during the first act could work as a common site that could only accentuate the mysterious allure of the Caribbean locale throughout the next three acts. Yet when the characters arrive, Cuba is constructed in a generic way without even any stereotypical Caribbean distinctions. The three locations used for the action are an old inn in Matanzas; an "old sugar house," which may be a warehouse at a sugarcane plantation; and a parlor at a hotel in Pinar del Río, one of the most important cities in Cuba. However, the locales are never thoroughly described. For example, the lavishness of the Cuban hotel in the fourth act is reduced to "some furniture; curtains for doors; carpet [...]; cocoa-nuts and slab of marble [...]"<sup>63</sup> This neutrality in staging even marks the diagrams included in the text for suggested set design. It

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<sup>63</sup> Dumont, *The Cuban Spy*, 8.

makes it seem as if the playwright did not want the audience to focus its attention on the setting but on the character of Little Cuba, who ultimately personifies the island. There is a section in the text that describes the characters' costumes. Elinora's are colorful and foreign, reflecting the traditional way in which the Caribbean island is represented in other plays. Her "ragged dress as a stowaway" in the first act is later exchanged for a "Spanish costume, veil; short skirts; colored hose and slippers" that must reflect her qualities as a "Cuban girl, semi-Spanish and very picturesque."<sup>64</sup> Her trite stowaway rags make way for the livelier ethnic wear. Furthermore, the choice of the adjective *picturesque* is telling since it is mostly used in melodrama to describe locations thereby underscoring their visual exoticism. Little Cuba's most interesting moment comes when in the third act she disguises herself as a boy by wearing a "jaunty cap, jacket and short pants. Similar to Spanish bull fighter."<sup>65</sup> This description genders her character as male at a specific moment in the play when she does not interact with Carson. Little Cuba is tough, independent, courageous, and resourceful, all qualities usually associated with male characters. Yet as soon as she confronts Carson, the symbol of the U.S., she becomes a conventional female stereotype. In *The Cuban Spy*, Elinora is the personification of a staged island and reflects how the U.S. positions itself as a virile power to protect a weaker Cuba.<sup>66</sup>

Little Cuba assembles the attitudes of the U.S. in relation to the island and its people. Marvin Carlson's concept of *ghosting* is useful to understanding how the character is not an innocuous representation of a melodramatic type, but rather resonates with how the theatre of the time performed Cuban Otherness and interpreted the island for theatregoers. Carlson states that

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<sup>64</sup>Ibid., 4.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> I refer to the *staged island* when I call attention to the difference between the actual Cuba and the imagined one portrayed on the U.S. stage. As a construction, the staged island always makes evident the diverse attitudes of the artists and audiences towards Cuba. As a creation of a U.S. playwright, the character of Elinora does not evince the complex reality and conflicts of the Cuban people, but simply represents an imagined (or staged) island in need of rescue.

ghosting is practical for pondering how an actor's body inevitably informs a performance through a language of gestures, actions, past performances, and even private lives. A particular work cannot escape how audiences read an actor's career and past experiences in one role.<sup>67</sup> The concept could also be applied to how a character's look, costumes, identities, and behaviors, among other markers, *ghost* elements that audiences may relate to other aspects that lie beyond the performance itself. In this interpretation, ghosting relates to the habitus in how particular social, cultural, economic, and political environments that surround a performance add dimensions to the reading of the expression. The concept also relates to Louis Pérez's examination of metaphor as a tool used to align reality with power. Pérez ponders:

[t]here is in fact something of an authenticity to metaphor in the sense that its use implies a spontaneous recourse to imagery to construct a version of reality. But that spontaneity must itself be understood to possess a history, socially determined and culturally fixed. To engage the logic of metaphor is to gain access to the normative sources of power.<sup>68</sup>

Just as with ghosting, metaphor is a good tool for understanding the posthegemonic since the metaphorical image expresses how reality is systematized and read within the physical and/or imaginary locations where it is enacted. How that reality is ghosted in a performance and is made to fit into a metaphor reveals much about the multitude of ideas that struggle with each other at a point in time. In the case of Elinora, the character is a metaphor for Cuba, and her behavior in the play ghosts how the nation performed a melodramatic Cubanismo throughout the second half of the nineteenth century.

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<sup>67</sup> Marvin Carlson, *The Haunted Stage: The Theatre as Memory Machine* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001), 58-59.

<sup>68</sup> Pérez, *Cuba in the American Imagination*, 3-4.

At the beginning of the play, Jerry believes that there is a ghost haunting the boat. The characters later discover that it was Elinora, who illegally infiltrated the crew to spy on Valdez's dubious actions. For theatre historians, her ghostly presence opens the possibilities of what the character could have brought to the surface for readers of the text and audiences. Elinora fights the Spanish by herself and valiantly confronts them. She is smarter than Carson since she constantly sees through Valdez's stratagems while the Usonian character consistently falls prey to them. In the climactic moment right before the conclusion of the play, Elinora and Carson face the Spanish villains who are about to shoot them. She covers herself with the Cuban flag, which she declares "has been consecrated by the blood of Cuban patriots." Elinora then immediately produces the U.S. flag and drapes it over herself while she tauntingly dares the shooters to "[f]ire upon this if you dare!"<sup>69</sup> These actions invite the audience to read how the character stands for an island that defies European imperialism while simultaneously acknowledging the power of the U.S. At this moment, the revolutionary flag marked by the fallen Cuban heroes acquired the fortitude and physical protection of the U.S. flag. The flags' solid affirmation of national identity delineated the differences between Cuba and the U.S., thereby invalidating the affective fluidity of Cubanía and resulting in an empty Cubanismo. In this scene, Elinora does all the talking while Carson simply stands to one side. Furthermore, her strength comes through more clearly than Carson's since she proclaims her defiance of the Spaniards regardless of the consequences. Yet her final brandishing of the U.S. flag as a more powerful symbol than the Cuban one enacts a Cubanismo that simultaneously dilutes Elinora's vitality and silences the struggles of the Cuban multitudes. Elinora's power continues to be undermined in other moments, especially when her actions reveal her attraction towards Carson.

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<sup>69</sup> Dumont, *The Cuban Spy*, 57.

In the fourth act, Elinora walks in when Bridget, a young Irish woman constantly searching companionship throughout the play, hugs Carson because she does not want to be alone. The Cuban character apologizes for interrupting their “love-making” and proceeds to deliver the following tempestuous aside: “I’d like to scratch her eyes out.”<sup>70</sup> Although they are never romantically linked in the play, this scene in the final act divulges Elinora’s feelings towards Richard. Bridget insists that she came to Cuba to find a husband and Richard orders her to leave them. As soon as they are alone, Carson confesses to Elinora that they are in grave danger and proposes to remain by her and so protect her from the Spaniards. Now Elinora is not the powerful heroine, but the diminutive representation of the island referenced in her nickname, Little Cuba. Along these lines, Mimi Sheller argues:

[The] Caribbean lands are in effect feminized as passive nature awaiting insemination by manly North American enterprise. [...] Here again, the incapacity of the tropical island-dwellers to take their own economy and government in hand calls for and justifies paternalistic U.S. intervention. [...] Earthly paradise would be restored with American ingenuity, and Caribbean populations raised to “manhood.”<sup>71</sup>

The cultural gendering to demonstrate relations of power differentiates a paternalistic U.S. from the Cuban heroine in distress. Elinora *ghosts* the exoticism of the “earthly paradise” and, at the same time, the reckless and uncontrolled wildness of the idealized island. Yet she trembles and inevitably returns to a more conventional femininity as soon as she comes face to face with the Usonian. Little Cuba is a visual metaphor of Cubanismo that works to justify to Anglo theatrogoers the U.S. intervention in the Cuban and Spanish conflict.

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<sup>70</sup>Ibid., 48.

<sup>71</sup> Mimi Sheller, *Consuming the Caribbean: From Arawaks to Zombies* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 60.

The visual references to the *Virginus* affair are peppered throughout *The Cuban Spy* and function to link the comedy-drama to the historical conflict. The text was published in 1898, yet the allusions to the political tragedy make evident the international incident's ubiquity. The patriotic call to the U.S. by using the flag at the very end of the play could be a reference to the infamous moment when the Spaniards insulted the national symbol on the *Virginus*. Onstage calls to action and patriotic salutes were not uncommon in U.S. theatre of the time.<sup>72</sup> But the way that Little Cuba takes out the U.S. flag to protect both Carson and herself from Valdez and his men is a reinterpretation of that moment. Elinora's actions reinvigorate the power of the national symbol because it shields them from the attackers. In the historic incident, the Spanish tread on the flag and so the final image of Dumont's play avenges the U.S. nation's honor. Immediately after this, the Cuban army comes in and defeats the Spanish villain in what would have been a spectacular battle in performance. The ship in the first act is the most obvious connection to the *Virginus*. This trope in nineteenth-century U.S. plays about the Cuban conflict underscores the opposition between the island and the U.S., which is also evident in the relationship between Elinora and Richard Carson. The sea passage is not only a bridge that connects the two sides. The journey itself emphasizes the separation between both countries and identities, thereby delivering through the character of Elinora a univocal Cubanismo that only depicts an Othered island. Hence, the ship as a symbol of mobility challenges borders while simultaneously reinforcing them. Unlike Dumont's, Pierra's play portrays a complex Cubanía by constructing the island as a border space where the U.S. meets with the Spanish-speaking Caribbean.

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<sup>72</sup> According to Eric Lott, during the 1840s, audience rowdiness tended to be circumscribed to the working class. He adds: "If 'legitimate' productions in this period aspired to a new restraint, popular amusements cultivated a sort of demonstrative excess through which cultural allegiances were formed and class values negotiated" (*Love and Theft* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1995], 85). In the performance context of the plays that I examine, U.S. audiences may have also loudly expressed their political allegiances with Cuba through cheers and shouts against the Spanish villains. Although my dissertation focuses on plays that were possibly staged during the late nineteenth century, the U.S. drama about the Spanish-Cuban-American War drew on the audience's patriotic spirit whose "demonstrative excess" may have added to the performance itself.

Conclusion: The Final Confrontation Between the Patriots' Cubanía and the Spy's Cubanismo

In *The Cuban Patriots*, Adolfo Pierra envisions an island and a revolution in translation. The play negotiates a Cuba and its myriad linguistic specificities for U.S. audiences. Although the official language in Cuba was Spanish, this did not mean that it was limited to a pure expression of the Castilian that seemingly prevailed over the island. The presence of diverse African languages, Catalan, Galician, Basque, and Portuguese, among others, made evident a cultural diversity that influenced the theatre. Focusing on the groups represented in Pierra's play, it is problematic to collapse the multiplicity of African peoples into the denomination of "slaves," as the play does. Although the term is predictable in a play written for U.S. audiences, also trying to suppress racial difference in nineteenth-century Cuban society, the fact that this population had such an amount of representation in Pierra's drama is indicative of the considerable African presence on the island. This absence is more strongly felt in Dumont's *The Cuban Spy*, where Elinora becomes the sole symbol of Cuba, thereby suppressing the island's racial and ethnic diversity. In his dissertation project, Miguel Ramos explores how African cultures participated in the definition of Cubanía. Ramos identifies the three principal African groups that had an impact in Cuban culture. The *Carabalí*, a toponym assigned to the different peoples brought to the New World from the area that included present-day Nigeria and parts of Cameroon, was the dominant African group in Cuba and the most sought-after slaves for the plantations. The Congos were also another extensive community that included various peoples from Central Africa. Therefore, *Congo* assumed a broad denomination that encompassed diverse cultures and languages from a number of neighboring nations. Finally, the *Lucumí*, originally from the Yoruba region of West Africa, are considered to have exercised the most significant

cultural influence in the Americas.<sup>73</sup> All these languages and cultures coexisted, struggled, and mixed with Spanish on the island. The Spanish used by the *bozales* had its own particularities and was a linguistic enactment of Africanía in Cuba. Kristina Wirtz discusses the term of *bozal* as meaning

“wild” and “untamed,” “ignorant,” and also “dog muzzle” and “bridle bit” (as instruments of control). This was the label applied to African-born slaves (as opposed to Iberian- or creole-born slaves) [...]. [T]he term also came to refer to the way that such Africans would have spoken Spanish [...].<sup>74</sup>

Interestingly, even though *bozal* was used pejoratively and pointed to the silencing of African identity, the term came to stand for that repressed racial and ethnic side of Cubanía of which white creoles felt ashamed. Pierra’s translation of the island into English whitens difference by silencing not only Spanish, but also all linguistic identities inhabiting Cuba.

Through its use of English, *The Cuban Patriots* becomes accessible to Anglo audiences on the mainland. Pierra’s intention is not to showcase the island’s racial and ethnic diversity, which would have been problematic for nineteenth-century U.S. audiences, but to portray a Cuba that comes close to the Usonian ideal of paradise. The depiction still brings forth a complex Cubanía, regardless of the playwright’s hygienic portrayal to “sell” the revolution to spectators. Due to what the play is trying to achieve, it inevitably homogenizes the differences that characterized the Cuban world of that time under one linguistic identity. The Cuba envisioned by revolutionaries in the 1860s and 70s, sparked by the rejection to slavery enacted by Céspedes’s subversive act of liberating his slaves at his sugar refinery in la Demajagua, becomes a stronger

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<sup>73</sup> Miguel Ramos, “Lucumi (Yoruba) Culture in Cuba: A Reevaluation (1830s-1940s)” (PhD Diss., Florida International University, 2013), 298-324, ProQuest (3608775).

<sup>74</sup> Kristina Wirtz, *Performing Afro-Cuba: Image, Voice, Spectacle in the Making of Race and History* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2014), 268.

ideal in the revolutions of the 1890s through José Martí's postracial ideals. In his essay "Our America," Martí ponders over his idea of an America that is not divided through racial hierarchies. He argues:

There can be no racial animosity, because there are no races. The theorists and feeble thinkers string together and warm over the bookshelf races which the well-disposed observer and the fair-minded traveller vainly seek in the justice of Nature where man's universal identity springs forth from triumphant love and the turbulent hunger for life. The soul, equal and eternal, emanates from bodies of different shapes and colors. Whoever foments and spreads antagonism and hate between the races, sins against humanity.<sup>75</sup>

Martí's ideas reflect an America that transcends race and where everyone comes together as equals since there is a "universal identity." Ironically, Dumont's *The Cuban Spy* somewhat reflects Martí's ideal of "universal identity" since it poses the character of Elinora, or Little Cuba, as a representation of the whole island. Unlike Dumont's play, Martí's concept does not work as an Othering device, but as an inclusive locus of identity that demolishes difference. Even when Martí's universal identity resonates in Ortiz's *Cubanía*, its noble equalizing of difference comes closer to Elinora's univocal Cubanismo. Moreover, before Martí's essay, Pierra united islanders under one linguistic identity, regardless of their identification as Cubans, peninsulares, creoles, Afro Cuban, or Anglo. Could *The Cuban Patriots* be a projection of the playwright's ideal political and social future for Cuba? His project of literally whitewashing the island's diversity Usonian audiences comes at a price: the passing from a colony dominated by the Spanish language to a U.S. neocolony distinguished by the imposition of Standard English.

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<sup>75</sup> José Martí, "Our America," in *Selected Writings*, ed. and trans. Esther Allen (New York: Penguin Books, 2002), 294.

Nonetheless, while Dumont's Cubanismo does not really address the Cuban people's agency, since Little Cuba constantly acquiesces to the Usonian's masculinity, Pierra's Cubanía is a border expression that recognizes difference and the power of the insurgency.

Pierra constructs a Cuba that is staged as a border space. In his book, Gentzler discusses the relation between translation and the border:

In border spaces, distinctions between the "original" and "foreign" cultures tend to disappear, for cultures tend to be both simultaneously. Such dissolving of boundaries cannot help but have repercussions for translation theory. If distinctions between original and translation no longer hold, if both cultures tend to be similarly multilingual and multicultural, what then happens to the definition of translation? Such a rethinking of boundaries and languages also cannot help but affect thinking about identity formation, leading at first to a kind of schizophrenic crisis of identity, yet later pointing to new ways of thinking about as plural and capable of change.<sup>76</sup>

Gentzler defines *border spaces* as locations that eliminate the binary relation between "us" and "them." There is such a deep cultural intermingling that purity in any expression is simply impossible. This coexistence does not take place harmoniously since it entails "a kind of schizophrenic crisis of identity" because any border articulation brings together discourses of power and silenced voices thereby invalidating hegemonic expressions. The border underscores a problematic diversity rather than the idealized elimination of race in Martí's *America*. In the case of *The Cuban Patriots*, the translation that takes place is not a textual one since the play was originally written in English, but one where performed cultural markers are reimagined through language. This performance of Cubanía through the future invader's language, which coexists

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<sup>76</sup>Gentzler, *Translation and Identity in the Americas*, 145.

with that of the Spanish oppressor, evidences an affective net that gives rise to an identity with the inner contradictions of a heterogeneous multitude.

The staged Cuba is traditionally recognized as Hispanophone since this is one of its most identifiable characteristics. In *The Cuban Patriots*, names of places (Casorro Mountains, Puerto Príncipe), famous people (Céspedes and Quesada), and characters' names (Enrique Blanco, Conchita, Almanegra, Perico) are easily perceivable markers of linguistic difference, even when the dialogue is written in English. The exoticism of the Caribbean island is further constructed through language. There is a scene where Ricardo Agudo and Enrique Blanco lead the Usonian Colonel Ramsey through a consumptive tour of Cuba while discussing the merits of the revolution. Ramsey consumes a glass of coconut milk, which he appreciates since "he could not desire anything better"; some pineapple that "is as sweet as honey"; bananas, which he turns down because he has had enough to eat; and a "patriotic cigar" made with tobacco that "was raised on the very soil where our first blow for freedom was struck."<sup>77</sup> The marvels of Cuba are thus reduced to food and tobacco. The scene's primary goal is to show the reason why the revolution is essential not only for Cubans, but also for the economic interests of the U.S. The freedom for which the revolutionaries fight is one that the U.S. would be able to consume and does not pose the threats of the Haitian Revolution. This scene gathers all the characteristic signs of the exotic Caribbean island so that audiences recognize it even when these are expressed in English. The performed island falls into Gentzler's idea of the border space since the two very different cultural systems struggle with each other within an expression that challenges any purity. Pierra's Cubanía is thus a construction of that transatlantic border that doubly underscores the dominant discourses that promoted Cuba as a consumer's paradise, which ultimately determined the U.S. involvement in the war twenty years after the publication of the play, and

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<sup>77</sup>Pierra, *The Cuban Patriots*, 32.

foreshadows Martí's rather flawed, albeit well-meaning and revolutionary, idea of Our América. Furthermore, the Cubanismo of Dumont's Little Cuba only articulates the exoticism and sexual attraction of an island that the U.S. must consume in order to save it. While Elinora's Cubanismo and Dumont's references to the *Virginus* affair only foreground the opposition between a savage Cuba and a powerful U.S., Pierra sets his story on a Caribbean border space made linguistically palatable for a U.S. audience to ultimately find support for the revolution against Spain.

### Chapter 3: Burning Cubas and Laughing Negritos

#### Introduction: Explosions and Hilarity from Both Sides of the Conflict

On July 8, 1899, a musical revue titled *La entrega del mando o fin de siglo* (*The Change of Command or the End of the Century*) opened in an unidentified theatre in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Eduardo Meireles, a Cuban theatre actor residing on the island, wrote the show and it became a success on its first night. Under the pseudonym of El Duque de Bligny (the Duke of Bligny), the theatre critic for the island newspaper *La correspondencia de Puerto Rico* (*The Correspondence of Puerto Rico*), praised the show for its “happy and playful music” (“la música, alegre y juguetona”) and Mrs. Rendón’s admirable role as the mulatto woman whom audiences rewarded with an ovation.<sup>1</sup> It is not surprising that *La entrega del mando* was well received since it is an example of Teatro Bufo, an extremely popular Cuban theatre genre at the time known for its use of blackface and social satire. Nevertheless, the show’s success was cut short since on July 10 another Puerto Rican newspaper, *El territorio* (*The Territory*), reported that the mayor of San Juan, Luis Sánchez Morales, had unexpectedly suspended *La entrega del mando*. As a result, angry ticketholders who were already at the theatre lashed out and a riot ensued. Attendees indignantly shouted “down with the mayor!” and the police intervened with weapons drawn after the turmoil moved out into the street.<sup>2</sup> This moment of censorship was provoked by the show’s parody of the U.S. presence on the island only one year after the invasion of Cuba and Puerto Rico. The anger of the authorities may have been caused by the contagiously irreverent laughter that Teatro Bufo evoked from audiences, which characterized the genre from its very inception in Cuban theatre history. Ironically, one day before, in the July 9<sup>th</sup> edition of *La correspondencia*

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<sup>1</sup> “La Sra. Rendón, admirable en su papel de mulata. Los momentos en que estuvo en escena eran pocos para recoger las ovaciones.” El Duque de Bligny, “Teatro,” *La correspondencia de Puerto Rico*, July 9, 1899.

<sup>2</sup> “El motín de anoche: Conflicto inminente” (“Last Night’s Riot: Imminent Conflict”), *El Territorio: Diario de la mañana*, July 10, 1899.

*de Puerto Rico*, a caption announced that Henry J. Pain's fireworks were the ideal way to celebrate the Fourth of July.<sup>3</sup> While Teatro Bufo was censored for satirizing the U.S. invasion, Pain's fireworks were simple pyrotechnics that the masses identified with U.S. nationalism. These minute thrills did not even come close to capturing the nationalistic potency of Pain's own pyrodramas about the Spanish-Cuban-American War, which the impresario staged on the beaches of New York. Pyrodramas amazed audiences for their fiery effects and their flagrant championing of the U.S. as the saviors of Cuba. Yet even decades before Puerto Rican audiences were outraged by the censorship of *La entrega del mando* and invited to celebrate the Fourth of July with Pain's fireworks, Cuban Teatro Bufo and pyrodramas had already established a dialogue about Cubanía and the U.S. intervention during the Spanish-Cuban-American War.

Pain's pyrodramas about the 1890s Cuban revolution and the subsequent Spanish-Cuban-American War, all of which were staged in Manhattan Beach, New York, portrayed an island insurgency that valiantly confronted the Spanish army. Ironically Pain's shows affirmed the technological supremacy of the U.S. by performing the island as a muted presence surrounded by fire and in need of rescue. Even when Pain's fiery spectacles literally silenced Cubanía with their magnitude or absented Cuba from the action, the performance of the island demonstrated how U.S. masses envisioned a small nation's resistance against Spanish imperialism. This ambiguity in the characterization of Cuba brings to light the complexity in how Otherness is constructed. For this reason, it must be analyzed alongside Teatro Bufo, a theatre genre that was seen as a pure expression of Cubanía on the island and its performed identity.<sup>4</sup> I argue that this dialogue

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<sup>3</sup>The advertisement proudly declares: "Fuegos artificiales de la compañía Pain: Los mejores para la celebración del 4 de Julio o cualquiera otra fiesta, de la celebrada fabricación Pain" ("Fireworks from the Pain Company: The best for the Fourth of July celebration or any other festivity, by the celebrated manufacture of Pain"), *La correspondencia de Puerto Rico*, July 9, 1899.

<sup>4</sup>In chapter 2, I explore Cubanía in Mambí plays staged in New York. I define the concept as a revolutionary identity that distinguishes those Cubans fighting to free the island. At a time when Cubans were trying to find a cultural

between the pyrodramas about the Cuban revolution and Teatro Bufo underscores how Pain's performance of the U.S. as a technological power reclaimed the Caribbean island as an extension of the frontier myth prevalent in Usonian thought of the time. This comparative analysis between Cuban and U.S. theatre also sheds light on how Teatro Bufo challenged pyrodramas' depiction of the island as a silent victim in need of rescue, which aligned Pain's work with the U.S.'s imperialistic intentions in the Caribbean.

In this chapter, I will analyze *Cuba* (1896) and *The Battle of San Juan and Destruction of Cervera's Fleet* (1899), two pyrodramas that portray the superiority of the U.S. not only in its triumph over the Spanish forces in Cuba, but also in the nation's ability to construct an actual Caribbean island engulfed in war. On the one hand, *Cuba* let audiences at Manhattan Beach witness how islanders resisted Spanish colonialism and the consequences that Cuban rebels paid for such actions. On the other hand, *The Battle of San Juan* staged a crucial naval battle between the U.S. and Spain thereby underscoring the excitement of both Pain's technological prowess and the war itself. In both shows, the metaphorical frontier moved beyond North American borders, thereby justifying to diverse New York audiences Cuba's resistance to Spain and the nation's imperial project in the Caribbean.

Cuban theatre artists also responded to the portrayal of the frontier but in different ways, by enacting the island through a theatre genre that was a pure expression of Cubanía. To understand the participation of Cuban artists in my proposed dialogue, I will also examine Ignacio Sarachaga's *¡Arriba con el himno! (Hurrah for the Anthem!)*, which was written in 1900. In the play, Sarachaga places a U.S. American man in the island space accompanied by a Cuban guide who may have been performed as the mythical Negrito. The playwright corrects the

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identity through Mambí Theatre and Teatro Bufo, Cubanía is a national definition that challenges European cultural preeminence in the Caribbean.

depiction of Cuba as a savage land by constructing an island that is culturally unique and racially diverse. This dramatic treatment tames the Usonian presence to make it palatable to a proud Cubanía, thus representing a direct affront to the nationalist superiority that Pain's shows asserted.

In this section, I will briefly introduce the two theatre genres that I examine. I then proceed to establish the theoretical framework that I use and how it relates to the metaphor of the frontier. Then I consider Henry Pain's pyrodramas, followed by an analysis of Sarachaga's play. I conclude the chapter by directly addressing the transatlantic dialogue that unites these very distinctive theatrical expressions.

Pyrodramas championed a vision of the nation as an empire through an entertainment tradition that started in Britain in the 1850s at Belle Vue Gardens. David Mayer states that these fiery melodramas not only entertained audiences, but were also a clear performance of power over an Other that extended an idea of a world order rooted in one particular imperial nation.<sup>5</sup> The decline of this entertainment in England, which lasted well into the twentieth century, is consonant with the dwindling centrality of the British Empire, thus making even more evident the relation between the performances and power.<sup>6</sup> In Manhattan Beach, the pyrodramas enacted an idea of a powerful nation spreading democracy beyond its geographical and political borders. In this case, Pain's pyrodramas about the Spanish-Cuban-American War bolstered the nation's role as gendarme of the Caribbean. Although pyrodramas may seem as innocuous entertainment, they were harbingers of a deeper change in the Caribbean world as a Usonian neocolonial project approached its shores. Furthermore, as part of the audience experiencing these types of

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<sup>5</sup>David Mayer, "The world on fire...Pyrodramas at Belle Vue Gardens, Manchester, c. 1850-1950," in *Popular Imperialism and the Military, 1850-1950*, ed. John M. MacKenzie (New York: Manchester University Press, 1992), 179.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid, 181.

entertainments, the way Cubans viewed the U.S. entered into conflict with the representations of the nation and the island in the pyrodramas. Although I could not find any record written by Cuban spectators about pyrodramas, I will use Teatro Bufo as an indirect response to the neocolonial attitudes manifested through Pain's spectacles. Bufo's conception challenged Spanish cultural domination on the island and, after 1898, the U.S. invasion.

During the first half of the nineteenth century, Cubans lacked any autochthonous self-representation on island stages since all the works performed were European and had to pass the approval of the Spanish censors. Teatro Mambí was a subversive and passionate theatrical mouthpiece for revolutionary ideals and Cuban identity.<sup>7</sup> Spanish authorities obviously banned this insurrectionist genre from island stages, and so the supporters of Cuba Libre performed their plays as private revolutionary events on the island and as part of the activities of the Cuban Diaspora in the United States. In the 1860s, the large number of theatres across Cuba underscored the absence of artists that could portray the realities of Cuban society. Teatro Bufo became the artistic front that challenged in many ways the peninsular cultural domination. Many historians of Bufo argue that it is highly probable that the U.S. minstrel traditions of Campbell, Christy and Webb, who had visited the island with their own catalogue of theatrical Black stereotypes, inspired the formation of the genre.<sup>8</sup> The possible influence that these touring minstrel troupes may have had on Cuban theatre artists transcends the most obvious connection between minstrels and Bufo, the use of blackface. Both entertainment forms depended on the ridiculous depiction of Black sectors to evoke laughter from the audience. Yet while in U.S.

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<sup>7</sup> In chapter 1, I examine two Mambí plays by Desiderio Fajardo Ortiz, *La fuga de Evangelina* (*Evangelina's Escape*) and *La emigración al Caney* (*The Migration to Caney*). In chapter 2, I analyze Adolfo Pierra's *The Cuban Patriots*, a Mambí play written in English to find financial support in the U.S. for the Cuban Revolution. Mambí Theatre was the voice of the revolution and fervently opposed the Spanish presence.

<sup>8</sup> Rine Leal originally stated the connection between Bufo and U.S. minstrel shows in his prologue to *Teatro bufo, siglo XIX*, "La chancleta y el cotorno" (29). This historical note has also been used by Jill Lane in her book, *Blackface Cuba, 1840-1895* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), and by Inés María Martiatu's in her publication, *Bufo y nación: Interpelaciones desde el presente* (Habana, Cuba: Letras Cubanas, 2008).

minstrelsy, the laughter and enjoyment of this performance distanced the predominantly white Anglo spectators from the theatricalized conception of Blackness, in Cuban Bufo, the laughter demonstrated a revolutionary sense of nation. That is not to say that the Bufo was not racist, since, as with U.S. minstrelsy, it brought to light the victimization and silencing of a racial Other. Nevertheless, Bufo culturally coalesced a nation by bringing to island stages a social reality, albeit its racial and stereotypical portrayals, that resonated with the masses in need of representation.

Cuban Bufo became an affirmation of Cubanía by boldly satirizing European expressions of high culture, such as opera and classic drama that dominated island stages, through the character of the Negrito. Islanders recognized their social reality since they could easily identify the racial and ethnic stereotypes that populated the Bufo. Jill Lane argues:

The teatro bufo's protagonist, the "negrito," [...] is a manifestly racist caricature of black people by white actors; yet, over time, it came to stand in for a national sentiment whose primary attribute was a celebrated racial diversity. In short: blackface performance was a central vehicle for the expression of *mestizaje* as a national ideology.<sup>9</sup>

Lane adds a level to the Bufo's blackface performance by linking the genre to the growing significance of racial diversity in Cuban society. The Bufo may have originated as a racist theatre, but ultimately it became a subversive genre that in the nineteenth century was intertwined with a nascent theatrical Cubanía. This performance of identity resisted the Spanish subject's dominion on island stages and defied the depiction of Cuba as a silent presence in Pain's pyrodramas.

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<sup>9</sup> Lane, *Blackface Cuba*, 3.

## Staging the Frontier Right on the Borderlands

I contend that the way the U.S. envisioned the Caribbean in general, and Cuba in particular, through its performance in the pyrodramas responded to the ubiquity of the frontier paradigm in the nation. The myth of the American frontier was highly present in the minds of U.S. Americans throughout the nineteenth century, especially during the ever-expanding contact between the nation and other territories, such as Cuba. Yet even within big cities such as New York, the confrontation with new peoples and Othered ways of thinking asserted the relevance of how the frontier did not simply divide one territory from another, but a civilized U.S. from a barbarian foreigner. In this chapter I use the American frontier as a theoretical foundation to examine Pain's pyrodramas and Teatro Bufo. For that reason, this section will first focus on Frederick Jackson Turner and William Cody, two of the most important nineteenth-century U.S. voices who, in their own ways, defined the prevalent frontier myth. Within this discussion, I will reference theorists whose work concentrates on how immigrants related to mass cultural forms in the nineteenth century and the mobility of ideas across borders. This conversation will later lead to how Cuban patriot, poet, and playwright José Martí, responded to a specific performance of the frontier and will conclude with how his ideas expose an ambiguity that I interpret as foreshadowing Gloria Anzaldúa's conception of the border. Anzaldúa's *frontera* is the third space where opposing identities coexist in unstable relations, similar to the Cuba performed in Sarachaga's *¡Arriba con el himno!*, where the Negrito introduces the island to the Usonian presence.

As envisioned in the nineteenth century, the frontier divides two opposing worlds, one that is associated with U.S. Americanness and that underscores civilization and technology, and an inferior one, marked by the uncivilized and savage outside world. Frederick Jackson Turner, a

nineteenth-century intellectual whose theories about the frontier heavily influenced U.S. historians at the time, declared in his presentation at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition that

[t]he frontier is the line of most rapid and effective Americanization. The wilderness masters the colonist. It finds him a European in dress, industries, tools, modes of travel, and thought. It takes him from the railroad care and puts him in the birch canoe. It strips him off the garments of civilization and arrays him in the hunting shirt and the moccasin. [...] In short, at the frontier the environment is at first too strong for the man. [...] Little by little he transforms the wilderness, but the outcome is not the old Europe [...]. The fact is, that here is a new product that is American.<sup>10</sup>

Turner views the civilizing process involved in the frontier as the transformation from something wild into a “new product” that is essentially Usonian. The pioneering process strips the European from its “old” ways to ultimately become an American. On the other hand, the pioneer subjects the wilderness, which I argue could stand for the space and its inhabitants, to the civilizing process. Jackson's idea reveals an interesting overlap since the frontier is not an imaginary line but a space where the European is as touched by the savagery. Although the transformation progresses differently for the European pioneer and the subjected wilderness, according to Turner both experience the realignment of a foreign Other into the novel U.S. way. A significant contention in this chapter is that, just as the transformation that the frontier imposes on difference, one of the many roles of mass culture is the regulation of Otherness. The attraction of pyrodramas to nineteenth-century audiences in the U.S. coincides with the growing power of mass culture in the nation and with the increasing popular support of the nation's intervention in

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<sup>10</sup> Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Frontier in American History* (self-pub., Amazon Digital Services, 2011), Kindle.

Cuba, that frontier space across the sea. As Matthew Rebhorn asserts: “The Turner Thesis thus became just another name for Manifest Destiny and went hand in hand with the U.S.

government’s seizure, just five years later, of Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guam, Wake Island, and Manila [...]”<sup>11</sup> Rebhorn establishes a clear link between Turner’s concept and the U.S.

neocolonial project in the Caribbean. Hence Pain’s pyrodramas staged the civilizing treatment through which Cuba would lose its Spanish/European persona to become a U.S. territory, even though its innate savage Otherness would always remain.

One cannot only focus on particular works without also examining how audiences can actively engage with and challenge their messages, which in this case focus on the nation’s civilizing mission and its repercussions on the immigrant populations. The Cuban Diaspora was part of the theatre in New York and even used the medium to garner support for their fight for independence from Spain. Therefore, many Cuban immigrants were sophisticated audiences who understood the influence of international politics and power on theatre.<sup>12</sup> Immigrant audiences were entertained, while never losing sight of their role in the nation’s future. In referring to how audiences related to mass culture sites in New York City during the nineteenth century, Sabine Haenni argues that

[b]y looking at different sites of mass-mediated leisure in the city, we begin to get a sense of the fragmentation, hybridization, and forms of difference inherent in mass culture. While turn-of-the-century New York City easily evokes images of congestion or recalls the attempts of urban ethnographers and realist writers to map—and hence cognitively control—the new metropolis, [...] the city was in

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<sup>11</sup> Matthew Rebhorn, *Pioneer Performances: Staging the Frontier* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 3.

<sup>12</sup> In chapter 2, I examine how Adolfo Pierra used theatre to move U.S. audiences into supporting the Cuban cause. Pierra’s play, *The Cuban Patriots*, reveals the Cuban playwright’s understanding of melodramatic conventions prevalent in the U.S. stage to tackle international politics directly related to the revolution.

many ways dominated by an ideology of mobility. Circulation was encouraged, fantasized about, legislated.<sup>13</sup>

Haenni correlates the movement of peoples around the city to a nascent mass culture. This motion was not only limited to how communities physically moved around, an action made possible by the increasing accessibility to transportation and communication technologies, but to how they also “imagined themselves” elsewhere through their experience of entertainment forms. These “sites of virtual mobility” functioned with the latent hope that there was another space where opportunities for better social conditions awaited the common woman and man. Furthermore, the physical mobility in the metropolis did not necessarily make the city feel as a smaller space, but as a location shared by those countless identities that coexisted with and struggled against each other. Haenni observes that theatre and cinema offered “different ways of negotiating the city and its inhabitants.”<sup>14</sup> This addition in Haenni’s argument is crucial since theatre and, towards the end of the nineteenth century, film provided for audiences a visualization of Othered sites outside the U.S. territory and an exchange, albeit limited, with non-U.S. peoples. According to Haenni, the confrontation with other cultures facilitates a process of acculturation. Haenni is perhaps too idealistic in how she considers that cross-cultural contact brings about acculturation, especially when mass culture expressions in many ways work to realign or expedite assimilation of immigrant communities into the host country thereby becoming an extension of the pioneer’s labor on the frontier. Shows such as pyrodramas do not treat Otherness as equal, but as a silent victim that must be saved through U.S. intervention and ultimately adjusted to the nation’s ways. Still, Haenni recognizes the impact of a foreign spectator on the mass culture of the nation. Hence the mythical frontier does not only run across

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<sup>13</sup> Sabine Haenni, *Immigrant Scene: Ethnic Amusements in New York, 1880-1920* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 8.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

the south along wild territory, but likewise determines the confrontation with Otherness within the urban space. Most importantly, Haenni considers how those immigrant communities directly responded to the latent indoctrination of mass culture into the ways of the U.S.

Similar to Haenni, Robert Rydell and Rob Kroes examine how mass production and consumption made popular culture more accessible to the increasing influx of immigrants between 1870 and 1910. In their book, *Buffalo Bill in Bologna*, Rydell and Kroes consider how immigration participated in the strengthening of entertainment forms for the masses. They argue that

[t]here were [...] variables that paved the way in the United States for the creation of mass cultural forms that would unite people across time, space, and cultures. With the massive increase in immigration in the last half of the nineteenth century, the American population as a whole trebled, while the industrial labor force doubled.<sup>15</sup>

Immigrant communities formed part of U.S. society and so participated in the mass culture that became more accessible to middle and lower classes. Haenni, Rydell, and Kroes stress the role of mass culture and the different opportunities that it opened in bringing together different communities within the U.S. and even from around the world. Yet one must not be so naïve as to suggest that these constructions brought the world together in an unproblematic manner; rather, they engendered encounters between nations in new conflictive ways thereby imposing neocolonial systems of rule or civilizing the transatlantic frontier. At the same time, however, these encounters produced new challenges to imperialism from the communities in the exteriority and created new transnational networks. As Mimi Sheller states, “The mobilities of

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<sup>15</sup> Robert W. Rydell and Rob Kroes, *Buffalo Bill in Bologna: The Americanization of the World, 1869-1922* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 8.

consumption are not only material, but also cultural and discursive.”<sup>16</sup> Sheller argues that these masses of foreign and U.S.-born consumers decided where to experience and consume entertainment, what to take away from it, and how to engage with the ideas, which were ultimately transported across borders. Cultural expressions did not function exclusively in how they performed the nation and Otherness, but also in how they were interpreted, accepted, and challenged by diverse audiences in the U.S. and beyond. U.S. mass cultural expressions performed an ethnological (as in the films made by the Edison company) and politically convenient as in the pyrodramas’ depiction of a Cuban Other, while at the same time confronting the culturally different masses trying to survive in the city. Nevertheless, those same immigrant audiences that experienced these biased constructions would respond to them in their own ways, as I argue Cubans did with Teatro Bufo. I combine purposefully Haenni’s ideas about mobilization within New York City, Rydell and Kroes’s Marxist analysis, and Sheller’s views on the relation between the consumption of the Caribbean and the movement of knowledges to underscore the active role of audiences and how “the savage hordes” never passively accepted another’s civilizing mission.

Mass culture in general, and in the final decade of the nineteenth century included film, and Henry Pain’s pyrodramas in particular were no longer limited to elite audiences or to cultural capitals, such as New York, but travelled throughout the U.S. and beyond.<sup>17</sup> These cultural expressions consolidated the nation’s imperial and technological dominance throughout the Western world. They performed a frontier ideology that in unique ways underscored how the

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<sup>16</sup> Mimi Sheller, *Consuming the Caribbean: From Arawaks to Zombies* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 24.

<sup>17</sup>In its earliest stages, cinema was indeed a form of theatre not only because it was exhibited in vaudeville houses, but also because it depended on the short act format that made the audience experience a sudden burst of presence. This “cinema of attractions,” a phrase coined by Tom Gunning, has many structural similarities to live performance (“‘Now You See It, Now You Don’t’: The Temporality of the Cinema of Attractions,” in *The Silent Cinema Reader*, ed. Lee Grieveson and Peter Krämer [New York: Routledge, 2004]).

metaphorical pioneer mastered savagery through its industrial capabilities. In the final decades of the nineteenth century, Buffalo Bill Cody's show performed the Wild West as it had existed in the imagination of people around the world through the dissemination of dime novels and the press. As Philip J. Deloria points out, Turner presented his ideas about the frontier to the American Historical Association. Nevertheless, it was Buffalo Bill Cody's show at the World's Columbian Exposition that "proved a far more effective popular vehicle than Turner's conference paper [because it] linked lessons about empire, conquest, character, and social order."<sup>18</sup> The show successfully brought American frontier action to the stage while portraying an image of the West as a space where different identities coexisted in constant conflict, yet under the conquering gaze of Buffalo Bill. Cody's company not only included Native Americans and white Anglo Americans, but in the 1890s the show featured performers from around the world, which included Turk, Arab, and Latin American riders, among others. Although these international horseback riders were not part of the U.S. American West, they still occupied the same stage where the battle between Native Americans and white Anglo Americans took place, as is also clear through the show's title, "Buffalo Bill's Wild West and Congress of Rough Riders of the World." The Wild West show established a multiethnic community under the iconic figure of Buffalo Bill.

Yet this multiethnic coexistence entered into onstage conflict in the spectacular collision between the Native Americans and Buffalo Bill's white troops. Rydell and Kroes state that

[...] the essential message of [William Cody's Wild West] show remained unchanged: in the United States white, Anglo-Saxon "civilization" had tamed

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<sup>18</sup> Philip J. Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 62. The following discussion of William Cody's West Wild shows and the myth of the frontier is informed by Paul Reddin's *Wild West Shows* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), Joy S. Kasson's *Buffalo Bill's Wild West: Celebrity, Memory, and Popular History* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001), and Matthew Rebirth's *Pioneer Performances: Staging the Frontier* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

“savagery,” rendering “savages” a source of amusement, ethnographic study, and inspiration for a shared racial consciousness among whites that held the potential for blurring class distinctions.<sup>19</sup>

Rydell and Kroes emphasize how the Wild West show’s creation of an ethnic and “savage” Other eliminated divisions between classes while affirming white U.S. superiority. The fact that William Cody took his show to different parts of Europe created links between the battle on the U.S. frontier and the nation’s expansionist endeavors to those of diverse European nations and their colonizing missions. Cody’s Wild West enacted in Europe and the United States a confirmation of the superiority of the West and their position as defenders of “civilization” around the world.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, Buffalo Bill became the symbol of U.S. technological progress since the show featured new weaponry and fantastic sharpshooting skills, elevating the relatively new republic to a privileged position over the European empires of the past. The Wild West show and Buffalo Bill’s performative presence professed a mythic narrative of the U.S. triumph over savagery within its geographical borders and the international superiority of the relatively young nation. The performance of the *conquista* of the frontier in Buffalo Bill’s show linked the U.S. with a modernity that started with Europe’s invasion of the Americas.<sup>21</sup>

Buffalo Bill’s Wild West performed a combination of modernity and coloniality, two concepts that according to Walter Mignolo must always go together. In his book, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity*, Mignolo divides modernity into three historical periods beginning with Europe’s first encounter with America:

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<sup>19</sup> Rydell and Kroes, *Buffalo Bill in Bologna*, 111. These ideas can also be explored in Paul Reddin’s *Wild West Shows* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 94-95.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

<sup>21</sup> I use *conquista* as a direct reference to the Spanish colonization of America since it is the origin of early modernity, as Europe became a central and defining world power. In the nineteenth century, Buffalo Bill’s spectacle of the subjection of the savage Other and the frontier marks what I argue is another defining moment in modernity. The Wild West show opens the door for the future U.S. intervention in the Caribbean, thereby solidifying the nation’s neocolonial and imperial project.

[...] modernity came along with coloniality: America was not an existing entity to be discovered. It was invented, mapped, appropriated, and exploited under the banner of the Christian mission. During the time span 1500 to 2000 three cumulative (and not successive) faces of modernity are discernible: the Iberian and Catholic face, led by Spain and Portugal (1500-1750, approximately); the “heart of Europe” (Hegel) face, led by England, France, and Germany (1750-1945); and the U.S. American face, led by the United States (1945-2000). Since then, a new global order has begun to unfold: a polycentric world interconnected by the same type of economy.<sup>22</sup>

Mignolo organizes history according to which empires exercise power in different periods. These local histories become dominant thereby colonizing subaltern histories that are pushed towards the exteriorities of those global designs.<sup>23</sup> Dominant epistemologies do not only relegate “minor” knowledges to the margins, but they also reinvent peoples and locations in ways that will ultimately justify an invasion. This is why Mignolo combines invention and exploitation as part of the colonizing project. Mignolo’s *colonial difference* is a performed location that blatantly displays the invader’s power to imagine natives in particularly effective ways for conquest. He defines the *colonial difference* as

the space where local histories inventing and implementing global designs meet local histories, the space in which global designs have to be adapted, adopted, rejected, integrated, or ignored. The colonial difference is, finally, the physical as well as imaginary location where the coloniality of power is at work in the

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<sup>22</sup>Walter Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 6-7.

<sup>23</sup>“Local histories” and “global designs” are a direct reference to Mignolo’s work and they are the dominant concepts that define his central argument in *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).

confrontation of two kinds of local histories [...].<sup>24</sup>

The Americas served as the colonial difference where Europe experimented with the imposition of racial and ethnic hierarchies, new technological advancements, and the establishment of a global market of slave labor and goods that progressively forced the world together. Expanding on Mignolo's historical analysis, Tulio Halperín Donghi states that after the process of Latin American independence from Spain, which concludes with the expulsion of the last Spanish remnants from Cuba and Puerto Rico, the final decades of the nineteenth century "signaled the consolidation of the neocolonial order."<sup>25</sup> Thus the U.S. assumes its role of gendarme of the region remaining vigilant of its interests in Latin America, a world view that the North American nation's entertainment reflects. The Wild West show is the theatrical construction of the colonial difference where different peoples are brought together under the command of Buffalo Bill, the symbol of U.S. sovereignty over the savage Other and the mythical gendarme of the frontier. Just as with most mass cultural expressions, even the most adamantly defiant voices were inevitably enamored by the romantic subjugation of the West. Through a performance that was similar in its championing of U.S. ideals to Pain's pyrodramas, Buffalo Bill's show captivated the attention of the Cuban figure considered as the purest symbol of Cubanía, José Martí.

From 1880 to 1895, Martí, the intellectual leader of the Cuban Revolution, spent many fruitful years in the United States, where he raised support for Cuban independence, organized the Cuban Independence Party, published *Patria*, a newspaper that advocated for the Cuban cause, and wrote for a number of Latin American newspapers. Most of his articles centered on politics, current events, and theatre. Since Martí was a playwright himself, it is not surprising

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<sup>24</sup> Walter Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), ix.

<sup>25</sup> Tulio Halperín Donghi, *The Contemporary History of Latin America*, ed. and trans. John Charles Chasteen (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993), 158.

that he became interested in the New York theatrical scene. In 1884, José Martí, a proponent of racial equality, Cuban independence from Spain, and a revolutionary culture championed by the 1890s Cuban Revolution, published in both *La América* and *La Nación* his article “The Great ‘Buffalo Bill,’” about Buffalo Bill’s Wild West show, which he saw in New York in 1884 on an undisclosed date.<sup>26</sup> Martí describes Cody’s larger-than-life performance in the following way:

“Buffalo Bill” is the nickname of a Western hero. He has lived many years in the wilderness among rough miners, and buffaloes less fearful than the miners. [...] He knows how to dazzle ruffians and make them recognize him as boss; because no sooner does one of these jump on Buffalo Bill wielding a knife, than he falls with Buffalo Bill’s knife between the ribs, or if Buffalo Bill is shot at, his bullet meets the other in mid-air and bounces back against the aggressor, for Buffalo Bill is such a crackshooter that he can shoot at a flying bullet, stop it, and disintegrate it. He knows all there is to know about Indians, their customs, tricks, ways of fighting, and, like them, he can see in the dark and can tell by putting his ear to the ground how many enemies are approaching, how far away they are and if on foot or horseback.<sup>27</sup>

It is evident that for Martí, Buffalo Bill was the epitome of the Western hero not only because of his onstage performance, but also because Cody had lived this reality in the “real” West. In his article, Martí considers how both figures, real-life “hero” and performer, converged in the show and blurred the line that divided reality and fiction. Yet Martí never really criticizes the show for falsely glamorizing a colonial process through which various Native American nations were

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<sup>26</sup> José Martí’s article was published in the New York-based *La América* in June, 1884, and in the Buenos Aires newspaper *La Nación*, on August 16, 1884 (José Martí, *Inside the Monster: Writings on the United States and American Imperialism*, ed. Phillip S. Foner, trans. Elinor Randall [New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975], 123).

<sup>27</sup> José Martí, “The Great ‘Buffalo Bill,’” in *Inside the Monster: Writings on the United States and American Imperialism*, ed. Philip S. Foner, trans. Elinor Randall (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975), 123-24.

displaced by U.S. expansionism or the mythical frontier. Although the battle in the show between Native Americans and the representatives of U.S. whiteness recalled the various revolutions fought against the Spanish in Cuba and the way that the representatives of the Crown portrayed the insurgents as savages, Martí remains enamored of what Cody proposed as the symbols of freedom and power. Rather than identifying with the struggle of Native Americans, Martí romanticizes the cowboys and the risks they take when facing the dangers of the West. He writes:

We can see the cowboys approaching with their leather trousers fringed at the seam, their short jackets, neckerchiefs, dashing Mexican sombreros, flung rather than seated on their spirited steeds, their lariats rolled on the saddle horns ready to be whirled in the air, their guns, with which they settle their smallest disagreements, ready to be drawn from their crude holsters. The brave rascals –homeless, childless– look upon death as though it were a mug of beer: they give it or take it: they bury their victims or, with a bullet in their breast, they roll up in their blankets to die.<sup>28</sup>

Martí fantasizes about the sacrifices that the cowboys have supposedly made in their battle for the West. He even admires the cowboys' bravery and stoicism since they would be more than willing to give up their lives in a fight. Does Martí's idealization of the cowboy, which is parallel to Cody's staging of the Wild West, point to an uncritical consideration of the United States? In his writings, Martí criticizes the United States on many fronts. For example, in his article "The Truth About the United States," he writes:

One must keep watch with the poor, weep with the destitute, abhor the brutality of wealth, live in both mansion and tenement, in the school's

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 124.

reception hall and in its vestibule, in the gilt and jasper theater box and in the cold, bare wings. In this way a man can form opinions, with glimmers of reason, about the authoritarian and envious republic and the growing materialism of the United States.<sup>29</sup>

In this case, the Cuban writer declares how one must also consider marginal sectors in the United States in order to reach a more informed opinion about the young nation. Martí criticizes aspects of the U.S. that aligned its democratic ideals with those of corrupt monarchies.<sup>30</sup> Although in this article the writer's criticisms run along the lines of class, Martí also focused his critical eye on race in the United States.<sup>31</sup> Through his journalism, the Cuban writer explored the dualities of U.S. society by emphasizing the ideals of the American Revolution and the apparent freedom of thought, while at the same time excoriating the existent corruption and inequality. As Paul Giles argues, "Martí's idea of liberty [...] involves [...] a triumph of imagination, an emancipation of the spirit, which is why he is so keen to endorse the mythological emblems of America even while acknowledging the insular, self-interested nature of the country's local politics."<sup>32</sup> The way that the Cuban revolutionary and intellectual read Cody's Wild West is very complex and challenges a simple analysis of audience response.

Although the Wild West show incorporated a narrative of U.S. expansionism and an Othering practice, Martí identified with the larger-than-life persona of Buffalo Bill. Unfortunately, Martí was killed in battle in 1895 and thus was unable to see the march of

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<sup>29</sup> José Martí, "The Truth About the United States," in *Inside the Monster: Writings on the United States and American Imperialism*, ed. Philip S. Foner, trans. Elinor Randall (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975), 52.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>31</sup> In his article "The Negro Race in the United States," Martí discusses a lynching episode that occurred in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, after an African American man was found living with a white woman. Many from the African American community armed themselves and resisted the mayor and his men. Martí uses the incident to criticize racial inequality in the U.S. and the unpunished actions of the mayor [*Inside the Monster: Writings on the United States and American Imperialism*, ed. Philip S. Foner, trans. Elinor Randall (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975), 212-14].

<sup>32</sup> Paul Giles, "The Parallel Worlds of José Martí," *Radical History Review* 89 (Spring, 2004): 186.

Theodore Roosevelt's Rough Riders on Cuban soil. The name of Roosevelt's battalion was a direct reference to Cody's show of international horseback riders. Martí's appreciation of William Cody's show would have possibly changed with the U.S. imposition of an imperial agenda in the Caribbean, that moment when fiction and reality merged beyond the borders of the nation's stages. Buffalo Bill's civilizing thrust in the West, which Martí probably associated with his own nation-building mission in Cuba, revealed its darker neocolonial visage through the U.S. invasion of the island. Yet this encounter between Cuba and the U.S., with all its imperialistic violence, generated a third space that challenged the idea of the frontier as the line that divided two binary oppositions. This was the instant when the frontier became *la frontera*.

In his thesis, Turner imagines the frontier as a space of transformation. In his theory, there is a moment in which the pioneer is still partially European, directly contaminated by the savage, and is already the possessor of an incomplete U.S. American way. At this middle point, all of these sides enter into conflict within the savage/pioneer's mind. Turner discerns the finality of this change, yet I propose that the different selves persist even when Americanness has been achieved. Although the frontier myth better defines James Pain's pyrodramas about Cuba, Gloria Anzaldúa's idea of the borderlands offers a more appropriate perspective from which to examine the Cuban Bufo. In her seminal book, *Borderlands/La frontera: The New Mestiza*, Anzaldúa conceptualizes the borderland as

a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant stage of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants. *Los atravesados* live here: the squint-eyed, the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulato, the half-breed, the half dead; in short,

those who cross over, pass over, or go through the confines of the “normal.”<sup>33</sup>

Unlike Turner’s frontier, whose final product is complete Usonianism, Anzaldúa’s borderland is unstable and ever-moving. There is no ending to its constant change, and ambiguity is its natural state. Martí’s romantic and uncritical interpretation of Cody’s Wild West show and his later denunciations of the nation’s materialism are opposing views that coexist in the writer and, I contend, also in Cuban Bufo, which reveals the ethos of the island. More than half a century before Anzaldúa was born, Martí channeled her complex take on the Others who are subjected to living between two or more worlds and within the colonial difference. While Pain’s pyrodramas exhibited the frontier ideology, a Bufo play such as Ignacio Sarachaga’s *¡Arriba con el himno! (Hurray for the Anthem!)* portrayed an island that somewhat alters itself to welcome the U.S., symbolized by the character of Mr. Handkerchief. Luis, a Cuban male whose racial profile is never revealed in the text, leads Mr. Handkerchief on a comic tour around the island. Luis introduces, to both the spectator and the Usonian presence, many aspects of Cuban theatrical and musical culture, politics, and society. The guide and the island combine features of Spanish, Criollo, and Afro-Caribbean identity, which are not completely static since they are adapting to the newly-arrived U.S. invader. Unlike the performance of U.S. superiority in the pyrodramas and Wild West shows, the Bufo as an expression of Cuba is a theatre of conflict that evidences how some local histories struggle for superiority while others just fight to survive.

### The Staged Caribbean Frontier

Nineteenth-century U.S. mass culture insidiously estranges immigrants from the frontier-related idea of civilization. Mass entertainment forms portrayed Othered groups thereby bringing

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<sup>33</sup> Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987), 25.

them to the forefront of the nation's consciousness. Nevertheless, mass culture always framed these communities as those who escaped the civilizing process of the mythical U.S. pioneer and hence either become the punchline of the joke for their lack of sophistication, the victimized infants by a decadent non-Usonian empire, or a completely absent non-entity. An extremely popular mass cultural expression at the time, Edison's films about the Spanish-Cuban-American War performed the frontier not only to separate the U.S. from an exotic Caribbean world, but also to differentiate the superiority of white Anglos from inferior racial and ethnic Others.<sup>34</sup>

This depiction even extended to how minorities related to Pain's fiery spectacles in Manhattan Beach. On June 29, 1903, *The New York Times* reported that Jefferson Jackson, described as "an Alabama negro just from the plantation [who] was hired to carry a torch" in the pyrodrama, *Last Days of Pompeii*, may have been oblivious to the nature of the show since when he witnessed the explosion of Mount Vesuvius, he fled in the middle of the performance. Jackson took with him his costume, which consisted of "a costly, bespangled garment," and what the reporter identifies as "a lycopodium torch." The article concludes with the comic image of Jackson running away with the lighted torch and the final punchline: "[t]he faster [he] ran, the greater became the flame from the torch." The journalist and interviewees are not worried about Jackson, but about the missing equipment since, as the final line of the article points out, he did not reappear for rehearsals.<sup>35</sup> That conclusion adds a slapstick note to the story similar to Edison's film *Colored Troops Disembarking*. There is a clear separation in the article, which is also applicable to Edison's film, between those familiar with the entertainments and technologies prevalent in the urban space and those whose "savage ways" are doubly marked by their Alabama upbringing. This differentiation simultaneously emphasizes the frontier that separated

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<sup>34</sup> See Chapter 1, where I examine how Edison's 1898 film *Colored Troops Disembarking* depicts racial Others as part of a mass culture that defines whiteness against a racist performance of Blackness.

<sup>35</sup> "Negro Fled from Manhattan Beach with a Flaming Torch," *The New York Times*, June 29, 1903.

the North from the South and the racial Otherness of the subject. In this section, I contend that the frontier myth served to demarcate the difference between the defining qualities of Cuban identities performed in James Pain's pyrodramas and the symbols of U.S. authority. I will begin by examining the 1896 pyrodrama, *Cuba*, which shows a group of colorful Cuban insurgents led by the character of Carmen fighting the Spanish military, and will continue with 1899 performance of *The Battle of San Juan and Destruction of Cervera's Fleet*, whose action spotlights Pain's fiery special effects through the portrayal of the battle at sea between the U.S. and Spain and the decisive skirmish at San Juan Hill. Audiences attending the Manhattan Beach shows, which could possibly have included Cuban delegates from the Junta, must have been mesmerized by the sophisticated pyrotechnics and the theatrical flair of the spectacle. Nevertheless, while eyeing the performance booklet for *Cuba*, Cuban attendees might have secretly snickered when they gazed at the Puerto Rican flag displayed in the front cover of the program.

During the seventeenth season of Pain's pyrospectacles in Manhattan Beach, which took place in the summer of 1896, attendees received a booklet of the show, *Cuba*, which portrayed on its cover a young Cuban woman as a representation of the revolutionary island.<sup>36</sup> The woman is barefoot and wears a sleeveless blouse and a basic peasant skirt, which points to the hardship that the island went through under the Spanish regime. Yet her manner is one of defiance clearly demonstrated by the fact that she is standing on a cannon while holding a sword in her right hand and a raised flag in the other. One would assume that the flag is that of Cuba given the title of the show, but the woman is actually holding up the Puerto Rican symbol. This confusion is understandable to an extent given that the Cuban flag inspired the Puerto Rican one, whose

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<sup>36</sup> *Cuba* was produced under the direct supervision of Henry J. Pain. Scenic design was under the direction of E.H. Kirby. The book was written by Richard Neville and adapted to the stage by F.R. Rose.

difference is designated by the inversion of colors. According to David J. Leonard and Carmen R. Lugo-Lugo's *Latino History and Culture: An Encyclopedia*, the Puerto Rican poet Lola Rodríguez de Tió, who was actively involved in the fight for independence on both islands and was one of the founders of the Cuban Revolutionary Party in New York, recommended that the Puerto Rican flag follow the Cuban design, thereby connecting both countries in their fight for sovereignty.<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless, in the case of the playbill for *Cuba*, the use of the Puerto Rican flag does not exemplify how both islands resisted Spain as a united front, but only attests to the carelessness of both the Usonian printers and Pain himself. The oversight evinces how the nation may have simply perceived both islands as copies of each other. Their cultural differences collapsed in the eyes of the countless audiences who flocked to Manhattan Beach to witness the "repeated island" on fire.

The use of the wrong flag on the cover places into perspective how the U.S. imagined the Caribbean in general and Cuba in particular. The national emblem of Puerto Rico did not simply represent Cuba, but a Caribbean under Spanish rule devoid of any specificity. Both islands were turned into interchangeable symbols. Therefore, the woman holding the flag is an image absent of any meaning and becomes one more among the countless signifiers that inevitably reiterated an infinite chain of "repeated islands." The metaphor of the "repeating island," as opposed to my own use of the "repeated island," as a representation of the Caribbean was coined and explored by Antonio Benítez-Rojo. He affirms that with the Caribbean archipelago "one can sense the features of an island that 'repeats' itself, unfolding and bifurcating until it reaches all the seas and lands of the earth, while at the same time it inspires multidisciplinary maps of unexpected

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<sup>37</sup> David J. Leonard and Carmen R. Lugo-Lugo, *Latino History and Culture: An Encyclopedia*, two volumes (New York: Routledge, 2015), 485.

designs.”<sup>38</sup> For Benítez-Rojo, repetition emphasizes difference since he romantically envisions the Caribbean as a “meta-archipelago” that lacks boundaries and whose transnational essence is present throughout the world. Yet I use the “repeated island” in opposition to Benítez-Rojo’s concept since, to the colonial and neocolonial eye, there is no real distinction between Cuba and Puerto Rico, or any other Caribbean island for that matter. Frederick Turner explains that “the frontier is the outer edge of the wave —the meeting point between savagery and civilization.”<sup>39</sup> The absence of boundaries essential to Benítez-Rojo’s idea of a Caribbean branching throughout the world counters Turner’s frontier, which works as the point of contact between two binary worlds that nevertheless remain divided by the line. Turner’s savage world remains as one broad undifferentiated space. In this way, the “repeated island” (not the “repeating island”) stands for the homogeneous wilderness on the other side of the frontier. This is precisely the exoticism of the colonies and neocolonies that extends throughout any region under imperial control and beyond, yet will always stand in opposition to the other more “civilized” side of the frontier. The “repeated island” lingers in any symbol or utterance that razes national, regional, racial, and ethnic difference, among others, and hence simply becomes a caricature of a more complex reality.

The insidiousness of the flag as a sign of the “repeated island” lies precisely in how its location in a booklet whose principal intent was to introduce U.S. spectators to an experience of rebellion in the Caribbean, homogenizes the region into one big territory. As a companion to James Pain’s *Cuba*, the playbill is an essential element in the way that the island is reconfigured into an exotic and dangerous scenario that scintillates audiences from a safe distance.

Throughout the pamphlet, an attendee might see the sponsors proudly announcing that Le Roy

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<sup>38</sup> Antonio Benítez-Rojo, *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective*, trans. James Maraniss (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1997), 3.

<sup>39</sup> Turner, *The Frontier in American History*, 2.

Cigarettes are the society smoke; that Sarah Bernhardt considers Le Bihan umbrellas as the most perfect of its kind; and that Mrs. Winslow's Soothing Syrup is the best remedy for both diarrhea and children's teething. These three advertisements synecdochically frame a particular experience of a performed Cuba by presenting products that spectators could have directly or indirectly associated with the Caribbean locale. In relation to the cigarettes, since the nineteenth century tobacco has been one of Cuba's most important exports. The protagonist of Adolfo Pierra's play, *The Cuban Patriots*, offers tobacco along with some tropical fruit to a U.S. colonel so that he can have a taste of the wonders of the island and to ultimately prove its economic value to the nation. In *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*, Fernando Ortiz asserts: "As for Cuban tobacco, being, as it is, the best in the world, it is unnecessary to analyze the advantages of soil and climate. From the excellence of the plant one can infer that of its natural conditions of production."<sup>40</sup> Just as the character in Pierra's play, Ortiz merges the island itself with the high quality of the tobacco grown there. This confluence in Ortiz's work is a result of his anthropological analysis of the island through an opposition he establishes between tobacco and sugar. Nevertheless, in Pierra's play, the characteristically good tobacco is what makes the island attractive to U.S. consumers. In the same way, Pain's show not only performs Cuba as a fiery setting, but also adds legitimacy to Le Roy Cigarettes, regardless if they are Cuban or not. The island is both a product and a brand associated with certain pleasures. Additionally, the umbrellas protect U.S. travelers from the inclement Caribbean sun, which the pyrodrama would somewhat reproduce through fiery effects. As one of the most popular actresses of the time, Bernhardt's sponsorship further drives the point across: the wild Cuban woman on the cover of the pamphlet may be able to fight while only holding the flag, but as the representation of

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<sup>40</sup> Fernando Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*, trans. Harriet de Onís (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), 7-8.

European theatrical royalty and white femininity, the divine Sarah needs her umbrella. Finally, the medicine would alleviate any symptoms brought about by tropical disease.<sup>41</sup> The products advertised prepared the audience to visually devour a dangerous and sweltering faraway locale from the comfort provided by the civilized side of the frontier.

The playbill also underscores safety and fantasy with the advertisements devoted to diverse travel experiences scattered throughout the pamphlet. Among them, there is the Pennsylvania Railroad that boasts of its “safety-securing apparatus” and provision of chaperones for ladies interested in excursions; the attraction of the Scenic Railway that promises a fantastic ride through fairyland and Dante’s Inferno; and the Fall River Line, whose steamboats offer guaranteed safety and their own orchestra. The reiteration of the travel motif in the pamphlet’s advertisements reveals how Cuba is the destination of Pain’s virtual excursion, just as Buffalo Bill’s show offered a tour through the frontier. With all his pyrotechnics, stage design, and casts of hundreds, Pain successfully created a minute version of a Caribbean island in flames, which audiences, even when conscious of the theatricality of the show, read as a simulation of the real thing. In relation to the simulacrum as a manifestation of a hyperreality, Jean Baudrillard affirms:

[...] it is with this same imperialism that present-day simulators attempt to make the real, all of the real, coincide with their models of simulation. But it is no longer a question of either maps or territories. Something has disappeared: the sovereign difference, between one and the other, that constituted the charm of

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<sup>41</sup>According to Ingrid Gessner, there were 2,910 U.S. casualties during the invasion to Cuba and only 345 were combat related. The rest were due to illnesses such as typhoid fever and dysentery, among others [“Heroines of Health: Examining the Other Side of the ‘Splendid Little War,’” *European Journal of American Studies, Special Issue: Women in the U.S.A.* 10, no. 1 (2015), <https://ejas.revues.org/10784>]. Although *Cuba* was staged in 1896, two years before the U.S. involvement in the Cuban conflict, disease was a real consequence of poverty, famine, and war, as suffered by Cubans during the revolution that started in 1895. A *New York Times* headline warned “Contagion Carrying Off Hundreds of People Each Week in Havana and the Other Cities of the Island” (July 21, 1896), adding to the already prevalent anxiety felt by U.S. masses towards immigrants in general and Cubans in particular.

abstraction. [...] In fact, it is no longer really the real, because no imaginary envelops it anymore. It is a hyperreal, produced from a radiating synthesis of combinatory models in a hyperspace without atmosphere.<sup>42</sup>

For Baudrillard, the hyperreal is then a construction that exists alongside reality. The author's inclusion of the element of power is essential to hyperreality. This becomes evident in Pain's pyrodramas, where the staged space inevitably mirrors certain imperial models of control over the simulated island.<sup>43</sup> In this way, the construction of Pain's Cuba as an island is not only limited to what is seen onstage, because the advertisements, the popular feelings about the actual revolution, and the show's correlation to the frontier paradigm make the pyrodrama into a hyperreal Caribbean. Thus Pain assures the U.S. masses that his *Cuba* will provide an island that will be consumed both by fire and by spectators from a safe distance. The moat that separated the seating area from the stage, which was meant to control the spreading of fire that could harm attendees as a result of the pyrotechnics used in the show, further demarcated that frontier between civilization and Caribbean savagery. Unlike the Wagnerian chasm, which divided reality from onstage fantasy, the watery border simply divided one reality from another, at least to spectators of the show. The repeated island, regardless if it is Cuba or Puerto Rico, is constructed as a short lived fiery moment, a burst of presence that ends in an explosion.

The simplicity of the plot of *Cuba* demonstrates the limitations of the actors' performances. The distance of the public from the stage and the hundreds of supernumeraries who participated in the spectacle evinced the show's dependence on its main attraction, the

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<sup>42</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. Sheila Faria Glaser (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1994), 1-2.

<sup>43</sup> I use the verb *mirror* on purpose. For Baudrillard, the hyperreal is not a simulacrum that *mirrors* reality, but it is another reality in itself. Although I agree with the theorist to an extent, I argue that hyperreality as a construction still *mirrors* the coloniality of power at play in the construction of a parallel dimension. There are unavoidable points of contact between reality and hyperreality.

special effects. The simple plot, which could only be performed visually since no dialogue would have been audible to viewers, echoes the story of Georges Bizet's *Carmen*, which was very popular at the time. The booklet summarizes the action of *Cuba* for attendees with enough detail for them to fill in any gaps brought about by the distance from the stage. The story is set in Santiago de Cuba at the fortified Morro Castle and next to the city walls. There are various performative events taking place, such as dancing. Some Spanish soldiers march onstage in formation, contrasting the revelry of the Cuban people. A beautiful and flirtatious Cuban woman who only readers of the pamphlet could have identified as Carmen, a direct reference to Bizet's work, comes in and coquettishly entices a Spanish sentry who stands guard alone. Although initially resistant, he soon succumbs to Carmen's feminine wiles and asks her for a kiss. As he prepares for her to oblige him, Cuban rebels come from behind and capture the Spaniard, stripping him of his uniform. Carmen's coquettish attitude toward the soldier and the subsequent deception mirrors how the female protagonist of the opera flirts with the soldier, Don José, to the point where he develops an unhealthy attraction towards her, which ends in his humiliation and her murder. Pain was clearly cashing in on the success of Bizet's opera, which, according to the *Grove Encyclopedia of Music*, "began in Vienna in October 1875" and subsequently "reached 20 other cities from St. Petersburg to Melbourne [...]." <sup>44</sup> Bizet's opera had also been staged to large acclaim in New York City at venues such as Booth's Theatre and the Metropolitan Opera House. <sup>45</sup> Pain's use of *Carmen* further silences the already problematic portrayal of Cubanía since he reimagined the Cuban revolution as a conflict fought between the Spanish military and the Orientalized Spaniards of Bizet's invention. The silencing of the only Cuban voice does not

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<sup>44</sup>*Grove Music Online*, s.v. "Bizet, Georges," by Hugh Macdonald, accessed March 3, 2016, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.ezproxy.gc.cuny.edu/subscriber/>.

<sup>45</sup> "Carmen at Booth's Theatre," *The New York Times*, January 18, 1879; "Carmen at the Opera," *The New York Times*, December 7, 1895.

come as a result of the proportions of the pyrodrama, the immense cast, or the distance between the stage and the audience, but as a product of the replacing of a Caribbean identity with an invented Spanish one.

The fact that the Cuban insurgents are led by Carmen, a clear copy of Bizet's Spanish character, creates an interesting dilemma when differentiating between islanders and the military authorities. Audience members who may have been familiar with the opera recognized both as descending from Spain. The performance established the difference through the costumes and the dominant gender in each group. The Spanish military affirms its masculinity through the use of uniforms worn by the men. Although the Cuban side also included men, the most forceful and representative presence is that of Carmen. In the opera, she is a gypsy woman, always an already Othered identity throughout Western and Eastern Europe. Therefore, the show transposes Carmen to the island that the U.S. masses recognized as a racially and ethnically mixed population. The costume that Carmen wore in the pyrodrama probably echoed Bizet's Orientalist version and may have accentuated her sexuality. Although these qualities make the character into a sex-hungry native who defies Western conceptions of femininity, the show utilized the character's wild side to advance the Cuban cause, the operating factor when capturing the Spanish sentry. As in Turner's concept of the frontier, the European is not prepared for the onslaught of the wilderness. The playbill underscores the frontier in the very first line of the text: "The patriotic struggle the Cubans are making to free their country from Spanish oppression has already attracted the attention of the civilized nations of the earth."<sup>46</sup> Civilization is a virtue that can never be achieved by Cuba, an island that lies on the other side of the border. Nonetheless the countries that can claim that moral high ground paid attention to the island's strife. That lack

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<sup>46</sup> Richard Neville, book for *Cuba* (Pain's Amphitheatre, Manhattan Beach: 1896), 5.

of civilization prevalent in the native woman's sexual proclivities leads the insurgents to a short-lived victory.

After the capture of the sentry, one of the insurgents takes his uniform and stands guard. At this moment, a ship arrives to port carrying weaponry for the rebellion. Yet the Spanish militia uncovers the plan and, in a spectacular shoot-out, they manage to overpower the rebels and capture six Cubans. The show then departs from its references to *Carmen* to focus on current political intrigue related to the Cuban revolution since the six prisoners will be put on trial. This incident, which begins with the capture of the filibuster vessel is reminiscent of the *Virginius* affair, received ample coverage throughout the Western world and, just like Evangelina's escape from the Spanish prison in Cuba, was crucial to move U.S. masses into supporting the cause.<sup>47</sup> As explained in the second chapter, the *Virginius* was registered as a U.S. vessel and revolutionaries took advantage of the ship's status to smuggle arms into Cuba. When the *Virginius* was close to Cuban shores, the Spanish navy intercepted it and arrested all its crew. The Spanish authorities quickly prepared a military tribunal to dispense swift justice, and more than forty men, including British citizens, were executed. U.S. and British ambassadors intervened immediately, and, after long negotiations, Spanish officials released the men under the protection of the U.S. flag. In the show, the six Cuban prisoners go through a short trial and the military authorities find them guilty. A priest and a number of nuns plead for mercy, yet to no avail. As soldiers prepare to execute the prisoners, the U.S. Consul enters the scene and argues that three of the prisoners are U.S. citizens and demands their liberation. Yet the court overturns the consul's orders. In a dramatic act of patriotism, the consul unfurls the U.S. flag and throws it over the three imprisoned U.S. citizens, effectively shielding them from Spanish retribution. As

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<sup>47</sup> I examine in depth the *Virginius* affair in the second chapter. Two of the most important sources used to examine the history of the incident are Richard H. Bradford's *The Virginius Affair* (Boulder: Colorado Associated University Press, 1980) and Ron Soodalter's "To the Brink in Cuba 1873," in *Military History* 26, no. 4 (Oct-Nov 2009): 62.

the consul leads away the three men, the priest and the nuns make a final plea to the tribunal, yet it is too late. The prisoners are shot in front of the horrified masses attending the show. The visual force of a live execution, regardless of its staged quality, revealed the consequences of the war on the Cuban people and cemented the validity of the cause.

Masses at Manhattan Beach felt the savagery of Spanish power with the execution of the crew that stayed behind. It is important to note that the representatives of the Catholic god are not the ones who are able to successfully protect the rebels, but the symbols of the U.S. government, the consul and the flag. On one hand, the Spanish were vilified by the refusal to heed their god's calls for mercy, channeled by the voices of the priest and the nuns. Although some spectators were not necessarily Catholic, they witnessed how the Spanish authorities completely ignored god's words. In contrast, the Spanish acted docilely when they did not open fire on the prisoners taken away by the U.S. functionary. At this moment, these actions clearly elevated the nation's power over that of the Catholic god's, at least in matters pertaining to Cuba. The flag thus became the political frontier that separated the barbarism of the Spanish victimizers from the victimization of the U.S. citizens. Furthermore, the illegality of the consul's direct intervention, regardless of its heroic overtones and its justifications within the drama, evidenced the virtue of any action by the U.S. and the performance of Manifest Destiny. The flag itself is a metaphorical frontier that justifies the Consul's intervention. Turner affirms that "the advance of the frontier has meant a steady movement away from the influence of Europe, a steady growth of independence on American lines."<sup>48</sup> Although at this point, the U.S. had been an independent nation for more than a century, many still considered Europe as the epitome of culture, society, and political stability. Yet Turner argues that the frontier is crucial since its contact with wilderness gives the U.S. its particular hue, differentiating the young nation from Europe. In this

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<sup>48</sup> Turner, *The Frontier in American History*, 3.

particular scene, the use of the flag not only divides U.S. citizens who stand for a just cause from the villainous Spaniards, but the power of the frontier shines in all its glory as it shields them from the onslaught of the European bullets.

*Cuba* brings forth an opposition between the U.S. and Spain in how they stand in relation to the Caribbean island, thereby highlighting how each nation relates to savagery of the metaphorical frontier. While the U.S., represented by the Consul, fights for the lives of Cubans, the Spanish struggle to eradicate defiance from the masses. These opposing portrayals underscore Turner's idea of the frontier: the Spanish as a European civilization untouched by wilderness, and the Usonian as the American explorer who has come in contact with wilderness and thereby subjugates it to its civilizing mission. The audience never witnesses an encounter between the symbol of the U.S. government and Carmen, who is the Cuban savage, despite the performance's connections to the opera. Yet Carmen is the key figure who, at the end of the show, lights the fuse that will decimate the Spanish army and bring Pain's show to its explosive conclusion. Carmen's final fiery chaos becomes the foil to the U.S. Consul's more civilized actions to protect the nation's citizens from harm. This opposition fits perfectly into the frontier narrative that will always define the "us," identified as the consul, against the savage Other, the Cuban gypsy. Pain's following pyrodrama on the subject of the war, *The Battle of San Juan and Destruction of Cervera's Fleet*, highlights not only the clash between the U.S. and Spain, but also between Usonian armies and the harsh Cuban wilderness. In this show, the explosive chaos caused by the U.S. military contradicts the wilderness of the island, which is the manifestation of Cubanía.

During the summer of 1899, three years after *Cuba*, Pain staged *The Battle of San Juan and Destruction of Cervera's Fleet* for audiences in Manhattan Beach. This new work intensified

the invulnerability of the representatives of the U.S. by confronting them with a well-prepared Spanish military and an inhospitable Caribbean landscape.<sup>49</sup> In this new spectacle, Henry Pain recreated two epic battles, thereby dazzling audiences with terrible explosions at sea and marching soldiers sacrificing their lives against the well-equipped Spanish military close to Santiago de Cuba, the second most important city in the island after La Habana. The show, which is divided into two acts, begins with the battle at sea between the four U.S. ships--the *Brooklyn*, *Texas*, *Indiana*, and *Oregon*--and the Spanish fleet led by Admiral Pascual Cervera y Topete. On July 3, 1898, the Spanish ships, which included the *Infanta María Teresa*, *Cristobal Colón*, *Vizcaya*, and *Almirante Oquendo*, were departing from Santiago de Cuba when the U.S. Navy, led by Rear Admiral Winfield Scott Schley, intercepted them. The U.S. vessels inflicted serious damage on the Spanish forces, destroying two of the ships and almost completely sinking a third one. In true theatrical style, this was only the closing of the first scene in the actual battle. Two Spanish torpedo destroyers, the *Plutón* and the *Furor*, suddenly appeared to defend Spanish honor and seemed to be a tremendous force. However, the smaller U.S.S. *Gloucester*, with Lieutenant Commander Richard Wainwright at the helm, waited on the sidelines for its moment in battle. The written narration describes the encounter at sea: “[...] Wainwright drove the little *Gloucester*, unprotected by armor as she was, directly at the terrible destroyers, without giving them time to use their torpedoes, if they so desired, and opened fire upon them.”<sup>50</sup> The booklet that was distributed to audiences constantly accentuates the strength of the enemy fleet and describes the Spanish as displaying “courage worthy of the race.”<sup>51</sup> Heightening the dramatic

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<sup>49</sup>*The Battle of San Juan and Destruction of Cervera's Fleet* was produced under the direct supervision of Henry J. Pain. The scenic design was directed by E. H. Kirby. The book was written by Richard Neville and adapted to the stage by Frank Oakes Rose.

<sup>50</sup> Richard Neville, book for *The Battle of San Juan and Destruction of Cervera's Fleet* (Pain's Amphitheatre, Manhattan Beach, 1899), 15.

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*, 11.

tension, Richard Neville, the writer of the book, builds the power of the Spanish in order to prove the indomitability and courage of the U.S. vessels, clearly demonstrating how Spain cannot defeat the American spirit. In the end, and after such a buildup, the U.S. earned a crucial maritime victory in the Spanish-Cuban-American War and cemented its superiority in the Caribbean and in the process honoring the *Maine*. Although it is impossible to clearly discern what spectators witnessed on that day in Manhattan Beach, Pain's pyrotechnics must have dazzled audiences with their technological prowess and nationalistic fire. Yet, how did Pain stage this battle? How did his crew represent the warships? It is clear that the engineers working for the production must have used materials that were fire resistant and durable enough to be reused in the show and in future productions. The booklet announces that, in 1898, Pain staged *The Battle of Manila*, which marked a significant triumph for Admiral George Dewey against the Spanish fleet in the Philippines. It makes perfect sense that the mechanisms used in the 1898 production would have been reused for the 1899 show. The technical performance of Pain's production values and pyrotechnics, which stunned audiences, adds to the power of the portrayal of the U.S. Navy. Pain does not stage the explosion of the *Maine*, which the U.S. government used to justify its intervention. The showman went for the battle that aggrandized the nation's military power. Therefore Pain's pyrotechnics, which were already a symbol of the developments in entertainment technologies, served as the perfect performance context to champion the *Gloucester's* and the nation's military achievements.

The second act of Pain's pyrospectacle focuses on the Battle of San Juan, where the U.S. troops must not only face the Cuban wilderness, but also the Spanish army's tactical familiarity with the area. In the playbill, this section begins by portraying the arduous march through the Caribbean frontier:

The advance of the American Army on Santiago de Cuba will long be remembered. No greater display of courage, and suffering, and daring, in the history of the war, has ever been chronicled. In a strange country, under a tropical sun, marching through almost impenetrable jungle, deprived even of the ordinary auxiliaries and support which an invading army has the right to count on, the American troops approached, surely, steadily, and necessarily slowly, towards the heights that looked down on the doomed city.<sup>52</sup>

Just like the pioneers as described by Turner or Buffalo Bill's Rough Riders as portrayed by Martí in his review of Cody's Wild West Show, Pain's and Neville's U.S. soldiers march through the Cuban jungle and are able to withstand the inclement environmental conditions for their idealized sense of justice. As is clear in the citation, even before the U.S. forces attack, the text already declares the fall of the city, Santiago de Cuba, which actually came after the battle at San Juan Hill. The show does not really cover the fall of the Spanish army in Santiago, yet the invasion and surrender of the city came as a result of the preceding U.S. triumph.

*The Battle of San Juan and the Destruction of Cervera's Fleet* took place in the summer of 1899 when the U.S. had already invaded Cuba, yet we must consider that the text responds to two different realities. The historical reality somewhat carries less value given that audiences were not attending the actual battle. Spectators at Manhattan Beach expected to see a staging more along the lines of Baudrillard's hyperreal, or a "reality" that Pain presented as a reconstruction and that was interpreted and ultimately perceived as even more real than actuality. Through the process of *surrogation*, the staged event substitutes the real battle, which took place

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<sup>52</sup>Ibid., 21.

the year before, and surpasses the audience's expectations due to its entertainment value.<sup>53</sup> There is nothing more satisfying than seeing a battle that a master showman has staged for maximum dramatic effect. Therefore the description in the playbill foreshadows the inevitable total defeat of Spain in Cuba as somewhat of a spoiler to the action of the show. This is not because attendees were not familiar with the outcome, but because Pain's dramatic sense would materialize the insurmountable odds of the battle at San Juan Hill that led to the fall of the Cuban city. In this way, the playbill adds melodramatic flare to the charge of the U.S. soldiers as they fight the Spaniards, who "displayed a fortitude worthy of the days three centuries ago, when the infantry of Spain was thought the finest in Europe."<sup>54</sup> The text heightens the strength of the Spanish, thereby enhancing the effrontery of the U.S. soldiers in the two battles staged in the play. Ironically, in its detailed reconstruction of the setting, the playbill indicates certain real issues that the U.S. military faced in Cuba during these battles when it states:

There were no roads, only trails and pathways, and miserable ones at that, over which the march was taken up, with obstacles and concealed enemies, well equipped with the most approved weapons and smokeless powder, to contest every inch of ground. [...] After days of distressing marching, suffering all the hardships of a most trying campaign, through jungle and almost impenetrable woods and forest of tropical growth, the army to capture Santiago [...] reached the approach to San Juan Hill [...].<sup>55</sup>

The motor of this revelation was not necessarily to add a sense of theatricality, but one of reality. In the actual war, the invading army was not prepared for such an inhospitable terrain. Even their

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<sup>53</sup>Surrogation is the process through which an original figure or event no longer exists and so a community replaces it with a copy that lacks the authenticity of the first one. Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 2.

<sup>54</sup> Neville, *The Battle of San Juan*, 25.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 21

tactics almost cost them their victory. An observation balloon, which served as a guide to the U.S. battalion in their approach to San Juan Hill, and their use of black powder, which produced smoke, betrayed their positions to the Spanish forces.<sup>56</sup> Yet what the text emphasizes is that, regardless of the odds, the American boys forged ahead without a care for their lives. Whereas *Cuba* portrays a Gypsy-like Cuban people fighting against and suffering under the cruelty of the Spanish government, *The Battle of San Juan and Destruction of Cervera's Fleet* stages two decisive battles between the U.S. and Spain fought at different fronts on the island. Even more stunning than the pyrotechnics that Pain used to enact the naval battle and the clash between the U.S. and Spanish armies is the absence of any Cuban representation in a war that the Mambises had been fighting since 1895.

Pain did not include the battle for the city of Santiago in his pyrodrama, a clash in which the Cuban army led by General Calixto García proved to be instrumental. This spectacle formed part of the general discourse through which the U.S. media presented to the national masses Cuban participation in the war. Stephen Crane wrote for the *New York World* on July 1, 1898 that “contrary to the Cubans, the bronze faces of the Americans were not stolid at all. One could note the prevalence of a curious expression –something dreamy, the symbol of minds striving to tear aside the screen of the future and perhaps expose the ambush of death. It was not fear in the least.”<sup>57</sup> Crane romanticizes the U.S. soldiers through a statement that already begins by establishing that this description serves as an opposition to that of Cubans. On July 21 and 28, 1898, Crane is more direct in the same news outlet when he charges Cuban soldiers with “not fight[ing], but stay[ing] in the rear to eat up rations and steal the belongings of American soldiers.” According to the writer, Cubans clearly took advantage of the U.S. military presence

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<sup>56</sup> Philip S. Foner, *The Spanish-Cuban-American War and the Birth of American Imperialism, 1895-1902*, Volume 2 (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972), 359.

<sup>57</sup> Stephen Crane, *The New York World*, July 1, 1898.

by abandoning the fight for the independence of their own nation. Crane's words and Pain's pyrotechnics function together to portray a heroic U.S. confronting Spanish iniquity on behalf of islanders whose laziness invites exploitation. Reality does not really need to inform Crane's newspaper accounts and Pain's theatrical performances in Manhattan Beach, because their conceptions of Cuba fall within the hyperreal. Nevertheless, on November 21, 1898, *The State* quotes General Nelson A. Miles who said:

It will be observed that Gen. [Calixto] Garcia [sic] regarded my requests as his orders, and promptly took steps to execute the plan of operations. He sent 3,000 men to check any movement of the 12,000 Spaniards stationed at Holguin [sic]. A portion of this latter force started to the relief of the garrison at Santiago, but was successfully checked and turned back by the Cuban forces under Gen. Ferial. General Garcia also sent 2,000 men, under Perez [sic], to oppose the 6,000 Spaniards at Guantanamo [sic], and they were successful in their object.<sup>58</sup>

Miles's views of Cubans acknowledge a much more trustworthy version of an army that had engaged with Spain since 1895. Whereas Crane's reporting and Pain's shows portray a Cuba that extends undifferentiated either as gypsies, a faraway shore (in the sea battle), and an uncivilized jungle, Miles's mention of García, one of the most important Cuban generals in the revolution, already shows an island as actively participating in its own process of liberation.

#### Mr. Handkerchief Goes to Cuba

The final blow to the Spanish domination of Cuba was the defeat of its forces in Santiago. The U.S. media immediately spread the news that the "splendid little war," as Secretary of State John Hay referred to it, had taken only a few months (from April to August

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<sup>58</sup>*The State*, November 21, 1898.

1898) thanks to the intervention of the U.S. The nation's media almost completely agreed that if it was not for the U.S. military, the poor Cubans would have never been liberated from Spanish oppression. Journalists such as Stephen Crane infantilized Cubans, as can be seen in his report for the *The New York World*, published on July 14, 1898, about the Cuban insurgents' apathy towards U.S. military aid and their general laziness:

The American soldier [...] thinks of himself often as a disinterested benefactor, and he would like the Cubans to play up to the ideal now and then. His attitude is mighty human. He does not really want to be thanked, and yet the total absence of anything like gratitude makes him furious, because the Cubans apparently consider themselves under no obligation to take part in an engagement; because the Cubans will stay at the rear and collect haversacks, blankets, coats and shelter tents dropped by our troops.<sup>59</sup>

Crane was one of the voices who justified for their wide readership the future imperialistic treatment that the Cubans would receive from the U.S. This linguistic depiction was bolstered by the visuals provided by the popular Edison films, which assigned a specific ethos to a whole nation. Edison's short "Cuban Refugees Waiting for Rations" defines the Cuban people by dividing the image into two sides. On the left side of the image, the Cubans stand almost immobile thereby revealing their suffering and lack of energy. The summary of the short in Edison's catalog identifies them as *reconcentrados*, or people who were prisoners in General Valeriano Weyler's concentration camps, which he opened throughout the island to sever links between the civilian population and the insurgents. Countless Cubans died of hunger, disease, and lack of medical attention in these internment camps, earning Weyler the nickname of the Butcher. On the opposite side of the image and in clear contrast to the Cuban refugees, there is a

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<sup>59</sup> Stephen Crane, *The New York World*, July 14, 1898.

group of women and officers moving around in a lively fashion. The catalog states that this image “affords an exceedingly interesting racial character study.”<sup>60</sup> This line erases any realistic context for the photo. It is not that the Cubans in the film are weak due to their horrible living conditions in Weyler’s concentration camps, but that this slow movement and passivity is a common racial trait of Cubans different from the energy of the officers and the ladies on the other side of the image. Although the summary does not identify the soldiers and the women as Usonian, the description, which was probably delivered by an interlocutor during the film’s exhibition, already assigns certain genetic features to the Cuban refugees’ racial identity. The critical question to which the U.S. media pointed, and one which was certainly present in the minds of government power players in the nation, was: are Cubans prepared for self-government?

The U.S. military stormed into the Caribbean in their self-assumed role of heroes who would defend the honor of the downtrodden. Yet the reality was very different, a fact that did not escape the Cuban insurgents. The rebels received the U.S. intervention with an amount of distrust, an attitude that is also present in Martí’s writing. As discussed before, Martí’s admiration for the democratic tenets of the U.S. and his passion for Buffalo Bill’s show did not blind him to the problems that the North American nation faced in relation to what he identified as its social inequalities and its rampant materialism. The Cubans’ lack of trust towards the U.S. became justified when, after the fall of the Spanish in Santiago, the revolutionary army was excluded from peace negotiations in the city. In his book, *The War of 1898: The United States and Cuba in History and Historiography*, Louis A. Pérez affirms:

Cubans not only seemed to have vanished from the war; they were even excluded from the peace. Left out of the negotiations for the surrender of

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<sup>60</sup>“Film Summary,” William Paley, *Cubans Waiting for Rations*, <https://www.loc.gov/item/98500976/>.

Santiago, Cubans were also prohibited from entering the city. By the terms of the surrender, the Cuban Liberation Army was denied entrance to the eastern capital. On July 14 General Calixto García learned to his horror that not only were his soldiers forbidden from entering Santiago de Cuba, but also Spanish officials were to be retained in office pending a permanent peace settlement.<sup>61</sup>

The U.S. imposed a distinction between the Cubans, those who have not earned the right to belong in the circles of power, and the Spanish authorities and themselves. Regardless of García's and his army's participation in the war, Cubans were not worthy of a voice in the decisions of state to the extent that, until the U.S. found a fit replacement, the Spanish would remain in power. This incident evinces the fact that U.S. officials considered that the island was better off in the hands of a civilized nation that understood how to deal with the frontier than with Cubans that were too similar to the savage side of that dividing line between civilization and the wilderness. The concept of the frontier, which justified such exclusions for the U.S. and that in many ways delineated the discourse through which the island and its people were portrayed for the masses, stands in opposition to Gloria Anzaldúa's idea of the border, where a diversity of discourses and ways of being enter into conflict with each other.

The concept of the frontier forged the U.S. as a nation since it demarcates a civilization that enters into contact with the wild. For Frederick Jackson Turner, it "is not the European frontier—a fortified line running through dense populations. The most significant thing about it is that it lies at the hither edge of free land."<sup>62</sup> Turner addresses the role of Native Americans in working through this "free land" thereby planting the seeds for progress, an important detail that recognizes the nations inhabiting that region. Yet this acknowledgement of difference loses any

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<sup>61</sup> Louis A. Pérez, *The War of 1898: The United States and Cuba in History and Historiography* (Durham: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 97.

<sup>62</sup> Turner, *The Frontier in American History*, 15.

validity when it reveals the cultural Darwinism coming through Turner's references. To Turner, the routes that Indian traders established through the wilderness only improved as modern commerce took over. Just as the U.S. deemed the Cuban insurgency unable to govern the island, Turner similarly considered that Native Americans lacked the ability to develop a fully civilized nation. Turner even points towards the U.S. imperialistic future when he states: "He would be a rash prophet who should assert that the expansive character of American life has now entirely ceased. Movement has been its dominant fact, and, unless this training has no effect upon a people, the American energy will continually demand a wider field for its exercise."<sup>63</sup> This "wider field" was at the center of the nation's intervention in Cuba. As a direct reflection of the Native American participation in the civilizing process of the frontier, the Cuban people's efforts to eradicate Spanish oppression on the island would only come to fruition once the U.S. imposed their own government policies on the Caribbean. Turner's side of the frontier would provide the necessary civilization to the rebellious savages. In opposition to Turner's frontier, Anzaldúa's *frontera*, which reconceptualizes the actual line as a space of conflict and encounter, reflects more directly Cuba's approach to the invading presence.

While the frontier as a discourse permeated and justified the U.S. imperialistic explorations and impositions of power in the Caribbean, the Cuban people engaged with the newcomers more in accord with the encounters that take place in the border space where distinctive historical perspectives coexist and enter into conflict. Walter Mignolo expands on Anzaldúa's concept with his own idea of "border thinking." According to Mignolo,

border thinking [is] the necessary [condition] for "an other thinking," the thinking that is [...] located at the border of coloniality of power in the modern world system. [...] "an other thinking" is based on the spatial confrontations

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<sup>63</sup>Ibid., 18.

between different concepts of history [...] [and] is possible when different local histories and their particular power relations are taken into consideration. [...] The epistemological potential of border thinking, of “an other thinking,” has the possibility of overcoming the limitation of territorial thinking [...] whose victory was possible because of its power in the subalternization of knowledge located outside the parameters of modern conceptions of reason and rationality. A double critique releases knowledges that have been subalternized, and the release of those knowledges makes possible “an other thinking.”<sup>64</sup>

Mignolo considers border thinking to be a subversive way of thinking and of enunciating knowledges that originate not from either side of Turner’s frontier, but from the space where the two ways of seeing come together and enter into conflict. The Western civilizing process that stormed the beaches of Cuba when the Spanish first arrived to America and continued in a neocolonial form when the U.S. declared itself as the savior of the island is challenged in diverse ways from within that border space. While Turner’s discursive frontier orders the world through a dichotomous perspective, positioning one side as superior to the other, Mignolo’s border thinking brings together dichotomous discourses so that their conflict engenders “an other thinking,” or a way of ordering the world beyond Western epistemologies. One of the most subversive expressions to defy the binary differences enforced by the frontier is the chaotic laughter of Teatro Bufo. There is nothing more destructive to a monolithic view of Cuba than Ignacio Sarrachaga’s *¡Arriba con el himno! (Hurray for the Anthem!)*, where the Usonian Mr. Handkerchief goes on a tour through an island inhabited by allegorical characters and guided by Luis, a racially undetermined expert on everything Cuban.

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<sup>64</sup>Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs*, 67.

Although there is no production history of Sarachaga's *¡Arriba con el himno!*, if it was ever staged, it was done after the end of the war in 1898 since it is a celebration of the island's independence from Spain.<sup>65</sup> Furthermore, the play shows its gratitude towards the U.S. for its assistance in liberating Cuba by inviting the character of Mr. Handkerchief, who symbolizes the U.S. nation, to form part of the victory celebration and witness the initial stages of the reconstruction of the island's infrastructures. Luis, whom the text only describes as the Usonian's guide, takes Mr. Handkerchief on a journey that begins at the very moment when the Spanish forces abandoned the island in December 1898. Along the tour, Luis introduces Handkerchief to various characters, which include the *barrios*, or neighborhoods, who comment on their particular pre- and post-independence issues; the theatres, whose personalities correspond to the type of entertainment that they offer; the newspapers, whose engagement or lack thereof with the revolution determine their characters; the national and fashionable musical rhythms, who compete against each other to demonstrate the best one; and orators, politicians, *criollos*, a U.S. baseball pitcher, and even Cristobal Colón, who comes in arguing that a statue of him should be placed on a pedestal. Mr. Handkerchief engages with each one of these encounters in a bufo environment surrounded by music, dance, and carnivalesque laughter. In the concluding apotheosis, the American character shouts "¡Viva la tierra que produce el aguacate!" ("Hurrah for the land that produces the avocado!"), and the Cuban people join him in a final triumphant shout while the U.S. flag is lowered at the Morro Castle and the Cuban one is raised.<sup>66</sup> Rine Leal argues that "[...] éstos son años de entusiasmo y optimismo [...] porque [...] no existía aún la Enmienda Platt, ese apéndice que enfermó la República, aunque el yanqui

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<sup>65</sup>Rine Leal claims that *¡Arriba con el himno!* was written in 1900. See *Teatro bufo, siglo XIX: Antología*. Vol. 1, ed. Rine Leal (La Habana, Cuba: Editorial Arte y Literatura, 1975), 277.

<sup>66</sup> Ignacio Sarachaga, *¡Arriba con el himno!*, in *Teatro bufo, siglo XIX: Antología*. Vol. 1, ed. Rine Leal (La Habana, Cuba: Editorial Arte y Literatura, 1975), 330.

invasor era mirado con reservas y desconfianza” (“[...] these are years of enthusiasm and optimism [...] because [...] the Platt Amendment did not exist yet, that appendix that sickened the Republic, even when the Yankee invader was seen with reserve and distrust”).<sup>67</sup> The Platt Amendment confirmed what many Cubans felt towards the U.S. intervention, yet at the moment when Sarachaga wrote the play, the hope for sovereignty with which the play concludes was still alive.<sup>68</sup> Nevertheless, Sarachaga depicts a racially homogeneous island thereby revealing how the playwright validates Cuba’s claim for independence and self-government in the eyes of the U.S. invaders.

The character of Luis is the personification of a whitened Cubanía who makes the island familiar for the U.S. presence. A normal initial reaction to the reading of the text would be that Luis, the character who represents Cuba and who will open the island for Mr. Handkerchief’s U.S., is the Negrito, who was the most popular character in Cuban *Bufo*. Due to the absence of any performance history, however, the reader can only distinguish the character’s staged racial identity through its linguistic profile. Luis’s Spanish is the same as every other Cuban character in the play and lacks the distinctive rhythms and malapropisms associated with the theatricalized depiction of blackness in *Bufo*, thereby unifying the island through an uninterrupted wave of whiteness. Regardless of its racist nature, the *Bufo*’s claim through its distinctive Negrito is that the island is essentially racially diverse. In her book, *Bufo y nación*, Inés Martiatu argues that:

En el bufo se representan personajes cubanos y extranjeros. Si partimos del punto de vista de un simbolismo nacional, tendremos que los únicos personajes

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<sup>67</sup> Leal, “La chancleta y el cotorno,” 44-45.

<sup>68</sup>The Platt Amendment was passed by the United States Congress in 1901 and it stipulated that the U.S. government had a claim over some territories on the island and the right to intervene in Cuban affairs to safeguard economic and political stability. This provision replaced the less invasive Teller Amendment, which was approved by the United States Congress in 1898 and guaranteed that after the defeat of Spain, the island would be left under the control of its people. See Louis A. Pérez, *The War of 1898: The United States & Cuba in History and Historiography* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 28-35.

cubanos, aunque injuriados, son la mulata y el negrito. El catalán, el chino y más tarde el gallego son extranjeros. Pero realmente no se puede aducir como factor de identidad a personajes arquetípicos y que además se enmascaran bajo el maquillaje. No son el negrito y la mulata reales. Son el negrito y la mulata que propone el teatro.

(The bufo represents Cuban and foreign characters. From the point of view of a national symbolism, the only uniquely Cuban characters, even when they are the object of ridicule, are the Mulata and the Negrito. The Catalan, the Chinese, and, later, the Galician are foreigners. Yet in reality one cannot refer to archetypal characters masked with makeup as representations of identity. The Negrito and the Mulata are not real. The Negrito and the Mulata are only proposed by the theatre.)<sup>69</sup>

Martiatu recognizes that along with the Negrito and the Mulata, there are other ethnic and racial depictions that form part of the Cuba that the Bufo performs. Although she refuses to accept the Cubanía of those other identities, Martiatu still sheds light on how the Bufo staged a nineteenth-century Cuba that could not be depicted solely as white. The representational nature of theatre that in the Bufo silences the Othered sectors of nineteenth-century Cuban society somewhat clouds Martiatu's vision of how this genre opens a window into a past inhabited by ethnic and racial difference. Moreover, the absence of the Negrito in Sarachaga's *¡Arriba con el himno!*, and of any other Blackface character for that matter, points towards an even more problematic absence that hides the island's actual racial makeup from the representatives of the U.S.

According to Ada Ferrer,

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<sup>69</sup>Inés María Martiatu, *Bufo y nación: Interpelaciones desde el presente* (La Habana, Cuba: Letras Cubanas, 2008), 15.

In Cienfuegos [...] rosters suggest the elite character of this final wave of enlistments. There the local brigade suddenly attracted the allegiance of prominent citizens: pharmacists and planters, students and doctors. [...] So in 1898 two processes appeared to converge. Even before American arrival, and certainly after, nationalist leaders began to focus on the question of which officers would end the war in positions of power. And in formulating answers to that question, they expressed deeply held beliefs that those men could not be “rough and ignorant” and should be worthy, civilized, and cultured. They were looking to promote particular kinds of men. At the same time, American intervention produced a new pool of healthy, fresh recruits –a pool with a relatively high representation of the kind of urban educated men who now seemed so desirable to anxious white leaders.<sup>70</sup>

The racial purification among high ranking officers in the revolutionary army brings to light the actual elimination of race that Martí championed in his vision of América and particularly in post-independence Cuba. Just as in the revolutionary army, the theatre genre that stood for a nationalist spirit and a Cubanía that defied the dominance of Spanish culture through the Negro, the Bufo eliminated its most emblematic aspect in order to assuage the anxieties of an imperialistic nation. Nevertheless, even when most Cubans worried about the hesitation of the U.S. forces in leaving the sovereignty of the island in the hands of the insurgent government, the people still resisted and resented the presence of the invading nation.

The shroud with which the theatre hid the presence of Blackness on the island also responded to the racism of Cuban society and did not necessarily exemplify their intentions to

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<sup>70</sup>Ada Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba: Race, Nation, and Revolution, 1868-1898* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 186-87.

accommodate the U.S. intervention. In general, Cubans eagerly waited for that final glorious moment when, as in the end of Sarachaga's play, the island would be fully independent. Alfredo Martín Morales, a writer for *El Fígaro*, a widely read magazine that focused on the social and political environment of post-1898 Cuba, simultaneously criticized and appreciated the intervention of the U.S. on the island. Morales wrote:

La obra pedagógica asentada por los Americanos es, sin duda, el rastro más luminoso que deja aquí la intervención y el cual contemplaremos siempre con gratitud y regocijo.

Las sombras de la tutela Americana hállanse todas en el olvido en que ha dejado nuestra arruinada agricultura, y en el desorden con que ha conducido nuestras instituciones jurídicas y nuestros organismos administrativos [...]. [L]as prácticas americanas [...] han creado entre nosotros una anarquía oficial tan peligrosa que el primer gobierno de nuestra República hallará [...] las mayores dificultades para el desarrollo de sus fuerzas administrativas.

(The pedagogical foundations established by the Americans are, without a doubt, the brightest achievement left by the intervention and one for which we will always be grateful and happy.

The shadows of the American tutelage lie in the indifference that they have had for our failed agriculture, and in the disorder with which they have dealt with our juridical institutions and our administrative branches. American practices have produced among ourselves an official anarchy so dangerous that

the first government of our Republic will find major difficulties in developing their administrative powers.)<sup>71</sup>

Although this article was published on May 20, 1902, a year after the hateful Platt Amendment was put into action and its directions had been incorporated into the Cuban constitution, Morales reflects a discursive middle ground in relation to the U.S. presence. He both recognizes some of the benefits of the U.S. intervention even when he criticizes the problems that the invaders created. In *¡Arriba con el himno!*, Luis also demonstrates this conflictive attitude towards the friendly Mr. Handkerchief. Even when the Usonian character is not portrayed as a militarily aggressive or imposing figure, at times Luis lashes out with a sarcasm that brings out a deep antipathy for the intervention. In the following scene, Luis throws some jabs towards the U.S.:

Luis: [...] estamos tan yanquisados que ya no creo en nada.

Handk.: ¿En nada?

Luis: Sí; en Mackinley que ha venido a ser el Dios omnipotente.

Handk.: Dice usted bien.

Luis: Por pocos años.

Handk.: Tener 47.

Luis: No creo que aguantemos tanto.

(Luis: [...] we are so Yankeesized that I no longer believe in anything.)

Handk.: In anything?

Luis: Yes; in Mackinley who has come to be the omnipotent God.

Handk.: Well said.

Luis: For a few years.

Handk.: He is 47.

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<sup>71</sup> Alfredo Martín Morales, *El Figaro*, May 20, 1902.

Luis: I don't believe that we can put up with it for too long.)<sup>72</sup>

Luis states that Cubans have become *yanquisados* due to the extended U.S. presence. This fact has destroyed his ability to trust or believe in anything. After Handkerchief's insistence, Luis delivers an ambiguous line that, depending on the performer's delivery, could either mean that he does or does not believe in McKinley, to whom he refers as God. Luis follows this assertion with his assurance that they will not be able to stand the U.S. presence for many years. The Cuban challenges the U.S. presence on the island, even when Luis serves as the host to the U.S. visitor. Different to Pain's pyrodramas, which present a lack of direct engagement with the other side of the frontier, Sarachaga's play is a border space where the U.S. and Cuba enter into a problematic coexistence that emphasizes the conflict at the dawn of the Caribbean neocolony.

### Conclusion

As popular entertainment forms, both pyrodramas and Teatro Bufo represented an affirmation of national identity and a direct challenge to European highbrow theatre culture. Pain uses opera and stage effects of gigantic proportions that date back to the mass entertainment of the Roman Empire to attract audiences and demonstrate the superiority of the U.S. in its role as gendarme of the Caribbean. Teatro Bufo originated in Cuba as a satire of European theatre, which monopolized island stages. The genre's use of guaracha music to make fun of opera and the figure of the Negrito and other island stereotypes to subvert the whiteness of European drama, made Teatro Bufo a theatre form that became a revolutionary expression of Cubanía. Both theatrical expressions engaged in particular ways with the Otherness with which each nation was coming in contact. Whether it was the savage Cuban in Pain's *Cuba* or leaving out the significant participation of island revolutionaries from the war in *The Battle of San Juan and Destruction of Cervera's Fleet*, pyrodramas about the Spanish-Cuban-American War depicted a

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<sup>72</sup> Sarachaga, *¡Arriba con el himno!*, 284-85.

Cuban Other that fit the frontier paradigm, which ultimately defined how the U.S. related to other nations. Pain's intentions were not representing Cubans on stage, but reproducing moments from the Spanish-Cuban-American War through fiery effects to amaze New York audiences. But national pride was an essential part of the entertainment of pyrodramas and their definition of nation inevitably identified the exclusions needed to demarcate the frontiers of its civilization. Cubans were the savage or silent Others in Pain's shows that opposed the order and technical supremacy of the U.S.

On the other hand, Sarachaga's *¡Arriba con el himno!* represented a toned-down U.S. presence through the figure of Mr. Handkerchief that the Negrito, as a representative of the Cuban people, received with cordiality as well as a considerable amount of suspicion. The show's intention may not have appeared to be overtly political to some audiences, even when the authorities banned its performance in Puerto Rico, because it was a musical revue. Nevertheless, Sarachaga's play reveals Cubans' misgivings in relation to the U.S. as represented by the seemingly inoffensive Mr. Handkerchief. The character could evidence the respect for Cuban independence reflected in the Teller Amendment, which assured Cubans that the U.S. would leave as soon as the island acquired its independence. Yet Cubans perceived Mr. Handkerchief's darker secret that is left unsaid in the play: the imposition of the Platt Amendment limiting the island's right to self-rule. Based on these examples, which can be taken as microcosms of broader national attitudes, the U.S. intended to subjugate the Caribbean world for its own neocolonial goals while Cuba reluctantly opened its doors to an invading presence. Ironically, the racist character of the Negrito symbolizes the comic defiance of a whole region against the fiery might of the U.S. As in the example of the theatre riot in Puerto Rico used as an

introduction to this chapter, the laugh that the Negrito provokes may be censored by the colonial authorities, yet it cannot be silenced even by Pain's firecrackers.

## **Conclusion: Beyond Empire: The Spanish-Cuban-American War and Its Theatrical Legacy**

In many ways, popular culture romantically portrays the Spanish-Cuban-American War as a moment when the U.S. came to the aid of a victimized Cuba. Throughout my dissertation, I have established a dialog around the Spanish-Cuban-American War using late-nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century plays. My goal has been to address and demystify the events leading to and the actual 1898 conflict in Cuba to understand the complexities of how power is exercised, how the idea of nation is determined, and how Otherness is formed through cultural expressions. Even when the war and the plays examined took place more than a century ago, representations of the conflict are still shrouded in simplistic notions of the U.S. role in Cuba and how Cubans received the invasion. In 2007, Bacardí USA started an ad campaign that linked the rum to different moments in Cuban history.<sup>1</sup> The Bacardí family started to commercially distill their rum in Cuba in 1862, and the company left the island after the triumph of Fidel Castro's revolution in 1959. The commercial is mistakenly set in 1900 and follows a young U.S. soldier who arrives to the Cuban headquarters of the Rough Riders battalion. The soldier delivers a letter to Theodore Roosevelt, who sits behind a desk in his tent surrounded by the Cuban wilderness. The young hero then proceeds to take a bottle of soda from a bucket full of ice and exits Roosevelt's tent. Once outside, he sees a beautiful young Cuban woman dressed in peasant clothes and wearing a gun holster, revealing her role as a Mambí. When he approaches her, she takes his soda bottle and draws a dividing line between herself and the soldier by spilling some of the soda on the ground. The woman then takes a flask of Bacardí rum from her holster, pours some into the soda bottle, and hands it back to him while she proudly affirms: "Cuba libre."

Apart from the anachronism of placing Roosevelt and his Rough Riders in Cuba in 1900, when

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<sup>1</sup> "Bacardi Cola TV Commercial, 'Cuba Libre,'" YouTube, published July 7, 2013, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MqYzQ\\_SJqd8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MqYzQ_SJqd8).

in reality the war took place in 1898, the Bacardí commercial uses the same tropes popularized by U.S. melodrama at the time of the war. As the only visual representation of the revolutionary army, the young woman, who is reminiscent of the defiant Elinora from Frank Dumont's *The Cuban Spy* and the *Carmen*-inspired protagonist of Henry J. Pain's *Cuba*, stands for an island rescued by the masculine U.S. forces. The character is not defenseless, as we can see in the way that she takes the soldier's bottle and her defiant expression as she delivers her war cry of "Cuba libre." Her force is also apparent since while the male soldier remains silent throughout the commercial, the young woman forcefully pronounces the tenets of the 1890s Cuban Revolution. Nevertheless, the commercial turns her war cry and raison d'être into an advertisement for a drink that can be made with Bacardí rum, thereby reducing her revolutionary zeal to a cocktail desired by the viewer. While the U.S. forces are associated with the gravitas of Roosevelt and the fictional precision with which the Rough Riders confronted the Spanish army, the female Cuban revolutionary becomes a good to be consumed by the nation that invaded the island. In this case, the Bacardí commercial idealizes a pre-Castro island that offered great rum and wild beautiful women to young white American men. With the dearth of representations of the war, this becomes a defining popular view of the Cuban past. Yet in contrast to advertising ploys, late twentieth-century theatre brings in a more complex view of the war since it dissects more carefully the inner workings of imperial power.

As a conclusion to my project, I would like to consider Elinor Fuchs and Joyce Antler's 1973 play *Year One of Empire* and Reinaldo Montero's 1996 Cuban play *Los equívocos morales* (*Moral Errors*), both of which reference the Spanish-Cuban-American War, to further explore how that historical turning point has become a metaphor for how power is currently exercised in the colonial difference. During the second half of the twentieth century and the beginning of the

twenty-first, the sporadic allusions to the war in both Cuban and U.S. theatres underscore the exercise of power of one nation over another and the diversity of voices that struggle and coexist throughout these imperial encounters. Contemporary plays about the Spanish-Cuban-American War are not only depictions of the war itself, but metaphors that remind modern audiences how imperialism and neocolonial impositions are still part of our histories. By this, I am not denying that the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century plays examined in my project are metaphors in themselves. Yet their immediate goal was to inform the masses about the Cuban revolutions and the war, garner support for the Cuban cause, comment on the contemporary political and social climate of the U.S. and Cuba, and sell tickets through the reconstruction of exotic locales. The few late twentieth-century plays that use the Spanish-American-War as a setting do not simply revisit the Cuban revolutions during the second half of the nineteenth century and the war of 1898, but remind us of how a particular moment in time will continue to resonate and come forth in future events. These playwrights make evident how the power of a specific metaphor relies on how it may become a transhistorical expression that never truly loses relevance, but persists as a copy or effigy of its original even when it is redefined to fit a future historical period.

In considering the power of the metaphor, we must first realize that these concepts are not subversive in themselves, but work in particular ways to reflect various forces that define the environment of where the work was created and those who experience it. By this, I do not mean that art is inevitably a Gramscian conveyor of ideology. Even when cultural expressions could work as the voices of the state, it would be absolutist to argue that all culture serves this purpose. Nevertheless, in considering how U.S. theatre depicted Cuban alterity throughout nineteenth-century theatre, it is evident how power works by constructing an Otherness against which the

nation is defined and how imperialism is masked as a humanitarian endeavor. In exploring the ways in which Cuba was portrayed in late-nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century popular culture, Louis Pérez affirms that

[t]he premise of power assumed the form of disinterested purport and obtained plausibility as a matter of cultural practice. To have deployed metaphor as a mode of cognitive engagement was to conceal the purpose of power, specifically, to represent the defense of self-interest as a gesture of selfless intent. [...] The use of metaphor did not necessarily imply mischievous intent. [...] There is in fact something of an authenticity to metaphor in the sense that its use implies a spontaneous recourse to imagery to construct a version of reality. But that spontaneity must itself be understood to possess a history, socially determined and culturally fixed.<sup>2</sup>

In opposition to Gramsci, Pérez argues that the metaphor aligns with the political and social realities of the location of its origin. This does not necessarily and consciously respond to an agenda of power, even when it sometimes does, but to the worldview of a specific community. The idea of Cuba as a rebellious force in need of U.S. guidance during its fight against Spain and its acquisition of independence still pervades our views about how the island required aid from the United States military in 1898. William McKinley's refusal to originally get involved in the Cuban conflict and the resulting intervention, once it was clear that the Spanish would be defeated by the Cuban revolutionaries, can still be felt in how Donald Trump aggressively pushes towards an isolationism due to an imagined U.S. superiority and how the nation exercises neocolonial control of a territory such as Puerto Rico. The issues that influenced the 1898 U.S.

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<sup>2</sup> Louis A. Pérez, *Cuba in the American Imaginary: Metaphor and the Imperial Ethos* (North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 3-4.

invasion of Cuba and that marked the aftermath of the Spanish-Cuban-American War still influence our current political environment. This is precisely why those forgotten plays that underscore how Cuba and the U.S. entered into relations of power in 1898, and which were relevant in 1973 when Fuchs and Antler published *Year One of the Empire*, are still relevant today.

Fuchs and Antler's *Year One of the Empire* is a documentary play that serves as a historical narrative of the political dealings in the U.S. related to the Spanish-Cuban-American War, the Spanish-Filipino-American War, which started and ended in 1898, and the subsequent Filipino-American War, when Filipino forces resisted the U.S. presence.<sup>3</sup> After the horrible atrocities of the U.S. forces on Filipino rebels and civilians, President Roosevelt declared an amnesty in 1902 and the Philippines continued as an official territory of the United States. Similar to Henry J. Pain's pyrodramas, for which a cast of hundreds of supernumeraries were used, Fuchs and Antler's play portrays a diversity of voices that represented the U.S. government. These include President McKinley, Roosevelt (who later becomes president after McKinley's assassination), Republican and Democratic senators, the Anti-Imperialists, and U.S. military officers, among others. In contrast to Pain's spectacles, where the actors could be barely heard since the pyrotechnics were the real attraction, *Year One of Empire* gives a voice to the countless figures and debates pertaining to the war in the Philippines. In their introduction to the play, Fuchs and Antler state that "[w]e wanted to transpose history to the present tense, and restore a sense of compromises, accidents, and human blunders that go to make up an immutable record."<sup>4</sup> The playwrights use theatre as a historical document to comment on their present environment. In this particular case, they tackle what they refer to as "America's first war in

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<sup>3</sup> Elinor Fuchs and Joyce Antler, *Year One of Empire: A Play of American Politics, War, and Protest Taken from the Historical Record* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1973).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, xiii.

Asia.”<sup>5</sup> At the beginning of the play, and right before the story moves into the Filipino-American War, U.S. politicians discuss the issues of intervening in the Cuban revolution against Spain. Although they mostly focus on the power games of the members of the U.S. government at the time, we get a moment when Tomás Pidal, a Cuban man who suffered the atrocities of the Spanish, addresses the audience directly to tell the story of how his family was killed by the Spanish militia. Pidal was a real-life reconcentrado (reconcentration-camp prisoner) whose son was hacked with machetes by Spanish soldiers in front of him.<sup>6</sup> After this, his house was burned down and, as a result of his move, his wife and son died from illness. Even when most of the play emphasizes the voices of white U.S. politicians, the playwrights include moments where the reader is reminded of the consequences of war on the masses. The play turns the Spanish-Cuban-American War into a metaphor for the Vietnam War, which ended in 1973, the year in which *Year One of Empire* was published. Just as the press was able to capture the atrocities of the war in Vietnam to inform viewers of the human cost of intervention, Joyce and Antler bring Pidal’s story to show how history is an uninterrupted flow whose echoes continue to resonate even almost a century later.

In contrast to *Year One of Empire*, Reinaldo Montero’s 1996 Cuban play, *Los equívocos morales* (*Moral Errors*), lacks the historical fidelity of Fuchs and Antler’s play.<sup>7</sup> Yet in similar fashion, Montero’s play underscores the diversity of political views that defined nineteenth-century Cuba. In *Los equívocos morales*, Montero brings together a diverse cast of characters who represent different sectors of 1890s Cuban society. The relatively small dramatis personae

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., ix.

<sup>6</sup> In 1898 Cuba, the Spanish authorities ordered that every Cuban civilian must stay within walled island towns since the Mambí army was spread throughout the rural regions. The living conditions in these reconcentration camps, as they were referred to at the time, were terrible since the people suffered from the abuse of soldiers, famine, and did not have proper medical care. The reconcentrados suffered the most, as Tomás Pidal’s story makes evident.

<sup>7</sup> Reinaldo Montero, *Los equívocos morales: Comedia del cerco de Santiago* (La Habana, Cuba: Editorial Letras Cubanas, 1998).

includes Pascual Cervera, the real-life commander of the Spanish armada whose defeat by the U.S. navy was depicted in Pain's pyrodrama, *The Battle of San Juan and Destruction of Cervera's Fleet*; Balboa, a young Spanish soldier; Tica, a young Cuban woman who seemingly takes advantage of Balboa's insider's information to aid the revolution; and her aunts, Dolores and Angustias, who are performed as two proper old ladies who carry pistols since they work directly with the Mambises. The play, which was performed by the Cuba-based Teatro Escambray in 1996, is a series of comic fictional vignettes that took place right before the decisive battle of Santiago.<sup>8</sup> Unlike Teatro Mambí, which was a straightforward vessel of revolutionary ideals, *Los equívocos morales* adds humanity to historical characters such as Cervera, who simply follows orders even when he recognizes the futility of the Spanish defense in Cuba. Montero also portrays the young Balboa as loyal to the Spanish army, yet so in love with Tica that he would give up his imminent return to Spain just to remain close to her. In this way, Montero goes beyond the dichotomous good Cuban versus bad Spaniard of many Mambí plays to create a more textured and personal account of the final days of the Spanish government in Cuba. The playwright also questions the traditional view that the U.S. was welcomed by islanders through the character of Práctico. This interesting Cuban figure, somewhat reminiscent of the humor of the Negrito from Bufo tradition, alternates between words and physical language in all his lines. Every one of Práctico's thoughts concludes with an action expressed through his body. In this way, Montero calls attention to how the language-based documentation of history may not be completely dependable since it lacks the actual actions of the historical figures and their actual consequences.

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<sup>8</sup> El Grupo Teatro Escambray is a Cuban theatre company founded in 1968 in the province of Las Villas. While at the beginning, the company mainly focused on making art accessible to mountain communities and people who lived away from the bigger cities, Teatro Escambray has become a significant cultural presence in the Americas and beyond. See Judith Rudakoff, "R/Evolutionary Theatre in Contemporary Cuba: Grupo Teatro Escambray," *TDR* 40, no. 1 (Spring, 1996): 77-97.

With *Práctico*, Montero creates a unique theatrical language that is as distinctive as that of the *Negríto* and which expands on Fuchs and Antler's play. While *Year One of Empire* pushes the reader/viewer into considering the blurred line that divides narrative from historiography, *Los equívocos morales* makes the spectator question the separation between performance and historical documentation. Furthermore, Montero uses the Spanish-Cuban-American War as a metaphor that subtly references the countless positions in relation to Fidel Castro's government. While a character such as Tobares, a Spanish bureaucrat in charge of the plaza of Santiago de Cuba, defends the Spanish presence with political slogans that hide the real strife of Cubans, Dolores and Angustias run around Santiago searching to buy food and tobacco from the black market in order to get by. These characters do not really condemn Castro, but they problematize the official account of the Cuban government amid the U.S. embargo.

*Year One of Empire* and *Los equívocos morales* make evident how the Spanish-Cuban-American War is still a relevant metaphor in today's world. Future research could pursue this line of questioning to explore how more recent depictions of the war serve as a transhistorical dialogue with late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century plays about the war. Even when in 1998 there was a surge of critical writing about the war in commemoration of its centenary, the conflict has been almost forgotten by artistic endeavors originating in both the U.S. and Cuba. One of the reasons that I decided to write about this particular historical moment is that it not only marks the beginning of the U.S. overseas empire in the Caribbean, but it also determines the problematic political relationship between Cuba and the United States that still prevails today.

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