Part II
The Final Decades of Colonialism

Joaquin Pedroso died the year slavery became illegal in Cuba.[1] The legislation was passed in the Spanish Cortes in 1880 thereby ending the island planters' tacit agreement with Spain to protect this cornerstone of their industry. Abolition[2] was one of the reforms that put an end to the first independence uprising on the island. However, the question remained of how vast fields of cane would be harvested without slave labor. Induced by the offer of cheap land or low-cost farming on rented fields, Spaniards poured into the island to take up the slack.

In Matanzas, the major sugar-producing province, the war had left most sugar mills in ruin. The majority of these and the fortunes they had produced would sink into obscurity in the next two decades. Technically sophisticated often company-owned mills in the future would contract cane production to independent landowners. Company railways would transport cane from fields to mill and to vast warehouses in newly dredged ports. The tradition of the family-owned ingenio and the protection of power and property through inter-marriage declined. The power shifted to the corporations who had the means to vertically integrate all aspects of the industry and the dealmakers in the abstract world of capital: entrepreneurs, bankers, and lawyers.

Cuba shook off its 400-year relationship with Spain with the last and decisive war of independence that began in 1895. And now, instead of being in the orbit of a failing European power, the former colony looked north to the vast market of the United States. The grandsons of Joaquin Pedroso, like those of other well-off families were sent to Ivy League universities and the country submitted to American military occupation and reconstruction. No one on the island was free from the urge to Americanize, to modernize and so erase the disastrous effects of wars and centuries of colonial repression.

As historian and cultural critic Louis A. Pérez points out, modern Cuban identity, at its root, is also American.3 During the period of military occupation that began following the 1898 American entry into the war, a tide of speculators and colonists washed over the island. Filled with a missionary obligation to spread the advancements of their civilization, they were filled in equal measure with wonder and horror at what they found. Cubans internalized the Northerners'

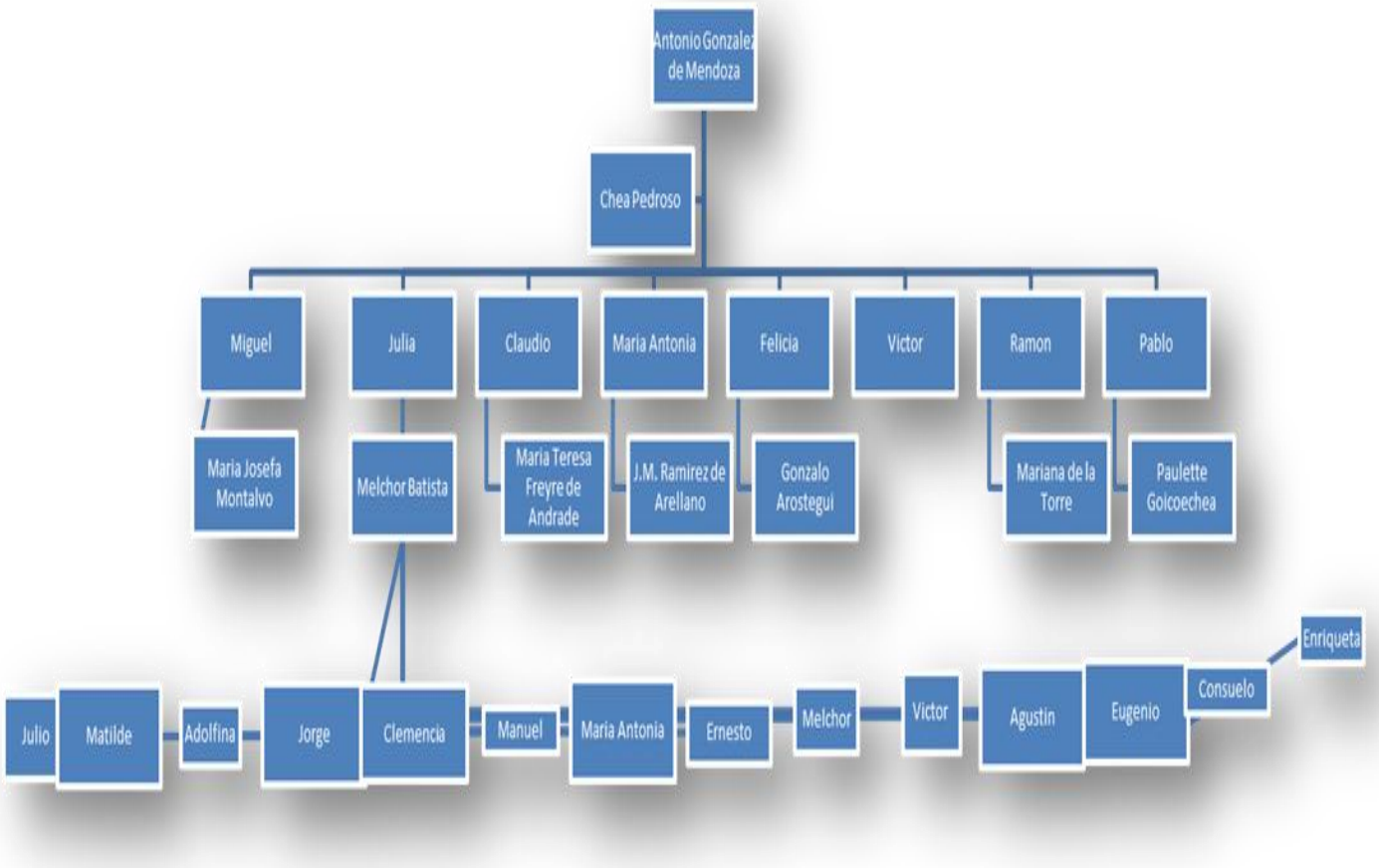
[1] "Volvimos en Diciembre y en enero de 1879 murió mi abuela Micaela Montalvo y al mes siguiente mi abuelo Joaquín Pedroso." Julia Batista

[2] Slavery was gradually phased out from 1879-1886.

[3] Pérez, p.xii

view of their culture developing an enduring bi-focal perspective—absorbing, re-mixing and projecting the other's perceptions of Cuban-ness as an element of their national identity and cultural production. This habit surfaces today in its most problematic neo-colonial form in the curious phenomenon of special period fiction.

Over one hundred years ago in a closely guarded family compound within the falling walls of the colonial city Joaquin Pedroso's nemesis and son in law, Antonio Gonzalez de Mendoza welcomed the bracing winds of change from the north. He ensured that the family maintained its status and wealth as they successfully rode the wave from colonial, slave-based economy to modern nation state. "Amargura" the massive house inherited by Antonio and Chea from Don Joaquin Pedroso, served as the family ark where their children, paired with spouses from old families and safely awaited the post-war birth of their nation.


Antonio Gonzalez de Mendoza
Chea Pedroso
Miguel
Julia
Claudio
Maria Antonia
Felicia
Victor
Ramon
Pablo
Maria Josefa Montalvo
Melchor Batista
Maria Teresa Freyre de Andrade
J.M. Ramirez de Arellano
Gonzalo Arostegui
Mariana de la Torre
Paulette Goicoechea
Julio
Matilde
Adolfina
Jorge
Clemencia
Manuel
Maria Antonia
Ernesto
Melchor
Victor
Agustin
Eugenio
Consuelo
Enriqueta

Chapter 5 Three Decades in Amargura: Life within the Extended Family

Amargura through eyes of its child residents: Matilde Mendoza b. 1886 and Nena Aróstegui b.1895

In 1836 Joaquín Gomez, a Cadiz based slaver, erected a magnificent home on the corner of Obispo and Cuba streets in Havana. Having made his fortune from the Cuban planters' insatiable demand for slaves, Gomez perhaps hoped that his tasteful residence elevated him morally from the unsavoury source of his wealth.[4] Joaquin Pedroso quite possibly used this celebrated home, that later became the renowned Hotel Florida, as a model for his own trophy-house four blocks away.

Unlike his grandfather's fortress-like *casa/almacen* constructed in the former century beside the city walls, Don Joaquin's mansion, at the very heart of the city, was more about private refinement than public commerce. It boasted marble floors with colourful inset designs, soaring slender columns, and broad galleries lined with ornate stained glass windows overlooking a patio with a marble fountain.

In a city where most buildings were only one or two storeys, the home, with its three floors of high-ceilinged rooms, loomed over its neighbours. The polished, illuminated and detailed interior was created to nurture an exclusive community. In every aspect of its design, the home celebrated the importance of the extended family and the entitlement of its members to the luxuries of space, light and air in the heart of a congested, ancient city.

Joaquin's great grand-daughter, Matilde Batista, who was born in this house in 1886 and grew up in it, describes it as overwhelming in its proportions:

> In Old Havana, encircled by the walls that I saw disappear with regret at the close of the colonial period, the wealthy *criollos* built their mansions. These followed the general style of Italian palaces and had three stories; the most ancient ones had wooden balconies and tile roofs some of these still survived, the majority had wrought iron balustrades and flat roofs *azoteas* like those of houses in Andalusia. I was able to admire and visit many of these but I have to confess that only one, situated on the corner of Obispo and Cuba streets occupied by the Hotel Florida was superior to that of D. Joaquin. I ask myself what the goal my great grandfather had in building such a large home, according to my memory in just the principal floor alone there were 12 rooms; a very large dining room with enough space for a table to seat thirty, served by 6 servants. There were two large salons with multi-colored Italian marble floors. Wide galleries around the courtyard were protected by wooden shutter-blinds *persianas* and semi-circular stained glass transept windows (*medio puntos de cristales*.) On the ground floor the offices and other service rooms looked out upon a square

[4] Involvement in the slave trade was at that point common among the planter class so the *social* stigma would have been insignificant.

patio with tiles and fountain made of marble as was the stairway. The mid-floor level *entresuelo* held the lower ceilinged bedrooms. Beyond the main patio there were three others as well as a service courtyard (*traspatio*) where the carriage house was located. He had acquired the single storey houses on the side as well as the front of his mansion so that he would not be impeded from enjoying the breeze. At his death the mansion was divided into three parts: the corner Amargura 21 for the Pedroso Mantilla family; Aguiar 108-1/2 for the Ramirez de Arellano y Pedroso: José Maria and Yoyó de Jorrín; Amargura 23 for Grandmother Chea. We occupied these last two homes, which after his death were connected, until 1906.[5]


Hotel Florida

[5] "En el ámbito de la Habana vieja encerrado por esas típicas murallas que con pena vi desaparecer al terminar la época colonial, los criollos acaudalados construyeron sus mansions. Estas seguían en general el tipo de los palacios italianos y constaban de 3 pisos; las mas antiguas tenían balcones de madera y techo de tejas, subsistían unas pocas la mayoría ostentaban balaustradas de hierro azoteas como como en las casas andaluzas. Muchas de éstas pude yo admirar y visitar pero debo confesar que únicamente la que estaba situada en Obispo esq. a Cuba ocupada por el Hotel Florida, superaba a la de D. Joaquín. Me pregunto que objeto tuvo el bisabuelo al fabricarse casa tan capaz, pues según mis recuerdos solo en el piso principal había unas doce habitaciones; el comedor amplísimo daba cabida desahogada para la mesa con mas de treinta comensales, servida comodamente por 6 criados. Dos grandes salones piso de marmoles italianos de distintos colores. Anchas galerías con persianas y medio puntos de cristales. En el primer piso las oficinas y dependencies dando a un patio cuadrado con losas fuente de mármol blanco, lo mismo que la sensorial escalera. Los dormitories en los entresuelos con cielo raso. Además del principal había otros tres patios, y un traspatio donde se encontraban las cabellerizas. Varias casas de un solo piso, tanto al frente como a los costados, las había adquirido para que no le impidieran gozar de la brisa. A su muerte se dividió la casona en tres partes: la esquina, Amargura 21 para los Pedroso Mantilla; Aguiar 108 ½ a los Ramírez de Arellano y Pedroso: Jose María y Yoyó de Jorrín; Amargura 23 a Abuelita Chea, y estas dos unidas las ocupamos hasta 1906." Matilde Batista, unpublished memoires

"Amargura" Amargura número 23 and 25 (today 203) and Aguiar 108


Amargura facade (photo T. Casas 2009)


Aguiar facade (photo T. Casas 2009)


Amargura entrance

patio with marble fountain

stairway

Havana's street plan ensures that sea breezes can penetrate the urban core; even now, Don Joaquin's home prevails over neighbouring buildings. As Matilde points out, he insured that there would be airflow within his new home by eliminating the possibility that anyone could construct around him. Following Mediterranean tradition, the colonial houses featured an interior patio, window blinds, high ceilings and galleries; elements designed to admit light and air while at the same time preserving privacy and dividing the home between upper domestic spaces and ground floor business areas. The patio, the great centrifuge of the colonial homes served as focal point and circulation for the interdependent worlds within.

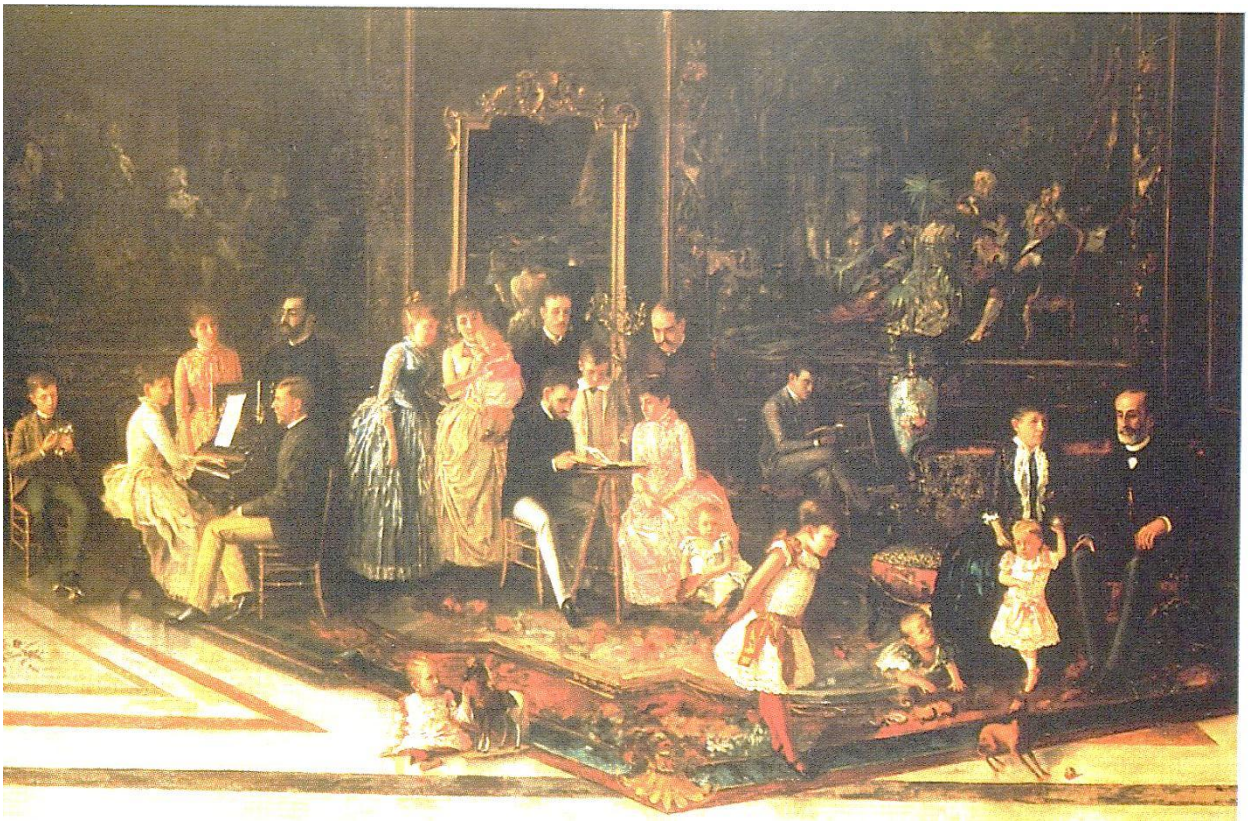
"On the ground floor the offices… looked out upon a square patio with tiles and fountain made of marble as was the baronial stairway."

Entrance from Amargura Street

entresuelo balconies looking out over patio

Melchor Batista y Varona

Teresa Casas Batista



Jose Arburu Morell, Retrato de la familia de Gonzalez de Mendoza, 1886, oil on canvas, Museo de Bellas Artes, Havana[6]left to right: Ramon or Pablo holding skate, Julia at piano, Felicia standing, Melchor seated, Gonzalo Aróstegui standing, Josefa Montalvo, Maria Antonia holding infant, Miguel, Claudio, seated, Ramon or Pablo in light suit, Maria Teresa Freire, Jose Maria Arellano, Victor seated reading, Chea and Antonio.

Marble floor with inlaid patterns seen also in the Arburu Morell painting of the Gonzalez de Mendoza family in Amargura

[6] 90.5 x 159.5 cm, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Havana, reproduced in the museum's exhibition catalogue*: La Sociedad Cubana del Siglo XIX, Reflejos de Una Época*, Exposición de Pinturas y Grabados, 2004

“Two wide galleries with wooden shutter-blinds (persianas) and semi-circular stained glass transept windows (medio puntos de cristales.)”

View from top floor to Amargura street

Internal organization of home; transitions in colonial Havana during last two decades of 19th c; growth of family through marriage; symbolic power of Amargura as family base

After the death of Don Joaquin, in 1879, his son-in-law Antonio Gonzalez de Mendoza took possession of Amargura; he converted the ground floor for his law practice and when two of his sons became lawyers, they set up their offices in the front of the adjoined house.[7] His son-in-law Gonzalo Aróstegui, a doctor, set-up his consulting rooms on the Aguiar side of the ground floor.[8] On weekdays, the sound of typewriters, among the first in Havana, filled the air in the downstairs law offices. The billiard room and the cast iron safe were further tokens of the masculine activities on the ground floor.

As the pollution in the bay of Havana and the industrialization on its shores brought undesirable smells into the old city, affluent families gradually moved to outlying areas that had formerly been the location of their summer homes, notably in the village of el Cerro and district of El Vedado. The coming down of the city walls' in the 1880's marked a decided change in the character of the colonial centre as many of the old homes were converted to warehouses or boarding homes for the workers employed within such large-scale plants as the tobacco factories just outside the former walls.

Don Antonio's decision at this time to use the inherited mansion, maintaining his domestic and professional base in the heart of the city, was likely a matter of convenience due to the requirement that all legal papers be filed at an office near the Plaza de Armas. But, perhaps also he relished assuming the throne of Don Joaquin, the dead patriarch. Heading a prestigious and talented family was a source of pride and a guarantee of the endurance of his legacy. As each of his children began their married lives throughout the 1880's, they and their growing families took up the many rooms of the mansion. While Amargura was originally subdivided into three homes each belonging to Joaquin Pedroso and two of his grown children, Gonzalez de Mendoza took down most of the dividing walls to make an interconnected family compound.[9] Among the first three of his children that were married in the early 1880's bringing a spouse to live with them in Amargura was Julia.

---

[7] His sons Claudio and Ramon and son-in-laws Melchor Batista and Jose Maria Arellano were lawyers.

[8] "Era por Aguiar 108 ½ por donde entraban los coches y los caballos. En las habitaciones del frente de la planta baja tenía papá su consulta médica y su biblioteca, que de tanto crecer llegó a convertirese en la pesadilla de mamá. Al fondo, la cochera, la caballeriza y los cuartos de la servidumbre masculina. En los bajos de Amargura 23 estaba el despacho o bufete de abuelo, que tanta fama tuvo, y donde por primera vez en Cuba se escuchó el tecleo de una máquina de escribir. Los despachos de mis tíos Claudio y Ramón, y de sus empleados, estaban en los bajos de Amargura 25. Al lado, su biblioteca y la habitación de la caja de hierro." Nena Aróstegui, as quoted in del Río, Bolívar, Natalia. *Vértigo del Tiempo, Memorias de Nena Aróstegui.* (Havana: Ediciones Boloña, 2006)

[9] In the preface to a collection of letters from Europe to his family members Agustín Batista describes his first home with great precision: "Mi primera residencia fué en la casa de mi abuelo, Antonio Gonzalez de Mendoza y Bonilla, sita en la ciudad de la Habana, calle de la Amargura número 23 y 25 y Aguiar 108, donde éste vivía con casi toda su descendencia hasta su fallecimiento en el año 1905. Los cartorce hermanos Batista y Mendoza con nuestros padres ocupábamos el entresuelo de la casa Amagura 23, hoy marcada con el número 203."

The growth of the extended family; Julia's character; oligarchy and marriage of Mendoza children; Melchor's poor health makes Batista family dependent on larger Mendoza clan

In her memoires, Julia begins with the drama of her parents' elopement as a breaking-away of the younger generation from a domineering, morally obtuse father. In contrast, she describes her own courtship as the tale of an anti-hero; for her suitor was a timid, shadowy character on the margins of her powerful family. And, if Melchor Batista touched her through his essential vulnerability, this in turn reveals something of Julia's own character.

Julia as a child gravitated between the regimented life of religious schools and the disruption of her family's hasty exits from Havana for two long periods. She turned seventeen and graduated from the Sacred Heart, a girl's boarding school, in 1877. At that point, she announced that she wanted to be a nun. Her mother, as Julia recounts, aware of her daughter's pleasure in clothes and society, asked her to wait some time before making the decision. Julia realized the value of this advice when, after several years, her vocation vanished.[10] Nevertheless, years later, she would send her daughters to the same school and her life-long devotion to the nuns of the Sacred Heart and their work was expressed through them. Two daughters and at least one granddaughter would join the religious order; thereby giving the Batista's the reputation as the most religiously inclined of all branches of the Gonzalez de Mendoza family.

In 1878, a year after Julia's graduation, Rosa, her adolescent sister, died at the boarding school after contracting a "pernicious fever" that swept through the dormitories. Alarmed, Chea withdrew her remaining daughters, Maria Antonia and Felicia, from the school where she had been only been permitted to see them during visiting hours on Sunday afternoons. She hired a governess to complete their education at home. While Chea was mourning the loss of Rosa, Don Antonio hoping to improve his wife's flagging spirits, arranged for the family to travel by steamer and train to Alexandria Bay, Thousand Islands in northern New York state. In September after, the rest of the family stayed to enjoy the cultural life of New York City, Antonio went back to Havana where, with the first war of independence at an end, the reformers were re-grouping. Chea and the children stayed at the house on 23rd Street at Ninth Avenue that they had occupied ten years earlier during their first year of exile. They renewed their friendship with the Mestre family and together they attended the operas presented that season at the nearby Grand Opera House. [11]

[10] Julia Batista
[11] Ibid

The Grand Opera House, at the corner of 23rd Street and Eighth Avenue. The likely location of the Academy of Music's 1878 opera season which Julia attended with the Mestre family.

Back in Havana that winter Don Joaquin died followed some months later by his wife. Having inherited a portion of Don Joaquin's fortune as well as home, the family installed itself in Amargura. Claudio, Julia's closest brother entered his father's law practice around this time along with a tall young man with light hair and eyes. Although Julia was vaguely aware of Melchor's attraction to her, he made no advances but instead ingratiated himself to her mother. In her writing Julia states with a certain wry humour, that her interest in him was sparked when her closest brother, Claudio, who, because he did not approve of her current suitor, suggested that she marry Melchor instead. 'Why not?' she answered.

This exchange, according to Julia, took place on a window balcony of Amargura.[12] She turns the typical romance of a balcony scene inside out, for the most likely location of the scene was the interior of Amargura where the entresuelo balconies overlook the patio. The anecdote mocks her submission to Claudio's cool administration of her love life. Moreover, in contrast to the daring elopement of her parents, she humorously portrays herself as a secondary character in a larger plot, namely the dynastic evolution of a family from *within* their own home.

Noting the suitability of the marriage, she describes Melchor Batista y Varona's background: He was her age, born 6 months earlier than she in 1859, to a rich and prominent family from Camaguey. The family had lost its fortune in the first war of independence and had brought their children to Havana for their education. The sons had graduated from the Colegio de Belén, a prestigious school for boys run by the Jesuit brothers. He was therefore from an equal rung of society, poor yet genteel, intelligent, and attractive; he worked for her father and had made

[12] A mediados, o fines de '81, me llamó Claudio un día al balconcito de Amargura 23, y me habló de sus temores de que yo acogiese otro pretendiente que parece no le gustaba y me dijo, 'Porqué no te casas con Melchor?' Le contesté 'No sé por qué no'

himself welcome within her family. 'I then set out to bring him out a little to see that if in so doing he would reveal his attraction to me; and so I succeeded.'[13]

Julia and Melchor, detail of 1886 family portrait by Jose Arburu Morell

Painting by Carlos Batista y Varona commemorating honeymoon of Julia and Melchor in Vento, 1883

[13] "Entonces me propuse animarlo un poco a ver si tratandolo mas veia que me agradaba; y asi sucedi."

In January 1883, Julia received $4,000 from her father to decorate her designated rooms and to buy her wedding clothes. She was married on April 12, the date of her birthday and her feast day. Their honeymoon was spent on a farm in Vento, a village just outside Havana. Melchor's brother, Carlos, presented them with a memento of this time, a small watercolour of a couple strolling in front of a country house with, in the foreground, the words of a popular American sonnet: "I saw a poem that I could not read, /"What place is this," I cried! Lo, at my need, /Two lovers passed,--"*'Twas Paradise!* for clear/I saw it shining in his happy eyes, /I heard it murmur'd in her low replies." [14]

It was the season of marriages. Already in 1880, the eldest, Miguel, had wed a cousin, Maria Josefa Montalvo y Chacon. Maria Antonia followed to the altar in 1882 also with a cousin, Jose Maria Arellano, the son of her maternal aunt who lived in the formerly neighboring section of the family compound that faced Aguiar Street.[15] Each couple took up residence in Amargura. In the two years that followed, first Claudio then Felicia would marry, the former to Maria Teresa Freyre de Andrade and the latter to Gonzalo Aróstegui y Castillo, and join the swelling ranks in the huge home. Victor remained a bachelor, and Pablo and Ramon, the youngest sons married in the late 1890's.

Melchor became very ill within a year of his wedding. While both he and Julia rejoiced at the birth of their first-born, a son they named Julio, not long after Melchor suffered his first attack of mielitis, a neural inflammatory spinal disease. His case was so severe that he was anointed with oils, made confession and was given the prayers of final unction's on December 16, 1884. Bedridden and paralyzed, it was not until the following spring that he was able to, with the aid of crutches, walk again. Don Antonio financed a three-month stay in New York City for Melchor to convalesce there with Julia.

The Batista G. de Mendoza family grew by fourteen children within twenty years. Melchor's frail health made Julia dependent on Don Antonio. Moreover, Julia's circumstances made her brothers' aid essential for educating her male children so that the family could maintain its status. Her parents had affirmed their values by acting-out their opposition to injustice and inequality in their society. Julia, on the other hand, was defined by her private struggle to support her many children, to cope with the burden of her husband's illnesses and to manage a large family with few resources.

---

[14] This 20X25 cm, unframed painted panel is identified with a note by Teresita Batista on the back: "This watercolor was made by my great-uncle Carlos Batista y Varona as a wedding gift for his brother Melchor and Julia Gonzalez de Mendoza." The poem is a fragment of "Paradise Regained" by American Maria W. Jones who was much published in magazines in the late 19th century. http://www.sonnets.org/jonesm.htm (Accessed July 29, 2012)

[15] The prevalence of marriage between first cousins was a feature of the oligarchy. "Society functioned according to power linkages between family groups, and each family group succeeded or failed according to its ability to control wealth and to protect family and friends under the direction of the patriarch. Conversely, the family-based society was closed to interlopers or newcomers seeking power and wealth." Stoner, K. Lynn. *From the house to the streets: the Cuban women's movement for legal reform*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997) 14

Values, routines and activities that defined family life in Amargura

The legacy of Amargura went far beyond the practicality of economic relations: by reputation, it was a tiny perfect society united under the wise rule of Don Antonio, a "Camelot" in the midst of the larger culture struggling to find effective political direction and leadership. Melchor and Julia's daughter Matilde, who was part of the household for about twenty years, wrote that she would often be asked how such a large family had managed to live for so many years in harmony. Her response was that all of the adult children of Antonio and Chea and their spouses were careful to follow their example of high moral conduct and mutual affection. She added that there was no occasion for conflict because it was a time of great abundance and luxury. And, lastly, that many of the women who cared for the children were distant relatives or friends and they were all practicing Catholics.[16]

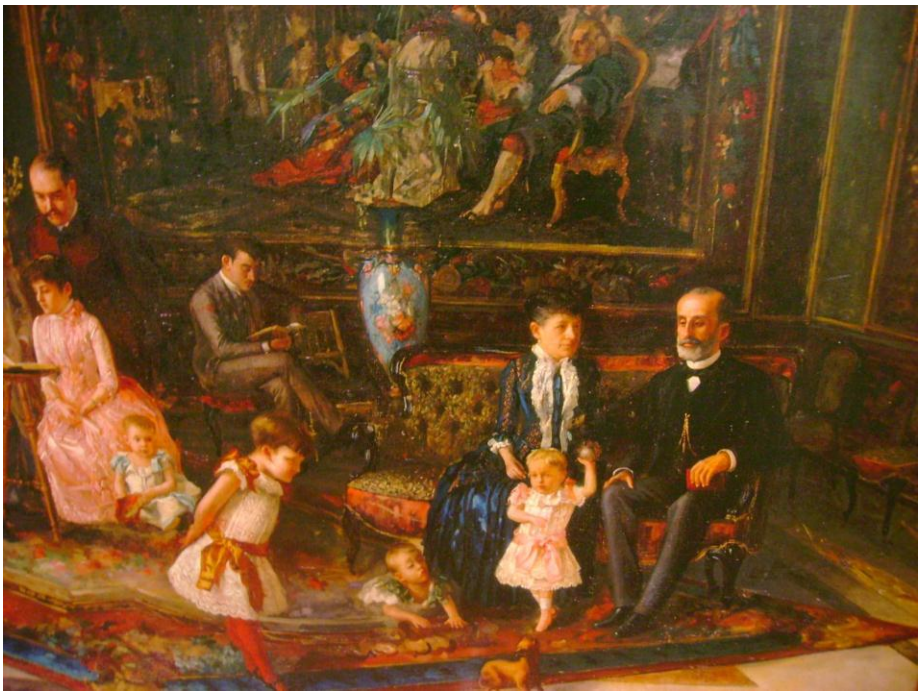
Another view of the traditions that bonded the extended family is found in the memoirs of Maria Teresa "Nena" Aróstegui Gonzalez y Mendoza, Felicia's daughter who was born in 1895, nine years after Matilde. She describes Amargura as a child's utopia where, Part of the Gonzalez de Mendoza family in Amargura 23 amidst great material luxury, fun was ever available amidst the multitude of fun-loving cousins and doting parents. According to Nena, before the age that they attended school outside the home, Amargura children received benevolent home schooling from their American governess Miss Keegan, observed strict but sensible daily routines, and enjoyed the games, plays and carnivals organized for them by the two youngest Mendoza uncles, Ramon and Pablo.[17]

A photograph included in Nena Aróstegui's memoirs showing the children of Don Antonio as young adults, some in costume, suggests that this tradition of light-hearted family theatricals predated the turn of the century period that would have been the basis of Nena's earliest memories. In the midst of their comic poses in the tableau vivant, a woman in a white dress who resembles Julia seems ill at ease and withdraws in the background or perhaps she is "in character" and as devoted as all the others to pulling-off the combined dramatic effect.

---

[16] "En distintas ocasiones me preguntaron amigas de toda confianza como habíamos podido vivir largos años en paz, en Amargura, tantas familias juntas. Y yo les contestaba que no solamente eran personas de esmeradísima educación y finura, sino también de gran virtud: además la veneración con que miraban a Abuelitos, solo su ejemplo mantenía la unión. Creo que otro factor importante para que no hubiera discusiones y pleitos, era la abundancia que reinaba; muchas de las manejadoras eran parientas o amigas, casi todas católicas práctica. Aún las americanas se llevaban bien con las demás." Matilde Batista

[17] "Con semejante gentío, aquel laberinto de escaleras, salones y galerías parecía una ciudadela cuyos accesos quedaban guarnecidos por el edificio de la iglesia y el imponente Convento de San Francisco, así como por el Banco Gelats. En el ápice de su populosa ciudadela llegó a reunirse, incluida la servidumbre, un centenar de habitantes. *Viejo caserón,* dicen hoy cuando se refieren a una de las tres casas. Para mí las tres serán siempre el palacio encantado por cuyos rincones busca mi memoria el cuento de hadas de mi niñez." Nena Aróstegui



Parte de la familia González de Mendoza en la casa de Amargura 23

above, ilustration from *Vértigo del Tiempo*

Teresa Casas Batista

According to Nena, Amargura etiquette demanded that all adult family members be in attendance on Saturday evenings to receive visitors with Antonio and Chea. Saturdays in Amargura were also reserved for the many amateur and professional recitals and concerts to which friends were invited. To honor Don Antonio on his feast day, his grown children produced costumed dramas in which even the youngest members of the family had a role. In 1886, when the first grandchildren were only crawling and toddling, all the family members were sketched in small groups to be collectively set in the composition of a large oil painting. The painting celebrates Don Antonio as patriarch, heralding his rule over his domestic Camelot for the next twenty years. The focal point of the composition, he sits to the right-of-centre with his wife. Behind him is his family set-off by their musical instruments books and paintings, symbols of the touchstone elements of life in Amargura.

In Amargura, the army of retainers included among others: 6 cooks and their assistants, 15-20 nursemaids, several wet nurses, 10 coachmen, a multitude of personal servants, women who specialized in washing and others in ironing, etc. Each day two family meals were served at a table with at least 30 settings and served by 6 servants; the first seating was the children's meal and then an hour later the adults were served. The passage from childhood to the adult world internal to Amargura and presaging a presentation to the outer world was marked by being invited to participate at age eleven in the later seating. [18]

Niños que habitaban la casa de Amargura 23. Al fondo, Felicia María y el maestro

above, ilustration from *Vértigo del Tiempo*

[18] Eduardo Dolz, periódico "La Discusión", Enero 15, 1906 quoted in *Vértigo del Tiempo*, also, Matilde Batista *Recuerdos*

For Nena Aróstegui, Amargura felt like an enormous, vertical labyrinth and the most magical of its curious spaces was the flat roof that extended the length of the three connected houses. This was the setting for the carnivals and parties thrown for the children by Uncles Ramon and Pablo. Nena describes this rooftop area as being ample enough to accommodate carriages if they had been needed for the celebrations.[19] Even the bells in the cupola of the neighboring church and monastery of San Francisco were not higher than the children's vantage point over the city in their rooftop playground.[20] The sense that Amargura existed in its own measures of time was symbolized for the children by the strange, weekly appearance of a man in a bowler hat who went from one clock to the other in the house winding and adjusting wheels and gears so that everything would continue to unfold in its safe rhythms for another week.

Don Antonio's character through speech and gesture; economic arrangements regarding distribution of family wealth

As a girl Matilde Batista would occasionally accompany her grandfather on his evening walk. She came to know him through small incidents that fed into their conversation. "One day a week it was my turn to accompany Grandfather on his evening walk; we would make several rapid visits…On one occasion as we went through the narrow streets of Old Havana, a black woman walked towards us on the same sidewalk. Seeing us she pressed herself against the building so that I could pass.[21] I was astonished when I realized that Grandfather had stepped down to the street so that she could pass as he would have done for the most illustrious of princesses. Stupefied I said: But Grandfather for God's sake why are you doing that? I will never forget these words: "She is a woman." This revealed to me the gentility of my grandfather's spirit.[22]

---

[19] "Mis tíos Ramón y Pablo, jóvenes y muy alegres, nos preparaban de vez en cuando una fiesta en la azotea con motivo de los carnavales o con otro motivo cualquiera. Los Gelats vivían en la casa que ocupaba la esquina del conjunto formado por las nuestras. Pero no era necesario, ni remotamente, hacer uso de aquella cuarta azotea. El espacio que brindaban las tres nuestras era tan amplio que, de haber existido la posibilidad de subir unos coches allá arriba, nuestros carnavales caseros habrían contado también con sus paseos."

[20] "Cuántas veces, mientras la cúpula de la iglesia de San Francisco miraba impasible al cielo, nosotros, al otro lado de la calle y un poco más arriba que ella, apurábamos, con tío Ramón y tío Pablo al frente, el gran trago de nuestro jolgorio infantil."

[21] Irene Aloha Wright interpreting Cuban culture to Americans in the early 1900's outlined sidewalk etiquette in the old city in the following vignette: "I know of nothing funnier than to watch two fairly well dressed and corpulent Cuban ladies determining, as they stand tottering face to face, on a foot-wide flagging, the whole delicate problem of their relative rank. The one arrayed in the giddiest garment seems, usually to win. If there is small choice in color and cost between the tight pink costume of and the tight blue costume of the other, the one with the straightest hair stands fast, and the other walks around, sometimes with grunts and comment sotto voce." Wright, Irene A. *Cuba*, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1910), 62

[22] "Una vez a la semana me tocaba salir con Abuelito en su paseo vespertino; hacíamos varias rápidas visitas…En una ocasión yendo por las estrechas calles de la Habana vieja, venía una negra por la acera en dirección contraria. Al vernos se apretujó contra la pared para dejarme pasar. Cual fue mi asombro al darme cuenta que

Matilde's ear for Don Antonio's delivery creates a vivid scene transporting the reader back 140 years, listening with her in the warm evening breeze to an elegantly dressed, frail old man. She explains that as they emerged from the narrow streets of the old city into the promenades of the Malecon or the Prado, it was easier to converse and Don Antonio had a vast store of anecdotes to share. In the following story she captures the cadences of his language, including his glee in the punch-line:

> A Spanish officer with an unsavoury reputation appeared very early one morning in my law offices. "What could this guy want with me? "I asked myself. He began by praising my honesty, talent, successes and then proposed to let me into a business venture that would make us rapidly very rich: there was only a small troublesome detail but he knew how to get around that. My outrage grew as I realised that he meant to use my sterling reputation as a cover. I rose to my feet saying: "I happen to follow an infallible system in all of my business practices." His eyes glistened with pleasure: he was about to know how Mendoza was able to avoid getting caught. "When I want dirty business not to be found out," I shouted, "I just don't do it!" He pivoted on his heel and walked out of my offices like a shot." The best thing is that he told me this story in the middle of the Prado and he animated the telling with such dramatic gestures and shouts that people turned and stared thinking that I was receiving a scolding.[23]

On another occasion Don Antonio revealed to Matilde that he and Chea had made an unusual arrangement in the distribution of the family wealth from Santa Gertrudis: "Chea and I did for Miguel what few parents would have done. When we saw how steadily he managed the plantation despite the fact that he did not like the countryside, we promised him that above his salary as a manager he would also receive one third of the profits from each sugar harvest." Perhaps Matilde notes this down as an important memory because it seemed to her that the arrangement troubled the old man. He may have mentioned it because he was happy to have struck a convenient deal with his eldest son that had resulted well. The fact that Matilde includes this comment in her succinct memoirs however suggests that it had long-ranging consequences in the family.

Abuelito se había bajado a la calle para darle paso como lo hubiera hecho por la mas encopetada princesa. Estupefacta le dije: Pero Abuelito por Dios, por qué has hecho eso? Nunca olvidaré estas palabras: "Es una mujer." Me revelaron la profunda caballerosidad de su alma."

[23] Muy temprano una mañana llegó al bufete un militar español que gozaba de no muy limpia fama en sus empresas comerciales. "Qué buscará aquí este tipo! –pensé al verlo entrar. Empezó lisonjeándome de lo lindo: mi honradez, talento, éxitos, etc., etc. Yo nada le contestaba; me propuso darme la participación en un negocio que él iba a emprender y que nos haría ricos en poco tiempo. Solamente había un punto algo escabroso, pero que él sabría muy bien sortear. Mi indignación iba subiendo de punto; de modo que él pretendía escudarse con mi intachable reputación… Me puse de pie y le dije "Pues yo tengo un sistema infalible en mis negocios." Los ojos le brillaban de gusto; iba a saber como Mendoza ocultaba sus líos. "Cuando yo quiero que un negocio sucio no se descubra," le grité, "no lo hago!" Dio media vuelta y salió disparado." Lo mejor es que esto me lo refirió en pleno Prado y tan a lo vivo con gestos y gritos, que varias personas me miraban compadecidas de que yo estuviera recibiendo semejante represión.

Matilde Batista Gonzalez de Mendoza

Teresa Casas Batista

Illnesses and Exile, travel North for treatment or refuge from war; death of Chea; financial hardship; network of support for Batista children through godfather uncles, Julia's leadership develops through meeting family needs

Throughout her married life, Julia faithfully records the litany of births and illnesses that defined her life. After her adolescent tour of Europe, as a mother she travels only to escape the heat and outbreaks of illness in the city, to escape political upheaval through exile but, more often than not to seek out superior medical care in "el Norte." Julia describes how in 1890 after her daughter Clemencia recovered from typhoid she took her and the rest of the children to the family's sugar mill Santa Gertrudis where they were alerted to the fact that measles had broken out among the children in Amargura. Julia chose to remain at Santa Gertrudis although far from medical help in order to keep Matilde and Adolfina who had very sore throats away from the other children. While there, Julia went into labour a month early and delivered a 4 ½-pound Manuel. Luckily her brother in law Gonzalo Aróstegui who was a specialist in childhood diseases had come to check on the girls and assisted in the birth. She states proudly that she was able to nurse Manuel for a year and into a state of good health. Beyond the difficulty with his legs Melchor, struggled with a condition that removed him from any supportive role in the family often at the most stressful times.

Julia is extremely reticent in describing her husband's illness beyond the use of the term "neurasthenia." This was a general diagnosis that referred what is now described as depression. In the contemporary press it was generally mentioned in relation to suicide. Treatment for the upper classes typically involved removal from one's usual surroundings, plenty of bed rest, massage, exercise and fresh air. In her memoire Julia recounts how in 1893 the family moves [24]temporarily to El Vedado so that the children could recover from "congested lungs." While there they were joined by Ernesto, Melchor's youngest brother who was very "neurasthenic." He disappeared one night and on the following day his coat was found by the shore. It was assumed that he threw himself in and drowned because he was never seen again. In his memory, Julia and Melchor named their next child Ernesto.

In the spring of 1896 Melchor had an attack of mielitis; his legs swelled and he was sent by Don Antonio for a change of climate and food to New York City then to recuperate in the mountains and later to Villa Nova School in Philadelphia for a further period of convalescence with the Augustinian monks. He returned to Havana after the declaration of war in the spring of 1898. His son Victor had been born the previous autumn in his absence. Don Antonio was afraid that Melchor would leave his family to go directly to join the rebel army in the field. Melchor was a partisan. He had been raised in Camaguey, home of the patriot rebel leader Ignacio Agramonte, and hotbed of rebel activity in the first war of independence. The Batista y Varona family had been dispossesed of their properties during the conflict.

His father-in-law packed Melchor off with his family sending them out of harm's way first in Tampa and then Philadelphia where they settled until the autumn of 1898 when it was considered safe to return. Some of Don Antonio's grown children spent the period when it was unsafe to stay in Havana in Santa Gertrudis. Others took up temporary residence in different cities in the

[24] Julia Batista

United States. Consistent with his father's pro-American position, Ramon enlisted in the American army as an assistant to General Lawton.

General Lawton with Cuban Officers

Melchor's illness affected his ability to support his family. His wife shouldered the burden of his dependence along with that of her many children with courage during the period of crisis at the last decade of the century. Among the blows was the death of her mother in 1896. Julia fainted from grief upon hearing the news and in the subsequent months was unable to nurse her infant. At the time of Julia's death her strength of character during the crises was remembered by Maria Antonia in an appendix note to her mother's memoires. [25]

The loss of her mother was magnified for Julia by another factor. Chea in her last years had helped to deflect the social embarrassments that arose from Melchor's lack of money. Don Antonio, unlike his wife, was not attuned to the clothing needs of his daughter and her children in image-conscious Havana society. Julia herself recounts how, when she visited New York, Miguel was so pained by the sight of the hat that she wore that he immediately gave her money to buy herself a new one. During the period of exile in 1898 she and Melchor chose to settle temporarily in Philadelphia not only because he was familiar with the city having taken a rest-cure for his neurasthenia there, but also because in this city there wouldn't be the need to appear elegant in society. Discussing the period after the family's return to Havana Maria Antonia expresses some resentment about the oblivion of her better off aunts to her mother's inability to supply her daughters with the elegant First Communion dresses and devotional gifts. [26]The pattern of being in the orbit of richer relations but fiercely proud of their moral rectitude and intellectual accomplishments was to continue into the 20th century with the Batista children.

As devout Catholics, Julia and Melchor believed in the regular arrival of babies. These were considered a blessing and an imperative. They were married in 1883 and had four children in that decade: Julio '84, Matilde '86, Adolfina '87, Jorge '89. The decade of the nineties saw the birth of no less than seven children despite Melchor's first depressive episode that took him away

[25] Appendix Notes by Maria Antonia Batista in Julia Batista's memoires
[26] Ibid.

from home for many months and a half year that the family spent in exile. The children of that tumultuous decade were: Clemencia ’90, Manuel ’91, Maria Antonia ’92, Ernesto ’93, Melchor ’95, Victor ’97, Agustin ’99.[27] Born in the new century, the first years of the new Cuban republic and the American occupation were: Eugenio ’00, Consuelo ’02 and last of all Enriqueta ’03.

The survival of all of the children beyond infancy was a mark of singular good care and fortune. With an antiquated municipal infrastructure epidemics were common in Havana and they hit infants and young children hardest of all. Escape from the ‘miasma’ of the narrow streets of the old city during the hottest months of the year was considered essential for the health of the children. El Vedado, the area to the west of the old city had been laid out with broad avenues, many trees and spacious homes. The family’s habit was to rent a house there for the hottest months. The other refuge was Santa Gertrudis, the family mill just north of the village of Banagüises in the province of Matanzas.

Julia’s sense of duty attracted her early to a religious life, her destiny however lay in being the head of a family of fourteen children and supportive spouse to a man struggling with debilitating illnesses. As adults, her children were wholly devoted to her because she formed their own vision of themselves as gifted and important people; Julia did this by safeguarding their wellbeing and pride under considerable odds, most notably during the years at the close of the nineteenth century when conflict and tragedy shook the family along with the island.

Surviving and prospering despite the war and the demise of the oligarchy: the advantages of the Mendoza family; the leadership of Don Antonio

Miguel, later his son Antonio, and his brothers Victor and Ramon were the Mendoza men most actively involved with the development of family’s interest in the sugar industry. The 1880’s was a period of profound economic reorganization that responded to the need to re-design the entire sector after the destruction of the first war of independence. Just as in the innovations earlier in the century that produced the enormous wealth of the 1840’s, 50’s and 60’s, there was an imperative to upgrade mills, reorganize the land distribution plantation system and develop the rail infrastructure to be able to survive and prosper. Don Antonio, preoccupied with his law firm in Havana leaned heavily on Miguel as the steward of the family’s sugar inheritance. The Mendoza brothers did this brilliantly with the result that they were among the very few old families who survived with their fortunes intact. Indeed, by the period of the First World War when the price of sugar soared creating fortunes overnight, they were millionaires whose diversified investments included real estate, one of the first Cuban banks, rail lines, real estate and the most technically sophisticated Cuban sugar mill.

[27] It was an expression of affection but also a reflection of financial necessity for Julia to name each of her brothers in turn godfather to her male children. The Gonzalez de Mendoza brothers sponsored their godsons’ education in American universities.

But long before the unfolding of these events, while the future of the country and the safety of the family hung in balance Don Antonio kept his children close and following an ordered life in the centre of the old city, for it was here that the extended families lived bound by the conventions and securities of an older time. Until his death in 1906, the stability of "Amargura" endured. Don Antonio's reputation as a leader was based not only his professional and political conduct but on his skill in presiding over this small, inwardly turned society around the patio of his home.

Monogrammed fan of Julia Batista Mendoza with portrait of one of her children

Works Cited

Batista, Julia. unpublished memoires

Batista, Matilde, unpublished memoires

Batista, Agustín, "Cartas de Viaje" unpublished letters

del Río, Bolívar, Natalia. *Vértigo del Tiempo, Memorias de Nena Aróstegui.* (Havana: Ediciones Boloña, 2006)

Gott, Richard. *Cuba: a new history*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005)

Pérez. Louis A. *On Becoming Cuban: Identity, Nationality and Culture.* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008)

Stoner, K. Lynn. *From the house to the streets: the Cuban women's movement for legal reform*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997)

Wright, Irene A. *Cuba,* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1910) http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.b270357;page=root;view=image;size=100;seq=13 (accessed. 28 June 2011).

Chapter 6 Santa Gertrudis and the interwar years, 1879-1895

Transitions in ownership and structure of sugar industry

The Cuban sugar industry was reformulated between the two wars of independence. The changes were part of the larger economic and political transformation of the island and the Mendoza family story embodies these developments. Those who could ride the great shifts in this agricultural sector reaped their rewards decades later in record world prices for sugar during the First World War. Among the successful sugar men were the sons of Antonio and Chea who, after selling the Santa Gertrudis mill[28] in 1916 built a new one farther east and close to the north shore of the province now known as Camaguey. "Cunagua," [29] as this mill was named, was completed the following year. Geared to ultimate labour efficiency and maximum production, it embodied the principles of American industry. No longer merely a planter's home with cane processing facilities and a nearby slave *barracon*, the Cunagua mill was an elaborately engineered modern plant complete with its own company town. The north coast of Camaguey would become known for this new corporate order of sugar mill. It represented the last significant step in the evolution of the sugar industry, one that created both winners and losers.

With the inheritance of Santa Gertrudis upon the 1880 death of Don Joaquin Pedroso, the Mendoza clan joined in a powerful criollo planter class now in decline. Its apotheosis had come with the expansion of the railways in the middle of the century, a trend headed by the Pedroso brothers, Joaquin and Luis. They are now best known for the founding of the Ferrocarril del Oeste; a venture which involved a "Fitzcarraldo"-like struggle to build a track through the mountainous country west of Havana. The goal was to grab the monopoly on the transportation of tobacco from the province of Pinar del Rio to the cigar factories and port of Havana. For decades the construction of the Ferrocarril del Oeste, founded in 1857, drained the Pedroso fortune until it was finally sold by the family in the 1880's. In August 7, 1885 *The New York Times* in the column "Cuban Crops, Robbers and Loans", reports from Havana that D. Fernando Freyre de Andrade has gone to New York to secure a loan of $500,000 to complete the Ferro-Carril del Oeste. [30]

---

[28] Santa Gertrudis was located, according to the legal document freeing the slaves of this property, in the area of Guamutas, Matanzas. See *Don Antonio Gonzalez de Mendoza y Bonilla 1828–1906*, Appendix. Copia de la Escritura de Liberación de Esclavos. Numero 241. The mill location is specified as 3 ½ miles north of the train station of Banagüises in *Military Notes on Cuba. 1909*. p. 323 http://www.archive.org/details/militarynotesonc00unitrich (accessed. 1 July 2011)

[29] After the 1959 revolution it was re-named Bolivia.

[30] The sale of the mills they had inherited from their grandfather Mateo Pedroso to La Gran Azucarera Company left the Pedroso family with a large amount of cash to create a merchant company with a capital of 2.4 million pesos and

Other major railway investors included Eduardo Fesser who had created the rail line that ran directly from Matanzas to his enormous warehouses in Regla on the east side of the bay of Havana. At the outset of the first war of independence in 1868 some of the sons of these *criollo* planter families became a target for the colonial authorities. Accused by the Spanish of supporting independence, Francisco Fesser, among others had his considerable properties confiscated. [31]

Francisco Fesser, along with Jose Ignacio Rodriguez, Jose Manuel Mestre, and Jose Maria de la Torre were Antonio Gonzalez de Mendoza's closest associates in the New York exile community.[32] They returned after the treaty ending the first war of independence granted them amnesty. However, they likely found it difficult to resume their former lives. It was a new chapter in the island's economic story: a period that benefited outsiders unscathed by the losses from the war. While the struggle continued to drain the *criollo* planters, they were ready to exploit the post-war conditions.

More Spaniards came as settlers to Cuba in the last decades of the 19th century and the first decades of the twentieth century than during its entire colonial history. They were valued as sober, hardworking, entrepreneurial, and above all, white. Drawn with the promise of economic benefits, their presence in the rural areas was insurance against an uprising from the disenfranchised blacks and Chinese laborers who had made few gains in the wars of independence. Just as important, the Spaniards' managerial skills and strong work ethic made them easily fit into a new occupational category, that of the *colonos*, tenant or independent farmers.

The traditional status of the *hacendado*, the planter, had depended on his ownership of all aspects of the operation. Now, with the ever-greater need for raw cane to feed the potential for higher yields with the industrial mills and without the labour possible with armies of slaves the owner of the mill became a buyer of cane from independent farmers who owned or rented the land around the mill. These independent growers fed the industrial scale of the production and were paid a percentage of the mill's yield each harvest. Just as sixty years before the steam-powered mills had stimulated the slave trade, the abolition of slavery and the ever-more powerful mills demanded a new influx of workers, but unlike the slaves, with the support of the colonial government the Spaniards established themselves as participants in the new economy.

---

to begin several businesses. Among these was the construction of a railroad to link the city of Havana with the town of Pinar del Rio at the heart of the tobacco growing region. The ambition was to create the longest line, 187 klm.s on the island covering such difficult terrain as the mountainous area near Artemisa. This Ferrocarril del Oeste grew to be a cash-sucking investment which by the time of the death of both Pedroso brothers (Joaquin 1879, Luis 1881) had not yet been completed. Zanetti, Oscar, and García Alejandro. *Sugar & Railroads, A Cuban History, 1837-1959*. trans. Franklin W. Knight and Mary Todd. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1987) 72

[31] Zanetti and García Alejandro, 1987. 129
[32] Julia Batista, 6

The post-slavery economy

The Treaty of Zanjon in 1879 was a finger-in-the-dike measure to appease the rebels for long enough to reinforce colonial rule through such means as land distribution to Spanish immigrants. It offered limited political power to the *criollos*, relief from high taxes and amnesty for the white rebels, liberty for the blacks in the rebel army and a phasing out of slavery over the next seven years. As a result of Zanjon, Cuba was allowed to send representatives to the Spanish Parliament. However, subsequent laws limited voting to *peninsulares*, Cubans holding Spanish citizenship, and even they held little power. To add to the disillusion felt on the island, the Spanish government increased taxes to pay for the debt racked up during the Ten Years War. As for the most divisive issue of slavery, it was to be phased out with the understanding that the majority of slaves would remain on the plantations and receive wages for their labour.

Appointed mayor by a newly minted 1879 Havana municipal council, product of the recent peace treaty, Antonio Gonzalez de Mendoza was in office for merely a year and resigning for what he gave to understand was ill health.[33] It is understandable that he felt unable to oversee city affairs for long; beyond his ambivalence about direct involvement in politics he was in charge of one of the largest law offices in the city

Liberation of Santa Gertrudis Slaves

As though acknowledging the end of the world in which he had known success Joaquin Pedroso died in 1880 having survived his wife Micaela Montalvo by only several months. His daughter Chea and son Manuel inherited a number of houses and four sugar plantations the largest of which Santa Gertrudis, included the property of 285 slaves.[34] Antonio and Chea, worked quickly to eradicate the legacy of slavery that came with the inheritance. They bought Manuel's interest in the plantation and he in turn donated these funds to the Jesuits. Through Deed Number 241 witnessed by Joaquin Lancis, Official Notary of the City of Havana on the 11th day of September of the year 1879, Mendoza freed the slaves of the Santa Gertrudis Sugar Mill, stating in the deed that this freedom is "freely given" (ex gratia) and not in consideration of any price and is done with the sole purpose of benefiting the said slaves, recognizing their rights and returning them to the condition to which, by their own nature, they are entitled."[35]

[33] Garcia Hernandez

[34] "Heredó tambien mi madre otras casas y la mitad del ingenio Sta. Gertrudis que era el mejor de las 4 que poseia mi Abuelo. La otra mitad le correspondia a Manuel el Jesuita, y Papá se la compró con toda su herencia y los dos antes dieron la libertad a los 285 esclavos que componian su dotación." Julia Batista

[35]. "...todos cuantos se encuentren en el referido ingenio SANTA GERTRUDIS sean absolutamente libres de todo cautiverio, sujeción y patronato, a cuyo efecto y con testimonio de esta escritura se ocurrirá a proveerles de la cedula de vecindad propias de las personas libres en cambio de las que han tenido has el día en calidad de esclavos, presentando el referido documento ante la autoridad local correspondiente en el termino municipal de Guamutas, donde esta situada el ingenio (11 Septiembre 1879) Copia de la Escritura de Liberacion de Esclavos. Numero 241. see supporting documents: *Don Antonio Gonzalez de Mendoza, Su Vida y su Familia*

Micaela Montalvo de Pedroso, oil on canvas, 1876. Casas Batista family

26 THE CUBA REVIEW

Gardens and Residence, Central Gertrudis.

Possibly the Gonzalez de Mendoza Sugar Mill, Santa Gertrudis. Illustration labelled: “Central Gertrudis Gardens and Plantation House,” the old slave bell is visible between the garden and the smokestacks, *The Cuba Review*, August 1917, New York: The Munson Steamship Lines, p. 26, Web October 11, 2011, The Cuba Review

Teresa Casas Batista

Miguel, Antonio and Chea's eldest son, read the legal document to the assembled slaves at Santa Gertrudis.[36] According to his sister Matilde, they couldn't comprehend the significance of freedom. This anecdote, since she had not yet been born at the time of the event, must have been passed down in the family. Its existence as family lore highlights the slave-owners' sense of the announcement as a historical occasion. The condition that had so shaped the course of the island's history, feared or hoped for, had taken place. Looking to their former property for an acknowledgement of the momentous nature of the event they were taken-aback by the freed slaves' impassive acceptance of their changed status. The mutual sense of anticlimax was well-based for, in fact, from the point of view of the former slaves' daily lives, little had changed. From a strictly financial point of view, freedom was not necessarily an advantage. A small daily wage was the only means for meeting needs that had before been met by the slave owner. These included clothing, food and medical care.[37] Domestic servants at Amargura who were former slaves, as always, fared better being regarded as an extension of the family.

Photo by **gertrudense**, identified as the slave quarters "barracones" of Santa Gertrudis, Matanzas, 2009/ Google Earth- ID: 46321443 Web. 30 June 2011 Gertrudense

[36] Matilde Batista

[37] Louis Perez Jr., claims that "the decline of the standard of living for former slaves after emancipation was as immediate as it was dramatic," (*Between Empires*, 23). However Rebecca J. Scott contends that this over-simplifies the subtleties of the transition to a freed life. "The conclusion that must be drawn from the Afro-Cuban struggle for civil rights and from the pattern of post-emancipation adaptations and access to land, however, is that such improvements were few. Certain choices could now be made that were not previously available; some families were reconstituted; new modes of life took shape. But the vast majority of former slaves remained landless and powerless. …slavery was at once a labor system and a social system. Its weight was felt by its victims both as a forced obligation to perform unpaid labor in tasks not freely chosen and as a series of abuses and restraints on personal mobility, autonomy, and dignity. Emancipation involved different degrees of escape from different aspects of bondage, and no simple comparison of "standards of living" before and after can capture the process." *Slave emancipation in Cuba: the transition to free labor, 1860-1899*, 282

[secretos cuba]

“Native Colored Family” detail of illustration. Report on the Census of Cuba, 1899, United States War Dept. Cuban Census Office. Washington:1900, p. 70, Web 11 October 2011, University of South Carolina University Libraries Digital Collections,

Destruction of Matanzas Mills, Re-building of Mills in Camaguey; Sugar Industry in step with the westward expansion of railways

Matilde Batista notes that her grandparents Antonio and Chea were among the first members of Havana society to grant freedom to their slaves, far in advance of the legal deadline of 1886. The plantation owners within the most heavily cultivated western provinces, most notably Matanzas, were much more reluctant to free slaves than those in the east. However, American reporters, eager for signs of the coming of abolition to the island, in 1879 sent news of a growing trend. "A private telegram from Havana states that three slaveholders, owners of 4,000, 1,200 and 400 slaves respectively, have emancipated them and contracted with them for their services for five years, and that other slaveholders intend to follow their example." [38]

With the 1880 inheritance of four mills, Don Antonio had to decide whether to stay in the sugar business. Prices were on the decline and technical innovations along with the new system of land ownership and cultivation were re-tooling the basis of the sugar economy.[39] He was absorbed with the demands of his law practice; it would require his sons to interpret the new economic conditions and pick up where their grandfather, Joaquin Pedroso, had left off.

The challenges were considerable. Vestiges of the rebellion continued throughout the 1880's. Gangs of bandits roamed the countryside destabilizing the economy by looting and burning crops. These problems were aggravated by drought, continued high taxation, and a glut of sugar on world market from large scale sugar beet farming. *The New York Times* continued to print dire reports of the situation under a column entitled "Cuban Crops, Robbers and Loans:"

> The results of the commercial and political crisis through which the island is passing, without any hope of near improvement, are daily becoming more patent. From the province of Matanzas 30 families have emigrated to Mexico, and the machinery of six abandoned plantations has been shipped to Vera Cruz to be used in Mexico on sugar plantations. An engineer has gone to Vera Cruz with a list of machinery and apparatus belonging to 30 plantations with the object of offering them to people in Mexico. Many families are preparing to leave here for Caracas. The sugar crop is nearly all disposed of, the greater part of plantations having ceased to grind. Planters find themselves in a very precarious position as no one is

[38] *The New York Times* September 25, 1879

[39] To recap the history of rail expansion in Don Joaquin's time—between 1846 and 1858 the number of sugar mills had tripled in the region south of the port of Cárdenas, Matanzas. The two existing railways merged in 1857 and extended south-east to the fertile region of Banagüises; there, the plantations developed in the wake of the railway had the newest equipment and highest yields. By 1868 there was no further possibility of expansion since, to the east, the province of Santa Clara was already served by railways. Development then moved farther east opening up lands in the north of what is now the province of Camaguey in the 1880's to link these with the port of Nuevitas. It was in this zone, where the Mendozas would expand their sugar investments after 1916.

> willing or able to advance any money for the raising of the next crop. Many planters will be obliged to abandon their plantations. A great drought prevails over a vast region of the island, and is doing especial damage to the tobacco crop and the cattle-raising interest. In Havana and the neighborhood it has not rained for five months, except a few occasional showers of short duration.[40]

A typical economic hard-luck story of the war's effect was that of the family of Melchor Batista into which Julia married in 1883. To put down the first independence uprising in 1868 the Spanish needed trains to transport troops, armaments and supplies; the Ferrocarriles de Cienfuegos and Villa Clara were crucial in maintaining La Trocha, the north-south line of earthworks that kept the marauding rebel army east of the rich plantations of Matanzas. In the area of Camaguey, east of the fortifications, of the 100 mills that existed in 1868 only one remained standing ten years later.[41] Among the properties destroyed was that of the Batista family.[42]

After 1879 many Matanzas planters didn't have the means to repair and upgrade their mills. Those who could instead chose to build farther east. Santa Gertrudis continued operating with robust production even immediately after the conclusion of the second and conclusive war of independence. Nevertheless, an 1884 map shows another "Santa Gertrudis." In this case, it is a settlement with a wharf on the northern coast in the central province of Camaguey just east of the Júcaro-Moron line, a north-south railway and trench and fortification system maintained by the Spanish to keep the rebels from the richest mills in the western half of the island. This district was to be the location of the reincarnation of the old Santa Gertrudis into the modern Cunagua mill.

---

[40] "The Plight of Cuba" *The New York Times* May 22, 1884

[41] The north-south configuration of the trochas ran parallel to the railway route for it was imperative to protect the lines of communication and transportation. The trains were critical in moving the Spanish army and their supplies. The armored cars became targets for the rebels who counted on the support of the rural population and concentrated on destroying the telegraph and rail communication.

[42] Nevertheless, he must have retained some of the family's properties in or near the city of Camaguey because Julia refers to his having business interests there and he lived there for extended periods after 1907.

Cuba, Chicago: Rand McNally and Company, from *The Commercial Atlas of America, 1921*

Rand McNally & Company, Cuba, 1884, from the *Indexed Atlas of the World*

Detail showing location of the "Trocha" railway and Gertrudis (Santa Gertrudis) within province of Puerto Principe or Camaguey

The Mendoza's story was an exception to the financial ruin of the old families. The grandsons of Don Joaquin Pedroso picked up where he had left off. They were among the few, beyond American and other foreign interests, who had the capital to make the necessary acquisitions and upgrades. Family investments stretched to the east of the island in the purchase of a railway connecting the island's largest copper mine to the port of Santiago. Damaged during the war, the Empresa de Ferrocarril y Minas del Cobre had been so expeditiously salvaged that in 1902 it shipped 510 tons of unrefined copper to England and the U.S.[43]

Introduction to the Cuban Sugar Mill for prospective American investors

Popular interest in the Cuban sugar industry peaked in the United States with the promotion of investment on the island by land agents. An excellent description in *The New York Times* of the workings of a mill as family enterprise in 1885 offered a detailed description of the workings of the sugar mill at this transitional moment:

This "Ingenio Hormiguero" (Ingenio being the Spanish term for sugar estate) is a little principality in itself. With its 3,000 acres, nearly, of sugar cane, its rich lands, its great

[43] International bureau of the American republics. *Cuba*, (Washington, DC:1905). Mendoza copper mining(accessed. 29 June 2011).

mill filled with the most expensive new sugar machinery, its more than comfortable dwelling house, and its large number of smaller dwellings for the workmen, it is one of the finest sugar estates in Cuba….. The entire plantation is laid out in lots of three or four acres each, with many miles of streets or roads between them, and 8 or 10 miles of railroad track running from one end of the place to the other, on which the cane is brought to the mill in cars. There are so many of these lots that a map is kept on which the condition of each lot is indicated by a different color. If the cane on one lot has been cut the fact is indicated by one color; if it is ready to be cut, by another color. The cane is brought to the mill and stored in great heaps in a convenient place near the rollers that crush the juice out of it. There are three large heavy iron rollers, and after the cane goes between them it is squeezed dry. It is carried up to the rollers automatically on a moving platform like that on which the horses walk in a thrashing machine and comes out crushed and sapless. The juice is carried off in pipes to the boilers and is boiled down and run through evaporators and other contrivances till all the liquid part of it becomes molasses and all the solid part sugar. The cane now yields a much larger percentage of juice than it did a few years ago, under the improved machinery for extracting it, but this machinery costs money. It comes from New York, most of it, and the engines, boilers, evaporators, and all the other machines necessary for setting up a complete modern sugar mill cannot be purchased for less than $200,000. About that amount has been put in this mill at Hormiguero within the last year, and still there are additions to be made. There is a locomotive to be purchased, for instance, to take the place of oxen in drawing cane to the mill, and electric lights are to be put in next season for working by at night, for in the grinding season the mill runs night and day, Sundays and holidays, without any cessation. But through the other eight months of the year all this machinery stands idle and earns nothing for its owners. The cane, after the juice has been extracted from it, it spread out in a drying yard to dry, which it does under this hot sun in a very short time, and eventually it finds its way into the furnaces where it makes steam for the grinding of fresh piles. The outlook in the sugar business this year is not as bright as planters would like to see it. Prices are so low, and transportation charges in Cuba and export duties so high, it barely pays the thousands of gallons of molasses are being thrown away or poured over the land for fertilizing, for it costs more to send a hogshead of molasses to New York this year than it is worth when it gets there. The production of these large sugar mills is enormous. No plantation is considered a large one unless it turns out from 5,000 to 15,000 hogsheads of sugar in a season. I forget the exact number of hogsheads made annually at Hormiguero, but think it is from 8,000 to 10,000. We sat in the ladies sewing room, on the raised platform, and discussed the chances of the ratification of the Spanish treaty. Everybody here is anxious to see it go through. “When we have the treaty” has come to be synonymous with “When my ship comes in.” And still the sugar planters seem to think that it would not have much direct effect upon their business. They look more to the present low prices killing out the manufacture of beet sugar, which would give them a better chance.

Some of the large sugar estates are still worked by slaves, but at Hormiguero there is none but free labor. Mr. Ponvert is beginning a new system—of letting out small tracts of land to farmers, furnishing them with a dwelling house and barn, oxen, and everything necessary, and stipulating that the land shall be worked according to the directions of his overseer and the cane brought to his mill. The farmer eventually pays for his stock and

implements out of the proceeds of his sales of cane, a little each year, and the productiveness of the land is thus much increased. This system, so far, has been found to work well, and nobody, I think, would be willing to go back to the slavery days, free labor having been found to be much more profitable in the end. Like many another business, sugar making is rapidly going into the hands of a few wealthy firms. Although the modern sugar machinery is terribly expensive, it does its work so much more completely and economically that the small planter, with his old-fashioned boiling kettles and crude machinery has no chance and cannot compete successfully. Still, there are quite a number of these large concerns. Here, in this district around Cienfuegos, one can stand almost anywhere and see the steam that has been grinding rise from a dozen chimneys.[44]

Sugar mill plantation workers near fire hole. "Vista de un trapiche, La fornaya, 1863, (detail) Barnard, George N. stereograph, Tom Pohrt Photograph Collection, University of Miami Cuban Heritage Collection, University of Miami Cuban Heritage Collection

[44] "A Day on a Sugar Estate, Cienfuegos, Cuba", Feb. 28. W.D., *The New York Times*, April 5, 1885

The Santa Gertrudis plantation was important for the Gonzalez de Mendoza family. It a testament to its faith in a post-slavery sugar economy; and, it served as a refuge during times of epidemics or war the city. In 1890, Julia extended a stay there when warned that illness had broken out among the children in Amargura. She was still there when she prematurely gave birth to Manuel. Luckily, Gonzalo Aróstegui, her brother-in-law doctor who had come to check on the other children could assist her. Eight years later when the war made it unsafe to stay in Havana some of Julia's brothers and sisters with their spouses and children took refuge in Santa Gertrudis. However, they cannot have felt very secure, records show that some villages and farms in the area were completely destroyed. An outpost of the rural guard in a nearby village had a telephone connection to Santa Gertrudis.[45] But, since both sides habitually burned property, there was likely also a small contingent of privately paid Spanish soldiers on the grounds of the plantation.[46]

An 1895 photograph of some employees the Soledad mill owned by the American E. Atkins and Company, reveals the conditions under which the harvest was brought in that year that the war resumed in earnest. While the mill workers stand under the old slave bell to their right the armed guards have their weapons ready to repel insurgent or bandit attacks on the fields or mill.

Historian Hugh Thomas sees the story of the Soledad plantation exemplifying the transfer of economic power in the last two decades of the 19th century. Its original owners, the Sarria family, had five mills in the Cienfuegos area that were mortgaged as a result of the crises. Typical high-living sugar kings, their horses were shod with silver, the Sarria's were not up to facing the challenges of the period and in 1884 Atkins and Co. (acting as the lender's receivers) became proprietors of Soledad. By 1893 railways and technological improvements in place, the mill was a dominant producer and represented the most significant American inroad into the island's sugar industry.[47]

Joaquin Pedroso's talent for commerce passed to his Gonzalez de Mendoza grandsons. Miguel, the eldest son, took over the management of the family's mill on the death of his grandfather and his son, Antonio, in turn, joined the firm. Don Antonio's sons Claudio, Victor, Pablo and Ramon were in the front rank of capitalists. Understanding the importance of American involvement in partnerships to secure markets, investing in the latest technology for their mill, founding their own bank and diversifying investments from the sugar industry into copper, real estate, and banking, they were among the very few old families that were fortunate and canny enough to develop their wealth in the post-war economy.

[45] Military Notes on Cuba. 1909. United States War Department. Washington: 1909. http://www.archive.org/details/militarynotesonc00unitrich. (Accessed Web. 1 July 2011).

[46] Thomas points out that it was the practice of Spanish soldiers to charge for guard duty. *Cuba, or, The Pursuit of Freedom*. Da Capo Press Inc., 1998 (re-print of original New York: 1977 edition) 274

[47] Thomas, 274

E. Atkins & Co. employees under the old slave bell, Soledad, Cuba
Photograph, circa 1895, From the Atkins family photographs
Photo. 37.216, Massachusetts Historical Society, E. Atkins & Co.

They convened in Amargura in the heart of a city that by the last two decades of the nineteenth century was in a state of transformation. Spanish immigrants and American tourists, investors

and speculators brought a new energy to the formerly rigid social hierarchy. A new social scene sprouted with the relaxation of laws that had formerly suppressed freedom of assembly, speech and press. This was the dawn of clubs fashioned closely after American models, such as the "Havana Yacht Club" as well as the Spanish regional clubs or "casinos" that addressed all the needs of the newly arrived Spanish. Despite the economic hardships after the war, the injection of new groups with their power to add to the circulation of monetary and social capital changed the tenor of life forever.

Works Cited

García Hernández, A. "Don Antonio Gonzalez de Mendoza, Extracto de la Conferencia Pronunciada en el Colegio de Abogados de La Habana", April 17, 1942, reprinted in Gonzalez de Mendoza y Freyre, Luis, *Don Antonio Gonzalez de Mendoza y Bonilla 1828–1906, Su Vida y su Familia*. (Havana, 1951) English translation http://www.gonzalezdemendoza.com/AGdM%20Biography.htm (accessed 24 June 2011)

Thomas, Hugh. *Cuba, or, The Pursuit of Freedom*. Da Capo Press Inc., 1998 (re-print of original New York: 1977 edition)

Perez, Louis. *Between Empires*, (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1998)

Joseph L. Scarpaci, Roberto Segre, Mario Coyula. *Havana Two Faces of the Antillean Metropolis*. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press. 2002)

Scott, Rebecca J. *Slave emancipation in Cuba: the transition to free labor, 1860-1899*. (Pittsbugh: University of Pittsburgh Press. 1985)

Zanetti, Oscar, and García Alejandro. *Sugar & Railroads, A Cuban History, 1837-1959*. trans. Franklin W. Knight and Mary Todd. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1987)

The New York Times "A Day on a Sugar Estate, Cienfuegos, Cuba", April 5, 1885

The New York Times "The Plight of Cuba" May 22, 1884

The New York Times September 25, 1879

International bureau of the American republics. *Cuba*, (Washington, DC:1905). Mendoza copper mining(accessed. 29 June 2011).

United States War Department, Cuban Census Office. *Report on the Census of Cuba, 1899*, (Washington DC:1900), p. 70, Report on the Census of Cuba 1899 (accessed. 11 October 2011).

United States War Department. *Military Notes on Cuba 1909*, (Washington DC: 1909).Military Notes on Cuba 1909 (accessed. 1 July 2011)

Chapter 7 Occupation, Tropical Desire and Decay

Pax Americana: the roots of long-term American involvement in Cuba

"I feel like a Bull Moose." said Theodore Roosevelt on returning with his Rough Riders after the Spanish-American War. The victory confirmed his country's inherent superiority and its imperial authority. The strategies for setting Cuba on its feet and on the path to modern state-hood exposed American assumptions about the foundations of democracy and civil society. The occupiers' experience on the island would severely test these very assumptions.

As one of its first actions as the government of occupation in Cuba, the American administration in 1899 decreed a new judicial system. Antonio Gonzalez de Mendoza was appointed the first Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. The strength of his candidacy, like his appointment twenty years before as mayor of Havana, lay in his reputation for fairness and his ability to skirt partisan politics. However, after barely a year in office he resigned without public explanation. According to a contemporary biographical essay, although not explicitly acknowledged, the resignation was a protest against an attempt to undermine Cuban judiciary authority and independence.[48] Afterward, Mendoza did not return to his law practice but, being 72 years of age, rewarded himself with retirement.

This concluding chapter in Don Antonio's legal career reflects a problem that emerged from the way that Cubans had won their independence. Victory against Spain had come only with intervention from the Americans; their subsequent military occupation marginalised the Cubans and wrested from them the initiative in setting their country in order. The moral authority and momentum of victory lay in the American court. As the self-declared liberators of the island, Cuba's northern neighbours rolled up their sleeves and set out to address what they saw as the island's appalling backwardness.

Platforms of American Democracy: Civic Efficiency and Educated Citizenry

In 1898 the United States entered the conflict referenced in their history as the Spanish American War. Cubans refer to the same episode as the last two years of the War of Independence. The blowing up of the U.S.S. Maine, as it lay anchored in Havana harbour on January 25, 1898, precipitated the American declaration of war against Spain. The war culminated that summer in land and sea battles around Santiago and its harbour that were decisively won by the American forces with reinforcements on land from the Cubans.

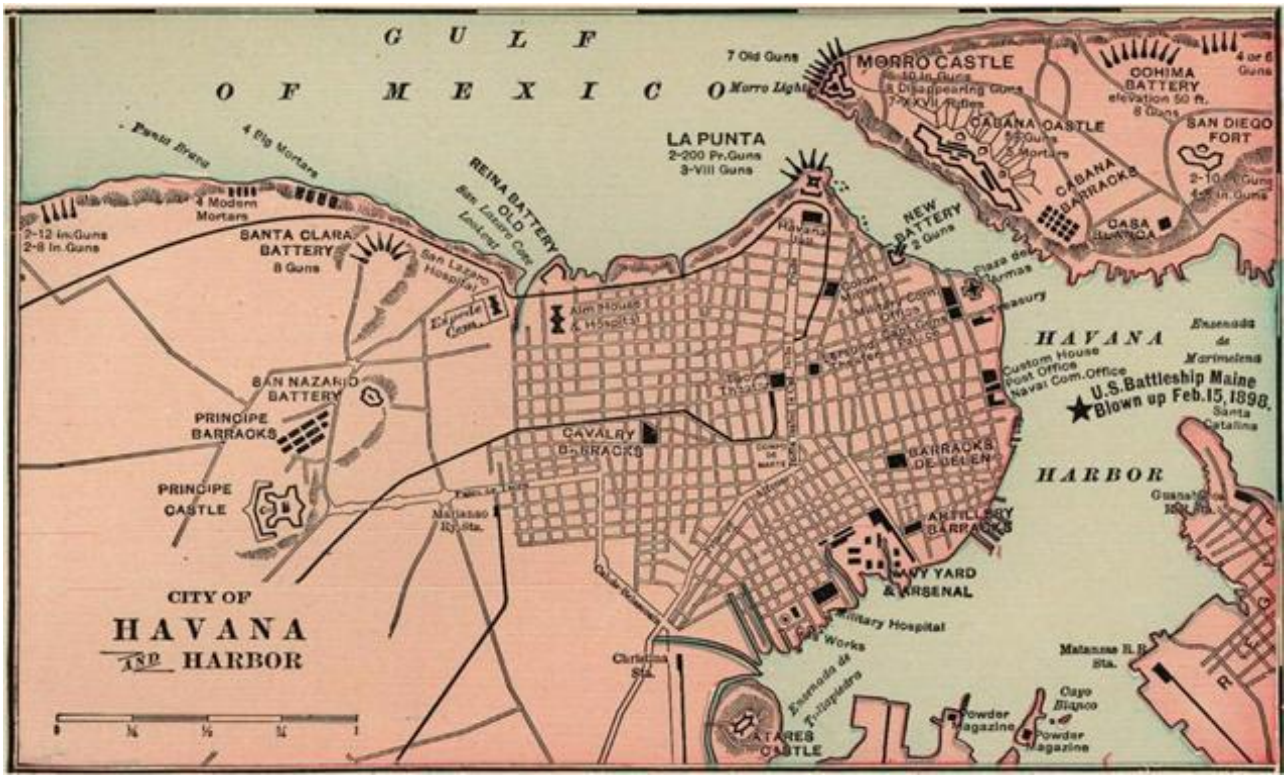
The government of occupation that ruled the island from1898 to1902 attempted to stamp out the legacy of colonial corruption and replace this with a democratic system of government.

---

[48] "During a period of absence by General Leonard Wood, the acting military administrator, a Colonel Scott, was left in charge of day-to-day government in Havana. The incident that triggered Mendoza's resignation related to a decision of the Civil Court of Havana regarding property rights that had gone against the wishes of the American administration. A decree was passed creating a Procedure of Appeal Under Squatting Rights, countering the legal decision and including a preamble strongly critical of the Cuban judiciary." García Hernández http://www.gonzalezdemendoza.com/AGdM%20Biography.htm (Accessed. June 14, 2011)

Unfortunately, against centuries-old customs, the American-style civil society never completely "took." Instead, caught between an imported ideal and their grass-roots reality Cubans entered a six-decade long watershed of economic and political dependency on the U.S. that would be labelled "the neo-colonial period," in today's official Cuban history.

The American agenda was to bring the island into the economic and cultural mainstream of North America, so facilitating investment, opening an important market, and promoting what they held to be superior, progressive values over archaic, dangerous customs. Major targets were the systemic corruption and the inefficient municipal services. An ambitious reform program aimed to overhaul the entire public infrastructure. Beginning with public health issues that threatened the occupiers themselves, Havana and Santiago were the focus of energetic sanitation campaigns to wipe out yellow fever and other tropical pestilence. Public transit, electricity, telephone, sewage, paving, hospitals, police and schools, all the services that underpin modern life were rapidly brought to a new level of efficiency and accountability. Political reform was implemented on the widest possible scale and on the American model: an independent judiciary and an electoral and a school system based on an up-to-date census of the population with a curriculum to produce civic-minded future voters. All in all, the occupiers began to feel very much at home by the time the improvements had begun to take shape.



Map of Havana by American Military Administration, 1899 [secretos cuba]

Leanord Wood and unidentified officer, possibly Ramon Gonzalez de Mendoza [New York Public Library Digital Gallery]

Ramon Gonzalez de Mendoza y Pedroso in American Army uniform, photograph reproduced in *Vértigo del Tiempo*, memoire of "Nena" Aróstegui Gonzalez de Mendoza

The Platt Amendment: defence of democracy/ control of protectorate

On May 20, 1902, Leonard Wood, the military governor transferred power to the new republic under the leadership of Tomas Estrada Palma who had run unopposed for the presidency four months earlier.[49] Although by then the American troops had left, they would return only four years later. In fact, American military intervention would reoccur at regular intervals during the next decades as permitted under the Platt Amendment. The latter was a last minute addition to the law that set the terms of the American withdrawal. In exchange Cubans were granted preferential access to the U.S. sugar market.

Through the Platt Amendment the U.S. granted itself the power to intervene in Cuba when it deemed necessary. But, since more than 13,000 North Americans had acquired land title by 1905, American motives for intervening in the islands' affairs often hinged on the need to protect this investment. Cubans experienced the looming, parental presence, on one hand, as a barrier to natural political evolution and on the other hand as the final resort to a higher power that could protect them from their own electoral fraud and corruption. In the adjusted, official narrative after the revolution of 1959, Castro's expropriation of American interests in Cuba was what finally set the island on the true course of independence.

[49] May 20 is the day in which Cuba's independence was annually celebrated before the 1959 revolution and, in the United States, continues to mark the event.

During the first occupation Dorothy Stanhope, a foreign correspondent for *The New York Times* wrote on Cuban culture. In one of her 1902 posts she highlights a family, legendary in Havana society, boasting of an insulated culture of its own, presided over by a venerable patriarch.

> Havana, Sept. 30—In the heart of Havana there is a house which occupies almost a block of ground—I am not sure that it is not an entire block. Its appearance is much like the majority of Havana houses, with the doors and windows opening directly on the street. The shutters back of the iron window bars are closed most of the time, so that the outside world cannot gaze within and see the marble tiled floors and handsome furnishings, nor the courtyard about which the house is built; like most Cuban houses, its form is that of a hollow square. The house has a great many rooms. I do not know the exact number, but I should guess about seventy-five or a hundred if I were guessing. It needs them all, however, for its roof covers about a hundred people, including servants. It is the residence of a very wealthy Cuban, whose children and grandchildren live under the same roof. Of the former there are twelve or fifteen, not including the husbands and wives of those that are married, and of the latter there are between forty and fifty of all ages, from babes in arms up. It is fortunate that the house is so large that the crying of one infant will not necessarily suggest the idea to all of the others. The father rules in the house, is the President, as it were; the family relations are of the warmest, and this is looked upon as the model united family. The gathering of all the daughters and sons, with their daughters and sons, under one roof is not uncommon here. When it can be afforded it is very common for the parental roof to shelter all the posterity. The head of the family of which I have been speaking is very partial to Americans and shows them much attention. One of his daughters tells of a striking evidence of this. In Cuba strawberries are the greatest luxury—until the past season I had never seen them in the market, and those of last Spring were brought from the States. So few are grown here that they are exhibited as curiosities. This gentleman has a plantation down in the country—few Cuban gentlemen of any means have not—on which very small quantities of berries are raised every year and sent up to the owner at once. During the Government of Intervention these always found their way to the table of the Military Governor without the family having a single one.[50]

[50] HAVANA SOCIAL GOSSIP, *The New York Times*, Oct., 12, 1902

Photograph from photo album: Our Trip to Cuba, p.6, 1907, University of Miami Cuban Heritage Collection. Our Trip to Cuba 1907


President Palma and Cabinet

The featured home was that of Antonio Gonzalez de Mendoza who at this time may have been carefully revising his long-held views on the advantages of annexation to the United States. Although he could not countenance the subversion of the judiciary authority under any circumstances, before the war he had supported annexation as the best post-colonial solution for Cuba, for in his eyes the island was not politically mature enough to govern its own affairs.

With his tribute of strawberries Don Antonio represented the attitudes of an elite group of Cubans who had, through the unstable decades before the war of 1898, made the United States their second home. The men of this group, educated there and fluent in the language and values of both cultures, saw themselves as the natural stewards of the new nation. Among these was Tomas Estrada Palma himself, who held American citizenship, had lived most of his life in the U.S. and ran a school in northern New York state dedicated to the proper formation of promising Cuban youth.

However, not only the wealthy, educated Cubans but those of almost all classes had a first-hand experience of "El Norte." Efficient, rapid steamship lines connected the island to cities on the eastern seaboard. Many saw the United States as a place to which one turned when in need of the

latest advancements in medicine, education and, after expelling the colonial government, democratic practices. This group trusted American intervention and saw it as a safety net in the transitional years before democracy could take hold.

Despite the cooperation of the Cuban elite and American zeal and know-how, the colonial traditions of patronage and bribery would prove resilient from the start. Estrada inherited officers' expectations of reward through government offices with corresponding powers to employ their loyal troops. The rebels had lived outside of the law as seasoned guerrilla fighters and they looked to the new government for war bounty as security on their loyalty.

Riding the popularity of victory, officers entered politics. Once elected, they were in charge of appointments for state funded employment. For the average citizen, having ties to the candidate, raising support for his party and even organizing armed guards at polling stations was a popular route to securing a well-paid job in the public sector or lucrative commissions. This system led to a new tradition of electoral fraud.

The fight against "Yellow Jack" and the influence of the City Beautiful Movement

"Cleaning up in Cuba" could have been the byword of American intervention with its perfect commingling of progressive reformist and imperial opportunistic impulses. Of all the reforms deemed necessary none was more urgent, because it threatened their presence, than the eradication of tropical diseases, notably yellow fever. While most native Cubans developed immunity, being more vulnerable to outbreaks of cholera, smallpox and typhus, yellow fever and malaria was the scourge of visiting Europeans and Americans. The troops sent by President McKinley to roust the Spanish from the island saw far more deaths from yellow fever than from action on the field. If Americans were to have an economic presence in the southern hemisphere they would need to win the biological war. Cuba became an arena for the most aggressive and scientific intervention against the tropical killers. In Camp Columbia on the outskirts of Havana, American soldiers volunteered for research that led to the discovery of the mosquito and its larvae as the source of the spread of yellow fever. Standing water was the place of incubation; it became the target for the American trained and financed disinfecting storm troops that attacked the colonial streets and wells of Santiago and Havana.[51]

[51] Dr. Carlos Finlay, a Cuban physician of Scots ancestry, had told the Academy of Sciences, Havana, twenty years before that mosquitoes conveyed yellow fever from man to man. He took his theory to the military commission that Wood had mandated to look into the connection between sanitation and the spread of fever. After destroying the insects, the epidemic that had spread through the city in the summer of 1900 was checked. Roberts

Street cleaning carts, Havana, 1900. University of Miami Cuban Heritage Collection

In fact, all of North America was in the throes of a grand cleansing of its cities. It was spurred by the need to deal with the diseases incubated in the tenements that harboured a multitude of impoverished people from around the world. Understanding that infections crossed class lines in the closely shared, dense new public spaces of the modern city, American authorities were urged by ratepayers to eradicate disease with the most up to date measures and with the authority of the state to penetrate into areas of life formerly insulated from public scrutiny. Every hidden crevice and artery within the body of the city was exposed, disinfected and rebuilt to eliminate the possibility of infection. Strict bylaws and building codes formally separated families from each other in individual dwellings. Sewage and uncontaminated water was separated, directed through labyrinthine pipes, aqueducts and pools. Water purification and storage facilities were designed as temples: soaring brick monuments to benign civic authority. It was no wonder then that Americans' reformist impulse would extend in a suitably proprietary way to Cuba's cities.


testing the pavement

a team of street cleaners, Smithsonian Museum, Department of Anthropology Smithsonian Museum

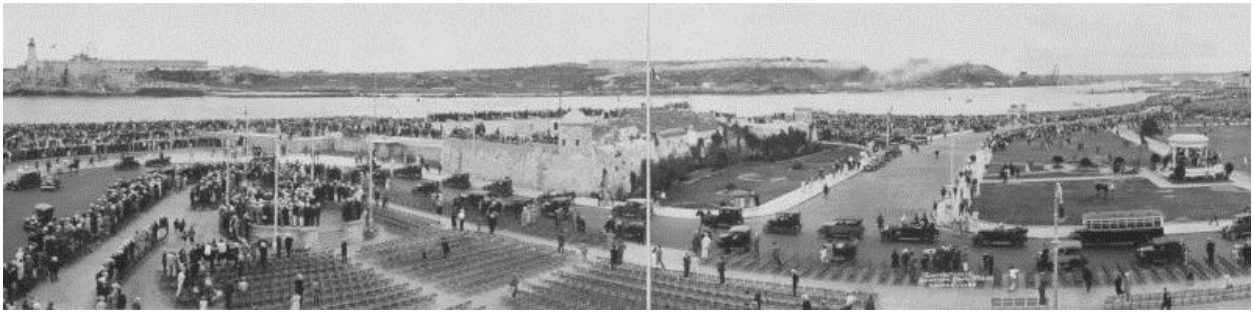
Album of Photographs 1890's University of Miami, Cuban Heritage Collection

To American eyes the colonial city was an anathema to clean modern living. Dorothy Stanhope, foreign correspondent for *The New York Times* provided vivid accounts of the daily life and customs in Havana. A major focus of her dispatches was the battle against yellow fever. Her glowing report of the city's highlights is punctuated with warnings of the invisible danger lurking within the picturesque cobblestone streets:

> *Most of the City's Points of Interest in the Infected Part—Fever Shows Little Decrease.* Tourists "doing" Havana think about fever before leaving home, knowing that it is in Havana the year around, and come here with the best information as to the best of living. Water must not be drunk, coffee avoided & c….There is probably no more beautiful or picturesque a harbour than that of Havana, surrounded on one side by the heights on which are built Morro and Cabanas, and on the other the low stretch of ground on which stands the city, looking so clean and beautiful with its low-built houses of white, pink, and blue.

> Forming a fine background to the city is a group of hills. In the lowland between the hills and the harbour, and especially in the strip nearest the harbour, the fever finds its home. All of the sewage in the city flows into the harbour, and remains there as there is no force to carry it further. The bottom of the bay is covered by an ooze so foul that the poisonous gases rise and carry with them the seeds of the disease. Casa Blanca, across the bay, is never free from fever. The cases in the city are almost always of those persons living near the harbour or those who have been in its vicinity… It may not generally be known to tourists that when they are shopping on the lower parts of Obispo or O'Reilly streets, or looking at the Governor General's palace, or at the monument where the first mass was said, or going through the Cathedral where Christopher Columbus was buried and from where he was taken some time ago, they are all in the midst of the infected district…. In spite of all the measures for sanitation and cleanliness that have been adopted since the American occupation, yellow fever does not seem to decrease materially, for while there were many more cases prior to Jan.1, 1899, the additional ones were among the Spanish soldiers. So far as cleanliness is concerned, there is no comparison between the Havana of today and a year ago, for now it is an ordinary thing to see gangs of men cleaning the streets and the sewers are disinfected frequently, principally with electro zone, which is being manufactured by the government by electrolysing sea water…[52]

In the Smithsonian Institution there is a collection of photographs documenting Havana through the eyes of the American government of occupation. It represents the work of the official photographer of the Chief Engineer, Division of Cuba, Havana, Charles E. Doty. His project was to offer evidence of progress through a depiction of the same places prior to and after their renovation. Among the buildings, fortifications, streets and city squares those documenting the redesign of the corner where the Punta Castle meets the Malecon, oceanside drive demonstrate the emphasis on "opening up" the city. There, less noteworthy buildings blocking the view of the harbour were removed thereby creating grand passages and perspectives that connect the murky narrow streets of the colonial city to its newer, free-flowing arteries.[53]



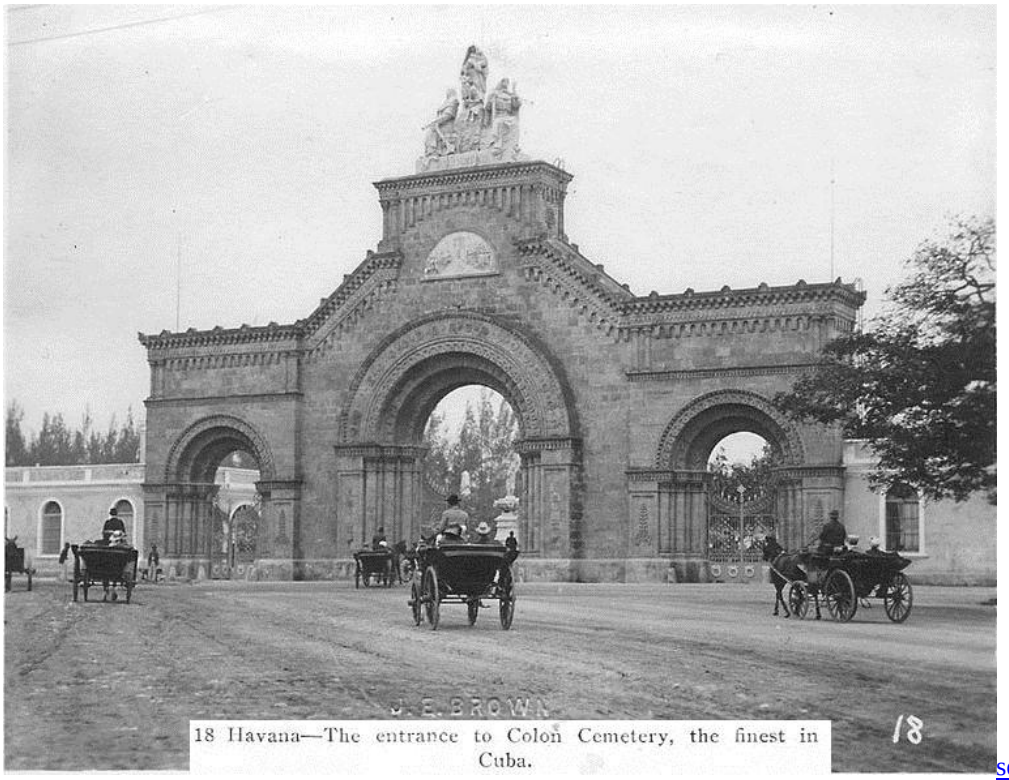
Album of Cuba 1900-1920 p.1 University of Miami, Cuban Heritage Collection

---

[52] *The New York Times*, March 4, 1900

[53] Bretos, Miguel A. "Imaging Cuba under the American Flag: Charles Edward Doty in Havana, 1899-1902" *The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts*: 22, Cuba Theme Issue (1996). 83-103

Another series of images record the battle to sanitize the city by cleaning all exterior surfaces. Thirty-three thousand gallons of a solution made of bichloride of mercury and the electrolysis of sea water would be used in a single day, and sixteen thousand houses would be cleaned each month. In the same vein, Dorothy Stanhope applauds American reform of some unhygienic burial practices in Havana. She makes note of the Cuban tolerance for evidence of death and decay in the form of the bone pit in the otherwise highly regimented and socially inscribed layout of the Cristóbal Colon Cemetery.



secretos cuba

> The front of the cemetery is filled with the resting places of those sufficiently blessed in this world's goods to pay a goodly sum for them: these graves are all cemented. Back of the chapel the graves are like those of our country, and are universally marked by black wooden crosses…Many of these graves are only rented for a time, and it is from them that the osarios are filled. In a remote part of the cemetery there is a large heap of black crosses that have been taken from dismantled graves, and nearby is a large heap of metal wreaths gathered together in the same way. I well remember that on my first visit to Colon in February of 1899, I saw many little heaps of human bones all about, waiting for the cart to carry them to the others in the far corner. Today nothing of the kind is to be seen

and the osario is no longer open to the public; in fact, the old bone pit is no longer used. [54]

Heap of bones in cemetery, examined by U.S. soldiers and Cuban guides, 1902, Necropolis Cristobal Colon, Havana, 1895-1910, Library of Congress Heap of bones

Havana Picturesque: The Tropical Folly

Readers of American newspapers were hungry for news and information about an island that was seen as their country's new backyard. Cuba was the latest in seemingly unending frontiers for their blessed nation. Not only did it beckon with unknown riches, it extended the country's cultural imagination, holding evidence in its buildings, harbours and streets to a history that Americans shared but that stretched back in time much farther than their own. Havana was, somewhat like the ruins of antebellum south for the Yankee tourist, a grand "folly, a picturesque ruin, object of contemplation, symbolizing the best of human achievement and its destruction through vanity and the passage of time.

[54] Cuba's Decoration Day in Winter" *The New York Times*. November 16, 1902.

Cuban Residence the Breakfast Room 1870 . stereograph [No. 5. Tropical Series.] ([ca. 1870]) New York Public Library,

In the following dispatch Dorothy Stanhope offers an American morality tale using colourful Cuban characters that she had come to know through gossip in Havana. She contrasts the indolence and blind arrogance of the titled aristocracy and their downfall, with the success of a tobacco millionaire who manufactures and trades with his northern neighbour with true Yankee enterprise.

In old books we read that titled persons held aloof from other Havanese who could not claim such distinction, but that time has passed. However, as it is, the old nobility believe that business is not suitable to their standing and lead the leisured lives that tradition tells them they should do. This idea still obtains among this old set, even though the majority are no longer wealthy and have not the luxuries to which they were once used. Anything which seems to draw them into the business life is distasteful. This was shown very plainly recently in the case of an old noble whose fortune has melted away, leaving him only some uncultivated land. He was offered a goodly sum for part of the timber growing on his place; he was quite willing for the people making the offer to go there and cut the trees, but when they stated that they expected him to have this done he declared the entire matter off, for although the price was an excellent one he could not soil his hands with such sordid transactions. In his pride he refused what meant considerable money to him.

Cerro, the little suburb out on a hill west of the city, has been the home of the old aristocracy for almost a century. It is no longer the exclusively fashionable district it once was, for many of the old homes have been turned into boarding houses. Some of the noble families went there only for the summer months, others lived there the year around, for it is not so far from the city but that all of the gayeties could be enjoyed. Today the city itself extends that far, and electric cars run directly by the old homes, for almost all were on the one street which forms the principal part of the Cerro. They are beautiful old houses still, these marble palaces, which were once the scene of Havana's most splendid entertainments. They are of the most luxurious tropical type, with gardens and courtyards of waving palms and murmuring fountains. Some are still in good repair, but others show that there have been more prosperous days; the leaves lie where they fall on the garden walks, the vines wander at will, the shrubbery grows rank, while within there is an air of desolation which those of us that have been in ruined Southern homes know only too well. This is not true of all of the homes, but only in those whence riches have fled, and yet living on the glory of other days, their pride will not permit them to improve the present ones by business transactions. … The price of a title is not great. Two or three thousand dollars would secure one, but of course these are no longer granted or desired. The titles thus bought are transmitted from father to son. The Marqués de Robell bought his title from the Spanish King. He owns some very large cigar factories, and his likeness is very familiar to the smokers of some very good cigars, as it is on the inside cover. So, although wearing the title of nobility, he is an energetic business man.[55]

[55] Stanhope, Dorothy, "TITLES DROPPED BY CUBANS" *The New York Times*, April 5, 1903, p.33

Calzada del Cerro 1900-1910, University of Miami Cuban Heritage Collection,

Dwelling in Havana, University of Miami Cuban Heritage Collection,

“Calzada del Cerro 1900” secretos cuba

Centro Habana, the market for ruins and the morality tale of Communist decay

The dismantling of Havana's walls was a gradual process beginning in 1863 and continuing until late in the century. During the early republican period as the city continued its spread to the south and west, the centre gravitated to the area immediately west of where walls had stood. This became known as Centro Habana.

In his book *Inside el barrio: a bottom-up view of neighborhood life in Castro's Cuba,* Henry Louis Taylor outlines the role of Centro Habana within the republican-era city. The creation of this district so close to the old core, the writer speculates, symbolically inserted the new Cuba beside the old. In its rectilinear urban design the area brought together light industry in the form of tobacco factories, a working class population living in the older housing stock, and grand public buildings."[56]

The dramatic increase of labourers in the centre caused the well-off to retreat. They went to the neighborhoods to the west where homes were built with surrounding gardens and portals as buffers from the street. The grand houses built there often borrowed features from those of the traditional courtyard villas. Later, in the mid-twentieth century the Cuban writer Alejo Carpentier in searching for a poetic hallmark of Havana found it in the colonnaded porticoes as well as columns of this style of architecture. He extended it as an image to encapsulate Havana as "a city of columns." For him, the rhythmic repetition, dynamic complexity and endless variety of these practical architectural elements in the space of the city reflected a deeply ingrained, New World Baroque sensibility. [57]

By 1878 the city walls had been largely taken down. The streets where businesses were concentrated in the old city now extended, although with new names, into Centro Habana. San Rafael for example, was the extension of Obispo, San Miguel of O'Reilly, and Neptuno of San Juan de Dios.

---

[56] Taylor, Henry Louis. *Inside el barrio: a bottom-up view of neighborhood life in Castro's Cuba***.** (Bloomfield: Kumarian Press. 2009). 47

[57] "Y como todo mestizaje, por proceso de simbiosis, de adición, de mezcla, engendra un barroquismo, el barroquismo cubano consistió en acumular, coleccionar, multiplicar, columnas y columnatas en tal demasía de dóricos y de corintios, de jónicos y de compuestos, que acabó el transeúnte por olvidar que vivía entre columnas que era vigilado por columnas que le medían el tranco y lo protegían del sol y de la lluvia, y hasta que era velado por columnas en las noche de sus sueños. La multiplicación de las columnas fue la resultante de un espíritu barroco que no se manifestó ?" Alejo Carpentier *La ciudad de las columnas,* Barcelona, Editorial Lumen, 1970. reproduced in Ángel Augier, POESÍA DE LA CIUDAD DE LA HABANA (Barcelona: Editorial Lumen, 1970).

Calle San Rafael, Habana, postcard

The new commercial centre in Centro Habana was, in its way, as multi-use an urban environment as the old city had been, for five large tobacco factories from leading cigar companies such as Partagás had been built there to take advantage of the local labour pool. Thousands of their employees lived in Centro Habana's low-rent and modest housing as well as in the neighbouring old city core where the former luxury homes were increasingly subdivided to create *solares* or *ciudadelas* (tenement apartments).[58]

Ciudadela A Habana Tenement , postcard

[58] Coyula, Scarpaci and Segre, 58

The former homes whose outer walls with few entrances had provided privacy to wealthy families now kept the intense poverty of the inner city out of the view of shoppers in the same neighbourhoods. A new kind of house-type within the high density working class districts immediately to the west and south of the old city were narrow semi-detached two-story, structures off the main thoroughfares. Their windows and doors framed with decorative metal filigree, they discretely emptied the poorer denizens of these districts into alleys.

Centro Habana, Special Period Fiction and Cultural Projection of Fin de Siècle Ruin

Unlike most capital cities like Paris where slums near the seats of political power were replaced by elegant buildings, Centro Havana was not destroyed and rebuilt to match the elegance of such neighbouring buildings as the Presidential Palace. Alongside the department stores seedy brothels served sailors and the patrons of a pornography theatre in the Barrio Chino. [59] With the start of the special period in the 1990s and the opening of the island to tourism some buildings and residents of the area reverted to the district's traditional specialty in sex for dollars.

As Henry Louis Taylor pointed out, republican planners' used the area just outside the colonial walls to create the sites of the modern economy thereby symbolically detaching the new Cuba from its colonial past. In a reversal of this process Centro Habana has not enjoyed the renovation of the colonial core. Locked within its poverty, the district's residents are in constant peril from collapsing walls.

Representing the newest version of the economy, much as it did at the turn of the last century, Centro Habana now exists in parasitical relation to the surrounding tourist dominated sections of the city. Its streets border on the major hotels and so it has become a vital part of the city's after dark sex trade. Moreover, it's not only the *jineteras* but the poetic elaboration of the cracked, fetid world of some Centro Habana residents that is now a hot commodity. Just as Alejo Carpentier, leading exponent of Cuban cultural identity in the last century branded Havana's built form as its archetypal symbol, today one writer in particular has translated the experience of Centro Habana streets into a potent ethno-cultural product. In its nihilistic glory, the district is the subject and setting of a new genre of Cuban literature known as "special period fiction".

Just as the Cuba watchers of the first American occupation perceived the economic degradation in Havana as evidence of a weaker culture, the current prurient outsider interest is fed by the sense that the problems of Cuban society frame a moral lesson. While *then* the ills of Cuban society were blamed on the sensual indolence of the tropics and European colonial vices *now* the material and human ruin of Centro Habana is seen as the final act of in the defeat of communism.

Like Dorothy Stanhope's *New York Times* articles at the turn of the last century, accounts of a society devastated by corruption and poverty continues to connect with a vast readership, with the important difference that now it is Cuban writers themselves that create the images that conform to the readers' most negative expectations. Essayist and short story writer Antonio Jose

---

[59] Joseph L. Scarpaci, Roberto Segre, Mario Coyula. *Havana Two Faces of the Antillean Metropolis*. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press. 2002) 123

Ponte appears in the opening moments of the German produced 2006 documentary, *Havana—The New Art of Making Ruins*.[60] The film portrays five people who live in buildings in various states of decay. Ponte introduces himself in the milieu of Centro Habana, "I consider myself a ruinologist who is always thinking about the condition of ruins and trying to explain them. Who is looking for reasons to explain the perversity of getting pleasure from something that's falling apart." In his ironic stance as a connoisseur of disintegration Ponte joins the viewers in their sense of wonder at this other-worldly environment.

In *Dirty Havana Trilogy*, a novel made up of inter-connected short stories, Pedro Juan Gutierrez takes the reader through Centro Habana's ecology of human despair. The narrator and central character, named so that he is confused with the author, is a product of the dollar economy, a denizen of the dark places of illicit trade. Gutierrez takes the reality of Centro Habana, where he lives, then tweaks and shapes its contours for the collective imagining of those primed to hear the worst. As Achy Obejas wrote in a review of the leading writers of this genre, Gutierrez stands out for the consummate cynicism not only of its central character but also his creator.

> The stories portray a society in decay and a people determined to survive at any cost. Pedro Juan's only goal is to stay alive, so he does it all: deals marijuana and sells empty soda cans on the black market, hustles tourists, smuggles art, and has sex. Yet Gutierrez's bland sensationalism feeds the worst stereotypes about Cubans as insatiable sexual creatures, creating a strange tension: On the one hand, Gutierrez's vivid testimonies to Cuba's terrible days are refreshing and necessary; on the other, they reintroduce Cuba as the most depraved brothel of the Americas. There is, however, an insistent sexism and racism in Gutierrez's writing that can't be explained as either cultural difference or benign in contents—a cool overall detachment, a disdain almost, that Gutierrez might be aiming as much at his readers as at his characters or even himself."[61]

The material and political challenges of the Special Period are played out for a global audience through the work of such top-selling writers as Zoe Valdez and Pedro Juan Gutierrez. Unlike the costumed historical Habanero types who pose for tourist cameras in exchange for tips these writers attempt to creatively exploit their own exploitation as cultural types.[62] Through their personal websites http://www.zoevaldez.net and http://www.pedrojuangutierrez.com/ they

---

[60] A German documentary by Florian Borchmeyer and Matthias Hentschler; shot in Havana and premiered in 2006 in film festivals around the world

[61] Achy Obejas, "From Cuba with Love, A new generation faces Cuba's dark reality," *The Village Voice Literary Supplement*, February 2001

[62] In *Cuban Currency, The Dollar and "Special Period"* Esther Whitfield examines money and cross-cultural economic relations as they are inscribed in Cuban fiction. Exploring the work of Zoe Valdes, Pedro Juan Gutirrez, Antonio Jose Ponte and others, she draws out writers' exploration of the marketing of Cuban identity.

globally extend their literary persona and cultural credibility as authentic Cuban products, human postcards of tropical decay.

Walker Evans, Havana, 1933 secret cuba

For cultural outsiders Havana has long been far more than a tourist destination; it is a site of exquisite and intense encounter with the repressed. A rich iconography from postcards, tourist photography, and other cultural products marketing Cuban identity attests to the voracious appetite for the experience that tourists and virtual travellers yearn for and find on the island.

Teresa Casas Batista

This phenomenon has been extended by the rise in tourism, the global penetration of the internet and the economic conditions of the last three decades. Special Period fiction commodifies the contortions of morality and behaviour necessary for survival by Havana residents. It answers the question of who lives within the landscape of urban decay that tourists glimpse beyond their comfort zone while visiting the city. While this genre of writing seems to contradict the function of the souvenir for pleasant memories, it has long antecedents. Representations of the lives of Habaneros from the period of the American occupation exactly one century earlier look both clinically and fearfully at a retrograde, unhygienic and corrupt society of the island. Havana like Hollywood, the factory of dreams, is a production centre for an international audience; and its product, from the beginning, has been the narratives and the sensibility associated with tragedy and desire.

Works Cited

Bretos, Miguel A. "Imaging Cuba under the American Flag: Charles Edward Doty in Havana, 1899-1902" *The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts*: 22, Cuba Theme Issue (1996), pp. 83-103 http://www.jstor.org/stable/1504149 (accessed. 29 June 2011).

Carpentier, Ajejo. *La ciudad de las columnas*, Barcelona, Editorial Lumen, 1970. reproduced in Ángel Augier, POESÍA DE LA CIUDAD DE LA HABANA (Barcelona: Editorial Lumen, 1970). excerpt published http://www.lajiribilla.cu/2002/n47_marzo/1228_47. (accessed. 29 June 2011).

García Hernández, A. "Don Antonio Gonzalez de Mendoza, Extracto de la Conferencia Pronunciada en el Colegio de Abogados de La Habana, April 17, 1942, printed in booklet, *Don Antonio Gonzalez de Mendoza y Bonilla 1828–1906, Su Vida y su Familia*. Havana, 1951 Web. June 14, 2011 http://www.gonzalezdemendoza.com/AGdM%20Biography.htm

Gutierrez, Pedro Juan. "Todo Sobre Pedro Juan" http://www.pedrojuangutierrez.com/ (accessed. 29 June 2011).

Obejas, Achy. "From Cuba with Love, A new generation faces Cuba's dark reality" *The Village Voice Literary Supplement*. February 2001 http://www.achyobejas.net/Books_by_Achy_Obejas/otherwritings.htm (accessed. 29 June 2011).

Roberts, W. Adolphe. *Havana, Portrait of a City.* (New York: Coward-McCann, Inc. 1953)

Joseph L. Scarpaci, Roberto Segre, Mario Coyula. *Havana Two Faces of the Antillean Metropolis*. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press. 2002)

Stanhope, Dorothy. "HAVANA SOCIAL GOSSIP", *The New York Times*, Oct., 12, 1902

Stanhope, Dorothy. "TITLES DROPPED BY CUBANS", *The New York Times*, April 5, 1903

Taylor, Henry Louis. *Inside el barrio: a bottom-up view of neighborhood life in Castro's Cuba***.** **(**Bloomfield: Kumarian Press. 2009).

Valdes, Zoe. Web. 29 June 2011http://zoevaldes.net/ (accessed. 29 June 2011).

Whitfield, Esther. *Cuban Currency, The Dollar and "Special Period"* (University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 2000)

Timeline

Abbreviations: b-birth m-marriage d-death

1877

Julia G. de Mendoza graduates from Sagrado Corazón School

d: Rosa G. de Mendoza from fever in while boarder in Sagrado Corazón school

Gonzalez de Mendoza family summers in Thousand Islands then spends fall in New York City

1878

February 8, Pact of Zanjón ends the Ten Years' War

1879

Antonio G. de Mendoza becomes mayor of Havana, resigns after one year

d: Joaquín Pedroso and Micaela Montalvo

Chea and her brother Manuel Pedroso inherit Santa Gertrudis plantation inc. 285 slaves,

Antonio buys Manuel's half and he and Chea liberate the slaves, Manuel, a Jesuit donates his inheritance to the order

August, A second uprising ("The Little War"), engineered by Antonio Maceo and Calixto García, begins but is quelled by superior Spanish forces in autumn

G. de Mendoza ffamily moves to 23 Amargura Joaquin Pedroso's mansion that is subdivided into three homes. The children of Jacinto Pedroso live in Amargura 21 and Jose Maria Arellano, whose mother is a Pedroso lives in Aguiar 100

1880

m: Miguel G. de Mendoza to "Fefita" Montalvo, they take up residence in Amargura

1882

m: Maria Antonia to her neighbour and cousin Jose Maria Arellano, they re-connect 100 Aguiar to the larger Amargura mansion

1883

m: Julia G. de Mendoza to Melchor Batista y Varona, they move into Amargura

1884

b: Julio Batista

Melchor Batista contracts myelitis, he is paralyzed for months

1885

m: Claudio to Maria Teresa Freyre de Andrade, they move into Amargura 23

September – December Melchor travels to New York city to convalesce from myelitis

1886

Slavery is made illegal after transitional abolishment beginning in 1879

m: Felicia to Gonzalo Arostegui, they move into Amargura

b: Matilde Batista, Amargura 23

1887

b. Adolfina Batista, in El Vedado during the family's summer holiday

1889

b: Jorge Batista, Amargura 23

b: Clemencia Batista, Amargura 23

December-Clemencia Batista contracts typhoid and family goes to Santa Gertrudis to escape epidemic, while there Julia gives birth

1891

b: Manuel Batista (premature)

1892

b: Maria Antonia Batista, Amargura 23

1893

the Batista children sick with "tosferina" and seek better air in El Vedado, Calle F corner of Quinta Avenida.

There, they are visited by Melchor's younger brother Ernesto who is depressed, while there he takes his life by drowning

1894

b: Ernesto Batista

1895

3 February Mounting discontent culminates in declaration of war by rebels under the leadership of the writer and patriot José Martí and General Máximo Gómez y Báez. The rebel forces invade the island in the west

Gomez calls for all plantations to the totally destroyed.

starting on Nov. 10, 1895, attacks on trains, together with the burning of bridges and other actions, coincided with Gomez and Maceo's operations in the Cienfuegos area and the rebels reached the tracks of Ferrocarril de Matanzas on December 22nd.

Cardenas and Jucaro Co. report burning of its stations at Manacas, Altamisal, Hato Nuevo, Retamal, Gispert...

b: Maria Teresa (Nena) Aróstegui y Gonzalez de Mendoza, author of Aróstegui y Gonzalez de Mendoza family memoires (Amargura)

b: Melchor (Melchorito) Batista (Amargura)

d: Chea Gonzalez de Mendoza y Pedroso (renal failure)

1896

General *Valeriano Weyler* announces the policy of re-concentration. Inhabitants living outside fortified areas are given eight days to move into the towns occupied by the Spanish troops. After that time, anyone caught outside the concentrated areas is to be considered an enemy sympathizer and killed.

Melchor-recurrence of myelitis sent, to NYC and the mountains for change of air, by Antonio. He goes also to Philadelphia to Villanova, a college run by Agustinians; he is gone from Havana until Dec 1897

Successful invasion campaign along the length of the Island by Cuban rebels lead by Antonio Maceo who controls Pinar del Rio and Maximo Gomez who attacks plantation-rich centre of the island; Maceo is killed on return east

1897

b: Victor

1898

Antonio, worried that Melchor is about to join rebel army, sends him with his family to the US, the rest of the G. de Mendoza family takes refuge in Santa Gertrudis (Miguel and Felicia are in NYC with their families and Maria Antonia in San Antonio, Texas) Ramon enlists in the American army as an assistant to General Lawton

Julia, Melchor and children settle in Philadelphia in Mount Airy near Chestnut Hill assisted by Mercedita Poey

June 6th–10th Invasion of Guantánamo Bay American and Cuban forces invade the strategically and commercially important area of Guantanamo Bay 4 July naval battle in Santiago, American victory

October-Ramon, discharged from army, visits Julia in Philadelphia

November-Julia and Melchor return with family to Havana

Americans blockade the island; the Spanish General Weyler orders everyone leave the countryside and move to the towns; famine and plague ensue

December 10, Treaty of Peace in Paris ends the Spanish-American War by which Spain relinquished sovereignty over Cuba.

1899

January 1, The Spanish colonial government withdraws and the last Captain General Alfonso Jimenez Castellano hands over power to the North American Military Governor, General John Brooke

Interventionist government under General Brook decrees newly organized Judicial System including Supreme Court, Antonio Mendoza is appointed Chief Justice (May)

December 23, Leonard Wood becomes American Provisional Governor of Cuba

m: Ramón González de Mendoza to Mariana de la Torre

m: Pablo González de Mendoza to Paula Goicochea

both couples move into Amargura (Maria Antonia and Jose Maria Arellano had left to live independently)

b: Agustín Batista

1900

b: Eugenio Batista

Antonio Mendoza resigns as Chief Justice in response to American interference with independence of Cuban judiciary

1901

March 2, Platt Amendment passed in the U.S. stipulating the conditions for the withdrawal of United States troops and assuring U.S. control over Cuban affairs.

1902

May 20 The Cuban republic is instituted under the presidency of Tomas Estrada Palma