MANNERS OF DISTINCTION: NINETEENTH CENTURY URBAN IMAGININGS, PERFORMANCES AND BODIES OF AFFECT IN HAVANA, CUBA

BY

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DISSERATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Anthropology with a minor in Gender Relations in International Development in the Graduate College of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2013

Urbana, Illinois

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This dissertation offers an anthropological interpretation of cultural discourses about the body found in literature, visual narratives and archival sources throughout 19th century in Spanish colonial Havana. These discourses show a pressing concern with the “manners” of bodies, the ways they moved, how they occupied space, and how they managed sensations and emotions to negotiate power and prestige in the highly stratified Havana’s society. Concerns for the manners of the body became the discursive domain of the rising planter and intellectual elite of Cuban creoles. They often expressed these concerns in normalizing terms such as “good manners,” “good taste,” and “tone.” I argue that these and other highly embodied, interlocking moral, sensory, affective and aesthetic categories such as nobility, respect or “sabor” became focal indexes of the social status of individuals in colonial society. I interpret discourses of “manners” as signs of an epochal shift in Cuba’s systems of social differentiation, giving rise to a different cultural order framed upon new and transformed moral and aesthetic regimes of the body during the century of Cuba’s transition away from colonial and into modern political economic structures.

I situate the emergence of two racialized creole or Cuban born urban classes, a native white bourgeoisie and a native free bourgeoisie of color, in the political and ideological context of the sugar agro-industrial capitalism’s expansion since the early 19th century. I examine their role in engineering new technologies of distinction and the crafting of a highly dramatic and sensitive bourgeois “body proper.” I examine how this distinctive 19th century normative body shed its colonial robes made of blood and genealogy, to assume a new, modern, highly accessorized, sensitive and dramatic social skin. I identify urban reform and manuals of conduct as two important pedagogical instruments created to shape the bourgeois “body proper” and its multiple oppositional racialized, classed and gendered abject bodies and subjects. Three major
inter related ideologies—costumbrismo, urbanity and the ornate—underpinned these pedagogies. I tease out the discursive practices in academic and historical narratives creating different Cuban bodies in the making, from the bourgeois good mannered Europeanized petimetre, to its racial counterpart the out-of-place bourgeois mulato. I expose the historiographical constructions of these effeminate male bodies in contrast to the masculinized dangerous black body of the economically ambitious “political” elite, which obscured bodies of entrepreneurial women of color. I discuss the preeminent interpellations of the black female body in historical and scholarly narratives in her sexualized facet. The overwhelming narrative presence of the sexualized black female body created a historiographic silence around the bodies of elite and marginal white women, and the material sites of practice where female respectability was negotiated, including promenades, carriages, streets and smoking habits. Finally, I demonstrate that black mimic bodies were also models and designers of molds for white bodies revealing their malleability, and the fluidity of their interfacial limits.
A mi mamá
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is a privilege to have the opportunity to formally acknowledge and reflect upon the conditions of production of this dissertation. I see this work as a collective achievement brought to light in collaboration with each and every person who supported me in countless ways throughout the process. First and foremost, echoing the wise words of Chilean composer Violeta Parra, I want to thank life. Without its continuous breath over the long, challenging journey of graduate school, this dissertation would have been physically impossible. Accordingly, those people that kept me alive with their care, love, trust and encouragement during these years come first in my list of acknowledgements.

I thank my mother, Nilda Guevara, who brought me to life, nourished me unconditionally and supported my long years of education in Ecuador and in the United States. The enormous load of work she took up during her life and the emotional challenges that came with it as a single parent, are the measure of the magnitude of her sacrifice and love for my brother and I. My mother endured a life of hard work with the major objective of giving us the best education possible. Thus, my doctoral dissertation at the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign (UIUC) together with my brother Javier’s doctoral dissertation defended at the Tokyo Institute of Technology two years ago, epitomize my mother’s greatest life goal to educate us and broaden our life opportunities. Her mission has been accomplished. Alongside her, I thank my brother for being the best friend one can ever be to a sister, for supporting me unconditionally at all times, and for helping edit and format this dissertation. I thank my father for being there for me and supporting me at all times when I needed him over the course of my graduate studies.

To my husband, Jesus Milian, for his unconditional support, trust and profound care during the good and the bad moments of my journey through graduate school. Like for many doctoral students, illness was an unfortunate part of my dissertation research process. Without the emotional support and direct care of Jesus, my mother, brother and father, and my families in Cuba and Ecuador, I would not have made it to the other side. I feel compelled to thank those anonymous blood donors from whom I received several pints that kept me alive during and after
my stay at the Brigham and Women’s Hospital in Boston awaiting surgery in 2010, as well as to the doctors and nurses who took care of me during illness in Cuba and the United States.

Besides being a true compañero de vida (life mate), I thank Jesus in his role as an active and unconditional collaborator in my research and learning process about Cuba’s history and culture. I am grateful for the privilege of counting with him as a highly insightful native specialist, a personal consultant on matters of Cuban everyday life and cultural experience. His stories and memories are for me, an everyday privileged experience of delightful discovery, which continue to inspire new ideas for future projects on the history and culture of Cuba as a continuation of this project.

I offer a special thanks to my in laws, Jesús and María del Carmen, for their incommensurable and deep felt generosity, love, care and incomparable hospitality during my stays in Havana. They mobilized resources beyond their possibilities not only to facilitate my research activities, but to please my personal needs and caprices. They also generously attended to my questions and concerns about Cuban history, memory and cultural practices, and thus had an important role in the development of the ideas and insights presented in this dissertation.

I thank my adviser, Arlene Torres, for her unconditional and persistent encouragement, support, and advise, insight and teachings throughout my doctoral journey. Arlene is everything that a doctoral student can wish from an academic adviser. She generously and unconditionally opens the doors of her home and her heart to her students, and as such she is first the friend and the “mom” that every doctoral student needs during the often-lonely process of doctoral research and writing. Arlene helped and cared for me, like she did for countless other graduate students during our difficult life moments in graduate school. As her last doctoral student, I am truly privileged to have been trained by Arlene’s unique perspective on Caribbean culture, history and research methods. Her tireless optimism and joy for life, her passion and dedication to students and to socially responsible research, and her lasting dedication to critical research on the Caribbean, the U.S. Latina/o community and the African diaspora in Latin America were the greatest motivation and inspiration to move forward at every moment in my graduate journey.

Alongside Arlene, I am immensely grateful to Flavia Andrade for being my mentor and collaborator during the last stage of my doctoral studies. Flavia offered me the opportunity to explore my research interests outside of Anthropology, in the fields of demography, aging, health and public policy in Latin America. I am indebted to her for believing in me and valuing my
work as co-author, which translated into two peer-reviewed articles, opening up opportunities for continued research at the postdoctoral level at the Department of Kinesiology and Community Health at UIUC.

At the University of Illinois, I thank my committee members, Ellen Moodie, Jonathan Inda and Martin Manalansan for providing critical insights on innovative theoretical and methodological frameworks for my research. Shefali Chandra was originally part of my committee before leaving UIUC. She and her class “Imperialism and Sexuality” inspired the broad themes in which I inserted my project in its early stages. I thank Shefali for teaching me, above all, to think critically. She actively and insightfully guided my research inquiries towards critical questions of methodology from transnational feminist and postcolonial perspectives. To Ellen Moodie for supporting and encouraging my work and ideas since my first years of study at UIUC and throughout. To Jonathan Inda for his teachings and orientation on Foucaultian theory, particularly, on the possibilities and limitations of the concepts of biopolitics and governmentality as they apply to studies of the body and sexuality. To Martin Manalansan for his teachings on performativity and especially for showing me the directions and potential for examining my evidence within an anthropological framework of phenomenology, the body and the senses. Thank you to faculty members who valued my work and provided insights for further research including Alejandro Lugo, Gilberto Rosas, Marc Perry, Alma Gottlieb, Jane Desmond and Nils Jacobsen. My special thanks to Norman Whitten Jr. for unconditionally supporting me during the application process and subsequent admission to UIUC. I also thank my former teacher at FLACSO Ecuador, Michael Uzendoski currently at Florida State University, who referred me to Norm Whitten, my adviser Arlene Torres and the Anthropology Department at UIUC as a welcoming place to develop my research interests in Cuba and Ecuador.

In Havana, Cuba, I thank the History Institute of Cuba for providing the institutional support needed to carry out this research. A special thanks to Belkis Quesada and Gloria García who directed me to scholars that became key research collaborators and advisers for my project in the field of cultural history, Marial Iglesias, Pablo Riaño San Marfúl, Beatriz Combarro, María del Carmen Barea, Victor Fowler, and Ariadna Gonzalez. My special thanks to them for opening the doors of their homes and offering their time to discuss and point me towards new research questions and key sources for this project. I also thank Tomás Fernandez Robaina and Dayma Echeverría for their insights at the early stages of my research. Thanks to the resourceful
staff at Cuban National Archive, the José Martí National Library, and the Sala de Libros Raros y Valiosos (Rare Book Unit) at the University of Havana, for facilitating my research of their collections. I also thank scholars, friends and family in Havana that offered their support and friendship during my visits in Havana, Carmita and Franklin Sotolongo, Concepción Campa, Maylin Cabrera, Nelly Díaz Laguna, Pablo García, Yuri Matuzalén, Henri Gil, Antony Pérez, Anais Barruela, Alejandro Boza, Libertad Carrio, Faustino Gutiérrez, Maria Emilia Cabrera, Rafael Núñez, Ivis Núñez and Rosalina Mondelo.

I thank the Department of Anthropology, and very especially to Liz Spears, for her unconditional and critical work and support in administrative matters from the first until the last day as a student in the Department. Without hers as well as Karla Harmon and Julia Spitz’ work, my research, writing and graduation process would not have happened. I want to acknowledge Andrew Orta’s support, as without his ultimate approval of admission to and graduation from the Department of Anthropology, my journey at UIUC wouldn’t have been possible.

A special acknowledgement goes for the staff at the University of Illinois Library, and in particular to the anonymous librarian that helped me track down the source that consolidated my project’s approach, José María de la Torre’s Reglas de Urbanidad, Buenas Maneras y Etiqueta (1857) from an archive in Madrid. To my knowledge, this book was not known to historians or available in Cuba, but I was privileged enough to access it through the spectacularly efficient Inter Library Loan system and the diligent staff at every point in its transit to my mailbox in Urbana, Illinois.

A very special and warm thank you to the staff at the Center for Latin American and Caribbean studies, with whom I had the privilege of working for the past two years as a Graduate Assistant. Gloria Ribble, Alejandra Seufferheld, Clodoaldo Soto, Angelina Cotler and Dara Goldman shared their warmth everyday at the office and were a true joy to work with and learn from. I offer a special thanks to Angelina Cotler for her friendship and for opening the opportunity and making possible the continuation of funding that enabled me to finish writing my dissertation. Outside of the University of Illinois, I thank Beatriz González Stephan at Rice University for her collegiality in supporting my work on conduct books in Latin America, pointing to key research sources and helping establish valuable scholarly networks to socialize my work.
I also thank the various funding institutions that supported my doctoral research, including the P.E.O. International Peace Scholarship Fund, the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies/Tinker Foundation, and the Graduate College.

My formation in Social Science and Anthropology started at the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences, FLACSO in Quito Ecuador. I want to thank Andrés Guerrero, my mentor and teacher, to whom I owe much of the perspective I present in this dissertation on performativity and habitus, and who encouraged the pursue of my studies in Anthropology at the doctoral level. Thank you to Eduardo Kingman who as a teacher and an author inspired my inquiry into concepts of the ornate, the city and governmentality in colonial Cuba. To Gioconda Herrera, a dear mentor during my early research work in Ecuador, for engaging in a continued scholarly exchange during my years at UIUC over our common research interests on gender, development, postcolonial feminist theory and migration.

I am indebted to my friends and colleagues at UIUC who supported me emotionally, materially and intellectually during my doctoral studies. To Meadow Jones and Michael Brün for their incredible generosity, honest friendship and trust. To María Isabel Silva for her friendship and support during my first years at UIUC. To Meghan Bohardt for being a true best friend and mate in the countless and exciting endeavors during my last year as a graduate student and onwards. To William and Tina Hope, Jennifer Shoaff, Isabel Scarborough, Kristina Medina-Villariño, Nicole Tami, Batamaka Some, Kathleen O’Brien, Kate Grim-Feinberg, Emilie Bagby, Anthony Jerry, Sarah Maas Rowe, Carolina Sternberg and Jennifer Zovar for their sincere friendship and for providing valuable insights to my research proposals and dissertation chapters. To my dearest friends from the music band COSTAS, Ian Middleton, Peter Judkins Wellington, Beatriz Guerrero, and Andy Miller for sharing with me the gift of music, a part of me which I left behind many years ago upon embarking in graduate studies at UIUC, and which I have the privilege of partaking with them in this band during my last year as a doctoral student and onwards.

I envision this dissertation, as the starting point for future endeavors into the study of Cuban and Latin American culture, sexuality, everyday life and history. As such, the findings presented are necessarily partial and incomplete. I apologize for the inevitable omissions I am making of individuals that contributed to the development of ideas and information gathering, who I haven’t mentioned explicitly in this essay. I want to reiterate that this dissertation is the
tangible product of a collective effort of all of those whom I have and haven’t acknowledged here, and as such, I congratulate and thank all of us for this collective achievement and milestone. Gracias a la vida, y a todos ustedes.
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“-Laura: hace rato que te estoy mirando y te encuentro de lo más raro, no sé la verdad pero estás de lo más mal ultimamente.

-Sergio: es que no tengo brillantina “Yardley” para el pelo ni pasta de dientes “Colgate” ni loción imperialista para después de afeitar, como tú sabes, todo eso ayuda mucho... Tú en cambio estás cada día más atractiva, sí, estás más artificial. A mi no me gustan las bellezas naturales, me gustan las mujeres como tú, hechas por la buena ropa, la buena comida, el maquillaje, los masajes. Gracias a eso has dejado de ser una cubanita chusma para convertirte en una mujer hermosa y rutilante.¹”

Tomás Gutierrez Alea; Edmundo Desnoes, Memories of Underdevelopment (1968, 1965)

The whole trick of pedagogic reason lies precisely in the way it extorts the essential while seeming to demand the insignificant.

Pierre Bourdieu (1977)

State run television channels in Havana today run a spot entitled “Urbanidad” (“Urbanity”). The spot presents a sketch in two parts. The first shows a situation of reprehensible conduct. For instance, a group of people is having a party with food, drinks and loud music. The next scene shows the partiers’ neighbor left to clean up the mess. The second part exemplifies the model situation where the partiers clean up after themselves as a gesture of courtesy with their neighbor. What is meant by urbanity in this case is a general sense of respect and courtesy with others that enables a harmonious coexistence in a shared space. Needless to say, the

¹ -Laura: I have been looking at you and you seem very strange, I don't know, to be honest you look quite bad lately.

-Sergio: It's because I don't have Yardley's hair cream or Colgate toothpaste, or imperialist after shave cream..., as you know, all of that helps a lot. By contrast everyday you look more attractive, yes, you are more artificial, I don't like natural beauties, I like women like you, made by the good clothing, the good food, the makeup, the massages. Thanks to that, you are have ceased to be among the riffraffs of little Cuban girls and transformed into a beautiful and breathtaking woman. Tomás Gutierrez Alea, Memories of Underdevelopment, (1968).
showing of these spots suggests there is a widespread non-compliance of the norms they promote, which especially older generations today lament forms part of Cubans’ idiosyncrasy.

More recently, the idea of “buenos modales” (“good manners”) and “buena educación” (“good education”, often used jointly and interchangeably) surfaced in public opinion following the controversial announcements to restrict the public broadcasting of reggaeton by Cuban authorities. The measure responded to claims from several local women’s and cultural organizations including Federación de Mujeres Cubanas, Instituto Cubano de la Música, and Unión de Escritores y Artistas de Cuba. Official spokespersons justified the call for this measure with charges against the “lower” aesthetic quality of the music (deemed “vulgar”) as well as the severely sexist content of lyrics and videos.

Cubans in and outside the island reacted to the news from a wide range of stances. A recurrent commentary in informal conversations during my last visit in December 2011 as well as in online forums was the need to rescue the loss of “good values,” “good manners” and “good education” reflected in the massive popularity of reggaeton among Cubans today. In the context of this debate, some associate “buenos modales” with the need to respect women’s bodies and reject all forms of discrimination. Others recall the opposition during the early years of the Revolution, to the notion of “good manners” for its association with bourgeois values and models centered upon norms of comportment and “decency” such as being clean, well dressed, using “clean” language, and observing social hierarchy. Older generations remember nostalgically the old “good ways” and “good music,” which they see lost in the disrespectful behavior, language and, of course, in the preferences for reggaeton music among today’s youth.

Yet another meaning in the popular understanding of “good education” in Havana today refers to the ways and manners of people from the countryside, who are said to be “untainted” by the bad customs of the city, such as saying “bad” words, not respecting authorities and elders, or speaking loudly.

2 Some recent news articles and forums on the topic can be accessed here:
http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/mundo/cartas_desde_cuba/2012/09/a_imagen_y_semejanza.html
http://www.rebelion.org/noticia.php?id=160427
http://www.dummymag.com/news/2012/12/07/cuba-is-going-to-ban-reggaeton/
http://www.cubarte.cult.cu/periodico/opinion/critica-de-la-critica-ninos-adultos/23053.html

3 María del Carmen Cabrera, personal communication 01/29/2013.
The educational spots on “Urbanity” like other radio and television spaces dedicated to “promote the good habits in dress, eating, talking…” (“fomentar los buenos hábitos en el vestir, comer, hablar...” Egües Cantero 2010⁴) are part of a broad effort by the Cuban state to reposition a “forgotten” system of ideas and practices known by the inter-related labels “urbanity,” “formal education,” “good education,” and “good manners” or “customs.” This ideological and practical system, I argue was socially and officially institutionalized in colonial Cuba since the early 19th century with the rise of the creole bourgeoisie, the propellants of the nation-building project (Figure 1). Cuba’s early “founding fathers” pushed forth these ideas through a broad project of moral education that appears to have been barred from the social system during the early years of the Revolution and onwards as part of their own project to build a class-less society. This was the historic moment of tension captured by filmmaker Tomás Gutierrez Alea in the introductory quote from his classic 1968 film (based on Edmundo Desnoes’ novel of the same name), whereby the Cuban bourgeois body of North American imperialism built onto 19th century cultural grounds, yielded to the “new man” of a refashioned Cuban revolutionary morality.

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⁴ Gladys Egües Cantero is a Cuban journalist and editor the fashion magazine “Acentos y Diferencias” published periodically by Editorial de la Mujer in Havana. She describes herself as a specialist in the “culture of dress.” The magazine has issues for men and women’s clothing featuring mature young Cuban models with suits for all occasions with a marked local specificity accordant with Cuban urban environments. She conducts TV and radio segments to promote good manners, particularly of dress. In a recent interview Egües described her field of specialization as dealing with “temas menores” (“minor issues”), which are said to lack transcendental significance but have an important incidence in quotidian life (López Sánchez 2011).
In the context of Latin America and the Caribbean, urbanity encompasses a wide range of elements of discourse, practice, material culture and perception that are habituated and embodied. It manifests primarily in the realm of the quotidian. Body gestures such as ways of talking, walking or gazing; habits such as caring for one’s body and polishing a specific projected or “public” self-image through dress or other accessories; emotions or the containment of them such as anger, sexual or other kind of desire, all entail an education or a pedagogy of the body. As such, urbanity is a sort of a platform of normativity that structures and orients practices and social relations in a microscopic field of operations, while also serving as a space for transformation, negotiation and creative expression.

Its ordinariness or seeming insignificance qualifies the subject of urbanity within what new cultural historians call “micro-histories” (Cowan 2012, Díaz y Fuentes 2006). This tradition approaches the study of cultural histories as fragmented, contingent and episodic rather than structured by grand-narratives or a delineated chronological line of events. Diverting from other historiographical traditions, and in alignment with anthropological analytical perspectives, cultural historians give preeminence to questions of culture, practice, meaning and feeling (Cowan 2012: 8). These “histories of the insignificant” have often been downplayed as “temas
menores” (“minor issues”) that lack transcendental implications (see footnote 4, Morales Tejeda 2009, Bourdieu 1977). Nonetheless, emergent new scholarship in Cuba has taken up these issues as legitimate venues to understand the past “not through great political events or heroic deeds, but through the traces that day by day ordinary people leave in the neighborhood, the community or the city” (Morales Tejeda 2009: 97, Iglesias 2003, Riaño San Marful 2002, Echevarría 2010). The relevance of reconstructing, interpreting and telling these histories in the present moment will resonate to anyone familiar with contemporary Latin American and Caribbean cultural and social life, its politics, and the importance given therein to “being proper.”

As a contribution to the still largely unexplored discussion about the historical processes of embodiment, habitus, performativity, affect and the senses in Cuba, this dissertation offers an anthropological approximation to the historical and socio-cultural construction of a bourgeois “proper” body and subjectivity, of its multiple raced, classed, and gendered discursive counterparts, and of the ideological normative complex that was set in place to produce these bodies throughout 19th century Spanish colonial Havana.

The argumentative thread connecting the dissertation chapters is the analysis of the performativity of categories of social differentiation. Cultural discourses found in literature, visual narratives and archival sources throughout the 19th century show a pressing concern with the body in its sensory, performative and spatialized dimensions. To a large extent existing studies have approached the study of 19th century society from the lens of race, class and gender divisions, not sufficiently attending to the role that cultural and bodily practices play in informing these divisions. This analytical framework is insufficient to gauge the complexity that performativity adds to processes of social categorization, leaving the social construction of “manners” as a fundamental measure of difference and distinction largely unexplained. Bodily practices, emotions, sensations, objects, and the ways they signify and are constituted through the built environment have been taken for granted, perhaps as “insignificant” manifestations subsumed under dominant signs of race, gender, and class difference.

Approaching the body within its performative and experiential dimensions, as a category of social analysis in its own right, offers a lens to construct alternative interpretations of socio-cultural and historical processes in Cuba. Reading historical narratives with attention to the body reveals how its practices, embodied objects and orientations in space inform various kinds of boundaries of difference according to class, race, gender and sexuality. From this perspective,
the body functions as a conceptual meeting point to understand how social differences manifest and are perceived fundamentally as perceptions, performances and enactments, rather than as self evident or ontological attributes.

This analysis acknowledges the inherently relational and power-laden character of social discourse as it critically engages with recent scholarship’s attention on the “sub” in schemas of alterity centered on blackness, women, popular classes, and other subaltern subjects. As such, it highlights the fluid and systemic workings of power in everyday social relations, which contribute to break with common associations of race with skin color, of gender with women, and of class with economic standing. The focus on the body as opposed to on “race” or “class” or “gender” enables to decenter the attention outside and beyond boundaries, to focus instead on what happens at limit zones of constant contact, contestation, and transgression (Fowler personal communication 01/10/2012, Bhabha 1994a). Using this framework, this dissertation makes evident that the production of the “proper” bourgeois body epitomized in the rising creole planter and intellectual class of the early 19th century, involved the concomitant production of multiple counterpart raced, classed, gendered and sexualized bodies and subjects. As such, the propriety of creole white bourgeois femininity, for instance, could only be conceived in relation to the production and continuous elaboration of a multiplicity of stereotypes of “low” female bodies and subjects including sexualized mulatas, working black and “dirty” poor white women. Similarly, working blacks, mulatos/as and whites played a crucial symbolic role in schemas of normativity by which creole white bourgeoisies were constructed as cultural models. In every case, this analysis brings to the forefront those subjects and bodies located and moving across “in-between” discursive locations who more than often have been downplayed in scholarship using binary models of social analysis.

In the tradition of anthropologists of cultural history (Mintz and Price 1976, Stoler 2006, Trouillot 1995) my interpretation of cultural discourses of the body in Cuba recognizes the tension between micro-level processes of cultural difference and meaning making and the larger socio economic and political structures and arrangements of power constraining and enabling their transformation. As such, the cultural analysis of categories of place, race, gender and class is contextualized within larger socio cultural and political narratives inserted in two ongoing political projects in the 19th century: colonialism and nation-building. Using this framework, a general question guiding this dissertation states: How should the concern with proper “place”
and “good manners” be interpreted in Havana’s 19th century slave-society so divided along race and color lines? I argue that the emphasis on manners as a marker of status in a society symbolically structured by the association of blackness to slavery suggests the limited effectiveness of racial phenotype to signify status.

The 1800’s were the last century of Spanish colonialism in Cuba. Major socio-political, economic and cultural transformations render it a transitional moment of profound and definitive changes in Cuban history. Since the late 18th and into the 19th centuries Cuba saw the drastic expansion of agricultural capitalism based on the extended production of sugar in slave plantations. Upon the triumph of the Haitian Revolution in 1804, Cuban sugar planters took up the expanding market for sugar exports and slave commerce of the former colony of France. The Cuban “sugar boom” in the early 19th century drove changes in economy and society all the while major political events altered the balance of power between old and emergent social sectors.

The rising Cuban born, white identified class of planters and intellectuals led many of these changes including broad social reform programs and economic dynamism via international sugar sales. In turn, the dramatic increase in slave importations fueling the sugar industry altered the racial composition of the population to the extent of numerically minimizing the white population. By 1840’s people of color outnumbered Cuba’s white residents, feeding anxieties surrounding the pressing imaginary of a black threat that would give Cuba the same fate of the neighboring Haiti. Furthermore, in the context of escalating political clashes between Cuban bourgeoisies and Spanish colonists, Havana became the center of major architectural projects of modernization paid with sugar wealth and power. Large urban reform projects were launched since the late 18th and more intensively since 1834 giving Havana the cosmopolitan global image of a rich and prosperous colony, treasured as one of Spain’s few remaining possessions and ambitioned by other imperial powers. Havana’s rapidly transforming urban landscape became the stage of a whole new repertoire of social interactions, cultural performances and practices of distinction which served as a platform of experimentation for new highly sensorial, emotional and performative regimes of social differentiation.

The growing circulation of money in the increasingly modernized and urbanized Havana of the first half of the 19th century stimulated the demand for new products and services. The economic dynamism fostered a capitalist consumer culture that multiplied the possibilities of
social mobility for all sectors of society. Newly arriving Spanish immigrants as well as free blacks, *mulatos/as* and slaves living in the cities took special advantage of new opportunities of trade and commerce (both legal and contraband). Thus, the flow of money and opportunities for social advancement crossed color and class lines, transforming the meanings of social status and prestige traditionally centered on nobility and landownership, which had been historically monopolized by whites. The growing number of slave insurrections, the changing racial demographics, coupled with spread of ideas about independence and abolition created a sense of vulnerability among white Spanish and Cuban elites.

These racial anxieties were largely channeled upon the emergent class of free blacks and *mulatos/as* who had achieved an active presence in the military as well as in the city’s economic, cultural and social life. These tensions reached a high point during the 1843 and 1844 repression known as *La Escalera* or The Ladder, named after the preferred method of torture used for interrogation and punishment (Paquette 1988). The colonial state-sponsored the massive killing, torture, exile and property expropriation of thousands of slaves and free people of color, accused of conspiring “against the white race.” Among the many victims, the colonial state selectively targeted the wealthiest and most influential free black and *mulato* men, dismantling their economic foundations and the institutions that they used to build their prominent positions in society. Blacks and *mulatos* re-emerged as a political force during the 1860’s in alliance with white independence leaders. During three wars over a course of nearly 30 years, they fought for Cuba’s liberation from Spain on the radical principles of a raceless Cuban nationality (Ferrer 1999). Gradual abolition of slavery and other segregationist legislation, and the positioning of a black rights political agenda in public opinion were some of the gains of the struggle for independence, which was truncated by the United States’ intervention in Cuba’s definitive independence struggle against Spain (1895-1898).

In this context, I interpret the historical development of cultural discourses about “manners” as a manifestation of a profound crisis of representation that reached a peak in the process of *La Escalera*. Progressive racial miscegenation mostly between women of color and Spaniards as well as Cuban white creoles resulted in a stronger presence of a lighter-skinned free colored cohort (Stolcke 1989). Strategies of “passing” widely used by the colored elite to navigate through a highly stratified system, rendered color and class as increasingly fluid and
permeable categories, posing a challenge to clear-cut social classifications based on color or “visible” racial phenotype.

Furthermore, the greater circulation of wealth and the related commodification of elements of prestige added new elements to the symbolic conundrum over race and class. Money, property-holding (including slave holding), as well as valued occupations like tailoring, dentistry, painting, European music and education came to define the class subjectivity of the free colored elite in Havana, as they actively sought for social distinction and status in the white dominated society. Military service, its privileges and symbols of prestige were also being negotiated by black and mulato men in their interactions with white officials in the royal militias. The use of honorific epithets and even titles of nobility were granted and available for purchase to exceptional members of Havana’s military and economic free colored elite (Barcia 2009). Their strategic positioning both inside and outside of the world of whites provided access to the needed cultural knowledge through which they appropriated and re-defined highly valued cultural forms like European dress, language, dance and music. In doing so, Havana’s free people of color effectively hijacked the symbols of power and privilege that traditionally defined the status of white dominant classes. These systematic transgressions into the economic, symbolic and political domains of whites exacerbated racial tensions and anxieties about the cultural proximities of the free colored class, feeding the pressing imaginary of the black threat to Cuba's white colonial hegemony. Clearly, there were cultural layers or spaces of practice and negotiation of symbols of power and privilege, beyond the economic and political considerations that dominate interpretations of the events of La Escalera.

In this context, the concern with bodily practices through recurrent expressions of “manners” and “customs,” particularly in narratives by white creole elites throughout the 19th century, was symptomatic of the need to produce and emphasize measures of difference beyond visible, self-evident signs. As such, in the context of the 19th century, “manners” and other highly embodied categories of distinction like taste and sabor were strategic technologies created and used by blacks and whites alike to govern and navigate through social and spatial boundaries in increasingly permeable fields of action and representation.

As the quintessentially embodied measure of social differentiation, manners offered autonomy from markers of status devalued by the social inflationary effects of money. However, good manners entailed a pedagogy that was distributed across all segments of society as part of
the colonial civilizing mission. Blacks and whites, free and enslaved, men and women, were all, to different degrees, made subjects of these pedagogies through a web of institutions such as the church, the family, the school, the press, and literature. The high value placed on whiteness implied that there was a stimulus to perform good manners masterfully, as a precondition or as one of several requirements for social advancement. Homi Bhabha (1994a) refers to this strategic cultural skill as colonial mimicry. Light skinned free people of color were constructed as the quintessential colonial mimics particularly of white creole bourgeoisies during the first half of the 19th century. The inherent contradiction in the colonial mandate to simultaneously resemble and keep distance, or as Bhabha put it, to be almost the same but not quite/white, provides elements towards new cultural readings of socio-political processes in 19th century Cuba, such as La Escalera. In particular, the analysis highlights that free blacks were not passive master mimics of good manners. Rather, they mastered and actively redesigned the codes of appreciation and perception of dominant aesthetic systems of knowledge through which differences were created and legitimized.

Furthermore, the creole bourgeoisie's project to somatize or transfer measures of distinction to the body made the appropriation of these dominant practices compulsory, desirable and most importantly available to people of color. Unlike etiquette dresses, carriages, or even membership in militias and nobility titles, good manners could not be bought, although disciplined students could achieve to perform them with a high degree of mastery. The performative expertise of good manners was, nonetheless insufficient. Good education and good manners were deeper conditions that had to be known, cultivated and felt. These intangible and elusive attributes of distinction were crucial principles in the creole bourgeoisie's project of an education to "be proper" encapsulated in the popular premise "noble is not who is born noble but who knows how to be" (De Coronado 1893, Villaverde 2010, Saco 1974). Therefore, modern bourgeois regimes for the body created molds not only to shape performances of a certain way, at a certain time and place, but also to educate the senses and mold emotions.

As such, an important contribution of this study is to expose the material, practical affective and sensory planes of respectability and governmentality, by decentering body, subject and space-making from their dominant symbolic and discursive analytical frames. Urbanity and the related ideology of the ornate were "modern" disciplinary technologies to orient the proper place and performance of subjects and bodies through a range of new and re-configured urban
fragments such as theaters, dance halls, promenades, streets, markets cemeteries, dining tables, and bedrooms. In addition to the aesthetic and symbolic mapping of bodies in the city's limits according to racial, classed, gendered places and performances, a perceptive component to urbanity and the ornate oriented and normalized appropriate sensations in morally ordered geographies. Textbooks of "good manners" ("manuales de buenas maneras") were crucial instruments for shaping "proper" or "urban" bourgeois bodies, while edicts of "good government" ("bandos de buen gobierno") had a similar function at a larger scale, to produce a decent, "tidied up" global image of the city, the colony and the nation in progress. These technologies provided principles by which visual, auditory and other sensory proximities regulated thresholds of aesthetic and moral acceptability of bodies through space. The concealment of inappropriate behaviors or sounds of abject bodies from the visual, auditory or other perceptive "public" reach of white creole and colonial arbitrates became a general rule of both urbanity and city ornate.

These novel principles to organize bodies in morally, sensory, affectively and symbolically structured topographies were foundations to a new kind of modern and bourgeois hegemonic cultural mold, gaining ground over, and built onto centuries long Spanish colonial cultural schemas. From this historic perspective, the 19th century was a broad creative space of conditions for imagining a new modern and bourgeois cultural and value schema over which the body of the impending Cuban nation was crafted.

**Conceptual toolkit**

This dissertation uses an original framework to examine three entangled dimensions where the making of difference unfolds. First, within a performative dimension, I demonstrate that difference is not self-evident, but rather it is constantly acted out. I use Judith Butler’s concept of performativity in relation to Bourdieu’s concept of habitus and Bhabha’s concept of colonial

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5 Although for narrative purposes I use the words “performativity” interchangeably with “performance” in this dissertation, I use both terms to convey the concept of “performativity,” which is different from the concept of “performance.” The latter concept underwent epistemological shifts in the context of poststructuralist critiques of essentialism—the idea that human behavior is predetermined. Performance was conceptualized to be associated with static views of somewhat fixed “states” of identity. By contrast, performativity stresses the processual character of identity formation or identification as unstable, constantly being remade and contingent to the operations of discourse in fields of power and history (Bourdieu 1977, Kullick 2002, Manalansan 2001).
mimicry to understand the making of bodies and subjectivities as historically transformative processes that are structured and structuring, that is, they provide ordering premises for disciplining and governance, while also allowing space for change, agency, creativity and improvisation. Second, I examine the spatialized dimensions where social differences gain meaning in relation to specific ways of occupying space. García Canclini’s concept of urban imaginaries was useful to understand how imaginaries were aspirations that oriented actions and organized perceptions, stereotypes, and social values in topographic terms. In close connection, I elaborate the concepts of performative and sensory space to explain how space and place are classified and evaluated according to racially, gendered and classed coded body movements, emotions and sensory perceptions. Finally, through the concept of scapes, I examine the entangled aesthetic and sensory planes of difference-making and governmentality, beyond dominant symbolic and discursive analytical frames in current research. This framework reveals the multiple planes of sensation, especially visual and auditory, where bodies are governed and their respectability is measured. I expand the definition of the conceptual framework below around the concepts of the body, the everyday, affect, emotion and the senses.

The body
The guiding premise in a vast segment of 19th century cultural discourses in Cuba is a pressing concern with manners. I approached this inquiry through an analysis of discursive practices of the body that consisted in reading how narrators talk about the body. I placed attention to narratives characterized by a concern for the performances, the sensations, the aesthetics and ethics of bodies describing and alluding to people’s emotions, ways of doing of feeling and of being.

Drawing from and as a contribution to the literature on the anthropology of the body (Lock and Farquar 2007), I read the body and its narratives not as facts, but as signs of times of profound transformation in the forms of social relations, the terms of discourse and the fields of power where new and transformed identities and subjectivities were being shaped. This framework reveals the emergence of new and transformed highly stylized performative and perceptive categories through which differences were read on bodies’ forms, shapes, accessories, embodied utterances and the meaningful places and spatial arrangements where they took shape.
There are multiple analytical dimensions of the body that render it a useful lens to read processes of construction and mutual constitution of place, class, gender and race in historical and cultural perspective. Within a practical dimension, the body is an essentially performative entity, which is constantly being made up through the creative repetition of coded body movements (Butler 1999). From a biopolitical standpoint, the body is also an object of disciplinary interventions that regulate and alter its contours as part of projects of domination and hegemony (Foucault 1978, Urla and Terry 1995). However, far from being a docile and mechanical entity, the body is a highly plastic surface, a social skin which is often altered to provide new meanings in efforts to challenge, appropriate and subvert normative structures (Butler 1999, Turner 2007). From a phenomenological standpoint, the body is also an apparatus of perception that mediates the interactions between subjects and their immediate world (Lock and Farquhar 2007, Ahmed 2006). In their relationship with space, bodies have a location, an orientation, a tendency and a sensorially mediated distance to and from other sentient and motile bodies and objects. As such the body itself is an instrument with incorporated systems of appreciation and distinction, orienting and ordering perceptions, interpretations, sensations and experiences (Hope 2009, Howes 2006). Finally, the body is a meaningful entity signified and culturally constructed through history (Foucault 1978). As a social fabrication made up through practice and history and signified through culture, the body is also an object of aesthetic and moral evaluations that assign it a place in discourse, in space and in the affective planes where constructions of difference take place.

The analysis in this dissertation traced the historic emergence of a distinctive 19th century kind of normative body that was shedding its colonial robes made of blood and genealogy, and assuming a new, modern, highly accessorized, sensitive and dramatic social skin. Throughout the chapters, I tease out the discursive practices in academic and historical narratives creating different Cuban bodies in the making, from the bourgeois good mannered Europeanized petimetre, to its racial counterpart the out-of-place bourgeois mulato. I expose the historiographical constructions of these effeminate male bodies in contrast to the masculinized dangerous black body of the economically ambitious “political” elite, which obscured bodies of entrepreneurial women of color. I discuss the preeminent interpellations of the black female body in historical and scholarly narratives in her sexualized facet. The overwhelming narrative presence of the sexualized black female body created a historiographic silence around the bodies
of elite and marginal white women, and the material sites of practice where female respectability was negotiated, including promenades, carriages, streets and smoking habits. Finally, I demonstrate that black mimic bodies were also models and designers of molds for white bodies revealing their malleability, and the fluidity of their interfacial limits.

The everyday

Practices, feelings, places and thoughts are what Raymond Williams dubbed the substance of the quotidian (Williams 2010). From this perspective, the everyday is an essentially performative and experiential site where differences are constantly interpreted and felt. The framework used in this dissertation acknowledges these two important dimensions of the everyday as useful lens to read socio-historical processes. First, from the perspective of performance and practice theory, the routine and habitual character of the everyday is the perfect pedagogical site for the making of performative subjects. Its simultaneously structured and fluid character offers the conditions of possibility for the stylized and improvised repetitions that constitute subjects through practice and through history (Butler 1999, Bourdieu 1977). The everyday is also a space of commonality where differences are constantly made up, interpreted and felt (Highmore 2002). It is a stage of display and interpretation of a web of symbols that endow social life with meaning.

Second, the everyday is also a material site where experiences are lived and organized. In this realm, culture unfolds beyond exclusively symbolic, cognitive or interpretive processes of discourse and ideology. Following Taussig, the everyday may be approached as an interface sensuous zone of experience, feeling and knowledge of the immediate world, a place where social life is not necessarily thought but felt (Taussig 1991). Taken together, the everyday functions as a symbolic and affective ground of interpretation, enactment, expression and contestation of shared meanings, feelings and understandings of difference (Williams 1977, Highmore 2002).

This framework builds on and expands the framework of the everyday in existing scholarship about Cuba and beyond. First, Marial Iglesias examined everyday life in Cuba in the period between 1898 and 1902 as a predominantly visual platform of negotiation of symbols of national belonging. Her focus on material culture, discursive and cultural practices of marginalized subjects, aligns with Williams and De Certeau’s understanding of the everyday as
“ordinary” in association with the often-silenced lives and voices “from below” (Highmore 2002). This dissertation contributes to decenter the everyday from the lives of subalterns by showing that “manners” were tactics that subaltern and dominant subjects used at both ends to navigate across and reconfigure established boundaries especially in the realms of music, dance and dress. This study also offers an expanded framework to incorporate the non-symbolic, experiential and sensuous aspects of the making of difference in everyday situations. Recognizing how affective measures of difference are built onto social, topographic and symbolic systems, brings out the ways in which meaningful gazes, sounds, smells and body movements contributed to shape social and spatial limits organizing everyday life in Havana of the 19th century (Stallybrass and White 1986, Ahmed 2006). I demonstrate how everyday spaces were marked symbolically, but also performatively and sensorially to create visually appealing and aesthetically proper images and sense-scapes (the latter which are defined in a later section). Furthermore, the tension between practice and perception, real and imagined spatial and social boundaries of difference is revealed through the analysis of narratives of practices of everyday life in Havana by means of the articulation of concepts of performative spaces and urban imaginaries in Chapters 4 and 7 (Alonso 2004, Garcia Canclini 1997, Goldstein 2007).

From a feminist standpoint and in articulation with theories of practice and habitus (in particular Norbert Elias 2000), this framework of the everyday proved useful to deconstruct and redefine conventional understandings of public and private/domestic space. The discursive analysis in Chapter 7 shows that public and private were situations not associated with gender roles or specific places. Rather the “public” was understood as a highly regulated space of action and perception in accordance with sensory, affective, aesthetic and performative standards. In turn, the private was conceived as a safe zone to keep bodies from displaying unacceptable emotions and behaviors “in public”. Finally, the anthropological approach to the everyday contributes to the expand the field of performance studies, by pushing the discussion cultural processes beyond staged and calculated venues, in particular theater (the object of several historical studies in Cuba, Lane 2007, Leal 1975), to those occurring in the fragmented and improvised milieu of Havana’s everyday life (Manalansan 2001). Using the well known anthropological analogy between everyday and staged enactments of social life (Turner 1988, Goffman 1959), the analysis in Chapter 8 contributed to understand the notion of urbanity as a dramatization of everyday life in the material, symbolic and affective field of the city, whereby
power and privilege were ordered and distributed across quotidian maps of space and time. Thus, ways of doing, living, speaking, dressing, occupying space, among other modes of performance staged in the highly spatially and chronologically ordered urban space, were key guidelines informing forms of classification and the grounds for their continued negotiations in 19th century Havana society.

_Affect and the senses_

The complexity involved in describing and analyzing processes related to emotion, pleasure, trauma, memory, everyday experiences of sensation and embodiment, among other embodied social phenomena, present a challenge in approaching “affect” and “the senses” as separate domains of analysis (Staiger, et. al). While a so called “affective turn” has been taking place in various domains of cultural studies, including feminist and queer studies since the 2001 (Staiger, et. al. 2010, White 2010⁶), a sensuous turn marked a shift in anthropological studies since the early 20th century and onwards (Howes 2006). Recent studies have alerted us to the seeming disconnection between the two bodies of literature, by bringing to the forefront how analytic foci of sense perception and embodiment add to the broader discussion about affect in social theory (Davie-Kessler et. al. 2013)

Grounded in a cross-cultural analytical method, anthropology has contributed to understand the socio cultural and historical formation of the senses, that is, how visual, tactile, olfactory, aural, gustatory and other kinds of sensations and embodied experiences are culturally coded to mean something to someone at a particular time and place (Howes 2006). Anthropological studies have furthered the understanding of how the attachment of sensuous kinds of meaning to practices, places, and objects, informs a specifically sensory modality of understanding and knowing the world. As such, these studies have contributed to move beyond the linguistic/propositional fixation of ethnography since the 1990’s, which approached the task of “reading” cultural processes as texts. Scholars in anthropology have often pointed to the dual phenomenological and hermeneutical processes involved the act of “sensing.” To “sense” entails both the sensation of an experience, as well as a reflexive exercise “to make sense” or to develop

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⁶ For instance, Michele White’s analysis of reborn artists’ sales of dolls on e-bay in Straiger, et. al.’s edited volume *Political Emotions* (2010) is an example of the important efforts to theorize the relationship between tactile touching, emotional feeling and performances of care.
an understanding of the experience (Howes 2006, Lee Perez and Audant 2009). The proposition “How people make sense of the world through perception” used by David Howes to illustrate this dual process (Howes 2006: 43), carries an implicit emphasis in the symbolic and hermeneutical aspects, rather than in the phenomenological and experiential aspects of sensing. This perspective reduces the potential to understand sensory communicative processes beyond an exclusively symbolic realm, into an experiential realm of limited cognitive and linguistic mediation (Merleau Ponty 2007, Taussig 1991, Turino 1999).

Such is the case of music and dance, as ethnomusicologist Tom Turino has observed. According to his theory of musical affectivity, Turino demonstrated that music and dance are two non-propositional sign modes and realms of direct experience that have not been domesticated by symbols (Turino 1999: 250). From his effort to understand sensory processes within and beyond the symbolic and phenomenological, into the more inchoate and inarticulate realm of the affective, Turino’s theorization of affect and emotion converges with sociologist Deborah Gould. For Turino, “emotion” is “our inadequate gloss for that mammoth realm of human experience that falls outside language-based thinking and communication” (Turino 1999: 221). Words are not sufficient to express the embodied experience of music and its potential to trigger powerful and often involuntary, visceral and affective reactions in the perceiver. For her part, Gould sees affect as those non-conscious and unnamed but registered experiences of bodily intensity in response to stimuli exerted upon the body (2010: 26). Gestures, language and other conventional or coded bodily expressions are the limited, culturally constrained and constructed means of materialization or transformation of affective states into structured and knowable manifestations. In particular, Gould observed the pedagogical mechanisms provided by social movements to manage and regulate activists’ emotional responses in the context of political activism. In doing so Gould made a key contribution to gauge the complex process of materialization of affect into culturally apprehensible forms (Gould 2010: 33).

As a contribution to the developing debates about interrelated processes and pedagogies of affect, emotion, embodiment and sensation, Chapter 5 examines various instances where pedagogies of the body were deployed in interconnected layers/levels. First, books of conduct provided a frame for modeling or shaping the form of common, ordinary actions and behaviors, such as those that fulfill bodily functions or necessities such as eating, blowing one’s nose, or yawning (Elias 2000). Some of these pedagogies of action or performance operate at a different
but related layer of an education of affect into emotion, whereby the specific form of actions such as laughter were regulated to conform to acceptable sensory/performative standards, i.e. acceptable levels of loudness from laughter. Other emotional states such as joy or pain were also called up for regulation according to convened behavioral prescriptions. The emergence and development of the pedagogy of “sabor,” an embodied principle for experiencing and discerning distinctively Cuban forms of music and dance, may also be understood as a form of affective/emotional pedagogy. As contemporaries described it, sabor indexed an affective state of “irresistibility,” a certain uncontrollable bodily “drive” to dance prompted by musical stimuli. However, to the extent that sabor instilled a faculty of “discernment,” an education of distinction or taste with symbolic and cognitive mediated components was at play at this instance, simultaneous to an education of affect. Finally, the analysis presented in Chapters 4 and 5 opens up new directions in the largely unexplored field of Cuba’s sensory histories (Smith 2007). This analysis contributes to what sensory historian Mark Smith deems constructions of sensory otherness, whereby the subjective perceptions of visual images, sounds or smells were used to characterize and imagine specific kinds of subjects. Thus, within developing ideologies of distinction, the senses conformed important parameters of moral and aesthetic evaluation. Furthermore, the senses informed modalities of sensory governance of subjects through space. The importance given to perceptions about sensory proximity in the management and production of spatial and social boundaries revealed the connections between the spatial, the sensory and the social in the production of difference and social relations.

**De-racializing periodizations of nineteenth century Cuban cultural histories**

Important historians of Cuba have emphasized a division along racial lines in 19th century society, while giving less importance to class and cultural factors. Aline Helg’s view of stratification in 19th century Cuba is an example of this perspective, “in Cuba, the barrier separating blacks and mulattos from whites was based on ‘visible’ African phenotype (skin color, hair structure, and/or facial features)… Cuba’s [rigid] color bar and two-tier racial system … prohibited the absorption of some highly educated mulattos into the white planter-dominated elite” (Helg 2011: 256, Helg 1995). Often, these scholars have also used the lens of race to periodize Cuba’s 19th century social histories. Using 1886, the year of the abolition of slavery as a point of reference, Robin Moore and Aline Helg coincidentally identify a shift in dominant
discourses about race, from ones that localized racial difference on physical features to others that sought to explain it in culturalist terms.

Moore argues that as emancipated blacks sought to integrate themselves into society, African-related cultural forms “suddenly became more visible and therefore more threatening” (More 1997: 32, 33). His argument follows that later on in the 1900’s with the advent of the republic and its premises of racial equality, new mechanisms of discrimination based on psychological and cultural criteria as opposed to biological criteria became evident, “…culture came to serve as an important social marker and as a justification to maintain racially based social hierarchies” (Moore 1997: 32, 33). Moore provided examples related to the criminalization of religion, as well as discourses and measures that pathologized and sanctioned African derived dance and music forms.

The 1880’s were certainly a politically and socially convulse moment tied to major changes including gradual and official the abolition of slavery in 1886 as well as a series of government reforms intended to create an atmosphere of democratization following a long war with the Cuban independence rebels (1868-1878). The abrogation of interracial marriage legislation and a series of laws relaxing the censorship on the press, associations, reunions and educational reforms marked the political atmosphere of the 1880’s and 1890’s (Barcia 1999). In this context, the proliferation of social, racial and political discourses is likely to have been informed by the greater availability of spaces of public opinion and media where these were disseminated. As Moore rightly observes, African derived cultural expressions were the focus of public controversy in the 1880’s, but so were other controversial topics. In particular, newspapers, pamphlets and books during the 1880’s and 1890’s served as outlets for Cuban and Spanish elites’ moral panics surrounding music, religion, dance and prostitution.

Moreover, the moralistic and culturalist tone that characterized some discourses analyzed by Moore such as those of Israel Castellanos or Fernando Ortiz, were not a new phenomenon to the late of the 19th century in Cuba. Moore uses these early 20th century authors as a reference point of a shift towards what he calls “wars on Africanisms” or the drive to de-Africanize and whiten Cuban culture. Contrary to Moore’s reading, many of the culturalist elements used by Ortiz or Castellanos to describe race, including metaphors of contamination and sanitation, dominated public discourse already in the 1820’s and 1830’s as the analysis on José Antonio Saco presented in Chapter 2 demonstrates. The growing participation of free people of color in
urban occupations drove Saco’s radical proposals to culturally elevate and whiten the domains of work, art and artisanship by taking it back from free blacks.

Like Moore, Aline Helg identifies the decade of the 1880’s as a moment of shift towards “culture” in the discourses and mechanisms to explain and regulate racial differences. She states at this time the “barrier between whites and people of color became more permeable when some Afro-Cubans gained access to a few elite institutions, and professions” (Helg 1995:33). Helg only sees class and cultural differences working together with race and “affecting its definition” in the period post-emancipation and into the republican era after 1898 when

...new opportunities for social differentiation and status emerged that stressed the importance of cultural expression in the social construct of race. Emphasis was given to literacy, education, and Western culture and social behavior, even though Afro-Cubans continued to be prohibited from fully participating in dominant social practices because of their race (emphasis added Helg 1995:13).

Helg observes that the lack of “modern skills and Western culture” fragmented people of color along class lines. Her view implies that class and cultural divisions within the community of color were a “new” phenomenon of the late 19th century. Looking forward, the work of Marial Iglesias (2003) challenges this perspective by showing that dichotomous perceptions of race informed by United States’ racial ideologies influenced segregationist attitudes and policies following U.S. intervention in Cuba between 1898 and 1902, promoting more rigid divisions along color lines. A similar perspective is found in Hoetink (2001: 458). Looking back, my analysis of cultural discourses of “manners” and the socio-historical conditions that produced these discourses since the early 19th century further complicates these racialized periodizations. In general, Helg’s analysis downplays the fundamental role that the free class of people of color and the elite that grew out of it played in the first half of the 19th century as the reference marker of class distinction from lower classes of African descent as well as lower class whites. The argument raised in this dissertation is aligned with the interpretation of scholars who see the permeability or social porosity, which Helg identifies towards the late 19th century, happening much earlier in the century (Mena 2005, Kutsinski 1993, Chapeaux 1971).

There are various layers of action where social groups move as they negotiate power positions. Political, social, economic as well as cultural fields of action ought to be considered when gauging the relative “porosity” or “rigidity” of the social structure, or the extent to which
individuals can overcome these barriers to scale up socially. Helg centers her analysis on the “rights” or lack thereof of people of color and their struggle for equality. She focuses on the political and to some extent the social aspects of the participation of people of color in Cuban society (Helg 1995, 2011). This particular approach is related to what could be deemed a specifically post-modern preoccupation with “subaltern agency” present in several historical works focusing on people of African descent in Cuba (Mena 2001, Childs 2001, Childs 2006, De la Fuente 2000). While these studies have made important contributions to expose the silenced histories of people of color in Cuba, their methodology often reproduces social dualities such as black/white or free/slave, resting importance to the subdivisions existing within social categories. These subdivisions are often quite meaningful from the perspective of a heterogeneous group of “subaltern subjects.” Discussing the increased racial prejudice and the related segregationist measures mobilized by elites throughout the 19th century conveys elements to understand inter-racial relations and politics. In this case, prejudice, discrimination and oppression are in reference to whites’ attitudes and measures against blacks. This (top-down) perspective constructs Spanish authorities and white elites as a homogeneous dominant class and simultaneously homogenizes the population of color as a victim of white oppression, resulting in the frequent interpretation: Cuban society was polarized along racial lines (Childs 2001, Mena 2001, Helg 1995). Although racial polarization likely occurred in the aftermath of specific events such as slave rebellions and repressions during the first half of the century, the continued oscillation of the terms of race relations throughout 19th century is often overlooked. Asking questions of and about subaltern politics complicates this dual view.

The work of Pedro Deschamps Chapeaux (1971), Luz Mena (2005), María del Carmen Barcia (2009), and Robert Paquette (1988) greatly contributed to expose the histories of the free population of color as an “in between” social group within 19th century contentions of master-slave and white-black. In alignment with this perspective, cultural critic and writer Victor Fowler proposes to,

…break down the monolithic aspects of the essentialist, reductionist and filled-with racism notion that analyzes cultural processes from the binary opposition between “white” and “black” sectors of Cuban society. It would be enough, instead, to find at least one case where the existence of a wide zone of confusion, collision, undefinedness between the two poles, to open up to a more complex reading of cultural processes in our country… (Fowler 2001: 100)
Harry Hoetink, a prominent theorist of race in the Caribbean, asked the critical question of subaltern politics back in the 1970’s when the pressing issue of agency had less of an influence in academic debates. In his critical reading of Franklin Knight’s study of 19th century Cuban society, Hoetink wondered about the attitudes of the “lighter-skinned and most prosperous coloreds” towards their black and mulato counterparts, “What were their attitudes towards slavery and its increasingly ominous conditions? Were they in fact also victims of the increasing racism or were they rather co-instigators of it?” What was the “prevailing definition of whiteness” upon which “passing as white” provided an opportunity for lighter-skinned blacks a greater mobility? It makes a huge difference, he noted, whether ‘passing’ means “the negation of any links with the ‘colored community’” or alternatively, acknowledging a socio-racial continuum. As this dissertation demonstrates, there was often an oscillation between and a coexistence of these two possibilities in the Cuban colonial context.

Although there are clear methodological limitations to answer these questions given the reduced opportunities that archival materials offer to gain knowledge about subaltern’s voices, they are critical issues that must be acknowledged in socio-historical research (Spivak 1988). I bear these questions in mind as I attempt to understand the complex racial ideologies across and within “racial” groups; how whites perceived and constructed blacks and mulatos/as as “others” as well as how a heterogeneous cohort of people of color perceived and related to each other, legitimizing at times and challenging at others prevailing racial, class and gender ideologies. This analysis de-centers the concept of race as a fixed/monolithic entity by stressing on the fluidity of racial categories and the active negotiations of the meanings of “race” in a moment when ideas of identity, mestizaje and nationhood were starting to be discussed and defined in Spanish colonial Cuba. As such, in addition to contributing to historicization of race in colonial Cuba, this dissertation makes a contribution to the larger conversations in the anthropology and cultural critique of ethnicity, race and racialization in the Caribbean and Latin America (Alonso 2004, Arrizón 2002, Rojo 1997, Hope 2009, Kempadoo 1999, Lane 2005, 2007, Mintz and Price 1976, Price 1998, Ortiz 1951, 1996, 1986, 1987, 1992, Queeley 2010, Quintero 2008, Shoaff 2009, Whitten and Torres 1998, Yelvington 2006).

This dissertation approaches the study of the 1800’s as a temporal whole given the transcendence of the changes occurring throughout. Best described in the words of cultural
historian Pablo Riaño San Marful (honoring the famous cultural metaphor of the “ajiaco” for mestizaje by Fernando Ortiz) the 19th century is “somewhat of a stock or medium of cultivation of what later, and always forever will be Cuba …” (“…el caldo donde se cultiva lo que después, ya siempre, será Cuba…” personal communication 04/03/2012). As an anthropological reading of historical narratives, this study is critical of what Antoinette Burton called the “archival logic’s” sequential views of history and the telling of “histories proper” (Burton 2005). In alignment with this critical framework, the objective of this dissertation is not to retrieve and report on a series of specific events, but rather to make a critical reading of the structured and structuring systems of practice, of feeling and of thought that oriented socio cultural and historical processes in 19th century Havana and Cuba. Given the processual nature of culture, power and ideology, precise cut offs for historical periods are unrealistic. Because cultural constructions and ideology formations are fluid and continuous, there are no exact points in time where ideas, images and imaginaries informing cultural discourse and practice originated or ended. Nonetheless, there are specific events that marked significant re-orientations in socio-cultural and ideological processes, and more importantly, in our capacity as researchers to interpret these processes based on available sources.

In particular, 1790 was the year of the first publication of a print periodical in Cuba, El Papel Periódico, opening up a critical and long lasting space to channel projects of social reform by an economically and ideologically influential class of Cuban creoles. In 1772, the institutional framework was created for this class to push forth Enlightened and liberal oriented programs of educational, cultural, urban and economic reform through the Royal Patriotic Society of Havana (Real Sociedad Patriótica de la Habana). These cultural transformations occurred in the context of the expansion of capitalism in Cuba. The relaxation of Spanish trade monopoly with Havana since the end of the British occupation in 1763 and the allowance of slave importation to the island since 1779 opened up opportunities for trade and for the expansion the sugar industry.

As I discuss in Chapter 5, the Papel Periódico inaugurated the print record of the “history of manners” in Cuba through which a broad platform of “distribution of normativity” or of governance of bodily performances, thoughts and affects was constructed (Elias 2000, Folver personal communication 03/24/2012). The early print press also served as the avenue for channeling and consolidating the emergent vernacular literary and artistic genre known as costumbrismo. Costumbristas became the spokespersons of Havana’s bourgeoisie and through
their works they promoted a broad-based program of moral and cultural reform. This project of cultural normativity was the foundation of their larger anti-colonial project of an imagined community framed around the creation of a range of stereotypes of marginal “Others”, especially people of color and women. They tackled their objectives from two ends, as educators and authors of textbooks of conduct or of “urbanity” for use in schools, as well as through satire and criticism of everyday “customs” realistic sketches in newspaper articles, literary pieces and theater. Of significance to this specific 19th century ideological context are the first publications of textbooks of conduct by Cuban authors, which are the subject of analysis in Chapters 4, 5, 7 and 8.

The repression of La Escalera in 1843 and 1844 was an important rupture-point in the socio-political dynamics of the century. Musicians, tailors, educators, militiamen, journalists, poets among other highly regarded men of color were an influential segment wiped out from Havana’s society after the colonial state-led repression. During subsequent decades emerged a more defined political movement for independence, in which black political leaders and freed slaves played an instrumental role. The strong anti-colonial political atmosphere during the long periods of consecutive wars and inter-wars during the second half of the century served as the backdrop for the public staging of a new kind of costumbrismo in the form of bufo or vernacular theater. Bufo playwrights made both racialized and gendered marginal “Others” as well as members of their own class the objects of their satirical representations. Their overtly anti-colonial political scripts made them objects of fierce state censorship during the 1860’s (Leal 1975). The introduction of anti-segregationist measures by the colonial state including the relaxation of state censorship during the 1880’s were reflected in active public opinion debates in print periodicals, medical and travel literature and theater. Two of the most important sources of analysis in this dissertation date from 1888 and 1893, setting a good reference end point of my chosen periodization: a moralistic treatise on prostitution La Prostitución en la Ciudad de La Habana by the medical doctor Benjamín de Céspedes (1888) and a conduct textbook for girls Consejos y Consejos de Una Madre a Su Hija by Domitila García de Coronado (1893).

I have chosen not to examine sources post 1898 because they fall outside of the official political economic and ideological framework of Spanish colonialism, and within U.S.

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7 Though, there were several previous editions to this publication, at least since 1881 as per the cover of the book.
imperialism and its subsequent influence in republican Cuba since 1902. Two excellent cultural-history studies of the period of 1898-1902 have examined the distinctive socio-cultural dynamics of everyday life in Cuba under U.S. rule (Iglesias 2003, Riaño San Marful 2002). Nonetheless, references to the United States’ ongoing cultural influences in Cuba, which could be traced back to at least the late 18th century, are part of my analyses at different points in the dissertation (for instance, see Chapters 4 and 7).

Methodology and data

Many groundbreaking studies in anthropology in the United States have been the work of historians and anthropologists in each other’s fields8 (Cowan 2012, Axel 2002, Mintz and Price 1976, Price 1998, Stoler 2002, Troulliot 1995, Coronil 1997). As an intervention to this growing field of inquiry in the United States, I envision my critical analysis of cultural processes through historical documents as a basic anthropological exercise of perspective taking, whereby I become aware of my center point in the present, and from there I embark on a decidedly partial, subjective, creative and interpretatively responsible engagement with a diverse past (Burton 2005, Cowan 2012).

Basic methodological and ethical questions in anthropology about my politics of location and ethnographic authority ran through my mind as I redefined my own “field” of anthropological/historical work in the archives, libraries and streets of Havana. Hartley’s expression “the past is a foreign country” perhaps resonates more to a historical anthropologist than to scholars in any other discipline (Cowan 2012). As I researched Cuban archival collections in Havana, Illinois and those spread over the virtual space of the world wide web, my non-native cultural location as a researcher in relation to my subjects of study was double: temporal and geographical. Thus, as an outsider to the Cuban context, my reading of 19th century cultural histories of Cuba may offer different perspectives from those who embody and experience the legacies of those socio-historical processes in their everyday lives. In approaching the study of Cuba as a foreigner to its people and their history, I was extremely fortunate to use the support and incommensurable expertise of Cuban historians in Havana. To them and to the

8 Being trained in the Latin American context prior to coming to the U.S., I owe a large part of this projects’ theoretical and methodological perspective in history and anthropology to my former mentors and teachers in FLACSO-Ecuador, Andrés Guerrero, Eduardo Kingman, Blanca Muratorio, and Javier Auyero, among other fellow anthropologist and historian colleagues.
Cuban people I am accountable for the new stories about their history that I tell in this dissertation.

Under the institutional auspices of the Instituto de Historia de Cuba (History Institute of Cuba), during the academic summer and winter sessions of the period 2006 to 2012, I gathered data at Archivo Nacional de Cuba (Cuba’s National Archive, ANC), Biblioteca Nacional José Martí (José Martí National Library), Sala de Libros Raros y Valiosos (Rare and Valuable Book Collection) at the University of Havana, and at the homes and offices of colleagues Marial Iglesias, Pablo Riaño San Marful, Victor Fowler Calzada, María del Carmen Barcia, Ariadna González, and Beatríz Combarro. My research visits to Havana were partially funded by a Graduate College Dissertation Travel Grant, Tinker Award for Pre-Dissertation Research in Latin America and Iberia from the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies, and Summer Research Grants from the Department of Anthropology at the University of Illinois in Urbana Champaign. During the academic Fall and Spring semesters, I gained access to valuable international historical collections through the University of Illinois library. Both primary and secondary sources are the objects of my analysis in this dissertation.

Evidence

Over the course of my research I re-oriented the focus of the project, from prostitution, to dance, to theaters, and to the definitive more general topic of the performativity of the body. During this process I gathered substantial archival data on colonial state policies to regulate sexuality in general and dance in particular from record collections at ANC. Most of this evidence was not included in this dissertation and will be the material for a future project. However the approach on governmentality and contact zones from my reading of archival sources is a thread connecting the chapters.

Although I gained access to the majority of the primary sources used through the University of Illinois Library and the digitalized copies widely available online, I originally identified many of these in the catalogs of libraries and archives in Havana during my periodic trips. Primary sources of analysis include,

1. Primary source and contemporary historical novels from the 19th century, mainly Cirilo Villaverde’s Cecilia Valdés (1981, 2010) and Marta Rojas’ Santa Lujuria (1998). I used

2. Visual sources in the form of reprints of paintings by Victor Patricio de Landaluze, Frédéric Mialhe and Miguel Guíjarro drawn from museum exhibit catalogs published in Bilbao and Miami, (Colección Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes de La Habana 1998, Cueto 1994), as well as from online digitalized copies of primary sources, in particular *Tipos y Costumbres de la Isla de Cuba* (Bachiller y Morales 1881) and *Las Mujeres Españolas, Portuguesas y Americanas* (Guíjarro 1876).


4. Travelers accounts, especially *Viaje a la Habana* by Mercedes Santa Cruz y Montalvo better known as the Countess of Merlin (1922), *La Habana a Mediados del Siglo XIX* by Antonio de las Barras y Prado (1926), *Cuba with pen and pencil* by Samuel Hazard (1871) and selected works from compilations by Luciano de Acevedo (1919) and Louis Pérez (1992).

5. Books of conduct especially *El Arte de Vivir en el Mundo* by Buenaventura Pascual Ferrer (1841) *Nuevo Tratado de Urbanidad, Buenas Maneras y Etiqueta* by José María de la Torre (1857), *Consejos y Consuelos de una Madre a su Hija* by Domitila García de Coronado (1893), in addition to medical accounts on prostitution especially *La Prostitución En La Ciudad De La Habana* by Benjamín de Céspedes (1988).

In alignment with postcolonial critiques of epistemology and method (Burton 2003, Behar and Gordon 1995, Trouillot 1995, Loomba 2005), I read these pieces of “evidence” as knowledge that is selective, partial and constructed. As such, I approach the content of documents as narratives or representations about the socio-historical process infused with the subjective ideological stances of a range of narrators speaking from unequal locations of power (Trouillot 1995, Burton 2005). In addition, my reading goes beyond a factual inquiry or “extractivist” approach to archives as repositories of evidence. Rather, I approach archives, the same as ethnography, as historical and colonial formations and modalities for producing knowledge framed under schemas of social and state power (Stoler 2002). From this anthropological and postcolonial standpoint, I concern myself less with the veracity of the
content, or the accumulation of facts to be reported, and more with the form and socio-political conditions of production of the narratives contained in historical documents (Trouillot 1995). A related concern with form relates to the materiality of these pieces of evidence in the context of the 19th century. I examine the means of circulation and practices of consumption of these documents in their historical and cultural context. Questions of audience are an important guideline used to understand how representations of bodies and subjects through cultural products such as literature, artwork, music, dance or public opinion pieces reproduced and redefined schemas of power and difference. Providing the necessary socio-historical and discursive context to interpret these narratives enables to get closer to picturing these historical enactments as they might have actually happened, but also to gain a better understanding of the complex negotiations of power that informed those social dramatizations.

To this distinctively anthropological approach I add an ethnographic sensibility and lens to read historical, literary and artwork material with attention to detail and form, as valuable ethnographic texts (Torres 2006, Axel 2002). Furthermore, in making literature and artwork central objects of analysis, I align with the postcolonial challenge to expand the limits of the official archive. As historian Antoinette Burton and other cultural critics have insisted, literature has the power to materialize those historical subjects who may never come under the archival gaze (Burton 2003, Marcelo 2006, Díaz 2009).

Critical discourse analysis is the primary technique I used to achieve the following objectives:

1. Read textual and visual narratives by a broad set of differentially positioned actors including medical doctors, journalists, travel chroniclers, painters, politicians, playwrights, novelists, and state officials, with attention to the institutional mechanisms by which these narratives were recorded while others were silenced (Spivak 1988).
2. Situate the texts in historical and cultural context by integrating biographical trajectories of authors into the political and cultural ideologies and schemas of value underpinning the institutions to which they ascribe (McCabe 2003).
3. Identify, unpack and historicize the various meanings of key categories and discursive figures used in reference to bodies and space, in particular the notions of “public”, “nobility”, “respect,” “sabor,” “good manners” or “good customs”, “good education”, “work”, “refinement,” “adecentamiento” (to tidy up), among others. Using these guidelines, I:
a) Examine the ways in which these categories and discursive figures informed the construction of particular kinds of subjects and bodies marked by their racialized, classed, gendered and sexualized performances, affects and sensations.

b) Interrogate whether these are suggestive elements of larger scale sets of beliefs and values (i.e. “respectability,” “urbanity,” the “ornate”)

c) Examine how these ideas informed the design, reconfiguration, contestation, and disparate enforcement of instruments and technologies of social differentiation and governance of bodies through space. I discuss segregation as in dance, theaters, education, marriage, occupations, and prostitution policy; stratification, in particular within spaces of sociability and in their distribution across space; and stylization; as in the aesthetic regimes aimed at shaping the contours of bodies and the city surface through instruments such as books of conduct and urban development projects.

d) Read against the grain of the archival logic. This entails not taking representations for granted, but inquiring: Why some images or stories are told and by who, while others are erased from the narratives? What were the political motors for these particular agendas of representation as well as the specific relations of power between the narrator and the subjects he/she represented conditioning these agendas? How does the narrator relate to his depictions—does s/he see her/himself reflected on them or are they instruments for promoting a certain view of social difference? For example, as I reflected on the aesthetically enhancing function of recurrent images of elite white women in the pictures created of 19th century Havana, I asked myself why were white women not portrayed smoking as were black women? I used the basic method in social science research of cross-referencing or juxtaposing information from different sources, specifically seeking depictions of women smoking. The story about white women smoking surfaced as I confronted sources by Cuban authors and foreign authors, particularly North American and European, in their travel accounts. This strategic silencing on the part of Cuban authors protecting the respectability of white women offers new elements to re-think the politics of class and gender and nation in 19th century Havana. In this case, rather than presenting new evidence, I repositioned existing evidence to generate a new narrative (Trouillot 1995: 27).

e) Read against the grain of scholarly narratives to unearth sidelined and silenced perspectives about the socio-historical process. I conducted a close reading of the archival evidence in scholarly literature on race, class and gender in 19th century Cuba with attention to discursive
and cultural practices surrounding the body. Several scholarly works have contributed to expose the complexity of Havana’s pigmentocracies through their study of socio-economic differences beyond legal status (slaves vs. free) among blacks and mulatos/as (Barcia 2009, Chapeaux 1971, Stolcke 1989, Paquette 1988, Mena 2005). I re-examined the evidence in these scholarly works from a cultural lens to unveil alternate meanings of “class” “race” and “color” beyond existing economic and political interpretations.

In addition, the valuable evidence in this and other important works demanded the use of a more holistic framework of gender, beyond its association with “woman” issues in general and with black women’s issues in particular (Guevara 2005, Stolcke 1989, Lane 2010, Kutsinski 1993, Arrizón 2002). For instance, the persistent attention given to cultural constructions of la mulata during this period has created blindness for the feminine constructs that made the stereotypes of la mulata even possible. Such is the case of the dominant images of elite white women in carriages, or those of poor white women discussed in Chapter 7. In addition, questions of sexuality and respectability have been asked about women, leaving the same crucial questions about men unexplained. The analysis of the figures of the petimetre and the bourgeois mulato in Chapter 6 is an effort to address the methodological gap in historical analyses of gender in Cuba. My discussion shows that the power dynamics inherent in the category ‘gender’ can only be revealed when examined systemically, placing the multiple parts and counterparts produced through discourse within the same analytical plane.

Books of conduct

While the question of “manners” has received significant attention in the literature of the Hispanic Caribbean, very few scholars have taken up the issue in Cuba. The important work by Angel Quintero Rivera (2008, 2000) and Beatriz González Stephan (1999) on the complex discourses of bodily normativity created around the famous “Manual de Urbanidad y Buenas Maneras” by the Venezuelan Manuel Antonio Carreño inspired my search for a version of this textbook in Cuba. The use of the Manual de Carreño or simply El Carreño was widespread in Latin America since its publication in 1857, especially in Caribbean countries and its memories as a de rigueur disciplinary instrument during childhood remains vivid among many Latin Americans today. The fact that El Carreño has continued to be published until the present day evidences the currency of its ideologies and values. For example, Stephan reflected upon the
success of the publication in 1997 of a version of El Carreño in Caracas as a sign of the continuous reconfigurations of what she calls el cuerpo conductual (behaviorized body, 1999).

Having not found a copy of Carreño’s textbook in 19th century collections in Cuba, I figured that there must be a Cuban version of the text somewhere. I had not found references to the textbook in cultural and social history accounts, nor has the subject received attention by scholars of Cuba, with the important exception of the work by cultural critic Victor Fowler (1998). Thanks to the exceptional research resources offered through the University of Illinois Library, and with help of an equally exceptional librarian, I found the reference to the holdings of the book by José María de la Torre Nuevo Tratado de Urbanidad, Etiqueta y Buenas Maneras (also registered as Reglas de Urbanidad... etc) through the World Cat engine. Two editions (1857, 7th ed. and 1860, 10th ed.) are held at the archives of Biblioteca Nacional de España in Madrid. I placed my request online and a copy of the entire 67 page long booklet arrived in my mailbox at 109 Davenport Hall in Urbana within two weeks. This experience of a First World scholar privilege has haunted me ever since, especially after living through some of the vicissitudes that Cuban historians must undergo to uncover unknown evidence from the chaotic sea of documents in Cuban archives. Reflecting upon and questioning how existing institutions and structures of power—in which my ethnographic/historical research practice is embedded—create unequal conditions for producing knowledge about Cuba’s history, is part of the anthropological perspective I bring to this study.

I am especially grateful to Beatriz González Stephan and Victor Fowler for the important resources and insights, which have informed my analysis of De La Torre’s textbook throughout this dissertation. I had the privilege of visiting and discussing with Victor Fowler personally in Havana. Through our continued our scholarly exchanges via email, he offered invaluable insights that became a crucial part of the theoretical framework used in Chapters 5 and 6. It was thanks to his orientation that I arrived at Norbert Elias’ work, which became an essential part of my framework of analysis about conduct books in Cuba. I must also thank historian Pablo Riaño for pointing towards Buenaventura Pascual Ferrer’s textbook El Arte de Vivir en El Mundo—perhaps the earliest manifestation of this genre of literature by a Cuban author.

The significance of why De La Torre’s textbook is held in Madrid while its absent from Cuban archives says much about the transnational scope of action of the 19th century project of moral education of the Cuban creole intellectual elite. Beatriz Gonzalez described Manuel
Antonio Carreño as an “entrepreneur of education” and the same can be said of De La Torre and other authors like Domitila García de Coronado whose works are part of the Latin American and Caribbean history of education as much as of the histories of imperial metropolis. For instance, in the preface of the second edition of her own manual *Consejos y Consuelos de Una Madre a su Hija* (1893, Figure 2) De Coronado claims the text was translated to French in Paris to serve as reading textbook for a school in Tolouse (1893: vi). These global knowledge-power connections between colonies and imperial metropolis evidence the workings of discourse in a transnational colonial milieu and reveal the multiple directionalities of their flows. Colonial techniques of knowing did not always only follow North-South / West-East directions of influence. Cultural discourses traveled “back” to their “sources” transformed with a substantive charge of cultural-ideological specificity to the “uses and customs of the island of Cuba” as De La Torre is keen to specify in the title of his textbook (Figure 2) (Stoler 2006).

![Figure 2 - Domitila García de Coronado’s conduct textbook for girls (1893). The title translates as “Advices and consolations from a mother to her daughter.”](image)

Finally, I cannot stress enough on how my reading of Angel Quintero’s work informed my project in this dissertation. In particular his seminal article “Los Modales y el Cuerpo: Clase “Raza” y Género en la Etiqueta del Baile” first published in the late 1990’s and republished
recently in his award winning book *Cuerpo y Cultura: Las Músicas Mulatas y la Subversión del Baile* (2008) motivated my search for discourses of bodily normativity in 19th century Cuba. The complexity of his narrative, tying discourses of dance, manners, race, class and gender, inspired my use of this article as a methodological reference point to frame conference presentations and an article entitled “Colonial Imaginaries of Cuban Women: the Politics of Place, Performance and Urban Representation in 19th Century Havana” which I reworked into Chapter 7. (The article is upcoming in JENdA: A Journal of Culture and African Women Studies).

*Reading Havana as a scape: methodological considerations on costumbrismo and travel literature*

*Costumbrista* and travel literature are two sources available to historians to approximate the physical and social conditions prevailing in 19th Havana. Each of these genres uses distinctive narrative and aesthetic styles to represent the realities the authors encountered. However, beyond the specificity of each genre’s methodological style, the concept of “scape” as used and developed by scholars of phenomenology and the senses, is a useful framework to explore their points of intersection as methodologies of knowing and representing Havana’s social and material environment at this particular moment. Influenced by aesthetic and scientific tendencies of realism and positivism, both local and foreign writers and artists associated with the artistic movement of *costumbrismo* created different kinds of sensory “scapes” to describe their surroundings as these expressed a particular relationship between the authors and the objects of their observation. Rodaway refers to these authors as “sentients” to denote the broader range of sensory mechanisms that mediate the experiences of the perceiver with his/her immediate environment (Rodaway 1994). Blanca Muratorio used the descriptor *imagineros* (“imagers”) (Muratorio 1994) to express a similar relationship between the colonizers as creators of representations or images of colonized Others.

Following Rodaway, ‘scapes’ can be understood as subjective and locational situations that enable a particular form of knowing, structuring and representing geography. Thus, we can say that the “imagers” of Havana created “scapes” or “pictures” of their sensuous experience and relationship to the environment and the subjects within. For the most part, the pictures, portraits
or scapes created by costumbristas and travelers were visual and sonic⁹, whereby environment and the subjects therein were represented visually as “landscapes” or audibly as “soundscapes.” Rodaway observed that the concept of “landscape” implies a linear perspective in which the representation of the visible world is presented as a view or scene arranged as a composition. The “image” created is static conveying the relationship between a single spectator/viewer contemplating the scenery from a privileged, specific position in space (Rodaway 1994: 86). Thus the “landscape” evokes “seeing” as a method of knowing and representing that implies first, a detachment from the objects of viewing which informs their often-realistic pretentions (Rodaway 1994: 129).

Second, it implies a relationship of power and privilege between the observer and the observed revealing their depictions as fundamentally subjective, and informed by the culturally determined attitudes and values towards the “Others” they describe. Thus the method of representation related to sensory “scapes” implies a positionality where observers as “sentients” or “imagers” are always situated at the “center” or at the issuing point of representation in the environments and with respect to the subjects they describe, a positionality that is available to them as monopoly-bearers of the means and perspectives of production of knowledge and representation.

The means used were writing and painting in the case of 19th century Havana. This was a privilege available to creole artists and intellectuals for their education as upper class white males. This privilege was limited for women, and unavailable to people of color. The perspective was given by their freedom to explore urban zones, to “walk the city,” (De Certeau 1988) a privilege unavailable to upper class women as Chapter 7 reveals. Thus, travelers and costumbristas constituted a particular kind of urban leisureed bourgeois subject equivalent to the Parisian flaneur studied by Baudelaire and Benjamin (Benjamin 2006). As urban explorers, spectators and consumers of the city and the images of urban bodies, they carried the mission of

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⁹ Rodaway observed the epistemological limitations of using “smellscape” as a conceptual analogy of “landscape” to describe olfactory situations, because smells don’t offer scenes or views of objects arranged and set at a distance of the observer like sounds or images do (Rodaway 1994: 86). The reason according to Rodaway is that the presence of smells in a specific field of perception depends on the movement of air or the movement of bodies across space, making smells much more “volatile” compared to images or sounds. The latter can be arranged in a static composition, creating conditions for the representation of a scape. While narratives about smell might not be as useful in the analysis of city-scapes, these can be useful as a framework to explore construction of subjectivities. A history of discourses about smell as they informed constructions of race, class, gender or other subject-category remains to be written for 19th century Cuba, a project that is beyond the scope of this investigation.
gathering knowledge about their urban surroundings with a penchant of empiricism seeking to “map the world according to a science of surface appearances.” (McClintock 1995: 82) The product, in the case of local explorers (costumbristas and their successors in late 19th century, medical doctors) was a catalogue of visible social types as elements of the urban surface. Their representations bore a claim to truth that expressed their “mastery” over the city as a bourgeois male territory—in the case of Cuban authors—or of a colonized/colonizable territory, an aspiration often conveyed through European travelers’ narratives of Havana and Cuba (McClintock 1995: 82). Thus, recognizing the power relations that inform the production of images of Havana as a city-scape, reveal the suggestive relationship between the aesthetic category of “scape” and the socio-political category of “spectacle,” denoting that the process of knowledge and representational production was essentially performative and inserted within broader imperial, class, race and gender relations of domination.

Soundscape has been conceptually adapted from the notion of landscape to illustrate a sonic environment that works as a field of subjective and spatial representation and knowing (Rodaway 1994, Sharpley and Stone 2011). Anthropologist Mark Smith (2006) has used this perspective to understand how sounds and sensory experiences more broadly, serve as discursive devices to elaborate subjective and racial constructs. Speaking from positions of power, as colonial authorities, middle and upper class residents or foreign visitors, particularly the authors of the texts discussed in Chapter 4, describe situations that express these authors’ relationships to images and sounds in the context of the city at different moments in 19th century Havana in terms of an imagined moral and aesthetic order to which they aspired. Like the visual elements of “landscape,” sounds are elements within an arranged or composed view or scene that symbolized this aspired order. The authors of these representations attached moral and aesthetic values to specific bodies, images and sounds that projected prevailing ideologies of race, class and sexuality and reflected the anxieties and aspirations of authors vis a vis their objects of perception and representation.

In discussing the situated portrayals of Havana as a “scape,” the politics of location of these authors as creators of these portrayals becomes a relevant question. While both travelers and costumbristas spoke from positions of social privilege as a majority of white educated males in the highly stratified Cuban colonial society, costumbristas (particularly Cuban born) parallel the anthropological category of “native” especially if viewed in relation to travellers who are
only temporary residents in the island. Travelers speak as “outsiders” to the local everyday dynamics and environment and thus stand at a further distance—culturally—with respect to the objects, subjects and sites of their observation. However, specifying who were subjects of observation—the “Others” constructed through representation—complicates the dichotomous schema of “insider” vs. “outsider” ethnographers or imagers (Narayan 1993). Costumbristas, particularly writers and playwrights, were members of the creole elite of Cubans who created Orientalizing depictions of popular classes. Thus, in relation to blacks, women and other marginalized subjects, costumbristas can hardly be considered “native” since they did not participate in the world of popular classes and could only view it from the distance marked by their class and racial status. Second, while “subaltern” subjects—black, female, children and non-heterosexuals—were costumbrismo’s “otherized” objects of representation, “Cubans” more generally were the objects of representation of travelers, and these included members of the upper classes like costumbristas along with the mentioned “subalterns.” Methodologically, these representational overlaps are useful to uncover “silenced” stories and images by means of a reading comparatively and in tandem with depictions made by travelers and costumbristas of a single object, subject or situation. For instance, the comparative analysis made in Chapter 7 between depictions of upper class women by travelers and costumbristas demonstrates that, what local authors chose to conceal (conditioned by their class interests), travelers without such socio-cultural constraints had no issue, and perhaps were eager to report.

**Notes on terminology**

*Modernity*

My use of the terms “modernity” and “modernization” in this dissertation relates to the specific meanings that this discourse acquired towards the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in relation to ideological influences of Enlightenment liberal thought. These developments significantly affected the socio-political atmosphere throughout the nineteenth century up until Cuba’s independence in 1902. Liberal ideas were embraced among black and white Cuban-born Creoles as they negotiated the terms of a “national” political imaginary, marking the decidedly anti-colonial character of this nineteenth century modernity. My definition of modernity, then, is situated in a historical and discursive schema that diverges from, but nonetheless builds upon ideas developed by the prominent anthropologist of the Caribbean, Sidney Mintz. He proposed to
study the Caribbean as an always, already modernized region from the very onset of colonization in the sixteenth century (Scott 2004). For Mintz, the Caribbean experienced a precocious “colonial modernity” as it inserted itself within the forced processes of globalization, migration and agricultural capitalism through the large-scale, labor-intensive sugar processing industry. Caribbean peoples were modernized in and through the new technologies and disciplinary labor regimes of plantation slavery as well as the new kinds of social relationships that the emerging socio-economic and cultural context mandated. Following Mintz, then, the nineteenth century “push” towards modernization in Cuba was simply a new and different stage of an ongoing modernization process. This nineteenth century modernization had its own ideological, historical and socio-economic peculiarities marked by Cuba’s position in the global sugar market following the demise of the French colony of Saint Domingue (Haiti) as well as by the novel ideological tendencies of Enlightenment and independence thought among a heterogeneous cohort of people negotiating their identity as “Cubans.”

Social categories

Like other historians of Cuba in the United States, I have tried to use categories and descriptors that emerge from within 19th century Cuba, and as they were used by the actors living at this specific time and place (Ferrer 1999). However, the complexity of colonial Cuba’s systems of classification, as they were legally established and used in practice, makes the task of referring to historical actors with homogenizing categories inevitably problematic. Nonetheless it is indispensable for analytical purposes to use and choose general social group categories. I have chosen not to use the term “Afro-Cuban” to refer to people from African descent in the Cuban 19th century because this category has its own local history rooted in the writings of early to mid 20th century white Cuban intellectuals, notably Fernando Ortíz. “Afro-Cuban” is also a category that relates to racial and ethnic systems of categorization and racial politics specific to the United States. Using it, indirectly projects onto historical subjects, categories stemming from outside the historical and geographical specificity to 19th century Cuban society (Ferrer 1999: 10).

For analytical purposes I have chosen to use the term “people of color” to generally refer to African descendants in Cuba, which I use interchangeably with “blacks and mulatos/as.” I use the word “black” in reference to historical records of words negro / negra or moreno / morena and the word “mulato/a” in its original Spanish form in reference to the record of words mulatos,
mulatas and pardos, pardas. These two general racial categories capture the numerical and social preeminence of the segment of the population of African descent in Havana and the major class and political (specifically military) divisions that structured these classifications (Paquette 1988, Barcia 2009, Chapeaux 1971). “People of color” is a variation of the emic category “raza de color” re-signified and mobilized by black activists gathered around the collective political struggle for rights since the 1860’s in Cuba. “People of color” also has a historically specific connotation in the United States as the politically correct term in the context of contemporary racial politics. My choice to combine English and Spanish, emic and etic categories symbolizes my wish to speak to a wider readership in Cuba and Latin America, and not exclusively in the United States.

With respect to class categorizations, I have used “middle class” and “elite” interchangeably in reference to the free, lighter skinned and economically influential class of mulatos/as in Havana. My use of the words reflects the inherent relativity of status measures from different “center” points in the social structure. From the perspective of the free colored community, wealthy Havana mulato artisan and militia families were an “elite” within their community. However, at the higher end of the structure, free people of color were a “middle class” sharing a space with other working, “lower” class whites. In terms of gender, I have used the term “lady” to translate for the word “señora” and “doña” which were honorific prefixes almost always reserved for white women, regardless of class. “Señora” is the class specific counterpart to mulata or negra which signaled the lower status of women of color with respect to white women. The same applies for men with regards to “don” and “señor” vis-à-vis “mulato,” “moreno,” “negro,” “pardo”. As I explain in Chapter 3, honorifics were exceptionally granted to distinguished members of artisan and military corporations of blacks and mulatos in the cities.

Finally, any choice of terminology will always only partially capture the constructedness and fluidity of racial, color, class and gender lines, which were always contingent to and intersecting with a wide array of markers of status, not the least of which is the subject of this dissertation, i.e. cultural and bodily practices.

Chapter outline

Chapter 2 introduces the dissertation by contextualizing the emergence and cultural construction of the distinctive class of free blacks and mulatos/as since the late 18th century as
economic subjects defined by an ethics of hard-work. The culturalist as opposed to biologicist character in the racial discourse of José Antonio Saco is examined. Saco was as a major spokesperson of the liberal intellectual creole elite in the first half of the century. Reacting to the racialization of occupations produced by the ample engagement of free blacks in urban trades, Saco advocated for white middle classes to “take back” these occupations so as to whiten or sanitize an emerging and distinctively Cuban cultural model. Saco’s radical (for his time) view on work ethics formed part of a new system of aesthetic and moral categorization around which the bourgeois project of national imagining led by creole intellectuals in the first half of the century was structured.

Chapter 3 analyzes the political implications of the transgressions of elite men of color into the symbolic realms of white dominant classes through their strategic appropriation of markers of prestige and privilege including money, property holding, slaveholding, and nobility. It offers an alternate reading of the race and class-centered narrative of *La Escalera*, to highlight the gendered and performative elements in this narrative. I examine free men of color’s performance and negotiation of symbols of political and economic prestige through their participation in colonial militias, African mutual aid societies and involvement in insurgent actions during the first half of the century. I show how their active performance of dress and icons of military prestige informed the often-overlooked gendered dimensions of the “black threat” as a distinctively masculine cultural construct.

Chapter 4 introduces the discussion on the performativity of space by examining the political economy of Havana’s urbanization since the early 19th century. Newly built spatial configurations enabled the shaping of distinctively bourgeois bodies and subjectivities framed around novel practices of promenading, outdoor shopping, theater going and consumption of “high” cultural commodities such as Opera. In approaching Havana as a set of representations, I examine the negotiations over the “respectability” of Havana in the global stage through dominant imaginaries created by local and foreign elites. In their urban imaginaries these authors assigned different kinds of bodies a “proper” place within the city’s limits. In this context, I examine the ideology of the “ornate” underwritten in Cuba’s police edicts or *bandos de buen gobierno*. The ornate or “adecentamiento” (to tidy up or make decent) was a highly affective and aesthetic mechanism of governance of body proximities, aimed towards regulating place in terms of sensory distances in the visual and auditory scapes of Havana.
Chapter 5 is an exercise to historicize the highly affective and embodied emergent categories of good manners, taste and sabor as they informed the 19th century historical shift in aesthetic and moral standards of social differentiation. This shift in Cuba’s “structures of feeling” was informed by the coordinated program of moral education by Havana’s intellectual creole elite channeled through literature, the press and the educational system. Especially instrumental was the new 19th century genre known as “Manuals of Urbanity.” These mandatory school texts placed the deeply stylized and emotional bourgeois body, shaped in the image of white creole elites, as the cultural model of their national imaginary under construction. Two of such texts are examined, El Arte de vivir en el Mundo by Buenaventura Pascual Ferrer (1841) and Nuevo Tratado de Urbanidad, Buenas Maneras y Etiqueta, by José María de la Torre (1857). The chapter further examines the negotiations of emergent categories of “good manners” and “taste” by middle class whites and free people of color in the workforce, all the while creole elites’ pushed forth an agenda of aesthetic cleansing by removing the visual arts, midwifery, education and other professions from the labor and bodies of people of color. The developing aesthetic category of sabor—an embodied skill of discernment of feelings and performances unique to African-influenced Cuban music and dance—challenged creole elite’s efforts of boundary drawing, setting precedence for the embracement of mestizaje into new prospects Cuban nationality during the second half of the century.

Chapter 6 explores the problematic of colonial discourse by examining the construction of two often-neglected masculine figures in analyses of Cuban costumbrismo. The Cuban “petimetre,” a Europeanized creole white male dandy or fop, evolved in counterpoint to its racial counter-figure, the “uppity” light-skinned, Westernized Cuban mulato. Generally portrayed as obsessed arrivistes and “fake” mimics of their respective cultural models, the petimetre and the bourgeois mulato were characteristically ambivalent subjects, who experienced radically different fates. While the rising creole bourgeoisie eventually recognized and normalized himself upon the once scorned petimetre, the educated bourgeois mulato paid very dearly at La Escalera for following the civilizing mission’s mandate of cultural mimicry. I examine the strategic manipulation of elite free people of color of technologies of distinction such as dress and dance, thus breaking with the idea of a passive or mechanical mimicry. Rather, free blacks emerged as cultural knowledge authorities, as active molders and models who designed and controlled developing technologies of manners, structures of feeling and taste.
Chapter 7 turns attention to feminine constructs in Cuban literary and visual costumbrismo and travel literature. I read imaginaries of women in Havana as rich ethnographic texts that transmit the specific interests, aspirations and politics of their authors. A synchronic reading of antithetical mainstream images of white elite women in carriages vs. provocative mulata streetwalkers and smokers on an around mid century conveys an imaginary of Havana as a disciplined colony ordered by strict gender and racial boundaries. In turn, examining portrayals of women over the course of the century exposes the changing perceptions of white elites about social permeability. Towards the 1880’s in the midst of political combat over Cuba’s independence, prostitution and danzón, an African influenced local music and dance genre, became recurrent themes over which Cubans and Spaniards debated the fate of the colony. Reading across different spatial, chronological frames and archival sources exposed the strategic silencing by Cuban costumbristas of images of elite white women smoking, confirming the important role that women served in framing respectable images and imaginaries of Havana and Cuba.

Chapter 8 concludes the dissertation by providing a critical engagement with concepts of public sphere, public space, popular culture and imagined communities as they are useful to understand the performative and pedagogic dimensions in processes of difference-creation and nation-building in 19th century Havana. The chapter contextualizes the conditions of production, circulation and consumption of books of conduct within the expansion of print literature and its role in the creole bourgeois early project of national imagining. I examine Domingo Del Monte’s literary tertulias as an embryonic public sphere and public space, which played a crucial role in shaping a common sense imaginary based on bourgeois value standards upon which subsequent negotiations of nationhood played out. I highlight the discursive and material shaping of two major ideological instruments of the creole bourgeoisie, costumbrismo (Cuba’s vernacular literary school) and urbanity (a moral pedagogical system), as complementary technologies of habitus creation and bodily governance through space. Through satirical realistic literature and moralist didacticism, creole educators, writers and artists created highly spatialized and performative regimes for molding and localizing the body in real and imagined local and national space and time. Moving beyond important contributions by scholars of vernacular bufo theater, I expose the spatial and chronological everyday dimensions of the performativity and pedagogy of cubanidad. Finally, I demonstrate the fundamental role of measures of morality and culture in
the formation of a cultural citizenship upon which emergent processes of national belonging based on race, gender and class were negotiated.
Chapter 2 – (De) racializing Work and Culturalizing Race at the turn of the Eighteenth century

During the first half of the 19th century, Havana society developed under increasingly conflicted racial, class and gender relations. These relations played out within the complex system of social stratification historically and ideologically informed by major transformations occurring at the turn of the 18th century. This chapter introduces the dissertation by analyzing the specific socio-structural and economic conditions that informed the growing social and specifically racial tensions between the 1830’s and 1850’s in Cuba. Specifically I discuss the socio-cultural and demographic context in the late 18th century through which a distinctive class of free blacks and mulatos, the descendants of enslaved Africans and Spanish colonizers, were constructed as economic subjects defined by an ethics of hard-work. The racialization of occupations that occurred throughout this process informed a symbolic and social re-structuring marked by the consolidation of a class of urban free blacks, who represented an uncomfortable “in-between” category between otherwise clearly marked racial classes determined by master-slave relationships.

The growing economic, social and political influence of this middle class of color became of special concern to Cuban white intellectuals and social reformers in the first three decades of the 19th century. An important spokesperson of the intellectual creole elite in the 1830’s and 1840’s was the lawyer and anti-slavery advocate, José Antonio Saco. In the second section, I discuss the markedly cultural aspects of Saco’s discourse on work-ethics and race. I demonstrate the culturalist as opposed to biologicist character of a major race ideologue in the 1820’s and 1830’s speaking to the broader dissertation argument about the centrality of cultural and bodily practices to constructions of social difference in 19th century Cuban society. In advocating to “take back” for white middle classes the occupations historically performed by free blacks and mulatos, Saco called to de-racialize work so as to use it as a defining measure of whiteness and “civilization,” under the new, cutting-edge narrative of modernization and enlightenment. I introduce this discussion with a brief overview of the historical and ideological context in the late 18th through mid 19th century, namely, the Africanization of Cuba and the 1844 repression of La Escalera as key referent points to periodize the politics of racial, class and political relations at this key transformative moment in 19th century Havana and Cuba.
La Escalera against the backdrop of Cuba’s “Africanization” scare

The overarching narrative of fear of the “Africanization of Cuba” informed political and racial tensions particularly during the first half of the 19th century. The “Africanization of Cuba” refers both to a specific historical moment as well as to a multivalent discourse and cultural imaginary that informed social processes of power throughout the 19th century in both Cuba and the United States (Yelvington 2006, Stolcke 1989, Urban 1957). The idea of Africanization contained elements of the political economy of race relations in a slave society in deep interrelation with the cultural dimensions that informed the anxieties of the white population over imperial actions and the perceived dangerous consequences of a presaged black revolt. The victory of the Haitian revolution in 1804 represented for Cuban elites the dreadful testimony of a prosperous colony transformed into a black republic upon a successful uprising of African slaves and their descendants, producing slave emancipation as a pre-condition to colonial liberation. In this context, “Africanization” in Cuba was also associated with the possibility of slavery abolition promoted by Britain and France for Spain to enforce on its colonies.

Since the 1820’s the United States government expressed interest in colonizing Cuba. As the wane of Spanish domination was foreseen in the context of 19th century wars of independence in Spanish America, U.S. officials predicted the “gravitation” of Cuba to U.S. possession. In 1854 abolitionists from the North and of Europe interrupted plans by Southern expansionist planters to purchase Cuba in coordination with an “annexionist” segment of Cuban creole elite. Opponents of abolition assumed that with abolition would come rebellion, the extermination of whites, civilization and Christianity and the possibility to annex Cuba as a southern slave state of the United States (Urban 1957). Demographic changes driven by the increase in slave population also triggered fears of Africanization and the succession of black-led conspiracies taking place during the first half of the 19th century only helped to boost these anxieties. In this context, “Haiti” and “Africa” became critical cultural constructs and powerful imaginaries that structured political action and social relations within complex moral topographies (Torres and Whitten 1998). These constructs a became politically and culturally signified as “black” and linked to imageries of uncontrolled revolt and an “incomplete revolution” that attempted to jeopardize the prevalent colonial cultural and political order (Whitten and Torres 1998).
The political conflict and anxiety surrounding the fear of Cuba’s Africanization reached a high point in the episode of La Escalera in 1833-1844. This event is a key reference point in the analysis of the transformations in political and racial discourse throughout the 19th century. A strong correlation between race and class informed the structuring of Havana’s society, where a developing class of free blacks and *mulatos* in the city mediated the polarity between white Cuban planters and African slaves. Cuban creole intellectuals emerged as a class that represented, for the most part, the interests of the creole planter class. Middle and lower classes were comprised of both white and black Cuban working classes as well as a class of Spanish immigrants who dominated commerce in the cities and particularly the highly profitable slave trade. Especially since the 1830’s with the policy of exclusion of Cuban nationals from government office, Spanish officials dominated the administrative and political positions. Movements for greater political and economic autonomy lead by Cuban planters and intellectuals, as well as conspiratorial efforts lead by free blacks and *mulatos* were brutally quenched by the Spanish administration in 1833 and 1844 in the repression known as La Escalera.

Airs of emancipation reemerged with force during the 1860’s in the context of the three Cuban wars of liberation (1868-1878, 1879-1880) and the independence war (1895-1898). Also during the second half of the century came the consolidation of labor movements and a Cuban rebel movement for independence. Independence leaders from the creole intellectual and planter class mobilized supporters of color through the manumission of slaves marking the first call for independence in 1868. The first two wars of liberation (1868-1878; 1879-1880) unleashed a process of gradual abolition of slavery, which was officially proclaimed in 1886. During this period, the emergence of a discourse of racial homogeneity endorsed by Cuban rebels as a strategy to mobilize supporters of color marked an important shift with the racial and social discourses of the first half of the 19th century, whereby otherwise disparate efforts by white and black Cubans were unified towards a common goal of independence as a venue for both racial and colonial emancipation.

Debates about *La Escalera* have focused largely on whether one or several plots by free and enslaved blacks to launch an island-wide rebellion aimed to destroy colonialism, the slavery system and establish a political regime similar to Haiti actually existed. There are elements that lend support to the belief that the “conspiracy” unfolding in Havana and Matanzas uncovered
several months after a series of slave rebellions in 1843, could have been a fabrication of the colonial state to eliminate any possible manifestation or action to challenge white colonial power. Massive executions, expulsions and imprisonment of slaves and free Cuban and foreign black men, as well as several whites, accompanied the use of intimidation and terrorizing techniques like torture and the public display of victims’ mutilated corpses. Doubts rose about whether the alleged actors involved—including pro-abolition whites—were forced to confess theirs’ or others’ involvement under the inquisitorial method used by the colonial Military Commission of Captain General O’Donell. Many of the alleged leaders were accused and sentenced without evidence (Paquette 1988, Barcia and Barcia 2001). Nearly all of the free blacks and mulattos with a degree of economic and social influence within the white and black community alike were accused of being involved. The most notable figures within each of the most valued professions, including teachers, tailors, militiamen, foremen, musicians, writers, phlebotomists and dentists, were imprisoned, killed or expropriated of their possessions. Among these, only one woman of color, a well-reputed midwife, is known to have been accused for her familial ties with one of the supposed ringleaders of the conspiracy (Chapeaux 1971).

Whether real or fabricated, historians agree that La Escalera represents the crystallization of whites’ racial fears about a possible black takeover. Ever since the Haitian revolution, whites in Cuba had been haunted by the imaginary of the slaves’ brutal repression of whites during the insurrection in neighboring Saint Domingue. This image was exacerbated by over half a decade of subsequent slave uprisings in Cuba and the trend towards independence in other former colonies of Spain. However, La Escalera was distinctive in that its repression was not directly targeted to slaves, but more strongly to free people of color. According to the sentences, about 70% of a total of about 3066 alleged participants were free blacks including entrepreneurs, soldiers and immigrants from other colonies, compared to 25% slaves, out of which only 10 % came from plantations10 (Barcia and Barcia 2001). How did free blacks and mulattos come to be constructed as major political and economic threats and the major targets of this repression?

The following section discusses the social and economic conditions in the 18th century informing the development of an urban, working class of free people of color. This burgeoning

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10 These are nation-wide estimates of arrests. Barcia reported that nearly 50% of all the executed, almost all of the exiled were free blacks (Barcia 2009: 303). The repression concentrated in the cities of Havana and Matanzas where the conspiracies presumably had been unfolding. Havana’s population in 1828 had 112,023 residents, of which only about 41% were white (Paquette 1988).
class of color stood out and constructed a distinct identity from the rest of the population of African descent, both free and enslaved, and from the dominant classes of white Spanish and Cubans in the first half of the 19th century. They worked their way out of slavery and scaled up the social hierarchy through their work in the cities, aided by established legal institutions, particularly the practice of coartación or self-purchase of freedom, the social and economic resources obtained through kin and non-kin networks, such as the mutual-aid associations of Africans or cabildos. “Work” was a crucial category and practice around which this class of color defined their subjectivity. I demonstrate how in the process of transition from enslaved to free, the occupations performed by slaves became racialized and constructed as definitive of the subjectivity of blacks in general and free blacks in particular.

**Work, freedom and the emerging class of free people of color**

Historians set the moment of economic expansion of sugar plantations coinciding with deep social and political impacts of the Haitian Revolution in Cuba as turning point in the periodization of Cuba’s social and economic history. In the context of a cycle of expansion in the world economy, world sugar production grew between 1792 and 1842. The expansion of the sugar complex in Cuba was concurrent to its demise in the neighboring French colony of Saint Domingue following the revolution of 1791. For Spanish authorities and Cuban planters, the Haitian revolution was a unique opportunity to fill in the vacuum left by Haiti in the world supply of sugar (Pérez 1992). By 1830’s Cuba was the world largest producer of sugar, making the slave-trade a profitable business growing along with the expansion of the sugar economy dramatically changing the island’s racial demographic composition. As the sugar industry consolidated, African slave importation increased in elevated numbers. In fact the majority of the African population in the 19th century was brought to Cuba after 1790, the period of greatest importation being between 1815 through 1844 (Walker 2004). The faster rate at which the black population grew with respect to the white eventually resulted in an inversion of the slave to free and black to white population ratios over this period, producing a sense of vulnerability among the dominant white elites in Cuba and making census demographic figures an instrument and expression of their perceived loss of control11 (Childs 2001).

11 An expression of these anxieties were the systematic efforts to gather census data classified along racial lines to track the growing black population of the island, particularly since the 1790’s. Matt Childs describes the attitudes of
The development of plantation slavery in the western section of Cuba in the late 1700’s impacted the form of the race relations in Cuban and Havana’s society at large after the sugar boom, especially altering master-slave relations in the plantations. To illustrate this change, historians like Moreno Fraginals and Alejandro de la Fuente described Cuba in the centuries previous to the sugar boom as “a society with slaves and not a slave society” (De la Fuente 2007: 663). Relations between the dominant class of Spanish and Cuban whites and the subordinate class of slaves and free people of color went from more personalized and, in the words of Luz Mena, “racially tolerant” (2001) in the years previous to the sugar boom in the 1790’s to a society polarized along racial lines and heightened racial prejudice in the early decades of the 19th century with the expansion of the sugar estates. In the centuries previous to the sugar boom, slavery was largely and urban and the forms of servitude were mainly domestic. Masters owned only a few slaves, many of whom worked as domestic servants in comparison to hundreds that worked in plantations after the expansion of sugar estates. During most of the 17th and 18th centuries, masters shared their living space in close, intimate and everyday contact with their slaves. This made master-slave relations more personalized, also described as “patriarchal” in allusion to the protective role of the master, or “soft,” to describe their better living conditions and milder forms of punishment. These relations were in contrast to the conditions of slaves in colonies of England and other non-Hispanic sugar colonies and those that developed in Cuba after the massive slave-importation of the early 19th century in Cuba (Moreno Fraginals 1986: 3, Knight 1970). The social conditions were such in Hispanic-Caribbean colonies that slaves could more easily constitute families, gain their freedom and have a degree of social and economic autonomy. The idea of the relative facility of slaves to gain their freedom requires acknowledging the significant obstacles that in many cases masters placed on the process of coartación, the right to gradual self-purchase of slaves that allowed them to obtain their freedom (see footnote 15). For instance, masters would often set extremely high purchase prices (unaffordable to slaves) and adulterate the amounts slaves already paid towards completing their purchase (Pérez de la Riva in González 1992: 178). The complex ways in which this process was negotiated between slaves and masters, as well as the recourses that slaves had available to enforce their rights are discussed at length by De la Fuente (2007) and Childs (2001, 2006).

whites towards census at the time as “obsessive” over population increase and the need to quantify and classify it (Childs 2001: 134).
Specifically in the city of Havana\textsuperscript{12}, the relatively balanced sex ratio among slaves (47% men vs. 53% women) mediated by the influence of the Catholic Church in encouraging marriage can explain this phenomenon\textsuperscript{13}. The majority of the population was free and white, but a significant percentage of free people were of African ancestry (43%). Miscegenation with whites produced a population of racially mixed \textit{mulatos/as}, who were overwhelmingly free (85%), suggesting that white parents may have facilitated resources or allowed the freedom of their offspring (Moreno Fraginals 1986: 5). This social atmosphere contrasted with the highly impersonal relations of in the large sugar plantations of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, characterized by the brutality in the treatment and working conditions of slaves in the sugar mills, their isolation from the domestic realm of the masters, and the reduced privileges and opportunities for social advancement and freedom. The different treatment and conditions of slaves in plantations and the dramatic numeric increase and presence of black slaves imported to service the sugar industry, which soon in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century came to outnumber whites influenced the association of slavery with African ancestry in people’s perceptions. Historians argue that these conditions caused a growing social prejudice against all people of color—and not just slaves—and motivated measures to contain their influence in Cuban society in the first half of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century (Childs 2001, Mena 2001, Helg 2011, Knight 1970). Harry Hoetink (1971) views these negative attitudes specifically channelled towards the free people of color. The increase of African slave population in Cuban society effected the relative valuation of legal status in relation to color shades. Thus a majority of free black population came to be considered closer to black (and to the condition of slavery) and more distant from the higher-valued lighter skinned “\textit{mulato}”.

\textsuperscript{12} Only an incipient plantation area existed at this time (1770) in the outskirts of Havana with a majority of slave, black and male population (between 70-80%) (Moreno Fraginals 1986: 5).

\textsuperscript{13} Regulations to promote marriage among enslaved populations in Cuba were both an initiative of the Catholic Church, for moralistic reasons (to proscribe consensual unions and formalize them at the church), but also of the colonial state, for purposes of social control. For instance, slave regulations current up until the end of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century required the establishment of a separate room for married couples as a surveillance mechanism during their hours of sleep (Barcia 2009: 330). However, especially in plantations, the colonial state enforced measures to deter the creation and maintenance of African-descended familial units, for instance by maintaining disproportionately male/female ratios (Walker 2004). Nonetheless, other studies have demonstrated that in spite of the hostile environment, familiar ties persisted among slaves in plantations, who valued a particular ideal of family that might have been different from the western and bourgeois concept of family, which was tied to the institution of marriage and the Catholic tradition. Pérez Murillo 1988)
Thus, free people of color appeared to be “swamped” (Knight 1970) or “sandwiched” (Paquette 1998) in between the white master class and the African slaves.\footnote{Urban slavery as well as coffee and tobacco farms and cattle raising are important points of contrast to the harsher living conditions and master-slave relations that characterized plantation slavery (Pérez 2001, Knight 1970). I elaborate on the differences between urban and plantation slave conditions below.}

During the long centuries of “relaxed” racial tensions previous to the sugar-led economic growth in the late 18\textsuperscript{th} century, people of color planted the seeds of the social and economic development that they managed in spite of social and legal barriers. Both slave and free blacks monopolized important sectors of Havana’s booming service economy and participated actively in the mercantile life of the city, which earned them a degree of autonomy. Slaves mastered several trades and owned their own shops, hired themselves out, lived independently in personal homes, “operated inns, taverns and other commercial establishments” (De la Fuente 2007: 664). They also worked in the cities as cigar rollers, construction workers, skilled artisans and peddlers (Sublette 2004). Their participation in the market and city life allowed them to gain knowledge of economic and social skills to navigate the complex Spanish legal system to their own advantage. Mutual aid organizations of people of African descent or \textit{cabildos} played a key role in providing both financial resources and assessment to aid recently arrived Africans adapt to the new social and cultural environment and claim rights. Aided by these networks, slaves took advantage of the lenient Spanish legal codes that allowed for manumission (granting of freedom by masters) and self-purchase or \textit{coartación}\footnote{The laws of \textit{coartación} were customary, i.e. they only existed in practice as they were not established in written law, and likely emerged as a “pragmatic response” to slaves initiatives and actions to challenge their subordinate condition. (De La Fuente 661) Other privileges endowed to \textit{coartado} slaves included the right to change masters in case of mistreatment as well as to the legal assessment of colonial state appointed lawyers or “\textit{sindicos}” to represent slaves in legal tribunals. Colonial \textit{sindicos} were the intermediaries between slaves and the colonial state and acted as defendants of slaves’ interests and rights by bringing charges against masters for alleged abuses or simply slaves’ will to change masters, sometimes for no particular reason. These efforts were directed to “standardize and restrict master punishment” aimed to guarantee the stability of slavery in the future. These practices produced tensions between colonial government and sugar planters who saw the regulations as an assault to their authority as masters and to their “property rights”(Childs 2001, De la Fuente 2007).} (Reid 2004). Laws of \textit{coartación}, legitimized as customary through centuries of slaves’ actions of resistance and fights for emancipation, allowed slaves to purchase their freedom by earning money through work on weekends, marketing goods, participating in contraband trade, and engaging in a series of manual trades that were disdained by white people (Childs 2001). Urban slaves had greater opportunities for making money by working on skilled trades in cities than plantation slaves, although the latter often found extra-
legal ways to earn the necessary means to buy their freedom, at which point the usual trajectory was to migrate to towns and cities.

A slave became *coartado*—or partially enslaved—after he or she had placed a down payment on a fixed purchase price, entering a contract to finance his/her freedom until the price was paid in full. Masters rented out the slave for his or her services and slaves could usually keep earnings above the rental payments or a set portion of them, while the rest went to their master. This system motivated masters to allow the slave to be trained in artisan trades; the more qualified skills the slave had, the higher profits for the master. While this system increased the master’s profits from rental, it also provided an avenue for freedom for the slave, who eventually left the master after successfully paying-off his value through work.\(^ {16}\)

Historian Moreno Fraginals has argued that in the process of becoming a skilled artisan, an urban slave was “situated within the dominant cultural values” of the white class, “a highly qualified artisan slave was definitely a worker that had internalized the patterns of conduct accepted by the white oligarchy” (Moreno Fraginals 1986: 7). For urban and domestic slaves living within white society, serving their everyday needs as well as those of a growing urban economy centered on the production of goods and services certainly demanded learning and becoming competent in the cultural norms, values and practices such as speaking, reading or writing the Spanish language, knowledge of arithmetic skills or, learning appropriate codes of behavior such as dress. These activities became the measure of the aspirations and possibilities of slaves upward social mobility, in part because they had the stimuli of concrete monetary and social rewards. Being brought to work as a domestic slave was an individual reward to those who demonstrated abilities and “good conduct” which meant higher cultural competence and submissive attitudes (Moreno Fraginals in Martínez 1992: 62, Rojas, 1998). Domestic slaves were also said to be better treated in comparison to plantation slaves, although there are countless examples that demonstrate the opposite\(^ {17}\). More broadly, the shift from plantation to city meant for a slave the possibility of learning a skill and working for money independently in the city and/or gaining freedom. Differences between plantation slaves and urban slaves, in turn divided

\(^{16}\) For a detailed discussion of *coartación* see De la Fuente (2007)

\(^{17}\) Literature and travelers accounts provide examples. See for instance, Condesa de Merlin “Viaje a la Habana” (1844), FélixTanco y Bosmeniel “Petrona y Rosalía,” Cuentos Cubanos del siglo XIX: Antología (1975) A suggestive example is the category “esclavas de placer” or “slaves of pleasure” in reference to female slaves that were forced to provide sexual services to white masters (Rojas 1998).
into domestic and “street” slaves—those who rented themselves as peddlers, traders or dock laborers—ultimately derived from their proximity to the masters and their cultural realm. There were certain privileges that domestic slaves received from their masters that were proportional to the amount of time and the physical proximity in living and interacting with masters, taking a part in their most basic everyday needs. For instance, slave women spent more time at home than the male slaves because of their role as caretakers. From their birth to their death, women slaves cared for their white masters, as their wet nurses, as their nannies who raised and taught white children of the house, later as their personal servants and taking care of them when they were ill or disabled. As a result of these proximities and probably the affective or condescending ties that emerged therefrom, women could sometimes be gratified with old or unwanted possessions of their masters, such as their dresses, which then the women slaves wore. Domestic slaves in general were better dressed than other types of slaves as white Cuban families used their slaves appearance and dress as an indicator of their wealth, which they were said to flaunt, especially at their Spanish rivals (González 1992). The frequent practice of god-parenting by whites of slave or free blacks’ children is another example of how urban residency opened up possibilities for blacks and mulattos to cultivate relationships with whites\(^\text{18}\). Proximities with well-established hierarchies started at early age between black and white children growing up as playmates and sharing a common space in the house of white masters. *Muleque* was the name given to children of slaves who served as a kind of mascots to white children (González 1998). Kin classifications such as “*hermanos de leche*” (foster siblings) denoted the affective ties between whites and people of African descent united by their common black wet nurse. These situations defined social relationships, affective and potential spaces for cultural mesh in spite of the deep racial divisions. As free men and women of color, recognized entrepreneurs providers of services to whites, as in the case of masons, dentists, tailors and midwives, musicians, and as part of mixed religious fraternities free blacks also cultivated important relations with whites in the city. There are important implications of these proximities in terms of the multi-directional cultural influence—to white upper classes by African cultural forms, and vice versa—on which I elaborate in forthcoming chapters.

\(^{18}\) Perera Díaz and Fuentes (2006) provide examples of what were called “padrinos de oficio” (godparents by trade), many of who were white, who served as godparents of a number of both black and white children throughout their lives and in some cases they were seen as suspicious for what was deemed as their “sympathy” with blacks (Perera Díaz and Fuentes 2006).

52
Historian Manuel Moreno Fraginals argues that that a free sector of blacks and *mulato* artisans of Havana with a degree of socio-economic standing consolidated in the late 18th century and emerged and developed from the process of enculturation of slaves into the urban economy and the dominant Spanish and Cuban white culture. Over decades of working in the city, this free class of blacks and *mulatos* came to dominate almost all the urban trades by the late 18th century until their physical dismantling by the colonial state during the repression of *La Escalera* in 1844. Their trades included manual occupations like shoemaking, tailoring (for men) and midwifery (for women); and the arts, like music, sculpture, painting and fine woodwork. Although language, behavior and legal codes could be classified more evidently as elements of the dominant white culture, it is less clear in historical discussions what was the social and cultural value given to the specific skilled or artisan occupations that slaves and free blacks appropriated and later came to define them as a distinct social class. At what point did these skills and occupations stop being considered “dominant” and became the distinctive marker of a black/*mulato* class in general and free people of color in particular? Placing “work” within the category of “dominant” social values and habits that people of color acquired during this process, seems contradictory in a society where “work” was largely done by slaves, free people of color, as well as by poor whites.  

Over centuries of interaction among indigenous, African and Spanish people in the colonies, a process of racialization and social ranking of specific occupations took place. For instance, in the early years of colonization African or Spanish blacks working as domestic slaves in the colonies acquired skills like cooking and baking from native indigenous people or introduced them from their own cultural baggage (Martínez 1992: 62). In the specific case of Cuba, references exist that African domestic slaves cooked African dishes for their masters (González 1992). Artisanship in particular, was an occupation of white Spaniards that was progressively transferred over to slaves through their training to supply the needs of growing population in Spanish colonial cities. Artisan labor became vital for the development and functioning of emerging colonial cities and a profitable enterprise for masters. Enculturated slaves—those *who* were culturally competent in the dominant language, knew the habits,  

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19 For instance, in reference to Moreno Fraginals’ work Luz Mena states “Social conditions in Cuba during the 1700’s were such that African slaves could more easily internalize the work habits, acquire jobs of whites, learn Spanish and learn about their rights” (Mena 2001: 40).
religious practices or could read and write and those who were trained in specific manual trades were more useful and rather profitable for masters as they could be rented as day laborers or peddlers (Martínez 1992: 61-64). In the case of coartado slaves, Moreno Fraginals calculated annual utilities for masters of about 30% of the investment made in their purchase of a slave for at least 15 years, at which point the slave purchased his freedom and paid-off his own value to the master (Moreno Fraginals 1982: 6). It was Spaniard (white) artisans who often taught their trades to slaves and free people of color through apprenticeship contracts. However, eventually the black and mulato apprentices became competitors of their white Spanish artisan teachers. By the 17th century blacks and mulatos had already reached the level of “masters” in artisan trades and were the majority of artisans in many Spanish colonies (Martínez 1992: 65). Nonetheless, there were instances when other black slave “masters” taught apprentice black slaves. This was the case of slaves working in civil and military construction projects as builders, stonemasons and carpenters in docks and fortresses.

Moreno Fraginals observes that in the 17th century these slaves learned from another black slave “master”, possibly from the English colony of Jamaica (Moreno Fraginals 1986: 6). Although in the case of artisans, Spanish merchants transmitted the knowledge to their apprentices of African descent, they might not have transmitted the values attached to this kind of work. Work acquired different meanings in the colonies and in the metropolis along the process of colonization and the resulting creation and legitimation of standards of value and power differentials. For native indigenous peoples and Africans brought as slaves to the Americas, the meaning of work was mediated by the conditions of coercion and force under which they engaged as colonized subjects. On the other hand at the core of Spaniards

20Fuentes observes that this was the case of black slaves brought from Spain to work in domestic service of masters in the colonies. Colonizers preferred this kind of enculturated slaves as opposed to those imported from Africa, who lacked these cultural skills. Blacks that came to Cuba either as slaves or as free were identified as ladino/a and were held in higher social estimation in the social hierarchy compared to Africans (Rojas 1998) In the 19th century, literacy rates among blacks and mulatos was low given the inexistence of schools for blacks until mid 19th century and the overall reluctance of white elites and authorities to their learning for political reasons. As black population increased, reading and writing skills by blacks were seen as a potentially dangerous instrument that could –and in fact did- facilitate mobilization. Language skills also gave blacks important advantages, as in their ability to navigate the legal system to their advantage. As such, literacy was likely to be correlated with socio-economic status and leadership in the community. In spite of the obstacles, the census in 1861 estimated a 12% of free blacks could read and write. Given the low access to education, blacks and mulatos were likely to be self-taught, or taught by members of the community or as apprentices and in a few cases by “benevolent” masters. Also it is likely that most blacks and mulatos learned to read and write in adulthood. The few schools that admitted blacks and mulatos were directed by Catholic ordinances (Huerta 1992, Mena 2001, Barcia 2009, Chapeaux 1971).
conceptions of work was the “persistent medieval concept of the hidalgo, the feudal lord who obtained his money through conquest or high birth but disdained work” (Sublette 2004: 66). Since the 16th century colonization brought enormous riches extracted from the colonies and the Spanish economy was sustained by tributes and conquest. Spanish societies, like the Castilian, had a military and aristocratic structure that measured status by ideas of nobility. Scorn for economically productive work combined with ideas of nobility left commerce and trade in cities a domain of foreigners, while soldiers and clerics were the only respected professions. These values and attitudes towards work were carried over to the colonies where “colonial tradesmen were ashamed of their office and as soon as practical purchased a slave to do their work for them” (Sublette 2004: 66, 67). From this analysis it is evident that being a Spanish artisan in 17th and 18th century Havana had radically different meanings compared to their emergent artisan competitors of African descent, for whom learning a trade and working had attached the possibility of freedom and upward social mobility.

More broadly, jobs that required a higher level of skill like carpentry and tailoring were reserved for the free blacks and mulatos and were better paid, while heavier physical jobs such as loading, wood-cutting and others were left for the slaves (Martinez 1992: 64). Differences between African slaves also named bozales if recently arrived from Africa and Cuban-born slaves or criollos were also reflected in this occupational ladder. Creole slaves had high chances of being freed, especially if born of a white parent and socialized into the culture from their childhood, thus they tended to be trained and work in the higher-valued trades, especially if they were mulatos. By a similar reasoning that manual or artisan trades were stigmatized, personal services involving physical contact were associated with servitude, and black women performed most of these jobs. Women slaves worked predominantly in domestic chores, especially in the care of infants and the ill, as midwives and teachers of small children. They were also day laborers and peddlers. Although their professions may not have been the highest ranked in terms of remuneration and or prestige as other black and mulato male occupations like phlebotomy or tailoring, women had several advantages that facilitated their potential to gain freedom. Women slaves predominated in the urban labor force in numeric terms with respect to men, showed higher tendencies to save, and their presence in cities enabled the development of valuable social networks and increased their access to legal recourses and intermediary authorities (De la Fuente 2007: 667, Moreno Fraginals 1986: 7). This and other factors explain that women were the
majority of coartadas—partially enslaved—and had higher rates of manumission compared to men.21

In this long process of racialization, gendering and social ranking of labor, specific occupations with a degree of skill became institutionalized, culturally as jobs of slaves or blacks and mulatos/as in general. Because in Cuba, the process of skill learning and skilled laboring was deeply intertwined with the institution of coartación, which defined the transition from slavery to freedom, work in general and artisanship in particular came to define the subjectivity of people of African descent as a distinct class, in their transition to and after reaching the stage of freedom and in their continued pursuit of a better life for themselves and their families. Therefore for people of African descent at the turn of the 18th century, the meaning of “work”—especially skilled work—as an important avenue to freedom and upward social and economic mobility.

The strong presence, mobility and visibility of artisans of color in the city’s everyday functioning was also crucial in defining a distinctively “urban” subjectivity. Plantation slavery was the reference point of the least desirable state of living, while the city had the association of both freedom and economic advancement through (skilled) work.22 In the city, people of color fueled with their labor the growing service industry attending to the new habits and consumption patterns by white elites of city in the path towards modernity. For instance specific occupations, such as tailoring, gained their prestige from the strategic location of people of color in the city and social structure. Well-reputed free blacks and mulatto tailors designed European-fashioned attires of the wealthy aristocrats and cultivated social relations in all social levels. As they slowly appropriated some of these “urban” norms and values for themselves, new forms of behavior and consumption became markers of class status by which free blacks distanced themselves, culturally even further from slavery.

21 Women slaves also gained their freedom at earlier age than men, and a higher proportion of them were granted freedom as a gift in the testament of a deceased owner or in gratitude for their services (Moreno Fraginals 1986). De la Fuente observes that gender ideologies and family considerations can explain this phenomenon. Slaves took advantage of the ambiguities in legislation of slave families which they manipulated to their advantage, for instance, by “invoking paternal or maternal bonds to demand the manumission of a child” or “invoking the sanctity of marriage to press claims on behalf of their enslaved spouses” (De la Fuente 2007: 667).

22 The imaginary that divided urban and rural into two opposing poles was further emphasized through disciplinary practices, whereby domestic and urban slaves where threatened with being brought back to plantations as punishment for their errors, thereby loosing their opportunity to gaining their freedom through work and self-purchase (Childs 2001: 170).
By the early decades of the 19th century, occupation was a marker of both class and legal status, by which free people of color were recognized as a distinct social class. Hard-work and success were values by which they were defined in contrast to slaves, in relation to whites, as well as within the heterogeneous sector of free blacks and mulatos.

In 1831, the prominent Cuban social critic and early nationalist philosopher José Antonio Saco (1797-1879) reflected upon the prevalent occupational hierarchy in the 1830’s and the legal and cultural barriers that prevented mobility of social classes across it. At one extreme slaves were confined to agricultural work, whites were concentrated in medical, legal and religious professions and the free people of color in between dominating the artisan professions. His own views of how this came about were revealing. He lamented, “… its been long since any white artisans have been seen in our soil …”; “…it was expected that no Cuban white would dedicate himself to the arts, because by embracing them, it seemed that he was resigning to the privileges of his class: this was how all [the arts] came to be the exclusive patrimony of the people of color” (Saco 1974 [1831]: 205).

In the following section, I analyze the cultural discourses on racial difference that defined an emergent intellectual and aristocratic class of Cuban whites or criollos of which Saco was a prominent figure. Saco’s elaboration of a liberal discourse of work ethics and his proposal to de-racialize artisan work built upon—ironically—his acknowledgement of the value and qualities of the class of free black and mulato artisans. As such his discourse exemplifies the deep contradictions and ambivalent attitudes of Cuban criollos towards the idea of social classification and racial mixing, which oscillated between dependency and rejection, desire and fear (Stallybrass and White 1986, Mena 2001). Analyzing Saco’s ideas on racial difference reveals the importance of cultural and class elements prevalent among pioneering social reformers’ projects for social differentiation during the first half of the 19th century.

**Work ethic racialization: Saco and the Cuban “racist intelligentsia” (1830-1860)**

José Antonio Saco was the precursor of a discourse of work ethics that revolutionized ideas of his time, which he developed in his influential essay *Memoria sobre la Vagancia en Cuba* (*Memory on Vagrancy in Cuba*) (1974 [1831]). Influenced by Enlightenment ideas, he elevated “work” to a high moral tenet, challenging the old-dated stigma attached to physical and manual work both from the Spanish tradition of *hidalguía* as well as from the specific historical
conditions by which “work” came to be associated in colonial Cuba with an inferior social class of enslaved and free blacks and *mulatos/as*. He asserted that work is a *virtue*, which along with education, was capable of transforming Cubans into moral and civilized citizens and Havana into a modern and orderly city and society in the path towards self-governance and nationhood (Saco 1974: 179). He pointed at popular entertainment and leisure activities, like gambling, cockfights, street fairs as activities that dissipated (especially poor white) residents’ time and energy from engaging in productive activities and “higher” or “cultivated” forms of leisure. He considered reading, promenading, and even singing and dancing as “rational and productive” only if these are not accompanied by gambling as it often happened among both the rich and the poor. Good work and leisure habits could be achieved through the expansion of schools and reform of educational curricula to expand the occupational options, cultural centers and libraries, by eliminating vicious activities that corrupted individuals, and more importantly by breaking the cultural and legal barriers that prevented the mobility of poor whites, free blacks and slaves across Havana’s occupational boundaries. His text is clear in that policing and regulating gambling and vagrancy will not be sufficient to bring about change. Since there is always a way around the system with prevailing corruption at all levels—from the circles of lawyers, to the dishonest habits of slaves—he proclaimed “…its time to start making a revolution of habits” to transform society, where individuals act from moral principles rather than from fear of punishment (Saco 1974: 19).

Saco’s predecessor and teacher was the radical Catholic priest Félix Varela (1788-1853) who is considered a precursor of liberal political thought in Cuba. Varela influenced a generation of Cuban nationalist thinkers, in addition to Saco, the writers Domingo del Monte, José de la Luz y Caballero and others with his revolutionary philosophy of education, abolition of slavery, patriotic values, and humanistic thought. Influenced by enlightenment philosophy, Varela taught his students a conception of morality grounded on the idea of common good and ideas of universal human or natural rights and equality. He placed high importance on patriotic sentiments understood as the love for the place of birth and residence. As such he was a pioneer proponent of abolition of slavery and the independence of Cuba from Spain, for which he was persecuted and exiled. More broadly, Varela was influenced by the social and ideological reforms occurring in Spain in the early 19th century, many of which were gathered in the 1812
Constitution, marking the transition in Spain to a liberal-capitalist system. Movements holding moral anti-slavery stances, human natural rights to freedom, property, and critiques of torture mechanisms and authoritarian rule marked this historical moment following the French and American revolutions (Paquette 1988: 115). Varela envisioned abolition and revolution as a path towards independence, done pacifically and led by a unified white population to prevent a possibly violent movement for justice by an oppressed mass of free and enslaved blacks (Miranda Francisco 2013). Although Saco, like Varela also opposed annexation to the United States, he favored autonomy so the island could control most of its internal affairs but remain Spanish (Opatrny 1994: 39).

Like Varela, Saco proclaimed the right to work and to own the product of labor and believed that changes in relations of production were essential to Cuba’s freedom, as individuals and as a collective. They criticized Spanish domination and exploitation of the island’s wealth for the benefit of the privileged classes (Liss 1987: 15). Although Saco’s political discourse presents clear elements to question his influence by Marxist critiques of capitalism and the class system or by Weber’s thesis of the influence of protestant religious values in the development of a modern capitalist work ethic in Europe, a closer look to Cuba’s ideological traditions during this period point away from this hypothesis. In his genealogical analysis of Cuban political thought, Liss (1987) observes that by the 1840’s Marx’s ideas about Spanish colonialism and U.S. imperialism were “virtually unknown in Cuba”, in spite of the profound awareness among the island’s intellectuals about U.S. expansionist ambitions (Liss 1987: 6). He notes that ideas about class struggle only reached Cuba in the 1860’s through the immigration of group of anarchosyndicalist laborers from Spain, which later influenced Cuba’s labor movement centered on the tobacco industry until the 1930’s with the establishment of the Communist Party. In attempting to see a parallel with a Marxist perspective of class conflict, Saco and his contemporaries understood the Cuban class system as fundamentally based on racial distinctions and the slavery system as the exploitative mechanism for capital accumulation. Exploitation of

23 Particularly after 1808 with the arrival of Napoleon’s army in the Iberian Peninsula, the Spanish empire’s political structure was transformed from one of an Ancien Regime towards the formation of a national state. Some of the changes included the introduction of the concept of citizen to replace that of the king’s vassal, rights to private property, and the ceasing of the land to be the king’s patrimonial possession. As this process advanced over the next decades, overseas territories including Cuba were reduced to the category of colonies (Aguilera Manzano 2009: 70). As a result in 1837 Cuba and Puerto Rico were separated from the Spanish courts which ratified their colonial condition. These territories were not subject to the new liberal constitution of Spain but to "special laws" that were never actually written (Barcia 1999).
the small white dominant class over the mass of enslaved blacks, would eventually lead to rebellion or revolution—in the fashion of neighboring Haiti. However, Liss notes, “his work conveyed familiarity with, but no scientific analysis of, Cuba’s relations of production—how they affected international commerce and how they led to conflict” (1987: 20). Attempting a parallel with Weber’s thesis, Saco’s model did provide an important place to culture—though not religion—in his own elaboration of an ideal work ethics for whites, based on his project to de-racialize artisan professions that free blacks and mulattos had come to dominate. I expand on the cultural aspects of Saco’s ideology of race, class and work ethics below. Gordon Lewis used the idea of a “Protestant work ethic, adapted to a catholic society” to describe Saco’s reform model for Cuba’s work structure, to highlight the bourgeois, and catholic positionality from which Saco and the emerging intelligentsia spoke. This positionality was defined by their ideological adherence to the European liberal movement as well as by their position as spokesmen of the rising “sugar” bourgeoisie—a parallel development to the industrial bourgeoisie in Europe (Lewis 2004: 145, 150).

Also along the lines of Varela’s thought, Saco opposed slavery on moralistic and economic grounds in an age where slavery was crucial to Cuba’s economic growth. The Spanish government and creole planters of whom intellectuals like Saco were spokesmen were faced with a dilemma on the issue of slavery, since Cuba’s economic growth from sugar production depended on even larger numbers of slaves. This affected Spain’s international image in an era of high pressures for abolition by European powers and increased anxieties of white residents over a growing black population. The expansion of the sugar economy propelled the African slave trade into a profitable business. Slave importation increased to the thousands per year. The slave population as low as 28,760 in 1755 doubled between 1774 and 1792 to 84,590 and doubled again by 1804 to 180,000—a six fold increase in 50 years (Childs 2001). In the same period of time (1774-1804), the white population doubled only once, but the simultaneous increase in the free population of color converted whites into a minority by 1817, outnumbering by people of color, both slave and free\textsuperscript{24} (Table 1).

\textsuperscript{24} There is a discrepancy across sources about the year in which whites became a minority. Mena (2001), Helg (2011), Paquette (1988) and Pérez Murillo (1988) agree that this shift occurred in 1817. Childs (2001) argues it happened in 1792 based on his comparative chart of various primary sources. The chart in the Chapter’s Appendix provides a general reference of population trends during those years.
Table 1 - Population trends (total numbers and percentages) between the years of 1774 and 1841 by race and legal status.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1774</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>1792</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>1817</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>1827</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>1841</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>56,100</td>
<td>57.87</td>
<td>78,301</td>
<td>51.81</td>
<td>133,721</td>
<td>45.15</td>
<td>165,058</td>
<td>40.40</td>
<td>244,023</td>
<td>38.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free people of color*</td>
<td>13,144</td>
<td>13.56</td>
<td>20,804</td>
<td>13.77</td>
<td>40,857</td>
<td>13.80</td>
<td>46,064</td>
<td>11.28</td>
<td>66,463</td>
<td>10.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slave</td>
<td>27,691</td>
<td>28.56</td>
<td>52,025</td>
<td>34.42</td>
<td>121,569</td>
<td>41.05</td>
<td>197,415</td>
<td>48.32</td>
<td>321,274</td>
<td>50.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>96,935</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>151,130</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>296,147</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>408,537</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>631,760</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Calculated based on the figures from Pérez Murillo (1988)

Despite Spain’s agreement to British pressures to ban the slave trade in 1817, the prohibition went largely unenforced and clandestine slave trade continued with the veiled approval of the island’s governors who also took part in the business. Slave importations reached up to about 550,000 slaves between 1811 and 1866 (Helg 2011). Cuba arrived at 1841 as the world’s top sugar producer with 437,000 slaves in a total population of one million (Helg 2011). Historians estimate that in 1841 the free people of color conformed up to 20% of the total population (Paquette 1988). As a response to this demographic imbalance, the Junta de Población Blanca (White Population Council) was established in 1819 to encourage white European immigration (Mena 2001, Opatrny 1994).

Saco developed a proposal for modernization and economic development based on the sugar industry through a transition to free, waged labor supplied by white immigrants to reverse current demographic trends and promote economic efficiency (Opatrny 1994). Slavery according to Saco had inherent demographic dangers as well as a corrupting or morally degrading effect on the society at large which compromised the needed modernization. Ideas of order and discipline also informed Saco’s model of citizenship and urban transformation, which he sought to define and promote through far-reaching reforms of social institutions along with a group of Cuban creole intellectuals gathered in the Real Sociedad Económica de La Habana.

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25 By 1841 the population composition was 418,291 whites against 589,333 people of color of whom 346, 495 were slaves. In the Western part of the island, where plantation economy was concentrated, the great majority of blacks were slaves and surpassed the whites by over 100,000. (Opatrny 1994) However, the slave population was largely urban; only one third were plantation slaves (Helg 2011).

26 Saco believed that waged white labor could be less expensive given the high mortality and maintenance costs of African slave labor (Liss 1987). This stance was tied to his critiques of the use of force by the planter class to ensure slave subordination on grounds of morality.
(Royal Economic Society of Havana), hereafter Sociedad\textsuperscript{27}. This middle and upper class group of lawyers, writers and doctors took up as a patriotic duty to explain and provide solutions to a range of issues affecting Havana at the time. These included, beautifying and ordering marginality in the city space—relocating prostitutes, vagrants people of color and the poor—shaping modern “civilized” citizens through education and cultured leisure, promoting public health, researching and implementing technological and industrial innovations, and providing solutions to the challenge of racial integration in the face of racial-demographic imbalance and the dependence of Cuba’s economy on the slavery system. Reforms of the educational, penal, public health, transportation, industrial systems were among their main proposals with England as their model of ideal society in terms of technology, political liberty and constitutional government (Lewis 2004). Projects of reform and enlightenment ideas such as Adam Smith’s *laissez faire* economics clashed on the one hand, with mercantilist principles and traditional colonial authoritarianism expressed in Spain’s restrictive legislation that limited Cuban producers engaging in trade, including slave trade, with other nations other than Spain which was only one aspect of the limited political and economic say of Cubans as a colony.\textsuperscript{28} On the other hand, liberal-democratic principles that favored abolition conflicted with their own interests as land-owners of sugar estates whose business depended on the continued importation of African slaves. Several members of the Sociedad faced censorship and political persecution as a consequence of their political positions. Their critical stance against the Spanish administration and their quest for political and economic freedom from Spain determined the antagonistic relationship informing the conflicted relations between Spanish and Cuban *criollos* which

\textsuperscript{27} The institution was founded under the name of Royal Patriotic Society of Havana (*Real Sociedad Patriótica de la Habana*) and towards the late 19\textsuperscript{th} century it took the name of Economic Society of Friends of the Country of Havana. The Society in Cuba and in other Spanish colonies like Chile and Venezuela followed the model of the original *Sociedades* in Spain, founded during the second half of the 18\textsuperscript{th} century in the context of ideas of the Enlightenment and the consolidation of liberal thought. Their founders projected themselves as social reformers seeking to scientifically diagnose and give solutions that pave the path for society’s modernization in areas of commerce, industry and urban reform.

\textsuperscript{28} A series of political transformations in the 1760’s and 1770’s informed the progressive relaxation of restrictions by Spain regarding commerce in Cuba and the simultaneous boost of capitalism through the sugar and tobacco industry in Cuba. Spain enforced an exclusive trade monopoly with Havana since 1503, as the designated commercial port in the “New World”. During the British seizure of Havana in 1762-1763, Britain eliminated tariffs, opened up commerce to new ports with Cuba and introduced improvements in the sugar industry. Planter elites demanded greater facilities for trade and industrial development after Spain gained control over Cuba. After independence from Britain in 1776, North American states began investing in Cuba, influencing the development of sugar industry, trade and fostering U.S. interests in annexing Cuba. By 1779, Spain had allowed the free entry of slaves from different ports to the island. (Sublette, N. 2004: 68, 102-104)
marked the tense political and social atmosphere of the 1830’s and 1840’s. This antagonism only increased during the period leading into the in the wars of independence during the 1860’s, 1870’s and the 1890’s with the definition of a nationalist political project that used the military support of Afro-descendants in the struggles for independence.

The 1830’s and 1840’s were a crucial moment in the definition of Cuban whites as a “bourgeois” class who constructed their identity in opposition to the Spanish colonialists and the population of African ancestry. The “sugarcrats” or “sacarócratas” was the suggestive label Moreno Fraginals used to describe this class of wealthy Cuban planters, descendants of the Spanish settlers, who monopolized the land and started to claim autonomy from Spain. Historian José Antonio Portuondo suggestively described the turn of the 18th century as the “the fertile period of criollo ascendance”. His periodization sets as reference points of this transformation on one end the seizure of Havana by the English in 1762 when Cuban sugar lords finally earned the much-desired commercial freedom. Until then Cuba was allowed to engage in trade only with Spain. At the other end 1823, which is known as the beginning of the “tyrannical” era of colonial rule in Cuba that reached its peak with the governor Miguel de Tacón (1834-1838) (Pérez Cisneros 2000).

Saco’s political clashes with Tacón, which resulted in his exile in 1834, exemplify this conflict. Tacón excuded criollos from public office, increased taxes and gave preferences to Spanish merchants, fostering resentment among Cuban criollos. By contrast, a paternalistic and collaborative form characterized relations of Cubans and Spanish during the rule of Capitain General Luis de Las Casas from 1793-1799. In fact, the creation of the Sociedad as an instrument of cultural development was part of the broad plan promoted and actively supported by the colonial government during the rule of Las Casas. At the time of Saco’s writings many of the reforms promoted by the Sociedad were already underway, including modernization of public works, (roads, bridges), and improvement and expansion of public schools, the Botanical Garden, the Public Library, founding of the first newspaper (El Papel Periódico), the first census, the orphanage or Casa de Beneficencia. The designation of governor Las Casas as the First President and Associate of Honor of the Sociedad upon its founding exemplified the good terms Cuban-Spanish elites’ relations.

In spite of the subsequent rivalry between Spanish government and Cuban elites and their critical stance against the government, many of their proposals for reform were taken up in
governmental plans and policy, including measures to restrict vagrancy in 1834 as proposed by Saco. As for Saco, his questioning the legitimacy of the Spanish colonial regime and the slavery system on moral and economic grounds made him a precursor of a nationalist and distinctively Latin American historical and scientific modern discourse (Benítez Rojo 1989:73). Nonetheless, his fears about a racially heterogeneous Cuban society prompted his vision of a prospective Cuban nation that did not include people of African descent, but imagined an entirely white, Hispanic Cuba, with a population that was gradually whitened through miscegenation and a policy of planned white immigration (Lewis 2004, Moore 1997).

Saco and his colleagues created a model of citizenship, Cuban identity and culture in their attempts to define the ideal of a city and a nation, who should be included or excluded, and what were their distinctive characteristics. In doing so they shaped a view on social and racial differences that was deeply marked by cultural and class, rather than biological explanations. Although ideas of scientific racism had reached Cuba during the sugar boom, Saco, like his co-ideologue, the eminent writer and rich land-owner Domingo del Monte seem to have been reluctant to accept the “banishment of people of color from the human race” or to make more crudely racist assessments of their presumed racial inferiority (such as primitivist analogies) in the way that secular planters in the United States and secular racists were proposing (Paquette 1988: 115). Robert Paquette understands this tendency in relation to the model of segneurial society that developed with Spanish colonization in the Americas. This particular hierarchical structure entailed dependencies between individuals from different strataums, binding “superiors and inferiors in organic reciprocity” (Paquette 1988: 115). The relations of intimacy and ritualized interactions between social unequals in the colonial context, produced the conditions to acknowledge—if problematically—the “humanity” of Indians and Africans in the Americas (Paquette 1988). This reasoning aligns with Moreno Fraginals’ observation of Cuba’s patriarchal forms of master-slave relations discussed above.

However, the Cuban intellectual and land-holding elites’ stances on slavery and race were by no means unified, but rather filled with contradiction and ambivalence. For instance, while Saco opposed the brutal mechanisms of discipline and control of slaves, at some point in his writings he also recommended deporting or encouraging voluntary emigration of Africans living in Cuba (Lewis 2004: 152). When confronted with the question of racial integration in light of the prospect of a future nation, the solutions ranged from incorporating people of color as
unequal partners (Paquette 1988: 116), or, like Saco, to gradually erase the racial “stain” from the population through progressive racial miscegenation and whitening. The ideology of *limpieza de sangre* or purity of blood along with ideas of legitimate birth had long been institutionalized to justify social hierarchies and white supremacy as a mechanism of legal discrimination based on differences of racial heritage or as Verena Stolcke deems it “legal color”—as established in one’s birth certificate (Stolcke 1989). *Castas* or “castes” (the term used to refer to people of African decent) were excluded from positions of power within the government, the church and the military, as well as to higher education and prestigious professions, especially law and medicine, reserved for white Cuban *criollos* and Spaniards (Helg 1995, Paquette 1988).

Although *limpieza de sangre* informed the generalized naturalization of racial difference and legitimized the idea of a supposed inferiority of people of African descent as a natural or divine state of things\(^{29}\), Saco’s discourse on racial difference persistently explained this inferiority as a socio-cultural and historical rather than a biological or inherent construct. In fact, historian Gordon Lewis interprets Saco’s views as the “more intellectual and less racist” variant of the ideologues of slavery, an effect of Saco’s exposure to the intellectual climate in European cities where he spent most of his life as an exile, and where Anglo-Saxon superiority was expressed “less openly in racist terms and more in class and cultural terms” (Lewis 2004: 153). Unlike Paquette, Lewis holds the more radical view on the stance of what he calls the “white racist intellectualism” of the period between 1820 and 1868, many of whom, like Saco, were trapped between their fear of black rebellion and their hatred of the Spanish colonial regime. Therefore in his view, they could hardly be considered abolitionists (Lewis 2004: 153). In a moment of great political upheaval in neighboring nascent Latin American republics, Cuban *criollo* elites showed little interest on independence and Cuba adopted the suggestive name of *la siempre leal isla de Cuba* the “ever-faithful” colony (Liss 1987). They desired autonomy but not at the cost of a rebellion that could end up controlled by the growing black slave population, or the free colored class who had proven their political ambitions particularly during the major rebellion of 1812, the Aponte Conspiracy.

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\(^{29}\) Paquette used quotes from landowners and the Cuban creole class invoking the “Divine Providence” to legitimize hierarchies based on race. However, these were not necessarily the views of the Church.
Saco’s own stance on the subject followed the reasoning that political reform necessarily entailed an armed struggle in which Cuban black masses would be called for support either by Cuban liberators, the United States or Spain. Under those conditions, either annexation or independence could be suicidal for whites. A potential racial civil war could represent the “complete ruin of the Cuban race,” understood as the class of white Cuban *criollos*, with the “horrors of Saint Domingue repeated in Cuba…” imagined as a bloodshed of white masters at the hands of black slaves (Saco in Lewis 2004). For his part, Del Monte’s association with abolitionist thinking made him a suspect and potential conspirator in the process of *La Escalera* for which he was persecuted and forced to leave the country. He defended himself by setting clear the profoundly racist meaning of his struggle against the slave trade, “like Mr. Luz and Mr. Saco…and all of us who think in the island of Cuba [I] do not want to see it transformed into a republic of Africans, but rather into a nation of civilized whites” (Del Monte in Morán 2012).

Thus, the abolitionist stance of Saco and Del Monte was an expression of their social position as elite whites who viewed in a growing population of enslaved Africans and their free descendants not only a political and to some degree economic but also a cultural threat to their Hispanic-white integrity. Proving his influence by emerging positivist currents,30 Saco and Del Monte used metaphors of contamination to describe slavery and social practices and habits, like vagrancy and gambling as contagious diseases that threatened to “infect” the entire social body: gambling was a “devouring cancer” and vagrants should be either reformed or expelled from society like an infected part must be mutilated to prevent spreading of contagion. Nevertheless, “moral diseases” were historical and socio-cultural constructs, and so was “race”. Slavery was the cause of moral corruption and degradation of Cuban society for over centuries of influence through the cohabitation of whites with blacks and slaves. Negative moral values and habits were not inherent in the condition of blacks, but rather a historical consequence of slavery. Living conditions of slaves and their situation of oppression *led them* to be immoral—they steal because they don’t have a sense of property, they disdain work because they do not receive the benefits of it, and they are indifferent to love because their direct need is to fulfill their hunger (Miranda Francisco 2013). Del Monte expressed his culturalist views on race quite clearly in 1837,

30 Historians have pointed at the difficulty to categorize Saco’s thought (Liss 1982). While some viewed positivist thought as a major influence in his writings (Chong 1971) others like Gordon Lewis describe the tone of his writings as a “bourgeois class elitism and a vulgar social Darwinism” (Lewis 2004: 153).
“…today we Cubans are nothing more than a graft of Spanish and Mandinga,\(^{31}\) in other words, of the last two links of the human race in civilization and morality” (Del Monte in Morán 2012). Saco and Del Monte’s views meshed constructivism with social evolutionism in the idea of the “barbarization of creole culture through African influences” as an expression of white fears hidden in a *sui generis* abolitionist stance. For Del Monte, slavery had the effect of contaminating (white) society *culturally*; it was “an evil that poisoned their civilization, infecting it through the contact with an inferior culture, of despicable costumes” (Urbano Martinez in Morán 2012).

Their discourse on culturally constructed racial differences was a product of their intellectual project of a distinctively Cuban cultural model and ideology.\(^{32}\) Saco understood *cubanidad* as the distinctive nature of the colonial Cuban white *criollo* society and defined it as a combination of biological origins, language, religion and “manners and customs”, and the awareness and sentiment that came from their shared experience (Opatrny 1994: 11). In what could be interpreted as a critique of cultural imperialism, Saco opposed annexation to the United States, largely on grounds that their cultural influence might be detrimental in effecting a “loss of nationality” (Opatrny 1994: 11, Liss 1989: 18, Lewis 2004). The *criollo* intellectual elite’s definition of *cubanidad* gave an important place to cultural practices and behavior and emphasized cultural unity. However, the centuries of cultural exchange between Spanish, Africans, and their descendants resulted in new and transformed cultural forms containing both African as well as Spanish elements which complicated their task. Influence of African cultural forms was all the more evident in the sphere of music and dance, as the Cuban writer Félix Tanco observed with dismay,

> While watching our boys and girls at their waltzes and contradances, who can fail to be struck by how closely their movements mimic those of the blacks at their gatherings? Who can fail to see that the dancers’ steps echo the drums of the Tangos? It is all purely African, and the poor and innocent blacks, without intending to, and with no other power than that born of the life they lead in relation to us, are taking

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\(^{31}\) The name of one of the ethnic groups from West Africa some of who were brought as slaves to Cuba in the late 18\(^{th}\) century. Sublette describes Mandinga as “a catchall name for a variety of Senegambian people” (Sublette 2004:172)

\(^{32}\) Saco developed his ideas of *cubanidad* between 1848 and 1851 in the context of the debates over annexation to the United States, which intensified in the aftermath of the repression of *La Escalera* and Spain’s attempts to halt the importation of African slaves (Opatrny 1994).
revenge for the cruel treatment we have inflicted upon them by infecting us with customs and manners that are appropriate to the savages of Africa (Tanco in Opatrny 1994).

In a similar spirit, Del Monte complained about the introduction of “barbarisms” into the speech of the Cuban criollos and later in his career he made a sharp distinction between black and creole culture. Nonetheless Del Monte and the members of his ideological circle, showed signs of their intellectual appreciation of blacks and mulatos as they started to approach and sponsor—in a patronizing way—black and mulato writers like the famous mulato poet Gabriel de la Concepción Valdés “Plácido” and the former slave Juan Francisco Manzano, whose writings were accepted as samples of Cuban literary production (Opatrny 1994). Del Monte and his “literary circle” (which I expand on in Chapters 5 and 8) collected money to free Juan Francisco Manzano and sponsored the writing of his autobiography which was one of the pieces Del Monte handed on to British abolitionists to aid in their activism against slavery in Cuba. Del Monte’s interest and looming towards black writers evolved into tragedy during the process of La Escalera, when “Plácido” was accused as the ringleader of the conspiracy and sentenced to death, his relationship with the “abolitionist” Del Monte used against him. Scholars have extensively debated on whether Del Monte accepted Plácido and Manzano’s work on equal grounds, as intellectual subjects. If so, how was this presumed acceptance into an elite white circle mediated by the complex racial-power relations between the two antagonic social groups which they represented—Cuban criollo planters and upper class urban free blacks and mulatos?

As Jill Lane has argued, Manzano’s status as a literate slave created a contradictory image which positioned him as no more than “a curious object open for amazed scrutiny” both in the context of his mistress house as he performed poetry recitations for visitors, as well as later on upon his emancipation and joining of the broader public literary sphere created by Del Monte and his circle. Complementing this analysis, the literary critic Francisco Morán observed that the interest by Del Monte and his circle on Plácido and Manzano was mediated by the literary discursive field in which they were inserted and marked by their ability to read and write “like Europeans” which made them therefore “less black.” Furthermore, the recognition of their “humanity” was in fact mediated by class interests. Morán argues that Del Monte’s efforts to emancipate Manzano was not absolutely humanitarian nor antiracist, as the quote cited above (page 65) evidences..
The ambiguous and disparate political stances of Saco and his generation towards abolition, independence and annexation reflected their mixed feelings of fear and dependency on people of color. They recognized both enslaved and free blacks and mulattos had become indispensable to the sustenance of the economic system and the changing ways of life in the cities. This was evident in the great diversity of service jobs performed by blacks and *mulatos*, many of which were crucial to whites (Pérez 1995: 64). The census of 1846 showed that free men of color were in almost all fields the majority of the city’s blackssmiths, silversmiths, musicians, shoemakers, carpenters, foremen and dock workers, cigar-workers, sculptors, cobblers, tailors, painters, bakers, hatmakers, masons, soapmakers, stonemasons, miners, butchers, sawyers, coach drivers and cooks. For their part women were the majority of midwives, wet nurses, domestic servants, water carriers, care-givers, nurses, seamstresses, laundresses, market vendors and teachers of small children (Childs 2001, Mena 2001, Paquette 1988). Some of the best-remunerated and socially recognized professions such as masons, foremen, tailors and dentists allowed them to acquire a significant degree of economic capital in the form of houses, farms, slaves and jewelry.

In spite of their privileged economic standing, they continued to have limited participation in the white-dominated society politically and socially. In the 1830’s, people of color were not allowed to gather in public areas, bear arms, and offending whites entailed severe punishments as serious as death sentences (Mena 2001: 22). Segregation in spaces of sociability such as theaters and dance places was enforced more strongly towards the late 1830’s and through the 1860’s. Nonetheless, this working-class of people of color complicated the class hierarchies that continued to inform power relations between individuals and subgroups of African descent. The ranking within the field of skilled professions was one among several elements that informed these intra-racial class hierarchies. For instance, in 1833 a free *morena* explained the hierarchies in domestic service trades when she demanded a higher pay for her services as a nurse. This required a degree of experience and skill, in comparison with other purely domestic duties like washing, cooking or cleaning, she explained, “the division of labor, and the ability that certain duties require slowly create ("van creando") categories: the wet nurse,

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33 Many of these dated from the 16th century. Regulations to restrict black and *mulata* women’s use of dress and jewelry were unlikely to have been enforced in the 19th century. These restrictions were aimed to indicate these women’s civil status. Only if married to a Spaniard they could wear silk, gold or pearls in certain ways. Only the use of light-brown shawls was allowed (Mena 2001: 23).
the coach man, the seamstress…” (Chapeaux 1971: 177). These subtleties in the perception and construction of social categories from the point of view of people of color demonstrate the complexity of the Cuban social structure, characterized by its wide-range of layers and degrees of social porosity and mobility.

The legal system itself had historically facilitated this mobility. As discussed above, in spite of the efforts in enacting laws sought to keep castas (racial groups) apart, people of color navigated the bureaucracy and used the legal loopholes to their advantage. Besides the many cases of free blacks who successfully gained their freedom through coartación, examples of legal achievements were cases of blacks and mulatos who entered the field of medicine, and worked as legal clerks or escribanos, or became prestigious artists and writers (De la Fuente 2007, Mena 2001, Chapeaux and Pérez de la Riva 1974). Since 1804 and throughout most of the 19th century, legislation prevented inter-racial marriages; yet in many cases marriages occurred upon successful demonstration of the individual and familiar social status which balanced out the racial inequalities of the couple (Stolcke 1989). From the perspective of Cuban whites, the rise of free blacks and mulatos as a preeminent social group with demonstrated capacities that white elites were starting to value, required additional explanations than one based simply on phenotypical differences. Creole intellectuals like Saco expressed these ambiguities in their sometimes-contradictory cultural representations of people of color. A prime example that largely informed Saco’s views on race and culture was vagrancy.

Since 1816, vagrancy became an issue of concern to authorities as crime statistics persistently showed that it was more prevalent among whites (Paquette 1988, Mena 2001). Confronted with the unquestionable—and painful—duality of hard-working successful blacks and disenfranchised “vagrant” whites in Havana, Saco indirectly blamed blacks for white vagrancy by observing the cultural barriers—a historically rooted racial stigma—that were preventing middle and lower class whites from engaging in what he deemed honorable professions of the arts and artisanship. In his most-cited statement describing the process of stigmatization of labor through the system of slavery, Saco used a deeply historical and socio-cultural analytical eye to explain this process,

Among the ills that this unfortunate race has brought to our land is that of having distanced our white population from the arts. Destined to do mechanical work only, blacks have been given all these tasks as fit to their condition. Their owners, who despised them, began to despise their work as well. Throughout the
years one generation passed such attitude to the next. And the perverted opinion, far from stopping or containing this trend, ran its course unselfconsciously finally sinking us in the summit where we now are. (Saco 1974: 205)

Saco’s proposal for the de-racialization of labor was indeed a radical project of cultural and symbolic change. He envisioned the creation of a white-working class that would effectively compete and replace the labor of slaves and free artisans of color. A series of measures including gambling control and educational and cultural reforms would break the racial stigma of artisan labor and promote an ethics of individual achievement and hard work among whites. White parents should leave aside the pride and vanity (the “perverted opinions”) that devalued artisan professions as dishonorable or degrading, and instead encourage their children to “embrace and respect the arts” and to “love physical and intellectual labor.” Children will “feel the noble wish to reach the same celebrity” as role model artists of civilized nations who having started at the bottom (working as artisans) became “the glory of their native countries” (Saco 1974: 30).

Saco’s project of cultural change inevitably stumbled with contradictions that came from playing the role of a modernizing agent seeking to promote enlightenment-style reforms in a society dependent on the “brutal and entrenched system of slave labor” (Ferrer 1992, Mena 2005, Paquette 1988). His project to create a white working-class had little motivation in a society where slaves and free people of color were the bulk of the labor force. Ironically, Saco had recourse to black and mulato/a artisans as the role models of whites in his proposal to de-racialize labor and incentive whites to work. Although this was definitely not the intention, in his narrative Saco explicitly recognized the values of hard work and achievement that characterized free artisans of color as a collective. This assertion contradicted his own beliefs of the moral inferiority of people of color, who were seen as “lazy” and imprinted by the “degradation of slavery,” and was inconsistent with his own model of citizenship, which excluded blacks from his ideal of nation and civilization. Unlike poor whites, which had descended into poverty and ended up as vagrants as a result of their addiction to gambling, artisans of color, Saco noted, do not frequent gambling houses because they work all day. Artisans of color stood out among the class of “laborious persons” like white lawyers and public employees who only worked through “part” of the day. He recognized the value and quality of their work noting the advanced level that certain trades had reached in Cuba like shoemaking, tailoring, blacksmithing and especially
carpentry, “the sort of works which one can see are perfectly finished and comparable to those of the English” (Saco 1974: 194).

Saco’s enlightening project to “whiten” an emerging “Cuban culture” by taking back occupational domains from free blacks and mulatos/as had been going on since the late 18th century by initiative of the members of the Sociedad. Measures to formalize elementary and technical education since 1793 were aimed to encourage whites to engage in artisan jobs as well as to remove education of white children from informal black women teachers, popularly known as maestras amigas (female teacher friends) (Mena 2001) as well as to enforce segregation more generally in elementary schools directed by people of color (Chapeaux 1971: 126). Towards the 1830’s midwifery training was also formalized to encourage white women to engage in what was until then a job of black and mulata women (Chapeaux 1971). Artisan apprenticeship had been done informally between master and black youth apprentices until 1837 when regulations were established (Mena 2001: 174, 175). The National Academy of Fine Arts was founded in 1818 to “win back painting from the hands of blacks and mulatos” (artoffer 2012, Peramo Cabrera 2009). Saco’s complaints in 1830 about building workers and coachmen in hands of blacks were heard and 30 years later all of the coachmen in Habana were Spanish, whites and no blacks were allowed as building workers (Fraginals 1986: 10).

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the processes by which a free segment of the population of African descent in Cuba shifted discursive and subjective fields from one of servitude to one of work. As Afro-descendants in Cuba rooted themselves within these spaces of subjectivity, Cuban white elites’ consciousness was awakened. In particular, emergent intellectual figures of the Creole bourgeois class found in this discursive niche an effective site of intervention whereby they identified the need to seize or “hijack” the sphere of work, which had historically defined the subjectivities of African slaves and their descendants. In order to claim work for whites and away from blacks, Cuban elite intellectuals had to alter the terms of discourse, the moral and ethical standards by which work was now to be included as an element of a distinctively Cuban, and not Spanish, bourgeois white “civilized” subjectivity. Contradictorily, slaves and people of color were set as models of this ethical transformation while also being claimed as inferior in
moral and cultural terms. Creole social reformers’ proposal to construct modern “enlightened” subjects in a colonial, slave society produced these discrepancies.

This characteristic ambivalence in early 19th century bourgeois discourses reflected the moment of profound crisis of representation and value affecting Cuban elites as an emergent, politically and economically ambitious class facing up to colonial state authority in the island. As the political destiny of Cuba was being negotiated, Cuban elites confronted the challenge to define their own identity as a Cuban elite class in a role of cultural models of the new “enlightened” subject-citizenry. They also needed to specify their stance as a class with respect to Cuba’s political future in their role of economic and political leaders in the quest for greater autonomy from Spain.

This chapter also showed the deeply culturalist logic of racial discourse in early 19th century Cuba. This should serve as framework to the broader argument raised in this dissertation regarding the importance of cultural and performative aspects in historical formations of social difference, as opposed to those based simply on phenotype, gender or class categories. Scholar Sherene Razack has defined this particular form of racism as “culturization of racism” whereby black inferiority is explained by the assumption of a cultural or acquired limitation, as opposed to or in denial of a biologically assumed understanding of racial difference (Razack 1998: 60).

Approaching constructions of race from this perspective enables to uncover the spaces of discourse whereby practice and performance are endowed with the power to inform and alter racial categories. In other words, they enable an understanding of race that is more fluid and malleable as opposed to over-determined and conditioned by a fixed or given factor tied to biology, i.e. phenotype or skin color. Rather than as a “condition,” race might be better understood as a “status” category that was deeply interlocked with class status, an articulation that was particularly evident in the context of early 19th century Havana and Cuban society.

As per the discursive analysis made in this thesis, this framework allows unpacking the ideological processes behind the pressing concern with “manners” present in social discourses throughout the 19th century. A preoccupation with manners is useless in a society where race (as phenotype) fixes one’s status in the social structure. An emphasis on manners as a marker of status in a society symbolically structured by the association of blackness to slavery can only reveal the limited effectiveness of racial phenotype to signify status. As Chapter 6 discusses, the colonial mission’s penchant to inculcate mimicry as a cultural technology of “civilization,”
showed results in the cultural (and to an extent physical) resemblance of the population of urban free blacks in Havana to Cuban whites and the mastery of their cultural forms. In the context of these symbolic transformations, both embodied and “intangible” parameters of difference were given added importance in the definition of social differences and distinction in 19th century Havana’s society.

The following chapters demonstrate that knowledge, cultural and bodily practices of difference-making were available and effective as resources or forms of “capital” allowing mobility across racial, class and gender categories for all but especially for the members of the free urban middle class of color (Bourdieu 1986). In particular, I explore in more detail how projects for social and cultural change laid out in this first Chapter were negotiated using a framework of analysis of cultural discourses of *blanqueamiento* and mimicry. To “whiten” or clean up emerging Cuban cultural models, as fields of action and representation, entailed more than just switching occupations from blacks to whites. It entailed creating and legitimizing aesthetic and moral categories by which status, modernity, civilization and “culture” were ranked and measured.
Chapter 3 – Seeking distinction: Gendered Performances of Class and Color in Colonial Havana (1800-1844)

The following excerpt from a document entitled “Manifesto: Just sentiment of Spanish34 pardos and morenos of Havana” was published in 1828 by a group of free Cuban black and mulato working-class men in various fields of the arts and crafts. The fragment expresses their sense of class pride, simultaneously stressing their distinctive (higher) status from lower classes and slaves, and on equal terms to the white wealthy classes of Cubans and Spaniards in Havana,

…pardos y morenos, somos los que desempeñamos las artes mecánicas en el mayor grado de perfección, con admiración de los profesores de otras naciones ilustradas. Tenemos posesiones para vivir con nuestras familias, para nuestros talleres y para dar en arrendamiento indistintamente a los que carecen de ellas. Tenemos fincas rurales y siervos en los mismos términos que poseen estas propiedades los que componen la población entera del pueblo habano… (Manifiesto, 1828 in Chapeaux 1971: 62)

…[we], pardos and morenos are those who carry out the mechanic arts in the highest level of perfection, with admiration of the professors of other enlightened nations. We have [land] possessions to live in with our families, for our shops and to rent them out indistinctly to those who lack of them. We have rural estates and slaves in the same terms that the entire population of Havana possesses them…

Several elements stand out from this self-representation of mid 19th century Havana’s elite class of color: occupation in respectable professions, economic entrepreneurship, land ownership and slave holding. The former two, analyzed in the previous chapter, are related to the historical formation of a distinctive class of free blacks and mulatos who emerged from slavery and came to define their racial, legal and class subjectivity through their work in the city. In contrast, the latter two, land holding and slave holding, are constructed as symbols and measures of the possession of wealth, which had been traditional markers of status of white upper classes of Spaniard colonizers and their descendants born in Cuba. This chapter focuses on the implications of the transgression of elite men of color into the historical socio-symbolic realms of white dominant classes in the economic domain. This transgression was effected through their strategic appropriation of markers of gendered, racialized and classed prestige and privilege.

34 Self-ascribing themselves as “Spanish” was probably part of these elite Cuban blacks and mulatos’ intentionality to stress their “whiter” status as part of the larger performance of class-racial pride that their manifesto evokes.
I approach this analysis by examining the dominant imaginaries of black and mulato men as political and economic subjects framed around their participation in colonial militias, African mutual aid societies or cabildos and through their political actions during the early to mid 19th century (roughly 1800-1844). The construct of black men as economic subjects was deeply tied to the parallel construct as political threats in the context of the atmosphere of fear and anxiety around the successful actions of black rebels in the neighboring colony of Saint Domingue. I provide a reading of the debates on the conspiracy of La Escalera, a major narrative around which these constructs were structured. This state-sponsored repression specifically targeted the working class of free, elite men of color in 1833 and 1844, presumably on the grounds of their potential economic and political influences.

The extensive historiographical debates have questioned the validity of the argument about the real potential of this class of free black and mulato militiamen and entrepreneurs to destabilize colonial power and white dominion. Some scholars have suggested that Captain General Leopoldo O’Donnel fabricated the conspiracy of 1844 as an opportunity to eliminate and punish successful free blacks and mulatos, presumed ideologues and references of the social aspirations of other free blacks and slaves (Knight 1970, Chapeaux 1971). In other words, halting ambitious tendencies served as a violent warning of the deadly consequences to those who “stepped out of place”.

I build on this argument to show that the menacing image of elite blacks and mulatos went beyond political or economic considerations. Of equal or even greater concern were the cultural proximities resulting from the transgressions of blacks and mulatos into symbolic realms of class-racial privilege of the white elites. In this chapter I start this discussion by exploring these negotiations with a focus on the symbolic ordering in economic and political domains. I continue the analysis in the next chapters by exploring the challenges and redefinitions to aesthetic and moral categories related to cultural practices like art, dress and dance.

I start my discussion by exploring the processes by which black and mulato elite men negotiated measures of class, gender, race and color-related prestige and privilege through continuous performances of distinction (Bourdieu 1989) and strategic appropriation of symbols in the military body, political movements and mobilization of social networks through which they acquired their fortunes. In a latter section, I place this analysis in the perspective of the broader political economy of early 19th century Cuba. The deep economic transformations
related to the expansion of the plantation economy accompanied ongoing socio-symbolic shifts. The increased circulation of wealth among all sectors of Havana’s society and an often lenient and contradictory Spanish legislation opened up opportunities to “buy privilege,” of which the “new rich”—both white and black—took advantage. In the process, the value and meanings of money and of “nobility” as measures of class status and prestige were re-defined. I show how beyond political and economic concerns, white elite’s anxieties reflected the major social and structural changes affecting the cultural ordering of interlocking hierarchies in economic and political realms.

This analysis contributes to the discussions on race, class and culture in Cuba in the period of the first half of the 19th century by signaling the fluidity of Havana’s system of social stratification informed by interconnected symbolic systems that ordered perceptions and classifications of phenotype, occupation, and economic markers such as money/wealth and property (Barcia 2009, Chapeaux 1971, Childs 2006, Mena 2005, Paquette 1988, Gonzalez 1993). Rather than serving as obstacles or barriers to social mobility, categories were constantly being negotiated, re-defined and appropriated by actors to further class interests, where seeking distinction through various means was a major driving force and structuring principle in Havana’s colonial society.

**Crises of classification and performances of color**

The institution of slavery was the most important organizing principle in Cuban society during the 19th century whereby, as Victor Fowler describes it, “the black appear[ed] as a figure of the abject” (Fowler 2001: 99). Racial phenotype worked to divide society into two major groups, one of European origin and one African origin. However, upon this major division, a complex hierarchy structured by color categories formed as a result of centuries of racial miscegenation. Over the course of centuries of colonization, unions occurred predominantly between Spanish men, their white Cuban born descendants, and women of color, which often manifested as relations of sexual violence by masters against female African slaves. These relations produced a population of mixed descent with a wide spectrum of skin shades and phenotypes. These color hierarchies were structured onto and by legal, gender, and ethnic and

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35 Cuba’s native indigenous “Taino” population was nearly decimated during colonization by warfare and contagious diseases at the end of the 16th century, with a scattered population remaining mainly in the Eastern part
class systems of classification. Legal color categories or “castas” were defined according to
degrees of African ancestry. This system that was legitimized through the legal practice of
limpieza de sangre (purity of blood) by which the inexistence of African ancestry in a persons’
past had to be demonstrated through a judicial process involving scrutiny of baptismal
certificates and testaments of at least two generations of ancestors. Limpieza de sangre was
transplanted to the colonies from Spain where, as opposed to its use in Cuba, it served to
distinguish Jews or Muslims from “true” Spanish Christians\(^{36}\) (Paquette 1998, McAlister 1963).
Judicial processes to demonstrate limpieza de sangre were necessary to clear up “suspicion” or
“rumor” about a person’s racial ancestry, which affected their “honor” and prevented them from
accessing the privileges of whites (Mena 2001). Some of the prevailing color/racial categories
created and used over the years for purposes of social classification included mulatos (defined as
descendants of black and white couple), pardos (lighter skinned mulatos with less visible African
ancestry), and morenos (generally darker-skinned and thus considered closer to Africa and
slavery) (Helg 1995). A mulato cuarterón or quadroon mulatto was defined as one fourth black
(Mena 2001: 139). The label Chino or China denoted the offspring of a mulato and a black, and
was different from Chino Asiático, Manila or Colono, which referred to indentured servant
immigrants from China (Pezuela 1863: 86).

As population of color increased in the late 18\(^{\text{th}}\) century, this system of differentiation
created a crisis of classification of concern to white elites as it became increasingly difficult to
absolutely determine social differences using visible and even legal ways to draw color divisions.
While the image of the rebel black slave appeared threatening, equally so was the light-skinned,
of the island. (Sublette 2007, Childs 2001) Immigration of free people of color from neighboring regions in the
Caribbean and the Americas undergoing territorial shifts, and political transformations including revolutionary
movements contributed to Cuba’s demographic heterogeneity since the late 1700’s. (Reid 2004: 24) Immigration of
Chinese indentured servants starting in 1847 to work in sugar plantations along with African slaves, created a
diaspora of Cubans of mixed Chinese, Spanish (white) and African ancestry in Cuba. Regional differences also
informed the creation of distinct subject categories in a polarized island divided between East and West, urban and
rural. This historical disconnect resulted from the higher concentration of wealth and development in Havana and
the Western part of Cuba, which made it a political and economic center of the trans-Atlantic trade and the sugar and
slave industries during the 19\(^{\text{th}}\) century. (Perez 1995) Scholars Ferrer (1999) Rojo (1898), Hope (2009) and
González (1991) have discussed the importance of place and region in the construction of different political, ethnic
and gender subjectivities along the historical East West divide in Cuba. In future research projects, I hope to engage
with these scholars’ work as I further the question about different constructs of femininity along the East West
divide in Cuba, in efforts to expand my discussion of constructs of racialized femininity in the urban space of
Havana in Chapter 5 of this dissertation.
\(^{36}\) McAlister noted that limpieza de sangre was a condition treated as lineage of “impeccable orthodoxy” (i.e. the
oldest the lineage of Christianity in a family, the better) that informed social status as well as corporate membership
in artisan guilds, religious and military orders, municipal consejos and for the award of university degrees. (1963)
“white looking” type, which became increasingly difficult to tell apart from a “true” white person. As people of color engaged in multiple strategies of performance of class and color, such as dress, occupation, language and consumption patterns, skin color and phenotype were not sufficient as indicators of ancestry. Thus, “passing” became a strategy for people of color to outwit social barriers. Color hierarchies reflected class hierarchies as lighter skinned people of color were generally more represented in higher social and economic spheres within the colored community in which militiamen and artisans of higher valued trades were regarded as figures of leadership and achievement. They represented the free class of people of color who defined itself in contrast to slaves, the reference point of the lowest position in society. While lighter-skinned blacks could sometimes pass as white, slaves could sometimes also “pass” as free. Since free people of color concentrated in urban areas and in Havana, specifically outside of the city walls, urban runaway slaves or cimarrones, found refuge in these neighborhoods by acting as free as a strategy to divert authorities’ control of their legal status (Childs 2006: 70). They either faked papers or mimicked the confident and “loud” ways by which free people of color were told apart from slaves37 (Delgado 2003, Childs 2006: 70). While it was obviously problematic to whites, and in this case authorities, to distinguish between a “true” free black from a cimarrón, it was probably not the case for free black and mulato residents to tell a slave apart from a free resident of their own class, given the close ties by which slaves and free people of color related to each other at instances like African mutual aid societies or cabildos (discussed below) and through ritual practices like compadrazgo (co-parenthood). Thus, situations of “passing” and “mimicry” were not self-evident from skin-color resemblance, but necessarily entailed complex performances of skin-color, which created codes of social behavior, dress, or speech that served as markers of gendered class status. In the following sections, I start this discussion by exploring processes of performance of race and color in constructions of political and class subjectivities among men of color through their participation in the colonial militias and political movements. In Chapter 7, I continue this discussion with a focus on sexualized constructions of the black female body around the figure of la mulata within discourses of biological and cultural whitening or blanqueamiento.

37 Historian Matt Childs quotes police reports describing “free blacks of considerable pride”, suspecting they might have been slaves. Their report stressed that these men were “not showing humility and creating a ‘big scandal’ and shouting ‘various dishonorable insults’” (Childs 2001: 183).
Negotiations of Loyalty, Power and Prestige in the Colonial Militias

The black serfs were granted liberty during the siege of Havana by the British as long as they helped with the defense of the plaza; they performed stunning feats of valor, rushing forth bare-chested into the barrels of enemy canons. It was their passage to a white world of knowledge, uses, pleasures, fashions.

Alejo Carpentier

Some of the prevailing categories and divisions that ruled 19th century Havana’s society were strategically created by authorities through institutions of governance dating from the time of colonization. The militias of color and the African cabildos de nación were created as mechanisms of social control where people of color were grouped and divided according to ancestry or color categories to prevent alliances and hinder the possibilities of collective action (Childs 2006, Barcia 2009). At the Batallones de Pardos y Morenos Leales de La Habana, the loyal militias of free colored men, the division between pardos and morenos was stressed in their uniforms, decorations and pay, which positioned them below white officials and above or in between slaves working as artillermen (Barcia 2009: 257). In spite of their subordinate position, serving in the colonial militia was already the highest position that a man of color could aspire to in light of the social and legal restrictions to enter into the highest-valued or so called liberal professions of medicine, law and ecclesiastical professions reserved for whites. Militiamen were given privileged and better remunerated occupations entailing functions of surveillance and supervision to slaves and free day-laborers in the docks as foremen or chasing and capturing maroons and criminals in the cities, further emphasizing power and status hierarchies among men of color.38

Recruiting blacks and mulatos into the military was a strategic political move by the Spanish colonial government, particularly after the outburst of the Haitian revolution and subsequent independent movements in the Spanish colonies.39 Rewarding “loyal” blacks and

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38 The privilege given to militia members of color to work as foremen or supervisors of free and slave dock laborers was established in 1763. The racial occupational hierarchies at docks had stevedores or those who worked on board of ships reserved for white men, militiamen as foremen and earning higher salaries than free and slave dock laborers, whose work was also the most strenuous—loading and unloading of merchandise from ships.

39 From the early years of colonial settlement Spain had recruited blacks and mulatos to serve in the defense of the colony from pirate raids of the main island ports, which were the transit stops for the fleet that brought riches to Sevilla from colonial territories. Later on, colored militias played a key role in the defense of the colony against
mulatos was at the same time a way to divide and rule as well as to ensure the political stability of the Spanish rule in Cuba as these battalions played a crucial part in the defense of the colony. However, training and arming blacks and mulatos proved to be a double-edged sword for Spain ever since their involvement in a major conspiracy led by the free mulato José Antonio Aponte in 1812. Aponte, like many of the alleged leaders involved in the conspiracy of La Escalera in 1843-1844, came from the ranks of the loyal militias of free colored men. Aponte was a corporal militiaman, a spiritual and African cabildo leader and an artist (Palmie 2002, Childs 2006). He was killed and his head exhibited as a terror measure after being accused to lead a Haitian-inspired slave rebellion in Cuba. The Aponte conspiracy revealed the existence of extensive networks linking urban free blacks and mulatos to plantation slaves and served as lesson to colonial authorities not to underestimate free people of color’s political ambitions or assume their loyalty

Belonging to the military body and serving along with white officials to the defense of the colony provided militiamen of color a sense of a corporate identity based on a career of merits as well as on the privileges to access the military courts or fuero militar. The “fuero” entitled them to bear arms, receive military training, exemptions to certain taxes, tribute payments and labor levies, pensions, preferred burial sites and other special legal rights (Childs 2006: 222, Barcia 2009: 266). Initially, membership in the militias was only associated with privilege and prestige from military service. However, a royal disposition in 1818 established that posts could be “purchased” by any person of color who could afford it. Thus militia membership became an important symbol of economic and social status, particularly for free

attacks of rival European powers, particularly during the English attack in 1762, as well as other Spanish interventions in Florida, Louisiana and Mexico. (Barcia 2001, Childs 2006)

40 Childs observed that government officials often assumed that the different legal status of free people of color and slaves automatically created divisions to avoid confronting the possibility of collaboration between the free and enslaved into a broad based movement. Free people of color were constructed as symbols of the benevolence of masters in granting freedom to slaves through manumission, to calm their fears about a possible rebellion that they associated with the expanding slave population.

41 Other benefits of the fuero included special juridical status such as the right to be tried by special military courts, rather than civil jurisdiction, with special legal assessment. Some of the benefits extended to the wives of the militia members (Barcia 2009). Fuero benefits to colored militiamen were similar to those of white members and in certain aspects regulations granted pardos and morenos similar authority and functions as white members. For more details on benefits of colored militiamen see Barcia (2009: 266, 255), Childs (2001: 222).

42 Although the majority of those who requested these posts were working-class artisans and urban traders of color, there were also cases of slaves who ascended to military ranks of sergeants, shortly after purchasing their freedom. This demonstrates the levels of social mobility reached during the decades of the 1820’s and 1830’s, of which even the lowest sectors of the society took advantage (Barcia 2009: 278).
black and *mulato* men (Barcia 2009). Several well-reputed artisan entrepreneurs of color in the 1820’s and 1830’s purchased titles as militiamen and entered the selected circle although they did not have military training or a career. Several of these lighter-skinned militia men also belonged to religious associations or *cofradías* integrated by the most prestigious families of Havana’s society including the Flores, Carques and Escobar families (Barcia 2009: 253).

Militia membership had wide recognition and respect from the community and represented the measure class aspirations and an indicator of their loyalty to the crown. A combination of valor and patriotism, economic status and corporate privilege framed a masculine subjectivity of militiamen of color, who gained power and prestige from their positions as militia officers. Although military service was one of the few spaces where men of color were held (as established in royal dispositions) in a sense of parity with whites through their common corporate military position, they constantly negotiated with white members their belonging on equal terms to the military body. In the context of the politically agitated atmosphere of the early 19th century where the image of the insurgent black (slave) stirred anxieties among authorities and white elites haunted by the imaginary of black rebels in Haiti, the “loyalty” of a black man was more socially valued in terms of his acceptance and status than that of a white man.

Insofar as freedom could be achieved through demonstration of loyalty from military deeds, this informed a particular kind of “legal origin” indicative of the means used to achieve this freedom. In fact, different avenues used for getting out of slavery were coded as symbolic markers that later informed class status among people of color. For instance, being born free—signaled through the label “*ingenuo*”—gave blacks a higher status than other former slaves who purchased their freedom through *coartación* after many years of hard work—signaled with the label “*coartado*” (Perera Díaz y Fuentes 2006). Many black and *mulato* men gained freedom by “grace” of the King for their demonstration of loyalty in fighting along side with whites to defend Spanish colonialism in numerous confrontations against foreign powers both in and out of Cuba. Loyal blacks then were held in higher esteem—or lesser suspicion, a symbolic asset that was then passed on to their (male) offspring. Being born free and having their father’s political merits in their genealogy, (male) children of militiamen expected to enjoy a higher social status or, least, respect from whites (Rojas 1998). Thus, like the racial origin, which could often be signaled through the surname “Valdes,” *legal* origin signaled through political
performance added to the broader economy of anxiety among white upper classes in their construction of an imaginary of the black (male, political) threat.

Indeed, members of the white elites expressed conflict and preoccupation over the participation of blacks and *mulatos* in the militias whom they regarded as unequal citizens that did not belong, and thus were unworthy of participating in the defense of the territory or “patria.” These anxious white Cubans and Spaniards may have found relief in interpreting blacks’ political loyalty as an indication of their racial loyalty—the acceptance of subordinate status of blacks to whites in the socio-political order and the military hierarchy⁴³ (Rojas 1998). However, for blacks and *mulatos* serving in the militias, “loyalty” might be better interpreted as their overall sense of belonging to a corporate body that was an institution sanctioned by the Spanish colonial government, which they expressed through a sense of pride, admiration and awe to royal power and authorities: the King and Queen of Spain. These performances of affect became evident during militiamen of color’s personal audiences with the King. Distinguished militiamen visited the Spanish courts to attend hand-kissing ceremonies during the King or Queen’s birthdays. During other visits they received their decorations and honors directly from the monarchs as recognitions and awards for their actions, a ritual that further elevated their sense of prestige and fostered a sense of racial pride within the local community. Barcia (2009) and Chapeaux (1971) provide several examples of black and *mulato* militiamen’s discourses about their belonging to the colonial militias, where their sense of loyalty is expressed not directly as a relationship to a territory, but to their commitment to service, admiration and subordination to the Spanish monarchs.

The novelist Marta Rojas illustrates this point by noting the display of symbolically charged attire and accessories in the performance and negotiation of these markers of military status and of political loyalty. Blacks, she notes, could wear their uniform proudly and without fear of being ridiculed by those whites, who were not militiamen, of proven pure blood who were exempt of the honor that represented fulfilling such “sacred duty as to defend their king”⁴⁴

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⁴³ This analysis is based on my reading of Marta Rojas’ historical novel *Santa Lujuria*. The examples she provided are from the late 18th and early 19th century.

⁴⁴ These discursive tactics used by blacks and *mulatos* to foster their prestige and a sense of racial pride was at cases seen as suspicious. An example is the well-known incident involved with the *mulato* artist and presumed conspirator José Antonio Aponte. As part of his trial, Aponte was interrogated on his drawing of King Charles III placing his hand on the head of two captains from the black battalion as an indication to not remove their hats in deference to the King. Militia regulations required black soldiers to stand with heads bowed and to remove their hats in front of
Part of the military attire for higher ranked captains of the militia was the Medal of the Royal Effigy (Medalla de la Real Efigie) granted by King Charles III to recognize military deeds. However, the medal was granted as a special distinction or prize to pardos, morenos or Indian militiamen in the Americas for their military services, which otherwise was only granted to the commanders of those militias (Toribio Medina 1900: 17). This exceptional reward symbolized scaling up a “casta” or social rank and placed blacks and mulatos in the same category as military commanders, showing the value that black men’s loyalty had compared to that of white officers. The display of highly valued prestige symbols, the royal codes and images of the 52 mm diameter gold or copper medal on the bodies of black men epitomized the affective ties between royal power and black militiamen, showing on the obverse “Charles III, King of Spain and Emperor of the Indies” with an engraving of the King’s image, and on the reverse the image of the “Coat of Loyalty” (Escudo de Fidelidad), inside a crown of bay leaves the engraving “To merit” (Al mérito) (Toribio Medina 1900: 16, Rojas 1998, Figure 3).

white soldiers as a show of deference and reminder of their subordinate status. The drawing of the King showing respect and admiration to black militiamen inverted the order of things. The drawing was used against Aponte as evidence of his irreverence to whites and his seditious activities in the trial that led to his execution (Childs 2006).

45 Based on a document by the Viceroy of Mexico, dated from October of 1791, Toribio Medina reported that this medal was granted as a distinction or prize to the pardo, Moreno or Indian militiamen in the Americas for their military services, which otherwise were only granted to the commanders of those militias (Toribio Medina 1900: 17).
A related example that sheds light on the processes of construction of racial and class prestige through fashion performances was the attire used by African officials of the Battalions in their role as Kings and Queens of *cabildos* during the most important religious celebration of Epiphany, or *El Día de Reyes* on January 6th. The attire was composed of a mesh of symbols taken from both the military and the royal representational systems. In Havana, the *cabildo* King’s clothing mimicked the attire of colonial officials, while the Queen used a Crown along with a set of accessories. Through this public performance of prestige and authority, blacks and *mulatos* in their multifaceted subject roles, i.e. military officials and *cabildo* leaders, strategically appropriated and re-signified traditional markers of white privilege and power.\(^{46}\)

Given the symbolic value and status these conferred, both black and white militiamen expressed great preoccupation for military uniforms. By wearing the same military uniform as their white counterparts in the militias, blacks transgressed the symbolic domain of whites in

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\(^{46}\) The significance of the Day of Kings; celebration within African religiosity in Cuba has received several interpretations including Fernando Ortiz’ seminal study *Los Cabildos y la fiesta Afrocubanos del Día de Reyes* (1992, Walker 2004). This was the only African celebration permanently authorized by colonial authorities. It was originally intended to give a license to enslaved Africans to honor the highest authorities with a public performance in retribution for gifts. As it became a custom, Africans organized in cabildos paraded on January 6\(^{th}\) towards the Government Palace as they danced and sung while receiving retributions by authorities and individual families in streets of the capital and other cities and towns of Cuba (Barcia 2009: 174).
respect to the established terms of the political hierarchy. As one indignant white resident described in 1811, the uniform was “a distinctive that has always been held in the greatest esteem because it serves to distinguish the defenders of the motherland (patria)” (Barcia 2009). The implications of the elimination of distinctions might have to potentially activate black political aspirations in light of the recent events in Saint Domingue produced indignation and fear among white officials. The specific accessories, color and design of uniforms became object of dispute between blacks and whites negotiating positions of power within the armed body. Blacks and mulatto officers showed disposition to fund from their own savings –making convenient use of their own class-resources, i.e. tailor militiamen and their shops- to make innovations in their uniform design to resemble those used by whites. The use of the same uniform for all militias regardless of color came as a royal disposition in 1792, a measure that did not go unchallenged by white officials. On one instance, a white colonel lamented to the king the “confusion” that this lack of visible distinction produced, “…it is very sensitive to these officials to see on their side with an exactly equal uniform and the same military embl… a black or mulato who may have recently been his slave” (Captain Luis de las Casas in Barcia 2009: 261).

These examples indicate that skin color was not sufficient as a marker of class distinction within the complex terms of social stratification in early 19th century Cuba, but rather required of continuous performances and negotiations through different uses and expressions of material culture. Historian Maria del Carmen Barcia pushes the analysis of the symbolism of uniforms one step further by noting that black and mulato militiamen did not always look to whites as models of their military and political aspirations. Rather, she proposes, they used the image of black insurgent Haitian military officials, to construct a political imaginary, where the French-style attire of the Haitian general Touissant Louverture was the paradigm of the military dress fashion of Havana’s “aristocracy of color” in the first half of the 19th century (Barcia 2009: 259-265). White officials anxieties may have been grounded after all given the proven trans-Atlantic network connections that black political leaders created as they moved across North American and Caribbean ports (Paquette 1988, Barcia 2009).

Constructing the black male body as political threat

Militia colored officers, like the majority of the free population of color, belonged to a working-class that dominated the artisan skilled trades that were not performed by whites due to
the stigma attached to manual labor. The most prestigious militiamen were also recognized tailors, musicians, masons, among others. Furthermore, African militiamen often also belonged to or were leaders of the African *cabildos*. Artisanship, militia service and *cabildo* leadership became three interconnected circles of intimate family and friend networks alliances, resources and prestige symbols that conformed a distinct and distinguished although socially heterogeneous elite-community from the rest of enslaved and lower-class free population of color. This “*burguesía de color*” and “military aristocracy” which integrated the most successful and wealthy free blacks and *mulatos* was targeted by Captain General O’Donell in 1833 and 1844 to be almost completely annihilated in the process of systematic extermination of people of color in Havana and Matanzas known as *La Escalera*.

The Aponte conspiracy and subsequent uprisings of the 1820’s and 1830’s activated the Haitian imaginary and fed the construction of free and *criollo* blacks and *mulatos* as political threats to colonial power. Free blacks came to be seen as subversive and dangerous, potential leaders of black rebellions and a terrible example for a large and increasing population of slaves (Mena 2001, Childs 2006). The camaraderie of soldiers in colonial established militias and *cabildos*, as well as their elevated social and economic position within their own community presented them as leaders to unite the free and enslaved populations and as possible links with foreign rebel leaders from neighboring island-colonies (Childs 2001, Chapeaux 1971). Their relations with whites as providers of services in the city added more elements to the threatening image as potential allies of white critics of the colonial government. Among free blacks, *criollo* (Cuban born) blacks were held by the white population with special suspicion. Depictions of *criollo* blacks and *mulatos* as “astute and bold” were associated to their abilities in reading and writing and other skilled occupations. They were perceived as more “aware” or “conscious” in contrast with recently arrived African slaves or *bozales* deemed ignorant and less threatening (Chapeaux 1971: 44). For this reason their participation in African *cabildos* was prohibited. Subtle cultural distinctions were noted in authorities’ concern that leadership of *cabildos* would fall into “… the most aware [“*despiertos*”], wealthy [“*acomodados*”], and as one would say, who wear a clean/neat shirt every day…” (Chapeaux 1971: 44). The construct of a dangerous or threatening man of color was intimately tied to concerns with cultural practices, attitudes and changing aesthetic dispositions. Authorities and white Cuban residents attitudes towards these “refined,” more westernized or culturally adapted black men were charged with the ambivalence
that characterizes colonial discourse, as Homi Bhabha and other scholars of colonialism have observed. (1994a) I expand on this point below and in Chapter 6 in connection with my analysis of discourses of mimicry.

*Political and cultural subject-identity formations*

While the colonial militias divided free blacks and *mulatos* along color lines, *cabildos de nación* were ethnically defined associations of Africans in Cuba sanctioned by both Church and state authorities. *Cabildos* separated Africans into ethnic lines or “naciones” (nations) expressed in their common linguistic, cultural and geographic heritage (Childs 2006, Barcia 2009). In Havana, *cabildos* grouped the ethnicities Carabali, Congo, Lucumi, Arará, Mina, Mandinga, Ganga, among others coming mainly from Western Africa, and producing a highly diverse African diaspora in Cuba (Barcia 2009). While the logic of divide and rule was enforced in colonial militias along color lines, at *cabildos* authorities aimed to maintain ethnic cohesion among Africans of a common ethnic belonging or “nación” creating ground for rivalries among and even within ethnic groups, as well as to prevent association based on colored class solidarity between slaves and free (Paquette 1988: 124). Authorities also used *cabildos* to create divisions between *criollos* and Africans for social control purposes. *Criollos* had an advantage with respect to Africans in part due to the knowledge and abilities that many of them acquired such as reading and writing, which opened up opportunities for social advancement (Barcia 2009: 90).

From the perspective of the state, *cabildos* facilitated communication between Spaniard and African and served as spaces to aid in the process of adjustment or “seasoning” of recently arrived Africans brought as slaves to the local customs. In fact *cabildo* leaders served as intermediaries between Africans and colonial authorities and they were often coopted for political support (Barcia 2009). However, although governance and evangelization were the original purposes of these institutions, Africans used them strategically to further their own interests. *Cabildos* facilitated the strengthening of social networks, which had been affected by enslavement by providing services such as education, artisanal training, housing, loans, burials, and financial assistance to members, including slaves who sought to buy their freedom. Through various cultural activities, common language, religion and fellowship, *cabildos* served an important space for cultural creation, recreation and expression.
The role of religion and the Catholic Church is crucial to understand the processes of enculturation of the African diaspora that emerged in Cuba as historical consequence of slavery. With respect to Catholic religious indoctrination and their civilizing mission, *cabildos* became a multi-faceted space of oppression, resistance and creativity. From the colonizer’s side, the messianic mission of the Church was a convenient justification for colonization and slavery in the Americas. As such it came to fulfill important roles of social control and moral authority that informed the construction of social hierarchies. From the perspective of the colonized, the recreation of Catholic religious practices expressed as a syncretism of African traditions with elements from Catholicism among their many socio-cultural functions and a crucial space for cultural insertion. *Cabildos* became a means to create and re-create cultural and religious elements and construct—although fragmented and unsettled—collective identities and ties of solidarity among Africans in Cuba. Authorities also sanctioned public gatherings of *cabildo* members to festival celebrations to Sundays and religious holidays, a public performance of dance and music from their regions of origin. For colonialists, allowing festivals served to alleviate tensions and increase the productivity of slaves, by providing them an opportunity to disperse and better tolerate strenuous working conditions. For Africans festivals were a means to unite and express a transformed collective identity in their new milieu.

However, *cabildos* also facilitated other forms of cultural division between African members of *cabildos* and the more westernized or “Hispanicized” *criollos* (born in Cuba) who had been compelled to assimilate to the dominant (white) culture from an early age. At *cabildos*, the organizational hierarchy stressed these differences in the subordinate position of the black and *mulato* *criollos* and slaves to the free African leaders deemed kings and queens (“reyes”, “reinas” or alternatively “capataces” and “matronas”) of each *cabildo* (Barcia 2009: 84). In general, language differences often distanced Spanish-speaking *criollos* from Africans in Cuba. Cultural differences between older African and newer Cuban-born *criollo* generations who grew up into the dominant culture often distanced them from participating in *cabildos*. For example, there are several historical references of lighter-skinned and second-generation descendants of Africans who did not participate in ancestral African dance performances of *cabildos*, particularly the Day of Kings street procession, partly because they did not know how to dance

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47 Legally only Africans could participate in cabildos but *criollo* blacks and *mulatos* did participate in fewer numbers.
them. Instead they more likely participated in the more popular local dances organized by the wealthier free blacks and mulatos (Mena 2001, Paquette 1998). These “Cuna” dances, where often whites also participated, were offered in private houses during street fairs and played popular rhythms mixed African and European components such as contradanza, danza and later, danzón (Mena 2001, see Chapter 5).

These examples raise the question about the ways in which cultural practices like dance informed the construction of distinct class/ethnic identities among people of African descent in the first half of the 19th century in Havana. Did multiple factors tied to class, gender and others such as legal status and ethnic origin combine in such ways to allow people of color to come together as a collective? Or did they rather work to create divisions according to colonial state interests and their own interests to stand out within the collective of people of color? The answer to the question on the formation of a collective identity is far from absolute given the methodological challenges of archival research. Rigid social and legal structures impinging upon people of color in early 19th century society rendered subaltern voices silent, filtered through and ventriloquized by judicial and police colonial apparatuses. Most representations on people of color created by white upper class intellectuals and travelers’ constructed images of them as “other” and abject subjects. In raising the question of “identity” formation I am retracting from the related but different concept of “subject” formation to signal the implicit inquiry in the former of the subjects’ own perspective—an emic inquiry. To ask how blacks and mulatos viewed themselves as distinctive from or as part of a collective is perhaps more difficult—in historical research, at least—than to make an approximation to the ways in which others who spoke about them constructed or imagined their subjectivity to be (Butler 2006). Given the extension and depth of discussions about political histories (as compared to social and cultural histories) in Cuba, historians have more often approached the question of formation of a collective identity among people of African descent from the perspective of political discourse.

Much of the discussion about intra-racial politics and relations in 19th century Cuba has centered on the extent and forms of collaboration and alliances between slaves and free blacks and mulatos in political mobilizations to end slavery and gain freedom and independence. Historians of slavery coincide in that people of color from diverse ethnic, cultural, national or legal backgrounds, historically established ties of collaboration based on racial ancestry and a common experience of oppression regardless of their social differences towards a political goal.
Two major conspiracies during the first half of the 19th century Cuba, Aponte in 1812 and later La Escalera in 1844, demonstrated the existence of transnational and internal networks between free blacks in the cities and plantation slaves. Similarly, differences between criollos and Africans as well as across ethnic groups did not preclude the establishment of ties of collaboration toward political goals. Africans in collaboration with Cuban born blacks used cabildos and militias strategically as a space of empowerment and organization to exchange ideas and plan rebellions. Both episodes revealed the role of free blacks as links between cabildos and militias, two foci of organization created by and used against the colonial government who had originally trained and armed its leaders. As an obvious consequence of the repression and massacre of La Escalera in 1844, militias were dissolved and were inactive for 14 years, when they reemerged with new and greater divisions between whites, mulatos and blacks.

While militias of color were finally extinguished in 1868, men of color reemerged as political subjects under a new guise during the revolutionary movements for Cuban independence against Spain in the second half of the 19th century. A racially integrated army of blacks mulatos and whites, some of who set their slaves free, emerged as the outcome of the revolutionary movement that consolidated during the 30-year period since 1868. Revolutionary wars revealed the violent play of not only class inequalities but also regional tensions that historically marginalized the Eastern part of Cuba and placed the limits of racial inclusion in the national project at the center of the confrontation (Ferrer 1999). Cuban revolutionary leaders pushed forth a rhetoric of anti-racism that consolidated towards the late 19th century, making the discourse of racial equality into the foundation of the Cuban nation (Ferrer 1999). Thus, while the first half of the century was marked by an atmosphere of fear, anxieties and localized repression, the consolidation of the revolutionary movements during the second half the century produced a progressive ideology of “raceless” or multiracial Cuban nationality. This rhetoric of an anti-racist revolution was strategically mobilized to confront a Spanish colonialism in demise, constructed as a symbol of anachronistic racial divisions and slavery (Ferrer 1999).

Historian Aline Helg has contended that the repression of La Escalera worked to polarize society along racial lines, producing the ethnic cohesion among people of African-descent that facilitated their mobilization during the wars of independence (Helg 2011). Ada Ferrer complicates this picture by noting the complex power negotiations that occurred within the
revolutionary movement involving cultural practices, moral standing and the interconnectedness of race and region. Her discussion of the importance of culture, sexuality and class elements in constructions of men of color as political subjects in the second half of the 19th century revolutionary movements compels a re-consideration of the politics of class, gender and color other than one just viewed through the lens of race (Helg 2011: 256, Ferrer 1998). Ferrer examined the figure of Quintín Bandera, a prominent black leader of the revolutionary movements of the second half of the century to demonstrate the importance of cultural factors beyond military performance as indicators of leadership. Quintín Bandera was charged in the court-martial in 1897, among others, with offense of “immorality”. Ferrer demonstrates how concerns for decorum, honor and civilization, measured among others on black men’s sexual behavior, moral standing and regional belonging were in the case she analyzed more important than racial identity or military discipline (1999: 683, see Chapter 8).

In spite of extensive debates, historians agree that the Haitian revolution (1791–1804) was a key unifying ideological force on which people of color in Cuba drew inspiration to create their own and historically distinctive forms of resistance (Childs 2006, Ferrer 2002, Barcia 2009, Paquette 1998). However, the influence of the Haitian model in the cross-class-racial alliances formed during La Escalera and Aponte conspiracies in Cuba might also be evaluated in terms of the arrangements of power that reproduced prevailing social hierarchies in the imagined post-rebellion socio-political order. In his reading of Matt Childs’ work on the 1812 Aponte Conspiracy, Manuel Barcia documented the nature of these arrangements. Barcia described how in the midst of a multi-cultural communion towards the cause of emancipation, arrangements of power post-rebellion were established,

> The urban-based circle of Aponte’s close friends and collaborators maintained a close relationship with enslaved persons from the rural areas surrounding Havana. Their members travelled to the nearest plantations, encouraging the enslaved people to participate in a general uprising against their masters. In these meetings they shared their ideas and knowledge about freedom. They also participated in dances and drumming in the most traditional ‘African’ styles. This combination of different cosmologies and cultural backgrounds was one of the main characteristics of the movement. *While the enslaved people were being encouraged to kill all whites and take over the land, the leaders of the plot had their sights on seizing control of the government.* (Barcia 2007: 6, emphasis added)

Robert Paquette’s reading of the 1844 La Escalera conspiracy refers to similar power
arrangements along divisions of legal status (free vs. slaves) and color. *Pardos* were perceived as “more [politically] moderate [and] more closely identified with white culture and attitudes towards property” in contrast to *morenos*, who were “more radical…[and]…generally had closer ties to the slaves” (Paquette 1988: 251). Lighter skinned, free *pardos* or *mulatos* made up the “vanguard” or rebel leadership presumably leading over “masses” of slaves organized around the supposed conspiracy. Adding complexity to Paquette’s analysis Manuel Barcia highlighted ethnicity and place (urban vs. plantation-based) as important elements to understand the power arrangements in the different types of movements for resistance in the first half of the 19th century. In spite of its critiques, Paquette’s analysis is particularly interesting for the discussion on cultural practices raised in this dissertation as it problematizes the complex negotiations of ideology and culture among different social layers of people of African descent at the moment of organizing. His work highlights the distinctions that authorities and actors made of the different ethnic, color and class groups that were presumably implicated in *La Escalera*. His discussion reveals how differences, both phenotypical, socio-economic but also cultural, truly mattered at

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48 A frequent critique to the major work on *La Escalera* conspiracy by Robert Paquette *Sugar is Made with Blood* (1988) was its downplay of alternative views of resistance among slaves participating in the movements for emancipation and independence, while placing emphasis on external influences, namely, liberal-democratic ideas from the French and the British industrial revolutions. Paquette provided a thorough discussion of the role of the British consul David Turnbull in providing at least moral support, if not promoting and even recruiting free blacks and mulattos for the cause of abolition during the years previous to the uncovering of the alleged plot of *La Escalera* (Barcia 2006, Paquette 1988). David Turnbull became an activist of abolition in Cuba upon being sent as a consul and overseer of the 1817 Treaty between Britain and Spain to abolish slavery, until he was expelled in 1822 and later accused in absentia for being the primary promoter of *La Escalera* conspiracy (Mena 2001, Paquette 1988). Paquette did specify that the influence of a liberal-democratic ideology was evident in the “distinctively modern quality” of the language used by the rebel *leadership* of color used in their trial testimonies in words such as “rights”, “liberty” and “republic”. In Paquette’s view, it was this colored leadership and not the African-born slave masses that “converted” to liberal-democratic notions (Paquette 1988: 256). Manuel Barcia provides additional elements to distinguish the interests and motivations of people of color in their movements for resistance. He claims that African-born slaves, the majority from the Lucumi ethnic group- led the majority of the series of uprisings of the first half of the 19th century in Western Cuba. African elements, expressed in their distinctive use of dress, language, military techniques and religious rituals, rather than on external revolutionary ideas characterized the development of these revolts. On the other hand *conspiracies*—including *La Escalera* 1844 and Aponte 1812—were well planned insurrections that tended to be urban led by free persons of color with participation of Cuban-born slaves. Blacks and mulattos in Cuba—both slave and free—among others through the powerful mechanism of “rumors,” had been exposed to and were aware of these ideas. Since the early 19th century abolitionist ideas were debated in Spain’s liberal circle related to the Spanish Liberal Constitution of 1812 and had reached people of color in Cuba. Cuban soldiers of color had not had only heard stories about the Haitian Revolution but also actually fought together with Haitian and Dominican rebels under Spanish troops in the armed conflict against France during the early years of the insurrection in Saint Domingue (1791–1804) (Barcia 2009). Later on, Turnbull’s involvement with Cuban blacks and mulattos in the context of the English anti-slavery campaign and the North-South debate over slavery in the United States in the 1830’s and 1840’s further impacted the ideological conjuncture of political and racial tensions.
the moment of deciding why someone was guilty of involvement in what was framed as a racial confrontation of “blacks against whites” (Paquette 1988, Chapeaux 1971). This discussion opens up spaces to problematize further on the complex relationships between cultural and racial ideologies and political ideologies in processes of identity formation among people of African descent. The discussion of the implication of the supposed leader of the conspiracy, the poet Gabriel de la Concepción Valdés “Plácido” gives some clues to approach this question.

Plácido is probably the most controversial figure in the long and unresolved polemic around La Escalera conspiracy. An important part of the debates have focused on Plácido’s racial and cultural attitudes, or in Victor Fowler’s words, his “racial loyalty” (Fowler 2001). Like most of the alleged leaders of the plot, Plácido was a well-educated mulato from Havana who rose from humble origins dodging social barriers to become one of the most well known poets of his time in Cuba. He became protected among the cultured Cuban white elite after he defeated several white writers in a poetry contest. The subtle condemnations of slavery in his poetry formed part of the debates on his implication in the conspiracy. He performed several crafts, but was best known as an artisan of tortoise shell combs, in fashion at the time. Although he never escaped poverty, he belonged to the elite circle in the community of color along with other artisans, musicians, artists, tailors and dentists. Many of them were literate and used to read newspapers and discuss their ideas in cafés and at private gatherings, traveled abroad and at cases spoke more than one language (Barcia 2009). They created their own spaces of sociability like “societies” and private dance balls or “Cunas” that were selective with other lower-class individuals of color, though not with whites. Although they were not admitted as equals in the spaces of whites or in other “public” spaces like theaters, they participated in their world as entertainers in music ensembles at their gatherings, as designers of their clothing, and providers of other services like funerary, dentistry, among others. The imaginary about Havana’s colored

49 The debates about the role of Plácido in La Escalera conspiracy date from the time of his death and extend throughout Cuba’s pre and post revolution historiography. Paquette (1988) goes as far as to label Plácido “the most important person of color in Cuba” and place him next to Jose Marti in the extent of attention received by Cuban colonial historians. (Paquette 1988: 110) With respect to the polemic over La Escalera, historians have debated the authenticity of the Conspiracy for over a century. Some scholars, like Robert Paquette and Gwendolyn Midlo Hall contended that several pieces of evidence confirmed the posible existence of one or many plots in 1844. These include Cuba’s history of slave rebellions, examples of collaborative dissidence among slaves, free blacks, and whites, and the massive testimony investigators compiled from the more than four thousand people arrested in connection to the process of La Escalera. Others, including Franklin Knight, and Cuban historians Pedro Chapeaux Chapeaux and José Luciano Franco, contended that colonial government fabricated the conspiracy and used it as a means to destroy the influence and growth of the free community of color.
aristocracy in the words of an upper class white Cuban in the 1840’s, cited often in historical accounts today, stresses the imitation of class codes as a fundamental element of their class-racial subjectivity, “…many blacks and mulatos, some of them with abundant wealth who in their lifestyle in their dress, in their stature (porte) and in their forms of expression [or speech], imitated those white gentlemen who still remained in Cuba, and among them no lack of people fond of reading serious books and even making verse…” (Franco 1937).

Plácido, like the urban artisan and military sector of free blacks and mulatos, had ties both with the free colored community as well as with a circle of white intellectuals. It was precisely this “in between” positionality in the socio-symbolic structure what made a free educated mulatto like Plácido most suspicious. Historians have long speculated whether his close relations with the famous criollo aristocrat, writer and critic of slavery and the colonial government Domingo del Monte worked for or against him at the moment of his trial and execution. Robert Paquette describes this situation in commenting on Plácido’s denial of the Military Commission charges up to the moment of his execution, “He could have done so with a clear conscience, for the kind of conspiracy the government charged him with leading—a racist ‘project of furious insurrection and bloodshed and extermination of all whites’—was not his way. Plácido had shown no obvious racial hatred of whites. Indeed, he was mostly white himself and spent much time with white intellectuals and patrons and had many white friends” (1988: 259). The relationship between Plácido’s political and racial subject-positions is called upon in this analysis as in the many attempts made by his contemporaries and historians to reconstruct his subjectivity after his death. These depictions persistently divided Plácido into either martyr or passive victim. There is the image of Plácido as a coward who claimed his innocence and informed on others counter posed to that of a courageous and dignified patriot, refusing to divulge information on the said conspiracy and dying heroically for his cause (Mena 2001, Méndez Martínez 2011). While some of his biographers assert that he was not interested in assimilating to white society, others provide references to his deferential treatment with whites such as removing his hat or refusing to sit at the table in gatherings of middle-class whites (Mena 2001, Méndez Martínez 2011). Either he was a servile mulato in his relationships with whites and a deserter to the cause or he had an active racial and political consciousness that validated
him as the leader of a revolutionary movement for liberation.\textsuperscript{50} These ambivalent representations of Plácido in his political and racial subjectivities are concomitant to the broader conundrum about the existence of the conspiracy of \textit{La Escalera} and the motivations for the repression. As such they speak of a moment of representational and political crisis where ambivalence, uncertainty and indefinability about the political, economic, cultural and spatial limits of blacks in colonial society were at the roots of authorities and white elite’s anxieties and their efforts to enforce boundaries. \textit{La Escalera} violently epitomized these efforts. Furthermore, these representations exclude the possibility of coexistence of multiple or presumably opposite racial subjectivities—a class/racial subjectivity affirming African ancestry vs. one informed by the ideal of “blanqueamiento” or whitening. In Chapter 6, I elaborate on this question by analysing cultural discourses about blacks and \textit{mulatos}’ class-cultural practices stressing the notion of ambiguity and mimicry as an expression of the representational crisis that defined this historical moment in Havana.

\textbf{Wealth, property and slave holding as signifiers of whiteness}

Historians concur that there were clear socio-economic connotations behind the repression of \textit{La Escalera}, which were inseparable from the inter-relations of color and class hierarchies in the first half of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century (Chapeaux 1971, Paquette 1988). The Military Commission led by the Governor of Cuba, General Leopoldo O’Donnell selectively targeted the wealthiest, most respected and influential free blacks and \textit{mulatos} along with hundreds of slaves and a minority of whites, of whom only one was executed (Paquette 1988). Artisans of color of diverse trades including barbers, flebotomists, dentists, foremen, masons, tailors, musicians, who also held posts as militiamen or as leaders or members of \textit{cabildos} were accused as conspirators and executed, tortured, expropriated of their property, jailed or exiled. Some historians describe this episode as the “dismantling of the black middle class” which particularly impacted the musical activity in the years after the repression: it became impossible to staff a dance orchestra in Cuba due to the large number of imprisoned musicians of color (Sublette 2007, Lapique 1879). Chapeaux (1971) and Barcia’s (2009) thorough documentation of the occupational, financial and

\textsuperscript{50} Roig de Leuchsenring summarized the ambivalent representations of Plácido as either “the eminent lyric poet, conspirator and propagandist of independence, civic patriot and man of dignity and decency or the contrary, a mediocre and servile poet, adulator of the whites and disdainful and depreciative of the blacks, a racist of little worth, against whom Spain committed a great crime, shooting an innocent” (Roig in Paquette 1988: 257).
networking activities of several members of this military-artisan aristocracy during the 1820-1850 evidenced the economic significance of blacks and *mulatos* in Havana and the extent and instrumentality of their social networks.

Chapeaux found that nearly all the most influential and rich blacks and *mulatos* in Havana at the time were implicated in the conspiracy. He argued that targeting the ascending class of blacks and *mulatos* was a measure to neutralize them as economic competitors of the white dominant class and as potential ideologues of the anti-slavery cause (Chapeaux 1971: 25). Whereas blacks and *mulatos’* economic success as a working-class is unquestionable, the idea that they represented a potential threat to the economic power of *criollo* planters and an emerging Spanish class of merchant slave-dealers is far from realistic. Chapeaux’ evidence itself demonstrates that the cultural construct of free blacks and *mulato* artisans as economic threats weaved around the broader narrative of *La Escalera* was inseparable from powerful cultural elements that gave racialized and gendered meanings to money, property holding—including slaveholding—and other cultural forms associated with white-European power and privilege.

*Gendered constructs of wealth and privilege*

Chapeaux ground-breaking work makes evident that the repressive process of *La Escalera* implicated men of color with close relations with the upper-white class in their positions of service providers in the city as masons, musicians, tailors and dentists who were held in high esteem by both white and black customers alike. Economic solvency also appears to have been a decisive factor in the authorities selective criteria. For instance, the famous composer and band director, militia sergeant Tomás Vuelta y Flores was thought to be the wealthiest among this aristocratic colored/military class, leaving behind $50,000 pesos in valued property, including 16 houses, slaves, diamond, gold and brilliants jewels, and silverware sets upon his death. Vuelta y Flores made between $100 and $150 per performance with his band at theatre ball dances at a time when a domestic servant earned $12 a month and a day-laborer slave, $9 pesos (Chapeaux 1971:116). Similarly, the most popular tailor of the period even among the white upper classes and a with a (purchased) rank of sergeant in the Militias of Color, Francisco Uribe was said to be the greatest owner of slaves within his class, although not within his gender—a matter I will address shortly. He owned 13 all women slaves who worked as laundresses, pressers, cooks, and aids in his shop (Chapeaux 1971). Uribe was given a walk-on
role by Cirilo Villaverde in the famous 19th century novel “Cecilia Valdes,” where the author described Uribe’s shop as the location of encounter of persons of all social classes, from upper white nobles, to lower class people of color and slaves. While Vuelta y Flores survived to the process, Uribe committed suicide in prison awaiting his sentence.

In addition, competition in common professional fields with whites was an obvious factor of conflict with direct repercussions against some well-reputed dentists of color (see Chapter 5). As noted by Jose Antonio Saco, many of these men and women transgressed the racialized limits of occupations and fields like poetry, painting, journalism, education, dentistry and midwifery, therefore challenging the terms by which these were deemed respectable for white competitors (see Chapter 2). Free pardos/as and mulatos/as were more represented in the elites of color and they were also the most westernized in their cultural forms compared to darker skinned blacks and Africans (Barcia, Maria del Carmen, personal communication 05/29/2011). They formed a kind of “cultured elite” with shared interests and social networks who acted in selected and selective spaces of sociability of both the upper white and black sectors. A paradigmatic figure, remembered for his “refined” ways was the dance teacher, famed composer and band director Claudio Brindis de Salas (Carpentier 2001). Along with Brindis, the poet Plácido, the tailor Uribe, the mason Barbosa, the teacher Barba, the musician Vuelta y Flores were remembered as representatives of this high-cultured and “uppity” aristocracy of color. Bachiller y Morales described this select group quite suggestively as los políticos (“the diplomats” or “the politicals”) in his memories about Brindis, “this black criollo, a musician by profession, was a gentleman of agreeable and ceremonious ways, adhering to the norms of social behavior; he was the cream of the ‘politicals’ of that species, and his aristocratic tendencies made him strike up friendships with gentlemen and professors of the other race” (Carpentier 2001:161).

As entertainers and stylists of the dense weave of cultural objects that white upper classes and to an extent also themselves consumed (concerts, suits, carriages, furniture, shoes, etc.) they were central elements in Havana’s imaginary of the 1930’s and 1940’s. They figured along with luxurious mansions and leisurely lifestyle of the upper class criollos enabled by slave-trade and sugar export revenues. However, this narrative of an economically solid colored aristocracy, which was (unfairly) victimized by the colonial government as far as Chapeaux and the extensive historiographical narrative of La Escalera describe it, is markedly a male imaginary. Although Chapeaux discusses the influence of women as midwives and teachers, their image is rather
passive as economic subjects as these professions were not among the most prestigious and/or better remunerated. Politically, a colored female construct is even weaker. While Chapeaux provides examples of numerous wealthy and influential men of color who were persecuted, only one woman of color, the respected midwife Pilar Poveda, was sentenced for her family ties with Plácido, her son in law. It is suggestive that Poveda’s involvement was framed in terms of her domestic role as a presumed hostess of political gatherings directed by men, and in her role as mother and kin of the (true) political actors (Chapeaux 1971: 183). Reading La Escalera as a meta-narrative through which men of color were constructed as political and economic subjects (and threats) to colonial power is an interesting avenue to explore how the construction of symbols of prestige and privilege was gendered. That women of color lacked representation in this narrative is revealing as both historians and contemporary writers have interpellated (Althusser 1989) women of color as sexual subjects, through which the imaginary of a different kind of threat—racial miscegenation—was projected and legitimated.

Building on the important work of Chapeaux, historian Maria del Carmen Barcia provided key elements to understand how economic and prestige elements among families of color were built through intertwined family, and non-kin networks and associations such as militias of color, religious cofradias and African cabildos. Her work speaks directly to the discursive vacuum of women of color as economic subjects in the first half of the 19th century. Endogamous marriage practices (within the same color-class group) were a crucial strategy of social mobility widely used by people of color to tighten their networks and consolidate their wealth. For instance, Barcia’s analysis of the trajectory and economic ascendance of the pardo military family Flores-Escobar reveals the fundamental role of women of color’s economic solvency on which the family’s fortune was built through their systematic contributions upon marriage in the form of dowry and inheritances (Barcia 2009: 355). Often, women of color brought more capital and property to a marriage than their husbands (Mena 2001, Barcia 2009).

For her part, Luz Mena’s (2001) interpretation of women of color as enjoying considerable economic autonomy, even within marriage, challenges passive views of women as economic agents. This autonomy went along with their active presence in the city that set them at odds with white women more strictly controlled by prevailing gender-class norms. A paradigmatic case was Ursula Lambert, a mulata of Haitian descent and famous entrepreneur, who left among other valuables, 21 slaves upon her death, far surpassing those of the
distinguished tailor Uribe (Barcia 2009). Among African women, their participation in *cabildos* as handlers of finances and donors was crucial (Childs 2001, Barcia 2009). It has also been noted that black women surpassed their male counterparts as homeowners in the extramural zone of the city (Mena 2001: 210). Why then, do men of color appear as the dominant economic agents of this elite class of blacks and *mulatos* who are, presumably for this reason, victimized as political threats by the dominant class?

I suggest that the historical imaginary of (elite) men of color as political agents was deeply informed by the privileges of their gender tied to the prestige value gained from their positions in the military and the professional fields they dominated in the first half of the 19th century in Havana. Women of color were excluded from the assets of prestige available to men of color through their participation in the military. In addition, the symbolic and moral ordering of gender hierarchies meant that the professions in which they engaged were less valued than those of men, which I discuss through specific examples in Chapter 5.

The question about the (absent) construct of black women as political subjects is a related question, although it is not the focus of this study. Recent studies have explored the role of women fighters or *mambisas* in the revolutionary movements of the second half of the 19th century (Prados-Torreira 2005). Another study explored the question of how free women of color in Cuba responded to the 1844 repression of the Conspiracy of *La Escalera* during its aftermath (Reid 2008). While these studies make visible women of color’s political agency in Cuba’s history, they still have not addressed the question of the discursive aspects of political narratives like *La Escalera* from a gender perspective. My objective with this analysis, then, was to tease out the discursive connections made between economic agency and political agency in the political historiography of Cuba in mid 19th century in ways that are clearly gendered. Thinking about *La Escalera* as a gendered meta-narrative is useful to understand the ways in which prestige as a crucial component of race and class relations was informed by the differential positioning of men and women, discursively, in realms of economy and politics.

*Prestige practices: slave ownership and charity*

Slave ownership among a minority of free people of color was sometimes expressed in terms of “mimicry” of patterns of the dominant class (Childs 2001, Chapeaux 1971). The number of homes and slaves was similarly an indicator of wealth and status although in very different
terms to those of the white elite. For people of color, slave holding was more likely an investment to secure material conditions—like investing in housing or a small self-owned business. Purchasing slaves was an additional income-source from rental either for their subsistence needs or to work in their businesses (Chapeaux 1971). Additional evidences are references about people of color who did not purchase slaves although they could afford them (Childs 2001). Thus, while slave holding was an institution and practice of the dominant white class on which the economic system relied, it served a different purpose to an emerging class of free people of color that worked for a living. This went in great contrast to the old-dated landowning oligarchy that lived from the profits of slave labor and trade. Chapeaux adequately describes this distinction by observing free black slave-owners as an “inferior master class within the slave social regime” given their subjected overall status in colonial society. Political power and vast amounts of land were virtually inaccessible even to free people of color. The British traveler Robert F. Jameson provided an illustrative description of these fundamental asymmetries in the early 1820’s, “Though tinted with the die of slavery, they possess certain privileges, here called freedom, but which have little analogy to the European [sic] meaning of the word; they are unchained but the collar remains on their necks. They are subject to most of the restrictions imposed on the slave…” (Jameson 1821: 37). Although slave-holding—like freedom—did not carry the same material implications, in cultural and symbolic terms property and slave-holding were important elements of class aspirations. These practices were interpreted in relation to a continuum of progress where normative standards were defined through whiteness as a symbol of prestige and status, produced through exclusion of the “black” and the “African” as references of the different, less worthy and desirable.

There are disparate representations of black and mulato masters in their relationship with their slaves. Whereas some references indicate a greater sense of humanity revealed in their greater tendency to grant them freedom (either graciously upon death or through self-purchase, Barcia 2009), others point to the contrary. Matt Childs provided an example of a mulata slave Maria Ramona Cabrera, whereby black masters’ cruelty appeared no different to whites. She appeared before judicial officials "completely bathed in blood as a consequence of the injury inflicted' by her black master Jose Maria Moreno with a butcher's knife" (Childs 2006: 69). Thinking beyond these disparate representations, relationships between masters and slaves of color were often mediated by different kind of affective and kin ties, which at cases were
cultivated from a common condition in slave barracks, revealing practices of solidarity and perhaps a common identity bridging the divide between slave and free.

Like slaveholding, charity was a social practice that a number of free and relatively wealthier blacks and mulatos engaged in through their membership in the Catholic cofradías or fraternities. Through their participation in the Church and its benevolent institutions, Havana’s elite of color appropriated some of the traditional markers aristocratic white families used to distinguish themselves. An evidence is the importance given to “charity” (caridad) as a fundamental value included in books of conduct directed to middle and upper classes throughout the 19th century (Costales 1884, De La Torre 1857, De Coronado 1893). Engagement in charity activities was closely related to their participation in government, possession of land and their marital ties within a closed circle. In fact, endogamous class marriage practices were yet another tactic used by elite families of color to consolidate their wealth. Thus, black and white elite families interacted in mixed Catholic cofradías, as these were among the few associative instances not always racially segregated. Although more than half of these associations were composed of pardos and/or morenos (blacks and mulattos), whites along with the latter attended to about 7% of the cofradías in Havana (Barcia 2009). Although the majority of cofradías were integrated by lower class individuals, some of the most prestigious cofradías in Havana grouped distinguished members of upper-class white families along with elite pardos and mulatos. Some of the prestigious cofradías of pardos were integrated by officials in the Colonial Militias and many of them disappeared after the repression of 1844 (Barcia 2009). By making donations to orphanages and other charitable organizations and engaging in numerous Catholic religious rituals (discussed in Chapter 7), elite blacks and mulatos appropriated one among many measures of prestige that defined traditional identity markers of the white upper-classes in early 19th century Havana. Thus, while free, lighter-skinned pardos and mulatos made strategic use of (sometimes racially mixed) associations such as religious cofradías and colonial militias to tighten their social circle, African men and women exploited ethnically based networks through their membership in cabildos.

*Cabildos as avenues for social mobility*
A number of wealthy African militiamen, generally leaders of *cabildos* used this colonial institution to engage in various strategies of social mobility. Through their participation in *cabildos*, Africans in Cuba gained a sense of political participation and prestige from their leadership positions and sometimes accumulated considerable wealth from making loans, mortgages, home-dealing and transfers of property among both black and white people alike (Barcia 2009: 105). Many of them had several white debtors including planters and military colonels and in some cases they inherited their property to those who had been their masters (Chapeaux 1971). African *cabildo* leaders mastered the home dealing and renting business often using their power to accumulate profits that allowed them some financial stability. Each *cabildo* had its savings box built up from fees collected at Sunday African religious ceremonies or “*toques de tambor*.” Fundraisings and donations by members were common sources of revenue. The leaders or *capataces* were in charge of the box, who often cases were women or “*matronas*.” Barcia documented several cases of claims against *cabildo* leaders for improper use of funds. It was frequent that Africans inherited their property to the *cabildo* as an institution or to specific members (one or several), generally to *capataces* or *matronas*, in case they did not have descendants upon decease. *Cabildos* also rented rooms or whole homes or “*accesorías*” (with private entries from the street) to raise funds for the *cabildo*. *Cabildo* property was rented preferably to *cabildo* members. In some cases, a particular *cabildo* would rent rooms in a house and use the living room, for their ceremonies and gatherings.

Some of the wealthy *cabildo* members, who were also militiamen and foremen were also targets of colonial repression in *La Escalera*. Their connections within the military, within *cabildos* and their successful commercial activities at the docks made them suspect. Foremen, the majority of whom were *carabali* Africans, were among the richest blacks and *mulatos* in Havana who gained part of their revenues by employing numerous slaves working as day-labourers, and through their business as private creditors, home-renters, usurers—gaining considerable profits from high interest on mortgage loans (Chapeaux 1971, Barcia 2009).

Thus, *cabildos* were an important avenue of social mobility for Africans in Cuba many of who rose dramatically as a wealthy minority of successful businessmen by exploiting the social

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51 Analysis on cabildos has largely focused on the religious, cultural and political functions they served. Maria del Carmen Barcia (2009) and Pedro Chapeaux Chapeaux (1972) contribute a different perspective by highlighting the socio-economic function of cabildos and the crucial role they played as a means of social mobility for Africans in Cuba.
networks of various social institutions to their advantage. Notable Africans arrived in Cuba as slaves over the course of a lifetime became businessmen and women in the housing rental business, could own as much as 12 homes and 50 slaves (Barcia 2009: 112). In addition to demonstrating the level of legal literacy that certain Africans mastered, their actions revealed the networks between certain (white) government bureaucrats related in one way or other to upper-class blacks and mulatos, who benefited from the lucrative business and sanctioned the activities of the cabildo. Africans’ mobility over generations reached even higher levels, at cases breaking the legal barriers that denied the entry of descendants of Africans to the circle of noblemen. The case of the Escalera-Reyes family analyzed by Maria del Carmen Barcia is an exemplary case (2009). Over 3 generations and with the strategic use of class endogamous marriage practices within elite families52, like the Barbosas and Escobars, and their strategic use of networks in cabildos, cofradías, and militias, this extended family scaled up color and class gradations to the point of having an ennobled member by the 3d generation. The grandson of two Africans used the honorific “don” as an indication of his (achieved) whiteness and legal noble origin, and of the family’s spectacular rise. Additional legal provisions current since the late 18th century that allowed purchasing titles of whiteness and nobility explain how this symbolic metamorphosis was even possible.

Purchasing privilege and the changing meanings of wealth

In Cuba and other American colonies of Spain like Venezuela nonwhites could access the privileges of whites through the provisions of Spanish Crown certificates Gracias al Sacar, authorized by Charles IV in 179553. These provisions allowed the purchase the legal status of “white” by persons of racially-mixed ancestry. One of its articles “accorded the applicant the quality of the pardo, cuarterón [quadroon] or quinterón for a sum of money. If a Spanish parent wanted to grant a privilege to his son with a black, mulata or an Indian, and give him the quality of white, he could purchase the papers and legally was white…” (Marta Rojas in Pérez Sarduy 1998: 6). The certificate of whiteness or “papeles de blanco” gave an individual of color access

52 Barcia provides examples of the use among Africans in Cuba of endogamic practices within the same ethnic group for similar property-unification purposes. (Barcia 2009: 112)
53 This disposition did not go unchallenged by the dominant classes in certains parts of the island. In 1796 the mulato Nicolás Morales plotted against the governor of Bayamo who had failed to publish the decree of Gracias al Sacar. Along with black and white supporters, he also demanded tax reforms and land redistribution. He was hanged and his supporters jailed. (Paquette 1988, Rojas 1998)
to the privileges of whites, such as university education or to (dignified and honorable) liberal professions, marriage with whites or entrance to the clergy.

In her novel *Santa Lujuria* the writer and historian Marta Rojas narrated a story of two of such cases in the late 18th and early 19th century Cuba. The main character, Francisco Filomeno, is the son of a Spanish nobleman, the Marqués de Aguas Claras and a free *parda*, thus classifies under the category of “quadroon.” His father, the Marquis purchases his “*papeles de blanco*” and the honorific “*don*” —reserved only to whites in Cuba—enabling Filomeno to pursue a remarkable career as a lawyer. One additional maneuver (altering his baptismal certificate to appear to have been born of a white mother the Marquis’ deceased wife, and have an artificial white-noble genealogy) gave Filomeno the necessary proof of “purity of blood” which “opened up the doors of the Royal Courts” in Spain. He could then finally reach his goal of being ennobled by Charles IV as the next Marqués de Aguas Claras, successor of his father. Thus, Filomeno went from being an illegitimate *mulato* to “doctor” in law, judge, director of the Lunatic Asylum, and adviser of the Captain General of Cuba and the Floridas over the course of approximately 20 years (Rojas 1998). In other cases, these certificates could be negotiated or arranged for at the Spanish courts as gracious concessions on the basis of merit to distinguished individuals, which was the case of the famous painter, the *pardo* Vicente Escobar (Pérez Cisneros 2000). Escobar had the privilege of very few in his class to study abroad in Europe and his family were members of a Havana selective religious *cofradía*. The quality of his work earned him the title of “*pintor de cámara*” of the Spanish Monarch Fernando VII, particularly for his portraits of Cuba’s Captain Generals. This public recognition opened the doors of the courts to purchase his certificate of whiteness. As one biographer put it graphically, although Escobar was inscribed as black at birth “… he died white.”

While *Gracias al Sacar* provided an avenue for upward mobility for people of color, it also reinforced prevailing racial hierarchies—different color categories had different price tags. To dispense the quality of *pardo* costed 700 reales de vellón, *quarterón* and *quinterón* costed 1000 (Rojas 1998). Legitimacy could also be purchased according to the provisions of *Gracias*

54 Although in Spain historically the term was used to address the members of the nobility who in most cases had proven high or ancient aristocratic birth, in colonial Cuba the term also denoted racial distinction; only whites were entitled to use the honorific *don*. In practice, the title *don* was also granted directly by the Crown upon merit to distinguished individuals of color. (Chapeaux 1971)
al Sacar and were more expensive (25,000) than simply purchasing a higher color gradation\(^{55}\) (Rojas, 1998, Stolcke 1974). From the perspective of Spanish authorities, taxing privilege was a convenient source of revenues. The disposition was a lengthy list of due fees ranging from purchases for the privilege of *hidalguía*\(^{56}\) (nobility) to legitimate births, providing a considerable income, even if it contradicted other provisions such as that of *limpieza de sangre* (Capdequi 1968, Barcia, M. personal communication 08/02/2011). However, the logic of Spain in granting privileges by purchase, such as whiteness, and military posts, could be interpreted as a trade-in for a greater security or diminishing the possibilities of organization by fostering hierarchies among people of color, which became especially necessary after the events in Saint Domingue (Rojas 1998). Rojas illustrates the interconnected logic of these dispositions in the following excerpt in the voice of the Marqués de Aguas Claras,

> If Spain had set a price to the taxes in the Indies to allow for the purchase the papers to be entitled as white, through the Gracias al sacar, thereby dispensing skin color; if the distinctive of *don*, a nobility title, of *hidalguía*, or even –although with certain trickeries- the purity of blood could also be purchased, and therefore it would not be at all impossible for certain rich Indians to form a lush genealogical tree capable to rival with the high-lineage (*alcurnia hereditaria*) of Grandes de Castilla, it wouldn’t be anything difficult to grant the loyal *Moreno* the right to dress a military uniform and sell him two honorific medals, if it was to secure the loyalty of ‘clever, pretentious and undisciplined blacks and *pardos*’... (Rojas 1998: 152)

This disposition also revealed the particularities of Cuban ideologies of race in the early 19\(^{th}\) century to the extent that this privilege was only available to those individuals with “one drop of white blood”, that is, with mixed black and white ancestry. This condition made them potentially—legally and socially—closer to whites than to blacks setting a distinction between Anglo-Saxon ideologies of race and those prevailing in the colonies of the Hispanic Caribbean (Pérez Sarduy, 1998).

From an alternate perspective, dispositions that permitted men of color to purchase

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\(^{55}\) 1000 reales de vellón were about 50 pesos which was about 5 times the monthly wage of a domestic servant, and double that of an urban worker. {{317 Stolcke, V. 1974/s: 167;}}

\(^{56}\) After the 12\(^{th}\) century Spain, the term was most often associated to the military class of knights or *hidalgos*. Since the 12\(^{th}\) century in Spain, the fight to reconquer Spain from the Moors (*Reconquista*) required the expansion of this class. There were distinctions of rank among the nobility and *hidalgos* came to be known as the untitled, lower strata of the nobility, above the ordinary gentry and below the great lords. The status of *hidalgo* could be granted directly from the Crown or inherited through birth. *Hidalgos* earned privileges such as the use of the title *Don* and exemption from paying taxes, bearing arms in compensation for their military service. They were freemen, but did not own land. (The Columbia Encyclopedia 2008)
privileges in the military, like those of the certificates of *gracias al sacar* to purchase the white-noble status had the effect of eliminating or weakening criteria of merit and of biology in traditional definitions of race and class. In the process, they also affected a change in the social and symbolic valuation of *money*. Within the white classes, titles, landed wealth, bloodlines, office holding and military services to the Spanish crown were interrelated criteria of status differentiation (Paquette 1988, Knight 1977). If anyone who could afford it could buy some of these markers of class status—a post in the military, and the legal markers of whiteness—a nobility title, the socio-symbolic value of money which came from the association to upper-class white status was expected to depreciate.

The broader context to these symbolic devaluations was the parallel process of *economic* devaluation of money in Cuba tied to the sudden rise in sugar production in the late 18th century and the subsequent increase in the flow of money “trickling down” to all social strata during the first half of the 19th century. With the growth of the plantation economy, the expansion of the city and the rising demand in new products and services came the expansion of trade (legal and contraband) and merchandising among all sectors. Recently arriving Spanish immigrants as well as free blacks and slaves living in the cities took advantage of this shift. Free people sought material possessions indicative of wealth and status, while enslaved sought to purchase their freedom (Knight 1977). Slave-trade and merchandising as a means of rapid accumulation of wealth was the niche of Spanish immigrants arriving in the late 18th and early 19th century. Through their successful enterprises and their strategic marriages to daughters of wealthy *criollos* once established as either slave traders, merchants and planters, lower class Spanish newcomers epitomized this form of rapid economic advancement (Knight 1977, Paquette 1988). A paradigmatic example is the case of Facundo Bacardí, to whom Cuba owes its internationally recognized rum. As a direct effect of the economic boom, trade surpassed land possession as means of economic advancement, of which not only Spanish but also the emerging class of free blacks took advantage (Knight 1977). These transformations effected the “inflation” of the criteria for success, which became more and more based on wealth, leaving aside traditional markers of prestige and power of the Spanish seigneurial system founded on markers of

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57 Bacardí arrived in Cuba in 1838 as poor Catalan working as apprentice in a kitchen where he created the formula for superior quality rum, which upon successful commercialization gained him international fame by the end of the 19th century (Knight 1977).

In this context, free blacks—dominating the artisan trades—along with Spanish merchants—dominating the slave-trade—were key actors involved in the symbolic negotiations of the social value of money. They formed an emerging class of “new rich” gaining space over the old oligarchy, the descendants of the Spanish nobility holding the monopoly over land and public office, which they only controlled until 1838 with the rule of Miguel de Tacón. These old families of Cuban criollos who had monopolized land estates for centuries through latifundism were the leaders of the agricultural revolution of sugar

The loss of the Spanish commercial monopoly on trade with Cuba in 1776, fostered an increase in trade through other ports and of internal consumption. The expansion of trade, the cosmopolitization of Havana, the related demand for new products and services, and the specialization of tasks—as in the institutionalization of trade, opened up avenues to accumulate wealth that did not only depend on high social status and family connections. Therefore, wealth from the plantation economy and changing Spanish legislation speeded processes of social mobility, among others, through the acquisition of nobility titles.

In spite of the greater accessibility to nobility status that the greater circulation of money among all sectors made possible, the deep inter-relation between these systems of prestige and status implied that they informed each other. In fact, literary accounts give testimony that money was not sufficient to obtain a title but also good relations and networks in the Spanish courts (Villaverde 1981, Rojas 1998). As the previous sections demonstrated, social networks often crossed racial lines, especially among those wealthy African businessmen and successful entrepreneur Cuban men of color through common participation in the militias and religious fraternities with whites. However interactions between blacks and whites extended from intimate-domestic to public realms through other social institutions and affective ties built through god parenting (compadrazgo), patron-client (at artisan’s shops, dance saloons), master-

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58 The Spanish-descended Cuban aristocratic families had traditionally monopolized land and commerce through their links with the Spanish crown and office holding in public administration. They often “bought” positions like municipal office through which they regulated commerce and had control over prices. From these positions they used gratifications to family to expand business opportunities (such as required permits). In the early years of colonization, the Castilian monarch had distributed lands to Spanish settler families. Therefrom, latifundism occurred through hereditary succession and lateral class conjugality (Knight 1977). Their protagonism in the agricultural revolution of the late 18th century was tied to their alliance with foreign interests that came after the Cuba’s liberalization from the Spanish trade monopoly.
slave (in the house) and sexual relations (in the bedroom). In the case provided by Marta Rojas, it was the Marquis’ relationships both at the highest ranks of colonial power—the Spanish courts—and his ties to the community of color initiated from his sexual relations with his domestic servant, a *mulata*, which created the picture for the ascension of Filomeno to noble status. In the case of the *pardo* painter Vicente Escobar, his relationship with colonial authorities and the Spanish royalty for whom he created portraits served as leverage for his ascension of status.

In the context of the developing political and cultural rivalries between *Criollos* and Spaniards, both groups made efforts to define markers to stand out in society with respect to each other and with respect to lower classes of whites and of color. With Tacón’s rule, a growing Spanish bureaucracy of military men excluded Cuban nobility from political office and economic decision-making. Spanish “peninsulares” brought a condescending attitude toward Cuban *criollos*, while the latter’s resentment grew from their marginalization from power positions. While Spaniards regarded *criollos* as dissipated and effeminate, Cubans held Spaniards as corrupt, ignorant and even uncivilized. For instance, they began to disdain Spanish traditions like bull and cock fights in favor of modern and “refined” leisure habits such as theater-going, reading, or opera music concerts (Riaño San Marful 2002, Saco 1974). Literary accounts portray *criollos* using flaunting and exhibiting of wealth as a way to distinguish themselves from Spanish elites. Rivalries were also expressed in gendered aesthetic forms such as the different colors that Cuban and Spanish ladies wore to dress or to decorate their houses.

The often educated-abroad *Criollos* stood out among the common Spanish immigrant, who was generally poor and uneducated. A class of intellectuals emerged from this group, of which José Antonio Saco was a representative (discussed in Chapter 2). Even amongst Spanish elite bureaucrats, few were educated. According to historian Ramiro Guerra, these Spanish men were situated in “inferior conditions in terms of distinction and social culture with respect to the *criollo* men of the highest stature ("alcurnia") …The superiority of the *criollo* resulted intolerable to him” (Guerra in González 1992). Those Spaniards who accumulated a degree of wealth aspired to enter the circle of distinguished *criollos* through matrimonial unions with Cuban white women with little success. Cuban *criollo* families preferred wealthy Cuban men as suitors of *criollo* women (Mena 2001). *Criollos’* overprotection of white Cuban women against
Spaniards created conditions for more frequent unions of Spaniards with blacks and *mulata* women.

In spite of these rivalries, both Spaniards and Cubans still abided to ideas of nobility as a marker of distinction from blacks and lower classes of whites. Spanish elites had long monopolized and constituted the class of nobles in Cuba. Older Cuban families distinguished themselves from the recently arrived Spaniards and “parvenus” through property holding and inter-class and racial marriage including inbreeding, by arranging marriages among collateral kin (nephews, aunts, cousins, uncles and nieces). Practices of land and property inheritance together with marriage strategies made these families into a kind of descent groups or clans united through claimed bloodlines to a common (noble) ancestry, shared land and class interests. The wealth obtained from the prosperous sugar industry allowed the Cuban “new rich” to break with their genealogical obstacles to nobility. Throughout the entire 18th century *criollo* elite families acquired 23 nobility titles compared to 39 obtained during a much shorter period that coincided with the sugar boom (1788-1838). By 1840 there were 62 counts and marquises concentrated mainly in Havana (Paquette 1988). The high price of titles as well as the annual fees required to maintain them meant that only the wealthiest families could afford to buy a title. In his novel *Cecilia Valdés*, Villaverde put it starkly: Cuban planters were buying nobility those years with the blood of the African slaves that enabled Cuba’s sudden economic prosperity and supported their opulent lifestyle.

Thus by the early 19th century economic standing became a means to and a synonymous with nobility and land-holding as Cuban *criollos* conquered the domain, otherwise, of the Spanish aristocracy. “*Aristócratas de azúcar*” (aristocrats made of sugar) was the suggestive phrase used by Spanish elites to make a note of authenticity, ridiculing the pretentiousness of the (fake) new noble Cuban *criollos* that managed to erase their genealogy with money (González 1992: 294, 295). Thus, nobility became a stage to which wealthiest class could aspire, a signifier of socio-economic standing—a more permeable domain—as opposed to being determined by birth, or (bloodline) genealogy, a (presumably) fixed and given biological condition, socially constructed as less accessible.

However, “genealogies” as class status markers not only mattered in terms of their significance to bloodlines and property-holding. Genealogies defined according to stratified occupational categories complemented the multi-faceted class system and were regarded as
status markers regardless of color differences. Among families of color, military rank defined the lineage through which certain aristocratic families like the Flores secured their prestige and status. Among white and black families alike, occupational genealogies were concerned with the “social” origins of newly titled Counts and Marquises, which as Paquette suggestively describes, were often “the leading subject of polite gossips” along with the private lives of the clergy (Paquette 1988: 46). Similarly, the “moral” origins of especially women of color and their female ancestors, as in their sexual behavior, were important when evaluating the “worth” of a suitor for marriage among “unequals” in terms of race and socio-economic standing (Stolcke 1989).

Concluding remarks: Performances of distinction and stratification in Havana’s colonial society

In the quote below, Cirilo Villaverde makes the famous Havana tailor of color Francisco Uribe speak in his novel Cecilia Valdés about some of the questions raised in this chapter. Villaverde (1812-1894) was a Cuban white intellectual and political activist against slavery and for the independence of Cuba. Although the novel’s definitive version was published during his exile in New York in 1882, the events described take place between the 1812 and 1831. Villaverde belongs to the same generation of intellectuals with Domingo Del Monte and José Antonio Saco, two prominent figures in the shaping of a distinctive discursive site, a nascent bourgeois national Imaginary from which they approached the colonial Spanish and racialized colonized “Others” (discussed in more detail in Chapters 4 and 8).

The quote selected captures the tensions between the construction (or not) of a collective identity and the many efforts and discursive strategies by the members of the colored bourgeoisie—to which Uribe belonged—to construct a separate symbolic sphere from which they stood out and distinguished themselves from the lower classes of color, but also from the upper classes of Cuban and Spanish whites and “nobles”. This simulated self-representation of Uribe by Villaverde, a Cuban white bourgeois himself, reveals those areas of intersection of different systems of class distinction, where moral and occupational genealogies have an important place in the exercise of subjective positionality of people of color, operating in multi-faceted and interlocking socio-symbolic and political systems of stratification that made up Havana’s society of the 1830’s and 1840’s. In this fragment, Uribe gives an elder’s advice to Pimienta, a poor mulato musician and the admirer of the beautiful but unattainable Cecilia, an
“almost white” mulata seeking to marry the white rich Cuban criollo Leonardo Gamboa, the son of a Spanish planter/slave-dealer and a rich Cuban white woman.

If you are angry because that white man is walking all over you… Pretend to overlook it, put up with it. Act the way a dog does with wasps: show your teeth to make them think you’re laughing. Don’t you see that they are the hammer and we are the anvil? The whites came first and are eating the best slices; we colored people came later and are thankful to gnaw the bones. Let it pass, my halfbreed friend (“chinito”), because it will be our turn someday. It can’t go on like this forever. Do like I do. You don’t see me kiss many hands that I’d like to cut off, do you? …it’s sure and certain that I wouldn’t want the role of a white for anything… Did you imagine that just because I am polite to everyone who enters this shop I don’t know how to make distinctions and don’t have my pride? You are mistaken; as a man, I don’t think anyone is better than I am. Do I think any less of myself because I’m colored? Nonsense. How many counts, attorneys, and physicians are there hereabouts who’d be ashamed if their father or mother sat down beside them in their carriage or accompanied them to the ceremony to show our allegiance to the Captain General on the days honoring the King or Queen Cristina? It may be that you’re not in the know the way I am because you don’t rub elbows with the nobility (“con la grandeza”)… think about it…Do you know the Count’s father…? Well, he was his grandmother’s steward. And the Marquise’s father…? A harness maker from Matanzas, dirtier than the cobbler’s was he smeared on the cord he used to sew harnesses. How much do you bet that the Marquis of…doesn’t let those who come to visit him in his mansion on the grounds of the Cathedral see his mother (“no enseña su madre”)? And what can you tell me of the father of that doctor of such distinction…? He’s a butcher through and through. (Uribe was discreet enough to pronounce the names of the persons to whom he referred in the ear of his assistant, as if to keep the others from hearing.) I for my part have no reason to hide who my progenitors were. My father was a Spanish brigadier. I’m very proud of him, and my mother was no slave and no African (“no fué ninguna esclavona, ni ninguna mujer de nación”). If the fathers of those esteemed gentlemen I mentioned had been mere tailors, they would have passed muster, for it’s common knowledge that His Majesty the King has declared our art to be a noble one, as is the occupation of cigar makers, and we have the right to use Don before our name. Tondá, even though he is a moreno, has his “Don” granted by the King. (Villaverde, Brouwers-Fischer 2005: 122, emphasis added)

Tying nicely with the themes presented in this, in previous and forthcoming chapters (2 and 4), this quote reveals how efforts to construct measures of distinction were at the center of
colonial society’s continuous performances of hierarchy. Although this quote presents the perspective of a person of color (mediated by a white man), this chapter demonstrated that seeking distinction—as in the purchase of nobility titles—was an effort among all social classes regardless of race. The efforts to evaluate or rank different occupations in a scale of values (i.e. tailor vs. butcher, cigar maker vs. harness maker) by a *pardo*, i.e. a light-skinned black, relatively wealthy, and highly regarded among the upper classes of both blacks and whites, sheds light on the intersections of occupational ranking with the pigmentogracies that ruled social stratification and informed continuous power negotiations across races, but also amongst blacks of different social classes in early to mid 19th century Havana.

The narrative highlights the ways in which working class “aristocrats” of color, like the tailor Uribe, constructed and negotiated the measures of respectability attached to those occupations which served to distance themselves from slavery and which they came to dominate at a time when José Antonio Saco and other Cuban elite white intellectuals wanted to claim them “back” for white middle and lower class Cubans. The symbolic value that a third actor –the Spanish monarch- added to these constructions of class value, brought up by Uribe in this quote to emphasize the higher worth of his occupation, was noted in the discussion raised earlier in this Chapter. Measures of prestige were framed around affective relations and demonstrations of political loyalty between militiamen of color like Uribe and the Spanish crown, constructed in a context of high (white) anxiety surrounding the figure of the (armed) black male body. Uribe was also an example of the privilege-purchasing power that money and social networks enabled at a time of economic boom in early 19th century Cuba, as he was among those who purchased his military title of Sergeant without having any military experience. It is important to acknowledge, nonetheless, the nature of this narrative as a mere representation of a subaltern’s voice, with hints of actuality, perhaps, as Villaverde might have been an acquaintance and or a client of Uribe himself (Chapeaux 1971). It is Villaverde speaking for Uribe positioning himself as a respectable, whitened professional, enjoying the favor of the King himself and a descendant of a military officer, where he imagined himself situated even above the parents of new white “nobles” whose genealogy was tainted by their parent’s (dirty) occupations. In Villaverde’s construct, Uribe nonetheless has recourse to his *bloodline* genealogy to highlight his “whiter” and higher status by noting his proximity to Spanish whiteness (as opposed to Cuban) gained through his (Spanish) father and his distance from slavery determined by his mother’s free legal
status. This representation gives an approximation to the imaginary of a black man’s social positionality and class aspirations through the eyes of a white Cuban bourgeois intellectual, likely infused with the condescension and contempt that characterized his class’ attitudes towards whom they saw as pretentious, ambitious, or out-of-line blacks and *mulatos* working avenues for their social mobility in a white dominated, slave society.  

It is of no small significance that Uribe was among those who perished in the repressive process of *La Escalera*. As such, he exemplifies the consequences of transgressions to the rules of hierarchy that ordered class and race relations at mid 19th century in Havana, which occurred in symbolic rather than purely material or “real” realms. While he was considered “rich” among the subordinated “*castas,*” his fortune was far from a real or even potentially threatening to the economic power of Cuban planters and Spanish merchants. His condition as a real political threat also remains unverified as his implication in the presumed conspiracy of *La Escalera* continues to be debated. His case is a great example of the implications of the transgressions in interlocking symbolic and discursive sites of the body, space and social hierarchy described by Stallybrass and White. They argued that rankings in these different symbolic domains are structured by and onto each other in such a way that “transgressing the rules of hierarchy and order in any one of these domains may have major consequences in the others” (1986). Uribe’s own complex subjective imaginary of distinction clashed with the more dichotomist *bourgeois* Imaginary that assigned him a lower cultural place than what he aspired to or perhaps already enjoyed. The consequences of this transgression, as that of thousands of others (innocent) accused of conspirators like him, was deadly.

Finally, this quote highlights the idea of *saber distinguir* “knowing how to distinguish,” a mechanism that an ambitious black man used to affirm his racial and class pride by appealing to the imaginary and intangible as opposed to the visible and verifiable. “Knowing how to distinguish” is the central premise in the notion of urbanity or etiquette described in the Cuban conduct “*manuales*” or textbooks published throughout the 19th century. These textbooks reflected the shifts in the measures of class status resulting from the changing meanings of

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59 It is important to note that Villaverde and others of his generation had similar critical attitudes towards Cuban bourgeois and Spanish whites, depicted as profligate and immoral and avaricious, in line with the anti-slavery literary tradition that his work was inserted in. This trope was used to highlight the contrast between the cruelty of masters and the exploitation of slaves that fed their lifestyle and “vices” and was used as a concealed way of denouncing slavery at a time when these ideas faced deep state censorship (Morillas Ventura in Valladares-Ruiz 2011: 138).
wealth occurring in the context of rapid socio-economic and political transformations of the early to mid 19\textsuperscript{th} century described in this chapter. Their authors, middle class white Cubans, proposed radical changes to measure class distinction. Among others, they proposed to define the concept of “nobility” to emphasize 	extit{performative} aspects such as individual achievement and bodily discipline in detriment of granted or fixed elements like phenotype and bloodline, as symbolic assets informing definitions of class status. These concluding remarks serve as a preamble to understand the ideological and socio-structural context in the first half of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century in which discourses of bodily normativity and urbanity emerged and became popular during the second half of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century.
Chapter 4 - Making Havana Respectable: Modernity, Imaginaries, Bodies

“Un lugar para cada cosa y cada cosa en su lugar.”
(A place for each thing and each thing in its place)
Popular Cuban saying

“...el perpéuo (sic) verdor de los árboles y de las flores, dan á la Habana un prestigio con el cual se sobrecoge el espíritu europeo, y cuyo aspecto no se puede olvidar...Aquí el paisaje [y] los habitantes, constituyen el adorno de la ciudad.”
Francisco de Mellado (1864)

The 19th century was a moment of radical spatial, social and political transformations driven by the consolidation of discourses and projects of modernization and urbanization. As the most prosperous remaining colony of the Spanish empire in the Americas taking the leading place in the world sugar market after the fallen French colony of Saint Domingue in 1804, Cuba embarked on the road to modernity in a contradictory ideological schema. Its modern capitalist economy depended on colonial institutions like slavery. On one hand, an entrepreneurial circle of Creole planters and intellectuals emerged as a powerful bourgeois class and resistance force against the Spanish colonial regime, taking the lead in Cuba’s industrial and social reforms driven by the sugar boom. On the other hand, a highly influential entrepreneurial class of free blacks and mulatos with a growing influence in the cities emerged as potential political threats to white Creole and Spanish colonial hegemony in Cuba. Moreover, their transgression of established social and cultural limits effected through their appropriation of dress, language, consumption patterns, occupation and even legal measures of whiteness like nobility titles created a crisis of representation of difference (McKintock 1995), heightening white elites’ anxieties and feeding their efforts to create and reinforce measures of physical and cultural distance with lower classes.

To face these internal social transformations as well as external expansionary forces and insurgency movements from within, the colonial state and the emerging planter bourgeoisie

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60 “…the perpetual greenness of the trees and the flowers, give Havana a prestige with which the European spirit is overwhelmed, and whose aspect cannot be forgotten… Here the landscape [and] the residents constitute the ornament of the city.” (De Mellado 1864: 481)
promoted a large-scale urbanization plan financed with the rising profits of the sugar industry since the late 18th century. However, urban modernization reforms were given a boost since 1834 under the governorship of Captain General Miguel de Tacón. This stage of the reforms centered on the construction and remodeling of the areas surrounding the city wall to create an illusion of a non-conflicted, orderly city headed towards progress and modernity. This aesthetic and symbolic function was deeply tied to the cultural and biopolitical function of urban reforms within the broad modernization discursive schema that oriented a number of disciplining institutions and measures. In this context, urban reforms served a dual function as effective technology of governance and mechanism of cultural differentiation that served to position and orient bodies within differentially valued social and spatial boundaries (Foucault 1982, Kingman 2006, Bourdieu 1989, Ahmed 2006).

Positioning and orientation can take various meanings in this context, some related to power and social relations, others related to the economy of symbols that give meaning to spaces and bodies, and a third one related to the materiality of the interactions of bodies in space and with material life. Sarah Ahmed (2006), Peter Stallybrass and Allon White (1986) as the broader literature on the anthropology of the body (Lock and Farquhar 2007), provide a framework to explore the ways in which these three domains, the social, the material and the symbolic, are entangled. These authors explore the methodological potential of a correspondence between the limits of bodies and the limits of spaces, objects and the everyday world. Seen from this lens it becomes obvious how new regimes for the body would become necessary following a reordering or a reconfiguration of topography or a reordering of the city’s limits.

Using this framework, this chapter explores how Havana was produced and reconfigured under policies of urban reform with attention to discourses expressing concern with bodily proximities and manners and the mechanisms for bodily governance mobilized therein. First it examines the local and global frames of power, knowledge and representation within which the city was produced and its limits reconfigured under projects of urban reform and social governance of the 1830’s and 1840’s.

Second, it examines the performative and affective dimensions of boundary drawing in the urban landscape by engaging with the concepts of urban imaginaries and the ornate. Néstor García Canclini’s work demonstrated the social and political importance of the imagined (as opposed to the “real”) limits of spaces in shaping discourse and action (Canclini 1997). Using
this framework, I explore the production of Havana as an image and an imaginary. I examine 19th century representations of the city with attention to the place that its “imagers”61 (the authors of representations) assigned different subjects within its limits (Muratorio 1994).

Finally, this chapter discusses the intersections of aesthetic/affective, performative and disciplinary dimensions of governance present in the discourse of “the ornate.” The ornate, in the context of 19th century urban reform, had meanings related to an aesthetic of the material and affective expressed in elite’s concerns with proximity or sensory orientation. The ornate also conveyed a concern with moral/social aesthetics expressed in concerns to regulate the manners, the forms, and the styles of practice, and of spatial, object and bodily contours. As such, this interpretation of aesthetics takes into account the positioning of subjects in material and in social fields according to acceptable levels of intimacy and proximity. From this perspective, aesthetics is also about how to behave in order to visibly re-create and project an appropriate social/urban scene. I argue that the ornate was about how certain subjects and objects in the city should be kept without or within sensory reach, be it visible, audible or other forms of sensory orientation, like touch, smell, taste, motile or proprioceptive perceptions. This chapter focuses on the visual and sonic aspects of the ornate in relation to the bio and micropolitical projects of bodily governance that upper classes mobilized during this time. My discussion of the processes of construction of visual, material and imagined spaces and places in this chapter continues in Chapter 7 and 8 in which I examine how these spaces became the stage of performances and negotiations of class, gender, color, race and national belonging.

On the path toward modernity: the political economy of Havana’s urbanization in the 19th century

Some peculiar historical developments diverted Cuba from the course towards modernization and nation building followed by most Caribbean and South American nations. Cuba remained one of the last possessions of Spain in the Americas until 1898 while other nations successfully gained independence in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. For this reason, the push for modernization driving many social and urban reforms in Latin America in the 19th

61 I borrow this analogy from Blanca Muratorio’s groundbreaking anthropological analysis on the representations of Indigenous Ecuadorians during the XIX and XX century. She uses the term imagineros (imagers) to identify the Western creators of representations or images of colonized Others.
century, developed in Cuba and Havana within a colonial rather than a republican context. In the aftermath of the Haitian revolution (1791–1804), Cuba rose as the most prosperous colony of Spain. The Cuban criollo (Creole) class of landholders took advantage of the gap that the former French colony left in the expanding global market for sugar to invest in a slave-based plantation industry, catapulting Cuba to the leading place in world sugar production by the early 19th century (Paquette 1988). In this context, Havana rapidly transformed from a settler colonial city-fortress with strategic value, functioning as transit port for the treasure-laden Spanish Indies Commercial Fleet in the 16th through 18th centuries, into one of the most modernized and prosperous cities in the Western Hemisphere by mid 19th century, built in the image of European metropolis (Sublette 2004). Ironically, Havana’s leap to the modern capitalist world depended on a backward form of labor—slavery—to fuel its profitable sugar industry (Echevarría 2010). As Cuba’s economy grew and international political ideologies of abolitionism, nationalism and enlightenment pulled it away from colonialism, the institution of slavery continued to consolidate as the organizing principle of Cuban economy and society. Thus, whereas abolition was a pre-condition for independence movements in most of Latin America inspired in Enlightenment and anti-colonial ideologies, Cuba’s path towards modernity and nationhood was built onto and shaped by colonial structures and institutions. These ideological tensions informed the historically and culturally specific meanings that modernity acquired in 19th century Havana and Cuba (Kingman 2006).

At times in collaboration and others in deep rivalry, Spanish authorities and Cuban Creole, white intellectuals and planters took the lead to transform Havana into a city of plazas, towers, esplanades, walls, palaces and theaters and simultaneously in the 19th century capital of

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62 Unlike other Latin American colonial cities, Havana did not develop as a colony of extraction and production, but rather as a service, transit port, because of its strategic location in the path between the Spanish metropolis and its colonies in the “New World” (Segre 1995). To protect the city from external attacks, Spain developed what was considered the most sophisticated system of fortresses requiring a defense garrison of about 7000 men (Campuzano 1992). The Spanish fleet system inaugurated in 1561 provided protection from pirates and corsairs with two escorted sets of ships each year back and forth between Seville and Havana, scaling on the Canary Islands, and then onto Mexico and South America (Sublette 2004: 69). The stopovers of the fleet in Havana stimulated all kinds of entertainment businesses directed to the floating population of marine travelers, fostering an atmosphere of gaming, dancing, drinking and prostitution with which historians characterize Havana in the 16th and 17th centuries (Ortiz 1996).
the Caribbean Plantation

63 In the tradition of Caribbean scholars, Plantation is capitalized to denote the large, complex system of land, machinery, transportation, labor and capital mobilized internally and transnationally towards the production of sugar (Ortiz 1995: 52, Benitez-Rojo 1989).

64 In 1762, during the Seven years’ War, the British occupied Havana for ten months in the context of Spain’s alliance with France, an enemy of Britain. Towards the mid 19th century, threats of filibusterers combined agendas of southern US expansionists and Cuba anti-abolition conspirators trying to defend slavery by annexing Cuba as a slave state of the United States. Upon taking back Havana from the British, Spain carried out a wide fortification construction plan to secure Havana from further attacks. What resulted was the Fortress of San Carlos de la Cabaña, considered the biggest Spanish fortification in the Americas (Martinez-Fernandez 1998:17).
of ornato y adecentamiento (ornate and tidying up)—a form of gentrification aimed to create “decent” and acceptable public images of the city’s visual landscape by European standards (Venegas 1990, Kingman 2006). Monumental buildings, neoclassical-styled mansions, fountains, boulevards, a new theater—many of which were named after Tacón—and other services like public markets, street-paving, garbage collection and sewage created an image of Havana as a clean, ordered colonial city guided towards modernity and progress. A combination of discipline, panoptical surveillance and social hygiene measures formed part of Tacón’s approach to “good government,” a concept that may be understood in Foucaultian language, as a dispositif or set of mechanisms to exert power including discourses, institutions, architectural forms and regulatory mechanisms.

Good government was grounded on the interrelated notions of “policía” (police) and the ornate (McCabe 2003, Kingman 2006). Policía (used as an adjective) in relation to the idea of “good government” had a different meaning compared to the modern understanding and use of the term as a noun—la policía (the police), which refers to a system or body of civilian agents in charge of enforcing laws and persecuting offenders (McCabe 2003, Kingman 2006). Policía in the Spanish colonial context and before the institutionalization of the police as an entity in Havana during the 1950’s, was used to refer to a general state or situation of order, “decorum” and cleanliness in the streets—very much tied to the idea of the ornate. For example, Alexander Von Humboldt’s remarks on his trip to Cuba published in 1840, used the term in such way “…few cities in [Spanish America] show a more disgusting aspect than La Habana, due to the lack of a good police (por falta de una buena policía), because one walked through the mud up to the knee65…” (Alvarez: 200). The Bandos de Gobernación y Policía (Good Governance and Police Edicts) current in the 19th century were the rules enforced by the maximum authority, the Captain General, which set to achieve “un buen gobierno y una buena policía” (a good government and police, Valdés 1842: 3). The bandos were first issued by Governor Las Casas in 1792 and revised periodically to update new regulations. The bandos included rules and regulations for all aspects pertaining to the city’s functioning and organization, including the management of the dead, waste, fire, food, water, animals, schedule of commercial places, hospitals, churches, schools, carriages and other transport means, and regulations on the

65 “Durante mi mansión en la América española, pocas ciudades de ella presentan un aspecto más asqueroso que La Habana, por falta de una buena policía, porque se andaba en el barro hasta la rodilla” (Humboldt in Alvarez 200).
conduct and roles/responsibilities of, especially “public” city actors, including children, slaves, “madmen,” street vendors, cabildos, dances, wakes, theaters, neighborhood police (“pedáneos”) and slave inspectors (“mayorales”), planters, artisans, coachmen, among others⁶⁶ (Valdés 1842). Therefore, “policía” was an aspiration of general social and spatial order with a strong aesthetic concern for the city’s visual and social appearance, a state of things where matter and bodies within socio-political and physical boundaries were clearly defined.

One of Tacón’s efforts to enforce ornato y policía was to establish a corps of serenos (night watchmen) – in addition to military personnel during the days, to patrol the streets with lanterns periodically announcing the time. This measure represented as a stage of transition to the more structured, specialized and expanded police force framed after models from London and Paris, which came under the next governorship of Captain General José Gutierrez de la Concha. Thus, a mixture of colonial and modern devices of governance gave historically specific meanings to discourses of modernity in 19th century Havana (Kingman 2006, Foucault et. al. 1997, McCabe 2003). Tacón’s repressive measures on political dissidence, gambling (centered on the persecution of “vagrants”), and the criminalization of the negros curros—a class of black immigrants from Spain known as criminals and pimps—were inserted in narratives of city cleansing and informed the creation and reform of confinement institutions like New Jail, said to be the largest of its time in Latin America, and a public lightening system intended to clear up the streets from criminals (Saco 1974).

The prominent Cuban intellectual José Antonio Saco was the designer of many of the proposals for reform taken up by Tacón, notwithstanding his political discrepancies with the Captain General. In this fragment, Saco rationalizes the idea of public lightening under the logic of urban and social hygiene,

La alameda de estramuros (sic) que... pudiera atraer una lucida y numerosa concurrencia, queda desierta desde que viene la noche; y el sitio donde pocos minutos antes rodaban espléndidos carruages (sic), y relucian el oro y los diamantes, se transforma repentinamente en una guarida espantosa de ladrones y

⁶⁶ Several regulations established in the bandos aligned with those established in comparable edicts by the Catholic Church. In observance of religious holidays of Easter, certain commercial establishments were required to close, or perform special cleaning and ornamentation of streets in preparation for religious processions. For instance Article 10 of the 1842 Bando indicates that the day and the eve of the Patron Saint of each town and in anticipation of the Corpus procession, streets should be cleaned, windows and balconies adorned, and at nights the streets should be widely illuminated (p. 7).
asesinos. Para purgarla de tales monstruos, bastaría iluminarla perfectamente, y tomando las demás medidas que requiere una buena policía, se impedirían unas escenas que tanto nos desacreditan en los países extranjeros (sic) (Saco 1974: 184).

The extramural promenade…[which] could attract splendid and numerous attendances, is abandoned since the night falls; and the place where splendid carriages transited a few minutes before, and the gold and diamonds shined, is transformed suddenly into a horrific hideout of thieves and assassins. To purge it of such monsters, it would suffice to lighten it perfectly, and taking the rest of measures that a good police requires, the scenes that discredit us so much in foreign countries would be avoided.

Saco’s statement reflects the articulation of bourgeoisie’s anxieties about difference through the body of the city in a discourse that combines social and urban sanitation, light and policing (López Denis 2003, Stallybrass and White 1986). Saco characterized promenades as a site for hygienic enjoyment as opposed to those enacted in closed buildings considering the hot weather. Saco echoed the opinions of an earlier, eighteenth century pioneer Cuban intellectual, Félix de Arrate (1701-1765), who considered promenading in Havana’s first paseos as an “honest” distraction (“pasatiempo honesto”, 1761 in De la Torre 1857: 117). Saco was a strong critic of gaming and gambling, which he identified as a major cause for vagrancy among whites. Saco’s statement conveys a desire to project moral (domestic) values of respectability to the public national and global arena by demanding an acceptable or “decent” collective image in keeping with the new modern standards of governance. This concern is a trope in nineteenth century discourses of the emergent bourgeois class of white Cubans gathered in the Sociedad in their quest to define the terms of their own collective identity within the broader national cultural imaginary that they were helping construct (Stallybrass and White 1986, Paquette 1988). Saco’s prescriptions materialized as part of the radical transformation of Havana’s public image under Tacón’s governorship, which is remembered in historical accounts of the period as transforming from a dark and dirty city plagued with vagrants and criminals, into a clean, illuminated and ordered “modern” city (Sublette 2004, López Denis 2003).

The biopolitical picture of Havana created by Governor Tacón, turned the remodeled

67 Up until the mid nineteenth century “police” or “good police” was used in relation to the notion of “good government” and ornate to refer to the general order, decorum and cleanliness in streets and the urban scenery. This was in contrast to the meaning and use acquired after the institutionalization of the police as an entity in Havana during the1950’s, to refer to an organized body of civilian agents in charge of enforcing laws and persecuting crime (McCabe 2003, Kingman 2006).
urban center into a stage for local and global performances of power and authority sending a message to internal and outside forces that appeared potentially destabilizing to Spanish imperial dominance in Cuba (Venegas 1990, Foucault 1978). Locally, Tacón’s building project affirmed colonial authority in popular imagination and everyday experience by systematically stamping his name on buildings with disciplinary and aesthetic significance. These included the New Jail Cárcel de Tacón, the promenade Paseo de Tacón and the majestic Tacón Theater, strategically staged as symbols of progress and power, which were situated alongside colonial structures like the Church, government buildings and fortresses which had given the city the military and marine character in the 16th and 17th centuries. These contrasting elements in the visual spectacle of the city center shaped the symbolic production of Havana simultaneously as the major subsidiary of the Spanish colonial State and empire—captured in the label “the key to the Indies”—and the American version of a European metropolis, as travelers suggested with the label Albiaón de América (Alonso 2004: 470, Barcia 2003). The tension of the modern and the colonial at play in these representational processes corresponded to a parallel tension along regional divides at the national scale.

The profound socio-economic, political and cultural differences separating Havana from

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68 Another such gesture was the disposition under Tacón’s rule to increase the frequency of sounding the military retreat. Retreats started to be played on Wednesdays at the barracks or fortresses since the early 19th century. However since 1834 under Tacón, retreats became an everyday event taking place in the main square Plaza de Armas converted into an opportunity for residents to congregate —if nearby or far out- of the visual and auditory spectacle as reminder of Spanish authority and power in the island. For middle and upper classes, attending the sound of the retreat became part of their leisurely ritual or routine. Around 1851 the Spanish traveler Barras y Prado (1902) described the retreat as a peak in the trajectory of ladies’ promenading in volantas, after which they returned to their homes. Thus, Tacón strategy to “speak to the imagination of those who obey” (Venegas 1990) included a range of sensory stimuli, not only visual but also auditory.

69 Historian Carlos Venegas observed that the chosen location for Tacón’s New Jail followed the same strategic and symbolic logic. Intended as an “admonitory symbol,” the Jail was located at the entrance of the city, at the north end of the attractive Prado Boulevard and very near the entry channel to the port, which was an obligatory sight-see spot for incoming travelers by sea (Venegas 1990).

70 Unlike its development in other Spanish colonies in Latin America, the main square or Plaza de Armas in Havana, displaying the church El Templete, the governmental and municipal headquarters Palacio de los Capitanes Generales and Palacio del Segundo Cabo, was superseded in its symbolic importance for colonial power by the Castle of the Royal Fortress, which was the first urban monument built in the early years of colonization. The original fortress was destroyed in 1555 in an attack led by a French pirate and then rebuilt closer to the harbor, on the west side, bordering the Plaza de Armas in a strategic point in the entrance canal to the bay, where the ships loaded with treasures stopped before heading to Sevilla or on its way to Mexico and Central and South America (Segre 1995, Sublette 2004). Thus, Colonial power in Havana was deployed symbolically first through its design major fortress and transit port and then as a wealthy plantation colony, as opposed to the modality used in other major Latin American cities characterized by monumentality and extravagant display of wealth in colonial architecture, particularly of Churches (Echevarría 2010).

71 The name was historically used to refer to Great Britain (Barcia 2001).
the rest of Cuba were a result of an historic regional polarization between East and West. Located at the western extreme of the island, Havana’s privileged status as a modern urban center was culturally constructed in relation to Oriente, the easternmost region, in terms of the binaries modern/backward, urban/rural, civilized/barbarian, orderly/rebellious, as an expression of what Quintero Rivera refers to as the plantation and counter-plantation dialectics in Caribbean social formations (Hulme 2011, Sklodowska 2009, Quintero Rivera 1987). Historically neglected by the colonial State in favor of Havana’s development, Oriente was the domain of buccaneers and pirates in the early years of colonization, runaway slaves escaping from plantations, most of which were located in Havana’s surroundings during the agricultural boom, and a hotspot of insurgency, where Cuba’s revolutionary movements have originated over the past 150 years (Hulme 2001). During the early 19th century, the regional divisions acquired strong racial implications deriving from the association of Oriente with black political insurgence coming from the neighboring French colony of Saint Domingue, which had been destroyed after the successful slave uprisings that ended the slave regime and founded the new black republic of Haiti in 1804. Separated only by the Windward Passage water straight, Oriente had long been a zone of contact with Haiti enabling a long trajectory of migratory movements and becoming an avenue of political and cultural influences from French and Afro-Haitian traditions particularly after the Haitian revolution. In this context, the racialized spatial imaginaries dividing Havana and Oriente were an expression of larger processes of social polarization driven by the specter of the Haitian Revolution, whereby Cuban and Spanish elites aimed to contain what appeared as a culturally, demographically and politically threatening black population in Cuba.

To Cuba’s white elites, Haiti evoked the terrifying image of blackness and insurrection; it epitomized an Africanized colony made into a black republic by means of the massacring and annihilation of whites by blacks. This powerful imaginary triggered greater anxieties as Cuba’s population of color that intensified sharply in the early 19th century as a result of the expanding plantation economy and the growing slave-trade. These developments informed the decision to hold the city wall in place for most of the 19th century until its demolition in 1863, thereby reproducing internally an island-wide racialized spatial divide (Venegas 1990). A black takeover appeared as the ultimate tragedy for both Spanish and Cuban elites, but in the eyes of Creoles resentful of the colonial government, the possibility of a black insurrection made Spanish colonial subjection or annexation to the U.S. was preferable to independence and the possible
“Africanization” of Cuba. The massive importation of African slaves to work in plantations in the late 18th century and onwards dramatically affected the demographic composition of Cuba. By 1817, the estimates for the combined free and enslaved population of African descent outnumbering white residents were considered alarming. Successive internal rebellions throughout the first half of the 19th century, some of which were led by free people of color, heightened elites awareness of the immanent danger of a growing population of color to white, colonial integrity and hegemony in the island.

While the fear of “another Haiti” motivated the creation of institutions and proposals to “whiten” the population and reinforce racial boundaries, white elites were faced with the dilemma of the indispensability of both free and enslaved blacks to their own economic and cultural endeavors (Mena 2005). African slaves fueled the profitable sugar and slave-trade industries while free blacks and mulatos sustained with their labor in the city’s growing service industry that attended to the new habits and consumption patterns of the rising bourgeoisie of Cuban planters and Spanish elites. Free blacks were generally lighter skinned descendants of African slaves and Spanish colonists, who gradually purchased their freedom through work in the cities. By the 1830’s free blacks dominated the arts and crafts, providing crucial services in the city as the majority of musicians, artisans, tailors, masons, shoemakers, laundresses, caregivers and midwives in Havana (Childs 2006).

Among free artisan blacks, a military, entrepreneurial and highly influential elite consolidated by the early 19th century. They accumulated economic and prestige resources through the strategic mobilization of vast ethnic-based, corporate and familial networks opening up avenues for social mobility, greater status and financial stability. These resources circulated from family units across associative institutions like African mutual aid societies or “cabildos de nación,” religious fraternities or “cofradías” and the militias of color, which concentrated the wealthiest and most influential members of the free class of color. Lighter skinned working class

72 In his efforts to reassure Spanish dominance in the island and profit from the expanding slave-trade, Tacón excluded Creole intellectuals and planters from positions of power, who had historically been close collaborators, in favor of the rising Spanish merchant class of slave-dealers (Venegas 1990, Lewis 2004). A group of Cuban intellectuals and planters advocated annexation to the U.S. to guarantee the continuation of the lucrative slave-trade and sugar business. A different political line of reformist Creoles opposed annexation on grounds of their anti-slavery and anti-colonial stance—notwithstanding their profoundly racist attitudes-, aiming for greater political and economic autonomy of Cubans in the island (Lewis 2004, Pérez 1992). Both groups opposed the option of independence in anticipation of a potential black insurrection that this might provoke in a context of increased international pressures to abolish slavery and growing internal conspiracies and rebellions by people of color.
Cuban blacks but also free Africans were a minority of property holders, including estates and slaves. Many mastered the home dealing and renting business, managing ample social networks with free and enslaved blacks and *mulatos* and middle and upper classes of whites free blacks for which they were widely known and respected (Barcia 2009). Free blacks’ growing influence as role models and leaders within and beyond the community of color raised concerns among Spanish and Cuban elites. Their ties with plantation slaves and with Cuban and foreign black and white intellectuals and activists for independence and abolition, became especially evident after their alleged implication as leaders of two major conspiracies against Spanish rule in Cuba in 1812 and 1844. For these reasons, free blacks appeared even more threatening than slaves to some members of the Cuban and Spanish elites (Childs 2006, Chapeaux 1971, Paquette 1988).

Systematic persecution and repression in the form of torture and massive executions ensued along with far-ranging social reforms to exclude free blacks from professional fields where they competed with white middle classes, such as teaching, nursing, midwifery, dentistry and the visual arts (Pérez Cisneros 2000, Chapeaux 1971, Paquette 1988). These measures added to the legal and social barriers in place during most of the 19th century that barred blacks from positions of power, education, marriage with whites, and other segregationist restrictions. In particular, many prominent free blacks and *mulatos* were killed, tortured and jailed along with another thousand slaves accused of conspiring with British abolitionists to due away with slavery and overthrow colonial rule during the 1843-1844 repression of *La Escalera* (Paquette 1988). The colonial government selectively targeted the most socially influential, wealthy and westernized in their cultural forms from Havana’s artisan and military elite of color to send a clear message of the deadly consequences of “stepping out of place”. Thus, the body of repressive and exclusionary measures enforced during the 1830’s and 1840’s in Cuba reflected white elites’ anxieties about blacks’ transgressions to established economic, political but also cultural limits.

In this context, the city wall acquired a dual function. It evolved into a useful mechanism to “order marginality,” signaling a frontier between an intramural residential zone and an extramural area where blacks were gradually cornered along with other criminalized subjects like “prostitutes” and “vagrants” (Kingman 2006, McCabe 2001). However, the refashioning of the surroundings and later, the barred areas of the former city wall with European-styled buildings functioned to accentuate not only physical but also *cultural* distances between dominant and
subaltern classes, and among elites themselves (Venegas 1990). Political clashes and class rivalries manifested in a territorial contest between Cubans and Spaniards for the monopoly of Havana’s spatial and visual scenery. By launching each their own public works plan, members of the Cuban intellectual and planter elite of the Sociedad negotiated power fields in the urban space with the class of Spanish merchants or peninsulares allied to the colonial government. The contest, fueled with profits from slave work and commerce, was aimed to create the most monumental and impressive constructions and ornamentation, using materials, techniques and styles imported from Europe. Monuments, palaces, hospitals, schools, hotels, theaters, train stations, and Havana’s first railroad -in anticipation of the one in Madrid-, were the visible result of the power struggle for symbolic preeminence of white elites in the urban scenario (Venegas 1990).

These spatial configurations were molded onto and by changing socio-cultural dynamics tied to the rapid economic rise of Havana’s Creole planter class, witnessed the emergence of a consumer culture reflected in the emergence and proliferation of shops, theaters, cafés and other public sites of sociability. Havana criollos’ sophistication of habits and preferences drove changes in aesthetic cultural standards, often described as their “refinement of taste,” drawing influences from French émigrés arriving from Haiti in the late 18th century and their own frequent travels to North American and European metropolis (Carpentier 2001, Venegas 1990, Bourdieu 1989). Havana’s remodeled urban center was the stage of the Cuban bourgeoisie’s public performances of class distinction through the display of an array of prestige practices and material culture such as dress fashion, outdoor shopping in stores and cafés, and promenading in carriages. Consumption of cultural commodities like European music concerts, Opera theater and leisure reading motivated by the flourishing editorial movement and theatrical businesses, made for a dynamic ambiance of “high-culture” that earned Havana the title of “Paris of the Antilles”73 (Sublette 2004, Barcia 2001). Attending to and informed by the changing demands for cultural products of the elite, urban planning projects surrounding the wall focused on transforming the

73 In his important historical account about music in Cuba, Ned Sublette made the case that the success of the internationally acclaimed Havana Opera Company of the Tacón Theater in the U.S., seen as a sign of the opulence and “high-culture” of Cuba, played a part in the political theater of Cuba’s annexation to the U.S in the 1840’s (Sublette 2004). Reading through travelers accounts of the period confirms this analysis. As discussed in the sections below, far from depicting realistic landscapes, travelers’ accounts often conveyed the interests and aspirations of the writers to reflect the expansionist ambitions of their nations of origin.
extramural into an area of leisure. Gardens, trees, water fountains, and promenades captured the spirit of cultural models of urban hygiene in fashion in 18th century European cities to highlight “refinement…illustration” and a cult to nature (Venegas 1990). The Prado Boulevard was one of such projects exemplary of efforts to offer ordered, civilized and hygienic alternatives of leisure. The Prado was built under the first public works project during the Government of Marqués de la Torre (1771-1776) together with the government square Plaza de Armas and Havana’s first theater Teatro Principal, inaugurating the era of urban modernization in Havana. Chapter 5 analyzes depictions of the Prado Boulevard as a symbolic site for the strategic staging and performance of social, racial and gender hierarchies and markers and an expression of the continued efforts to enforce boundaries of difference by Creole elites during the first half of the 19th century.

In sum, the era of civic building in Havana, started in the late 18th century and radicalized during the Government of Tacón, dramatically changed the image of the city’s physical and social landscape. Havana’s urban center in the 19th century was configured and endowed with politically and culturally charged meanings through an array of local and global negotiations of power playing out at the intersection of two major political and cultural projects: colonialism and modernity (Chateloin 1989, Sublette 2004, Kingman 2006). Given how Havana was physically and culturally produced, I now turn to examine how elite artists, writers and travelers represented Havana as a cultural landscape-text, created, interpreted, and consumed within and outside of Cuba. I will offer a view into the social relationships of power between differentially positioned subjects, and the spatial relationships of power between these subjects and geography, that informed the production of the 19th century “images” of Havana.

Images and imagers of 19th century Havana: the politics of colonial urban representation

Compared to rather scarce depictions of earlier moments of colonization, there are innumerable 19th century accounts of the visual landscape and social life in Havana, most of which come from the period between the 1830’s and 1850’s. The transformed hybrid modern and colonial picture of Havana created on and around Tacón’s 45-month tenure in office inspired paintings, lithographs, chronicles and other visual and textual narratives by travelers and Cuban artists and writers which were and still are accepted as authentic and evocative of 19th century colonial society (Lane 2010, Sublette 2004). Beyond the obvious specificity of individual
creations, foreign travelers and Cubans’ representations of Havana coincided in their realistic pretensions. They generally focused on specific topoi or visual themes that appeared most appealing to them, creating patterns of the city’s landscape as a static visual surface or snapshot. In Cuba, the literary and artistic movement of costumbrismo epitomized this two-dimensional visual metaphor used in narrative and visual representations under the suggestive label “cuadro de costumbres” (picture of customs). Costumbrista writers claimed to “paint” everyday life scenes and situations in streets populated by a range of urban characters constructed as representative “types,” creating colorful and folklorized images of city life, which were later consecrated as mythical of colonial Havana (Bueno 1985).

Some common aesthetic components framed the pictures of Havana by travelers and Cubans. Consider the following excerpt from the log of a French traveller, “…the magnificence of the tropical nature, the liveliness of a Spanish city, the elegance of the volantas [horse-drawn carriages] and the beautiful eyes of Havana women, must not deter one from thinking about the conditions of the slave population, whose presence casts a gloom on the entire spectacle…” (Ampere 1852 in Joseph 2008: 35). In fact, invariable elements in both travelers’ and Cuban’s narratives of Havana’s visual spectacle included Cuba’s nature’s exuberance, the city’s modern architecture, Cuban aristocratic women in volantas –also named quitrines- and people of color – both as victims of slavery and as embodiments the uncivilized and the exotic. A favorite scene were the Sunday street processions in observation of Epiphany or the Day of Kings when free and enslaved Africans in Cuba were authorized to parade and dance in the streets wearing traditional costumes as public performance of their respective ethnic “nations” cultural traditions 74 (Sublette 2004: 114). Foreign and Cuban narratives also focused on public performances and everyday social rituals of middle and upper classes, like carriage strolls on promenades, shows and dances held at the halls of theaters and cafés, funerals, or the popular.

74 For an analysis of the significance of the Day of Kings’ celebration within African religiosity in Cuba see Fernando Ortiz’ seminal study Los Cabildos y la fiesta Afrocubanos del Día de Reyes (1992, Walker 2004). This was the only Africanized celebration permanently authorized by colonial authorities, which was originally intended to give a license to African descendant enslaved population to honor the highest authorities with a public performance in retribution for gifts. As it became a custom, Africans and African descendant people organized in cabildos paraded on January 6th towards the Government Palace as they danced and sang while receiving retributions by authorities and individual families in streets of the capital and other cities and towns of Cuba (Barcia 2009: 174).
cock fights and bullfights from the Spanish tradition\textsuperscript{75} (Barcia 2001, De Acevedo 1919, Pérez 1992).

However, the added attention to subaltern subjects, particularly women and people of color in Havana’s 19\textsuperscript{th} century representations expressed the convergence of locations of power from which both Cuban and foreign narrators spoke to create images of Havana. The vast majority of accounts and depictions were created by upper class, educated, male Cubans and travelers from metropolis in Britain, France, Spain and the U.S.—countries with vested political and commercial interests in Cuba. Writings by female travelers were fewer and their writings were largely marginalized. The overwhelming majority of writers in 19\textsuperscript{th} century Cuba were men with notable exceptions such as the pioneer Cuban feminist writer Gertrudis Gomez de Avellaneda (1814-1873). To the contrary, there were a number of foreigner female travelers and long-term residents in the island during the 19\textsuperscript{th} century who wrote and published their accounts, yet male-authored travelers of accounts are still the majority. The most well known is the Countess of Merlin’s (1789-1852) \textit{Viaje a la Habana} (1844). Merlin was born in Cuba and at young age travelled to Madrid, married to a French Count and then onto Paris where she became an Opera singer and writer. She made one short trip to Cuba about which she wrote her log entries as both an insider and outsider to the country. She was an aristocratic woman and from such perspective she made observations aligned with the views of the Cuban planter class she formed part of (Méndez Rodenas 1998). A large part of her work was censored due to the openly political character of her writings. She critiqued Spanish colonialism. Méndes Rodenas argued that Merlin’s work was largely excluded from the canon of Cuban literary history and Spanish-American Romanticism. Other well-known female foreign travelers to Cuba included the Swedish novelist Fredrika Bremer and the North American writer Julia Ward Howe, both of whom were feminist international activists with liberal views on slavery (Pérez 1992, Martinez-Fernandez 1996). The ways in which gender, nation and empire converged to influence the perspective of these women’s writings about Cuba, Havana and Havana’s women deserves a separate study, an effort that scholar Adriana Méndes Rodenas initiated in her work on the

\textsuperscript{75} Travelers and \textit{costumbristas} also depicted non-urban settings and characters. A common depiction was the white peasant, or “guajiro/a” who emerged as emblematic of the countryside that was associated with the easternmost part of the island, the province and region of \textit{Oriente}. For an analysis of North American travelers’ representations of Cuba’s countryside, see Guevara (2008). The works of Ferrer (1999) Rojo (1898), Hope (2009) and Gonzalez (1991) studied the construction of different political, ethnic and gender subjectivities in their analysis of \textit{Oriente} under the framework of the East West historical divide in Cuba.

In their analyses of travelers and costumbrista representations, Alice Wexler (1978), Jill Lane (2010, 2006) and Yvon Joseph (2008) have observed that the (visual) narratives of the authors say more about who was looking – the consciousness, interests and value judgments of the observer – than about what was actually happening in the settings represented. Lane illustrates this representational politics as follows,

“…white men don’t appear at the center of these images because they are already imagined as the primary point of view, from the other side of the frame. [The] often reproduced lithographs enact this logic: white men occupy a position of disembodied subjectivity, and women and people of color are the bodies against which and through which their sense of social self is articulated” (emphasis added) (Lane 2006: 148).

Thus, colonial imperial and patriarchal were the major discursive and socio-political frameworks informing the specific ways of seeing difference with which colonial representations of Havana were infused (Lane 2010). These colonial and heteronormative representational dispositions or habitus were reflected in narrators’ efforts to create distance between themselves as members of a dominant social collective and colonized and subjected (black, female) Others (Bourdieu 1989). These differences were often expressed through depictions of specific practices and places that others occupied and performed in specific locales of the city, making physical place a sign of racial, class, sexuality and gender difference and a simultaneous expression of social place (Bourdieu 1989).

Costumbrismo and the framing of Havana (and Cuba) as imagined communities

Both foreign and Cuban authors contributed to the artistic movement of Cuban costumbrismo, often in close collaboration; the major exponents in the visual arts were European while Cubans dominated the literary and theatrical fields. Two major figures of plastic costumbrismo, the French lithographer Frédéric Mialhe (1810-1881) and the Spanish painter Víctor Patricio de Landaluze (1828-1889) collaborated with Cuban costumbrista writers with illustrations for their sketches about popular types and customs. Mialhe produced prints for Cirilo Villaverde, the author of the famous 19th century novel Cecilia Valdés (1879), while Landaluze illustrated newspaper articles by the said best costumbrista authors compiled in the book “Tipos y costumbres de la Isla de Cuba” (Types and customs of the Island of Cuba) (1881).
Landaluze’s paintings helped shape the archetype of *la mulata*, fetichized in 19th century literature and theater as the epitome of the taboo of racial miscegenation and illicit sexuality (Figure 4) (Kutzinski 1993). More broadly, in alignment with the major theme of Cuban literary and theatrical *costumbrismo*, Landaluze’s paintings ridiculed black popular classes’ use of markers of class and racial privilege of whites, such as dress, creating an image of blacks and *mulatos* as ambitious or uppity, pretending or aspiring to a social place where they did not belong according to their race and class status (Lane 2010, Leal 1975, Gonzalez 1992). Using blackness as an anchor to channel a markedly anti-colonial discourse through satire, *costumbrismo* in all of its forms, but mostly through theater and literature planted the seeds of a larger nationalist narrative about an allegedly authentic and distinctive Cuban culture and identity.

![Figure 4 – “La Mulata de Rumbo” by Spanish artist Víctor Patricio de Landaluze (1830-1889) in Bachiller y Morales, Antonio 1881 *Tipos y Costumbres de la Isla de Cuba*, Havana.](image)

In fact, the construction of social difference and place enacted through images and narratives of Havana by Cuban *costumbrista* writers in particular, was part of the embryonic efforts by Cuban elites to frame the city as a bounded political community of subjects sharing an imagined social and cultural space, which was a simultaneous exercise to create a symbolic frame for the future nation. *Costumbrista* sketches reflected the initial phases of processes of
subject formation among elites claiming a distinctively Cuban, urban and bourgeois, “modern” identity defined and measured in relation to the Spanish, who were constructed as symbols of colonial backwardness, and the demeaned lower classes of whites and people of color (Iglesias 2003, Riaño San Marful 2002). As members of the emergent bourgeoisie, Cuban intellectuals’ writings expressed their inconformity with the Spanish political and economic system playing out in the broader anti-colonial conflicted ambiance between the rising Cuban planter class and the colonial government, which intensified since the 1830’s under Tacón’s governorship. In the face of fierce state censorship, costumbrista’s satirical narratives of local customs euphemized deep political denunciations of colonial rule especially among the circle of Cuban intellectuals critics of slavery (Bueno 1985, Lapique 1979, Villaverde 1981). Critiques of Spanish popular traditions like cockfights and bullfights in costumbrista literature were part of a broader nascent nationalist and anti-Spanish sentiment expressed in growing efforts by Cuban elites to create cultural distance from the Spanish through practices like dress, leisure habits, and the performance of status markers like nobility, whiteness and wealth (Gonzalez 1992). For instance, the costumbrista form of vernacular theater or teatro bufo in the 1860’s satirized Spanish Otherness through the character el gallego (The Galician) to represent the prototype of the white Spaniard immigrant, along with other two main characters, the primitivized el negrito (the little black) and the sexualized la mulata (the mulatta) –the latter two performed in blackface.

These representations reflected processes of negotiation of markers of class privilege, including the legal status of whiteness, which gained importance in the context of late 18th century transformations in the Cuban economy and legislation discussed in Chapter 4. The profound economic changes that resulted from the rise of the capitalist plantation economy helped to speed up a process of social mobility that challenged the meanings and measures of racial categorization. Greater access to wealth among all social groups, including slaves, facilitated the appropriation of markers of prestige and status, like dress forms, and other prestige cultural practices, like theater going, and even legal markers of whiteness like nobility titles. These processes interacted with phenomena like “passing,” available to light-skinned, “almost white” people of color as strategies to outwit social barriers. Passing as a strategic performance of skin color, class status and even legal status (i.e. slaves passing as free) through the appropriation of dress, occupation, language, bodily practices and consumption patterns of the dominant class, provoked a crisis of representation of difference –the difficulty to absolutely
determine social differences using visible and legal ways to draw color divisions (Childs 2006, Stolcke 1989).

In the context of this profound “crisis of bourgeois value” (Stallybrass and White 1986), Cuban costumbrista intellectuals participated in a project of crafting of a distinctively Cuban and bourgeois collective self along with the broader corporation of Creole social reformers including journalists, educators and politicians. The most prominent figures of Cuban literary costumbrismo, including the first Cuban novelist Cirilo Villaverde, and the first black poet, Gabriel de la Concepción Valdés “Plácido” were trained by the planter Domingo del Monte through exclusive literary “salons or tertulias, held at his home in the late 1830’s. Del Monte’s literary movement was dismantled in 1844 upon the exile of the majority of its members – including Del Monte- accused of involvement in La Escalera conspiracy. As I discuss further in Chapter 8, Del Monte was a prime cultural activist in the process of imagining Cuban national identity which he promoted through the creation and legitimation of a normative cultural regime, a project of moral and aesthetic education founded on the affirmation of distinctively Cuban white bourgeois values and the rejection of African and Spanish cultural elements.

Thus, in the process national imagining initiated by Del Monte’s generation, following Stallybrass and White (1986), those who were socially marginal were made symbolically central to bourgeois constructions of subjectivity. In this model, the “bourgeois” –creole intellectuals, authors of representations- occupy normative and pre-supposed primary locations of view, acting as somewhat “disembodied subjects” (Lane 2005). Creole costumbrista writers made the cultural forms of Othered subjects –women, homosexuals, African-descended, white lower classes and children- the objects of bitterly moralistic, satirical and forceful judgments. Public dances, women’s education, gambling, slavery, and dress fashion were among costumbrista writers’ favorite themes to critique and over which they dictated propriety. Through these writings they created and legitimized heteronormativity and whiteness as a matrix of symbolic codes, social norms and values used to measure and evaluate social and cultural distance from an ideal under construction, an urban-bourgeois-heteronormative national subject. This value system reproduced and created through costumbrista writings, newspapers and the emergent bourgeois public body drew ideological elements and ensured hegemonic status through the array of

76 The work of Abel Sierra Madero discusses the discourses of homosexuality in the construction of a national subject, with attention to the key role of costumbrista narratives in this process (Madero 2006).
modern/colonial dispositifs of the Catholic Church, the educational system, ideologies of family
and domesticity and the growing industry of mass periodicals. In fact, written costumbrista
sketches debuted in Havana’s first newspaper, the Papel Periódico in 1790 and continued to
appear in magazines and books in the form of novels throughout the 19th century (Bueno 1985).

In sum, since the 1830’s costumbrista writings played a part in framing the city and the
nation in progress as communities operating within a shared symbolic and cultural system, a
developing representational field that established the terms of difference within which to
conceive or imagine cultural coexistence or alliance with (or without colonizers and) popular
classes. By mid century, participation in this community was defined in terms of a privileged
social standing, conditioning the meanings of belonging, nationality and modernity to emphasize
difference and hierarchy (Kingman 2006). However, the consolidation of the revolutionary
movements in the 1860’s and into the late century radically changed the discursive landscape
about race and nation in which cultural representations and the negotiations of citizenship
unfolded. The strategic rhetoric of racial integration mobilized by revolutionary leaders
organized towards Cuban independence produced a progressive ideology of a racially
homogeneous Cuban nationality that became official discourse around which the Cuban
revolutionary movement was organized since the 1860’s and on which the Cuban nation was
founded at the turn of the 19th century (Ferrer 1999). “Cuban is more than white, more than
mulato, more than black,” declared the utmost national hero of Cuban independence José Martí
in 1893. While “raceless” national identity became a strategic political discourse among Cuban
independents’ struggle for political emancipation from Spain, the elements of identity related to
cultural practices and ideologies of respectability promoted by creole intellectuals in the 1830’s
through their cultural pedagogic and literary project outlived their more racially progressive
ideological successors of the second half of the 19th century. In Chapter 8, I expand the
discussion on the role of Cuban intellectual discourse in the formation of an emerging anti-
colonial public sphere as a venue through which the changes and continuities in definitions of
citizenship and nationality are revealed.

Within the changing discursive and political framework of mid to late 19th century,
Cuban costumbrista writers’ methodology reflected an ambiguous positionality. Their efforts to
create a separate intellectually and morally (superior) sphere—a “bourgeois Imaginary”
(Stallybrass and White 1986) from which to capture, from a distance, a presumed objective
reality about the marginal “Others,” somehow collided with their almost obsessive (desire for) knowledge of the marginal world and their idiosyncrasies. Ambivalent attitudes of disgust and desire, intimacy and distance characterized their discursive relationships with the low “Others” of their writings, which Stallybrass and White have observed was characteristic of European bourgeois constructions of subjectivity in the 18th century (1986). A kind of moralist ethnographers of “the popular,” (Canclini 1987) Cuban costumbristas sometimes justified their entering the underworld for the good cause of exposing it and dictating cures with clear sensationalist zeal. This trope is found in later works of the late 19th century characterized by a more empirically “pseudo-scientific” than literary realistic tone. These later writings were sensationalistic, “best-seller” treatises by anthropologists, medical doctors and politicians centering important attention on the female epitome of the low-life that fascinated them, the prostitute (Céspedes 1888). Perhaps the best example of this kind of literature the treatise of prostitution by the Creole, liberal-aligned medical doctor Benjamín de Céspedes, “La prostitución en la ciudad de la Habana”. Published in 1888, De Céspedes’ book was an instant best-seller that sparkled a heated nationalist controversy. De Céspedes is a fascinating case of a medical doctor who “studies” prostitution in situ, playing the role of an authentic ethnographer of prostitutes, urban “low” culture and venereal disease. His descriptions are filled with detailed impressions of the urban setting, the living conditions, and the physical ailments and existential sufferings of the prostitutes whom he visited periodically. They in turn, act as his informants with whom he formally interacts in a doctor-patient scheme. Moreover, De Céspedes’ work is aligned with other similar authors of the time who allegedly write with a deep sense of awareness, impressive accuracy and detail about the world of prostitution. These authors precise knowledge of the subject matter suggests two hypotheses. First, as a licensed medical inspector by the Hygiene Section –the regulatory instance in charge of controlling prostitution and venereal disease- it is only expected of De Céspedes to have first hand experience and

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77 Some of the publications that fall into this trend include Reineri’s La Cebolla, Pedro Giralt Amor en tiempos de prostitución (1889), and other two physicians, one of them principal of the Hygiene Headquarters during the US intervention, Dr. Ramón M. Alfonso La prostitución en Cuba y especialmente en La Habana (1902), and Eugenio Molinet Memoria Informe de la Sección Médica de la Higiene especial correspondiente al año de 1899. Particularly illustrative is the case of the author of the newspaper ase of La Cebolla, Victorino Reineri, who projects his political discourse strategically through the voices of the prostitutes, as if it were they, themselves speaking about their own lives and struggles. Calvo Peña (2005) noted the accuracy with which he represents the prostitutes in La Cebolla, where he refers to some of their traditions, including the songs they sang and the nicknames they used.
information because he was, like other medical authors, in charge of visiting and inspecting registered prostitutes twice a week at their places of operation. Second and perhaps more suggestive is that albeit the moralist, pseudo-scientific and sanitary rhetoric, his narratives are filled with a profound ambivalence, which oscillates between fascination and repugnance towards his objects of study. De Césedes, like other texts of the kind, in fact read as erotic stories about what ought to have been the authors’ own fantasies or actual sexual encounters with prostitutes (De Cespedes 1888, Giralt 1889).

By the 1880’s, scientific discourse was indeed on the rise in Havana, and its sponsors inherited, in a way, costumbrismo’s penchant for “mapping social life” using classificatory schemas (Lane 2006: 123). As medical doctors gained legitimacy as moral and scientific authorities in Cuban society, the emergent discipline of anthropology showcased in 1877 upon the Anthropological Society’s inauguration. Early Cuban anthropologists made the “variety” of racial “Others” into the primary objects of their scientific study by means of elaborate classificatory systems of racial “types”. These discourses, in turn, influenced literary production. For instance, Jill Lane situated the proliferation of social “types” in bufo theater performance in the context of the popularity of classificatory social discourse of the 1880’s (Lane 2006: 123-124).

The following section discusses the images that medical doctors, politicians and travelers created of Havana from mid to late 19th century, whose negotiations played out in an imagined international political sphere as Cuba transitioned from its last stage in colonialism in preparation to showcase in the global theater of modern nations.

**Performances of nationalism and the postcard of Havana**

Global and local structures and relationships of power conditioned the production of travelers’ accounts of Cuba and Havana in the 19th century. The economic, political and cultural revitalization that came with the sugar boom drove a wave of travelers mainly from the United States, Britain and France during the early to mid 19th century to Cuba (Joseph 2008). In 1852, the Spanish visitor Antonio Barras y Prado commented on the proliferation of travelers from Europe and North america visiting Havana around and after Tacón’s urban planning reforms since 1834. He said they were compelled to stop at Havana to find out first-hand how such prosperity (“a work of thirty years”) had happened so rapidly (De las Barras y Prado 1925: 72).
Contrary to his own expectations, he noted that Cuba was not a colony “remaining to be civilized” but rather it was “50 years ahead” of the peninsula. De las Barras y Prado evaluated Cuba’s “civilization” in terms of the numerous advances and facilities offered by Havana, which he catalogued as a tourist-hospitable city. Signs of Havana’s civilization in his view were the city’s “public ornate” as in the paving of streets and ornamentation of gardens, paseos and the beautiful residences. He also praised the city’s incredibly effective and active transportation system, including a railroad, innumerable carriages (both personal and rented) and other public transport means. In addition, he noted the variety and quality of public spectacles, including the most acclaimed opera companies performing in world-class theaters like the Tacón. Finally he acclaimed the variety offer of cafés, restaurants and shops where an urban consumer culture emerged, and made Havana as cosmopolitan as any European metropolis (De las Barras y Prado 1925: 59-76).

Stories of travel to exotic places sold well among an emergent educated European middle-class readership in the context of a growing demand for empirical knowledge in Europe during the 19\textsuperscript{th} century. The fetichization of difference and of the Other was driven by a “curiosity” or a quest for knowledge among middle and upper classes for how natives lived in the colonies (Fitzell 1994). European travelers accounts and even the work of European \textit{costumbrista} artists of Cuba, can be better interpreted within the framework of scientific realism, pioneered by the naturalist explorer Alexander von Humboldt. Von Humboldt is said to have inaugurated the modality of Americanism, which paralleled Orientalism in its penchant for a cult of the exotic. Through the systematic production of Eurocentric images of the colonies under the gaze of scientism and Romanticism, a range of intellectuals approached the Americas as a laboratory and contributed to its “re-invention” or re-discovery (Fitzell 1994, Joseph 2008). By contrast to previous narratives by pirates, seamen and explorers focusing on expansionism, the enlightened travelers of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century combined artistic expression and scientific empiricism, particularly through the lens of the natural sciences as a method to approach the “real” in the American colonies (Echevarría 2010, Joseph 2008). The voluminous work of Humboldt which included a 1826 report on his scientific expeditions in Cuba, stimulated interest in travels abroad among European readers during the 19\textsuperscript{th} century creating a discursive context for the popularization of travel literature (Fitzell 1994).

Travelers’ writings evolved into a specific genre in 19\textsuperscript{th} century Europe targeting the
public of non-specialists fond of exotic sketches created by those who were seen as adventurous travelers, the bearers of first hand information about social life and nature in the colonies. A claim of authenticity and realism characterized narratives and paintings created to persuade the reader of the truthful character of the recreations. Their sketches used meticulous descriptions of plants, people and weather conditions with attention to the picturesque—that which deserved to be elevated to the category of art or scientific knowledge. Travelers and artists sought to transport viewers to a reality that they aspired but would probably never get to know, see and experience for themselves. Ironically, the “pact” of confidence between travelers and their clients entailed a long process of alteration and reinterpretation of the original sketches into engravings with the ultimate aim to produce a convincing image (Fitzel 1994, Joseph 2008).

Pierre Toussaint Frédéric Mialhe, a pioneer of plastic costumbrismo during early to mid 19th century Cuba, exemplifies the reach of the demand for realistic depictions of Cuba in Europe at the time. A natural scientist by profession, Mialhe was trained in the neo-classical school, which marked the trend of the visual arts in Cuba in the early 19th century (Pérez Cisneros 2000). During his stay in Cuba, Mialhe created a series of three lithographically illustrated works including landscape views of Havana, its environs as well as coastal cities, with attention to daily life activities and traditions including street vendors, cockfights and women in volantas. The success of his work Viaje Pintoresco Alrededor de la Isla de Cuba (1847-1848) in Europe was such, that a rival Havana lithographer, the German Bernardo May pirated it after the third edition was published. May heightened the marketing appeal of the images with added captions in Spanish English and German and vignettes printed around the borders of the images (Cueto 1994). Mialhe failed to prove his case against May upon taking it to court, and the work was published in yet another version. Mialhe’s prints circulated the world and became the standard image of mid 19th century Cuba known at the time and to this day (Echevarria 2010, Heald 2011, Cueto 1994).

Images and narratives of Havana, framed as commodities designed to fit European consumer’s preferences, only partially captured the knowledge of an objective reality, not only

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78 “…there is certainly enough of the picturesque about the vehicle [volantas] to make it worthy of some description” says Trollope, a North American traveler visiting Havana in the 1860’s (Pérez 1992:16) Echevarria defines this “worth” in the picturesque as a “painterly” character of the objects depicted including the vivid colors, peculiar shapes and exotic qualities of nature, human types and activities chosen for representation (Echevarria 2010).
because of the substantial editing they were subjected to. As cultural representations, these texts were also subjectively charged re-creations framed within the authors’ representational *habitus* and conditioned by their physical, ideological and social positionalities *vis à vis* their audience and the objects of representation. This politics of location limited the field of view of both native and foreign observers; much of the material and social realities of Havana remained unknown to them, creating a gap creatively filled with pieces from the authors’ imagination, a process that Néstor García Canclini captured in the notion of urban imaginaries (Canclini 2007, Joseph 2008). Yvon Joseph characterization of French travel literature in Cuba nicely illustrates the functioning of urban imaginaries, “Their writings as testimonials consist of snapshots based on prior readings, things heard, believed; things believed to have been heard and read, as well as actual observations in Cuba’s ‘realities’” (2008: 26).

Thus, urban imaginaries bear a strong subjective and affective charge, conveying or silencing the specific interests, identities and aspirations of the authors in relation to the larger ideological structures that informed their perceptions and motives of visit to Cuba. For instance, the many names that Havana received in the 19th century, including “Pearl” and “Paris of the Antilles,” “Key to the Indies,” “Albion of America” or the “Always Loyal Island of Cuba,” expressed the imperialist relationships connecting observers and objects of representation. European observers compared Cuba with France (Paris) and England (Albion), to describe the implications that such a rich, geostrategic colony with a booming sugar industry represented to any European metropolis. Spanish authorities and observers used the metaphor of loyalty to project Spain’s dominion over one of its last colonies in the Americas, while reassuring a desire for continued political subjection of the Creole planter class to the Spanish crown in a context of increasing political clashes and anti-colonial sentiment (Barcia 2003).

The possibility of Cuba’s annexation to the U.S. drove North American travelers to Cuba increasingly since the mid 19th century. The rhetoric of their travel writings projected the zeal for North American expansionism, while silencing the question of Cuban nationalism, a pressing topic in public opinion in the 1840’s in Cuba (Guevara 2008). Many euphemized their imperialist aspirations in descriptions of local customs, as in this traveler’s note of the changing fashion in late 19th century Havana at a moment when a the growing influence of the U.S. in Cuba was felt and foreseen, “The bonnet, however, is gradually becoming fashionable [in preference for the veil]…In this I see evidence of Spanish decadence…Patriotism is sapped by
millinery. The *bonnet rouge* was the French revolutionary symbol; who knows but that the American bonnet may become the liberty-cap to emblemate Cuban independence?” (McQuade in Pérez 1992: 34). Her words read as an omen of U.S. intervention in the Cuban War of Independence in 1898, the start of the Spanish-American war, marking the beginning of U.S. long-term political dominance in Cuba. Travelogues of British visitors who came to Cuba as spokesmen for the anti-slavery cause centered their interest in scenes of slavery that emphasized cruelty. By contrast, the Spanish Landaluze’s colorful depiction of blacks and slaves in festive, harmonious sceneries and elegant dresses in his paintings concealed deep racial and political conflicts, revealing his alignment with the interests of the Spanish colonial state (Pérez Cisneros 2000).

As the possibility for independence crystallized towards the late 19th century, travel literature became a discursive field for Cubans and Spaniards nationalist quarrels gaining strength against the backdrop of the wars of liberation (1868-1878, 1979-1980 and 1895-1898). For instance, the Cuban aristocrat Countess of Merlin who wrote her travel accounts in 1844 as a returnee from her second homes in Madrid and Paris assumed the role of mediator between Spain and the colony to promote the cause of the Cuban planter class for greater political and economic autonomy (Méndes Rodenas 1998). Moreover, towards the end of the century, the growing political tensions between Cuban reformists, *independentistas* and Spanish colonialists found a venue of expression in a heated polemic over prostitution that was at the center of public opinion in the 1880’s in Havana.

The polemic was ignited by the publication of a series of letters by the Spanish journalist Francisco Moreno reporting on his recent travels to Cuba, where he used the urban narrative to make fierce moral statements about *Cuba y su gente* (Cuba and its people) as his book was titled (1887). He depicted Havana as a dirty, corrupted and demoralized city and society and, most of all plagued by prostitution and immoral practices like creole dancing. He criticized the press and the administration, creating an image of Cuba as a colony that appeared ungovernable. Over the course of 1888 and 1889, the debate unfolded with nationalist, racist, anti-racist, and anti-Spanish replies by Cuban elite intellectuals including the Creoles Raimundo Cabrera (1888), a lawyer, writer and liberal-autonomist aligned politician, Benjamín de Céspedes (1888), a white medical doctor and Rodolfo Lagardere (1889), a spokesman for the intellectual elite of color, all in defense of the women of their class whose honor they felt hurt by others’ accusations of
prostitution. Additional replies to the work of De Céspedes were even more controversial. Four numbers of the newspaper *La Cebolla* published in 1888 claimed to be written by an organization of sex-workers voicing their protest against unfair State regulations and police abuses. The true authorship of the articles is attributable to an anarchist Spanish journalist, Victorino Reineri, seeking to interrupt the political discourse by nationalist Creole elites grounded in a system of gender values of respectability (Calvo-Peña 2005).

Feminist historians of Latin America have shown that prostitution debates and reforms have historically surfaced as signs of change at moments of destabilization of socio-political structures and ideological paradigms, when “creating a sexual threat…is a particularly powerful way of constructing consensus in times of great social stress and change” (Findlay 1999: 202, Bliss 2001, Briggs 2002, Guy 2000). This was certainly the case in late 19th century Cuba, as scholarly discussions on the 1888 controversy over prostitution have demonstrated (Calvo-Peña, Barcia 1993). At this particular instance, women were used as a language to talk politics. Their bodies became symbolic battlefields for special interest groups’ struggles for power at a politically convulse “moment of inflection,” as Cuba shifted from being a Spanish colony to a neocolony of the United States upon its military intervention in the war of 1898 and into a Republic in 1902.

Going beyond the strictly discursive dimensions of the prostitution debate in late 19th century public opinion, in the present and subsequent chapters I draw attention to the specific connections between the ideological (discursive) and sensorial fields in which these narratives unfolded. In particular, I have argued that *costumbrismo* was a political project of construction of a normative cultural regime, which was built around an imaginary or aspiration of a particular social and moral order of things in the city and the prospect of nation. *Costumbristas* strategically exploited a two-dimensional representational mode to create a visual imaginary that gave preeminence to the specific shape of habitual body movements—“*costumbres*”—as they informed a distinctive, simultaneously moral, social, embodied and spatial aesthetic order.

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79 Two additional replies to De Céspedes’ work were the *Pamphlet to refute Dr. Céspedes’ La prostitución en la ciudad de La Habana* (1889), a collection of letters from the Association of Merchant Workers of Habana (*Asociación de Dependientes del Comercio de La Habana*), mostly immigrants from Spain, who felt insulted by De Céspedes’ accusation of pederasty at commercial stores, and his attacks on the Spanish immigrant working class. Finally, a book by Pedro Giralt *El amor y la prostitución* (1889). As a Spanish immigrant, Giralt feels insulted by De Céspedes’ accusations to the immigrant class, and assumes the defense of the rights of the prostitutes and for women’s equality. The last two publications respond also from a religious stance against the scientific-secular statements of De Céspedes.
Situating this specific chapter of the prostitution debate and the pressing concerns for sexuality and the body in Cuba within the representational dimension of the city where it was deployed by political actors/authors, allows understanding the inter-related configurations of nation, class, race and gender. Here, as in the many depictions of gendered, raced and classed bodies in Havana made by Cubans and foreigners throughout the 19th century, the city functions as discursive, sensorial and imaginary field where negotiations of power and the definition of social boundaries unfold as a kind of spectacle in the urban landscape-stage of symbols.

While aesthetic and affective systems of perception and ordering of the world have multiple axes of expression including the motile, tactile, the auditory, and olfactory (Ahmed 2006, Smith 2006), the visual axis is at this moment in Cuba’s history a particularly dominant discursive and sensorial field of cultural and political negotiations as expressed in the specifically urban and modern narrative of “the ornate”. As Homi Bhabha observes from a critical stance on studies of colonialism, the visual had a particularly powerful function in the processes of signification of the nation, a project in which, the authors of Havana’s representations were heavily invested. He writes, “The recurrent metaphor of landscape as the inscape of national identity emphasizes the quality of light, the question of social visibility, the power of the eye to naturalize the rhetoric of national affiliation and its forms of collective expression” (Bhabha 1994). Seen in this light, Havana’s visual, and more broadly, perceptive landscape was an important discursive and sensorial field for crafting and imagining an acceptable collective image, one which was often indexed through the powerful and multivalent category of the “public.” As discursive practice, the “public” is thereby doubly signified as what is, should and should not be accessible visually and otherwise perceptible, as well as what pertains and represents that unified “collective” like a neighborhood, a city, a nation- being imagined and projected as a symbol of progress and modernity both inside but most importantly abroad.80 The Spanish traveler De las Barras y Prado illustrated this well, “In all countries, the aspect of cities is in harmony with the level of civilization of its inhabitants, and here in Havana this is evident at first sight” (1926: 77). The ornate as an expression of “public” urban

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80 Subsequent chapters discuss the gendered dimensions of the discursive uses of the “public” as they are signified in relation to the discursive and spatial counterpart unit of the “domestic” (Chapter 8 and 7) as well as to the ways in which the place and performances of women in “public” space inform its specific meanings (Chapter 6).
respectability thus, functioned as a disciplining, aestheticizing and representational technology at once.

The analysis and examples below discuss the ornate as a useful conceptual framework to understand the multi-faceted disciplinary, aesthetic and performative dimensions of colonial biopolitical and cultural projects such as urban planning and costumbrismo. On the one hand, a collection of governance tactics sought to order matter (i.e. garbage, wastewater) and bodies (diseased, idle, poor, of color, sexually “deviant” vs. heteronormative, white and bourgeois) into organized segments (extramural - intramural, domestic - public), bounded city fragments (markets, plazas, neighborhoods) and specialized, stylized, hierarchically ordered and segregated buildings and structures (jails, hospitals, mansions, promenades, theaters, etc.). On the other hand, discursively, these elements often served as aesthetic descriptors or indexes that organized a visual order of things, an acceptable/respectable image by normative standards, with counterparts in moral, social, geographical and corporeal orders of social life. In other words, the labor of representation of imagers of Havana and of Cuba as a nation-prospect was to regulate and configure the standards for a simultaneously sensorial and moral aesthetics of the urban landscape. This was crucial to the extent that Havana, as the capital of Cuba, was an image that carried national representative power. As such Havana’s image was conceived of as a postcard of the national imagined community. This picture of Havana bore a claim to representativeness and a plea for acceptability from civilized global “superior” nations—significantly those competitors of Spain for hegemony over the prosperous Cuba.

These nations—and their ambassadors in Cuba as “travelers”—played a crucial role in providing the Cuban project of modernity in progress with symbolic capital and political legitimacy. Elements unfit to the acceptable sensory norm, order or aesthetic of “the postcard” of Havana and of Cuba were spoken against, regulated and called for re-arrangement in the sensory realm. Many of these claims, were in fact, done in the name of “keeping appearances” in the global political theater where Cuba showcased as an upcoming republic. The calls were made to re-arrange elements in this sensory realm to be in alignment with a corresponding moral order, sometimes referred to as “norms” and “laws” of “prudery, good manners and decency.” These “laws” were, in these authors accounts, altered by the presence and activities associated with marginal populations—black people, “prostitutes,” and popular classes in general. Their rhetorical use often served as a metaphor of disorder. Moreover, rather than aiming to achieve a
single moral regime, the logic of re-arrangement proposed a structure based on a double moral-aesthetic standard. These unwanted elements were to be “tolerated,” so long as they remained outside of the “public,” meaning, perceptible realm of the viewers, those “disembodied” spectators, narrating the low “Others” as they simultaneously narrated their own selves. Thus, a double standard of morality and of perception – one which divided “the public” from that which must be kept out of sensory reach-, can best describe the ethic and aesthetic of “the ornate” as narrated by the imagers of Havana at late 19th century.

Ordering and cleansing Havana’s sensory-scapes

In alignment with their function to promote “good governance”, 19th century bandos had specific provisions to regulate the common space of sounds shared by city residents, some of which were in observance with religious occasions (see footnote 6). For instance, article 157 of the 1842 bando “prohibited songs and music [músicas] through the streets after the toque de ánimas” – a signal given through the chant of church bells between 8 and 9 pm every night. After this time, commercial establishments were required to close and residents expected to retreat to their homes. Only persons of “hierarchy and distinction” should be allowed to walk by foot and without lantern (Valdés 1842, Art 25). Havana’s day or night-life was without a doubt not nearly as quiet as in the bandos’ imaginary. This traveler echoed recurrent observations about the persistent musicality of Havana “En La Habana todo el mundo es músico; al pasar por las calles no se oye otra cosa que guitarras, pianos y música de Rossini” (Ney 1831 in De Acevedo 1919: 22). Indeed, many of the rules of the bandos can be read as responses to frequent contraventions, whose claims and denunciations fill the enormous stacks of Cuban archives. In fact, “tranquility” was an often-used expression of the aspiration for quietness, and was a recurrent language in charges and denunciations of prostitution, dance, and other activities and

81 Other articles in the 1842 bando specifically required “noise” elimination in streets during Christmas eve (Article 10).
82 “Animas” within the Catholic religious tradition are the “souls” of the deceased, which inhabit the liminal state of the “purgatory,” where they are thought to be purified from sins before they proceed to the state of salvation with God. The “toque de ánimas” was the signal given to devotees, through the ringing of Church bells at a certain hour at night to pray for the “animas.” Prayer is thought to have an effect in speeding the process of depuration and shortening the stay in the purgatory. The signal functions as an affective stimuli and reminder of the “presence” of these loose souls amongst the living, and very significantly out in the streets of the city. Exploring the symbolic and affective repercussions of this habitual practice in the everyday life of Havanan’s and Cubans further can shed light on some of the questions raised in this section, to the extent these informed the cognitive and sensuous dispositions and power relationships of individuals vis a vis other “bodies” and the environment.
presence of popular classes in middle and upper class neighborhoods (McCabe 2003, Chapter 8). Such was the concern for “quietness” that even excessive religious-related sounds like Church bell ringing were called for mitigation and ordering.83 “Loud” and “indecent” utterances were equally sanctioned as part of the cleansing colonial regime of sensory and moral fields of colonial bandos. The bandos included regulations against the “shouting” of children playing in the streets, who were said to block transit and bother the neighbors (Valdés 1842: Art 164). Neighborhood police agents were responsible of correcting “blasphemies, obscene words or swearing, or actions that offend the good customs” uttered by any person regardless of class and condition and denounce them to their superiors (Art 12).

However, different kinds of sounds were valued differently. Those associated with popular classes occupied lower places in the integrated hierarchies of sound and morality, which came under attack by middle and upper classes and colonial authorities. Ned Sublette documented extensively on the history of sound perceptions in Cuba as they relate to popular music. In particular, the prohibition of the African drum in the colonial period in Cuba and the Caribbean epitomizes the conflation of religious, political and aesthetic-moral concerns. First, the drum was deemed a symbol of the uncivilized and unholy since for centuries the Church associated the drum with the devil. The drum was also imagined as politically dangerous as an instrument with magical and related warfare functions in the context of Caribbean slave uprisings (Carpentier 1969, Barcia 2007, Rojo 1989, Mintz and Price 1976). Finally, the drum was perceived as culturally and sexually threatening. African-related dances were sites for reproachful inter-racial social and potential sexual intercourse and for the cultural blending (“darkening”) of popular musical and dance forms (Hope 2009, Sublette 2004, Guevara 2005).

While most of the time the sounds of Africans in Cuba remained invisible and inaudible, during the specific days and dates that these were allowed to come out in “public,” white upper classes protested their presence (Sublette 2004). Specifically, cabildo celebrations held in the streets with music and dance performances on Sundays, celebrating funerals and on January 6th

83 Gina Picart documented the specific edict issued in 1803 against the excessive “noise” produced by the indiscriminate use of Church bells in Havana by the prominent liberal Church leader and social reformer –member of the Sociedad-, the Bishop Espada y Landa. In retribution for a small fee, Church bell ringers and priests conceded “toques de campana” as votes of piety for reasons ranging from health for the sick, deaths, births, baptisms, weddings, among others. Espada disposed that bells be rung only to announce the “Ave María” prayer in the morning and for “Animas” for a duration of 3 minutes (2007, http://campaners.com/php/textos.php?text=3146 accessed 03/06/2012).
for the Day of Kings were by late 18th century ordered by the Captain General Juan Procopio Bassecourt be expelled to the outskirts of the city walls “because of the noise and disruption caused by their observance.” These were, for them, unpleasant reminders of the uncivilized African presence in Cuba (Paquette 1988: 109). State and church logics of regulation clashed, as the houses where cabildos held their meetings had been built for purposes of religious control nearby the Churches and Parishes around which residential neighborhoods slowly expanded (Barcia 2009: 63). The aesthetic cleansing of African elements from the city-scape mobilized by upper classes and colonial authorities added to gentrification policies during Tacón’s regime and onwards, and effecting the gradual marginalization of people of color to the extramural area of the city (Mena 2005).

Subtle snapshots of Havana’s soundscape narrated by the Countess of Merlin at midcentury in her famous travel accounts published in the 1840’s are a good illustration of white bourgeois racialized aesthetic which required ordering “beautiful” from “ugly” sounds. As she approached Havana’s harbor upon arrival in her boat from Madrid, Merlin interrupts her otherwise romantic and idealistic tone to narrate to her aunt –her addressee- the feeling of a “torrent” of “savage harmonies” filling the air. These were “screams and chants” of “semi naked blacks” rowing boats while performing what seemed to her a “concert given by infernal spirits to the king of darkness” (Montalvo 1922: 43). Not all chanting of blacks disgusted the Countess, especially if they sang “white” music. Pages later she tells of the delight of waking up with the sounds of a “fresh and youthful voice” singing a motif of the Italian opera El Pirata by Bellini (which premiered in Havana in 1834), by a “pretty mulata” slave of her cousin. In sharp contrast with her narrative of the slaves at the harbor, and speaking with the authority of the opera signer that she was, Merlín describes the singing mulata’s voice as “pitched and pure and with great extension would this voice be a treasure for Italian theater,” while her “copper colored skin a novelty compared with the pink cheeks” of the European divas (Montalvo 1922: 71).

Decades later, with a radically different style which was scientificist, moralist and sanitary at once, the medical doctor and sanitary inspector Benjamín de Céspedes’ echoed Merlin and other similar appreciations by whites of the “infernal” sounds and disgusting presence of

84 María del Carmen Barcia documented protests against the “scandals” of cabildo members since 1681 under governorship of Fernández de Córdoba, who prohibited gatherings “for dance and cabildos” and restricted these to be held in the streets until the signal of the prayer bell. Cabildo members built “bohíos” (huts) to commemorate their dances, but the “scandal was such” that the bishop Compostela ordered their demolition (Barcia 2009: 59).
marginal subjects in late 19th century Havana (1888, De las Barras y Prado 1926). De Céspedes summed and rounded up in his text on prostitution, the elements in 19th century colonial legislation and bourgeois discourse to represent what Mikhail Bakhtin called the grotesque body (Stallybrass and White 1986, Bakhtin 1984). De Céspedes depicted homosexuals, black people in general, and especially black women as primitive, filthy, contaminating and animalistic, anti-normative and essentially “public” beings. These images stand against the model of the white bourgeois woman, the “angel of the home,” naturally inhabiting the “respectable family home” as the cradle of civilized and cultured class of model citizen-subjects. Using marked “exaggeration of the inappropriate to incredible, [anti-human] dimensions,” a fixation on “primary” bodily life functions (particularly sex), and an emphasis on the tendency to transgress limits (Bakhtin 1984: 317), De Céspedes created an image of (black) women and other equally grotesque beings like pimps and homosexuals living “naturally” and in a continuous sexual and ambition-implacable state, as concubines, prostitutes, polygamous beings, suffering from pathological sexual desire which made them living vehicles of venereal epidemics. A constant recourse throughout his narrative is to use metaphors of animals and their sounds (beast, parasite, monkey, calf, pig, minotaur) to describe the ways of the grotesque, sexually deviant black, female and homosexual protagonists of his account.

The concern with these and other “lower” beings so adamantly dissected through De Céspedes’ flowery rhetoric, was largely a concern for their “publicness” – the tainting effect of these bodies in the aesthetic of the city, especially as it was open and visible to passersby but most importantly to (European) travelers, the principal approval critics of Havana—and Cuba’s advancement to “progress”. Bodies that appeared naked and the “nakedness” of the whole spectacle—the inadmissible consent of these bodies’ presence in public—is what appeared to outrage De Céspedes and his contemporary writers the most. In a specific section labeled “Provocation to lust and moral contagion” De Céspedes indignation goes for the “exhibition” in “public places” of prostitution through the main avenues, side by side or in front of a “honorable home,” nearby churches, theaters and cafés, where “prostitution overflows, blocking the city, stinking like an epidemic [that contaminates] everything it touches” (1888: 132). 85 The

85 The medical doctor and author of another text on prostitution in Havana, Ramón Alfonso -De Céspedes’ discursive successor in the post-colonial republican era as judged by his moralist/sanitary rhetoric-, echoed De
pedestrian can “see from the street, the bed of the prostitute…the pornographic picture, the most minimal and intimate details of the bedroom, and she exhibiting herself like in a market stand [casilla de feria], provoking to lust…” The prostitute, he charged, transits through the same public promenade as respectable and honest women, as does the disgusting class of “blacks, mulatos and pederast whites that go dragging their sandals [chancleta] … like females, showing their erect buttocks through their tight suits…” The spectacle of ‘the low’ in the city’s surface, which the prostitute embodied, seemed to fascinate De Céspedes as per his adamant and meticulous descriptions. Scandalous black, mulata and white “disheveled” (desgreñada) women go about in summer nights through the streets “showing shamelessly indecent low-cuts of naked fleshes (mostrando sin pudor escotes indecentes de carnes desnudas),” and so on his list went charging against “low” men, children, and even bathers at the beach for pretending to live “freely in savage costume” like in Africa. (1888: 134) That the “baudyhouse (mancebía) is installed on the very surface of the street (a flor de calle)” De Céspedes says, can “only cause nausea and shame of living in one’s own country.”

As much as De Céspedes and others were “nauseated” with the spectacle of “Africanism” and prostitution in Havana’s streets, they did not necessarily advocate its elimination. At this moment in the evolution of the disciplining regime of sexuality in Cuba86, a logic of “tolerance”

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86 Although prohibitions for prostitution were established in the bandos dating from earlier in the century, the institutionalization of Public Health through the creation of the Hygiene Section (or Department in 1873 brought forth a structured Ruling Statute for Prostitution titled Reglamento para el Régimen de la Prostitución (1873). Colonial authorities enforced, among other measures, the registration and medical inspection of prostitutes for sexually transmitted infections. The Statute suffered several modifications throughout the remaining colonial and
guided policies and discourses of prostitution, which regarded it as a “necessary evil,” acceptable as long as it was adequately concealed and not made “public.” De Céspedes graphically illustrated this idea as a frustrated aspiration: he laments, if only prostitution was “dressed up” decently,

Si al menos, esa prostitución se mostrara en traje elegante, discreta, comedida y perfumada, halagando por su belleza y distinción al transeúnte, sin provocar escándalos como sucede en otros países; pero no, aquí el tipo de la prostituta de esos barrios es vulgarísimo, ordinario, sus provocaciones a la lubricidad son brutales, parecen que piden una limosna a cambio del espasmo lujurioso que proporcionan \(^{87}\) (1888: 151).

If only, that prostitution would show up in elegant attire, discrete, moderate and perfumed, flattering the passersby for her beauty and distinction, without causing scandals as it happens in other countries; but no, here the kind of prostitute of those neighborhoods is extremely vulgar, ordinary, their provocations to lubricity are brutal, it seems as they are begging in exchange of the lust that they provide

Regulations for prostitution reflected this aspiration and logic of concealment and tolerance undercover of grotesque bodies. Prostitution ruling statutes since 1873 explicitly forbid women’s display in front of doors and windows, in streets and promenades in uncovered carriages, in parks, plazas and other zones “where honest people habitually gather” and in preferential sections of theaters (Reglamento 1894). Regulations for the configuration of brothels was explicit: “only one entrance door, which, the same as the windows, is set up in a way that what happens inside cannot be discovered from outside,” doors and windows only allowed to

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\(^{87}\) Here De Céspedes’ observations echo the Spanish Francisco Moreno, who sparkled the fire of the nationalist fight on prostitution with the publication of his1887 accounts. Moreno rationalized the question of prostitution “in the open” by explaining that it would not be reasonable to confine prostitutes. However, he said, there is a “colossal difference” between coming out “honesty” and presenting themselves in “open carriages, showing their calves (pantorrillas), singing and agitating (cantando y alborotando)” (Moreno 1887: 143).
open for hours of cleaning, should not use colors or lights to attract attention of passersby. Houses should also not be located nearby schools, churches or frequently attended centric streets, in which case they should be located in top floors with the adequate screening to conceal the interiors (Reglamento 1894). In spite of these explicit regulations, De Céspedes and his interlocutors in the 1888 debate denounced their daunt transgression “the Hygiene Section grants permission to open prostitution houses anywhere, in front of a church, side by side of a school or an honest home” (1888, Moreno 1887, Cabrera 1888).

The same “zone of tolerance” rationality was transported to evaluate the display of other bodily performances in “public” associated with prostitution and sanctioned as transgressions to the “laws” of morality and the acceptable sensory order. For centuries in legislative, social and medical discourses, dancing to European music infused with African influences was associated with prostitution, in particular the 19th century Cuban mixed genres of contradanza, which evolved into danza. Around the late 1870’s the danza evolved into the danzón, and later in the republican era, into the son (Sublette 2006, Ortiz 1986, Hope 2009). The sounds of dancing music were in the words of this Colombian world traveler in 1861, a trope in the city-scape of Havana “You can hear danzas playing all day long, both in people’s houses and from organ grinders in the street, where even pedestrians go dancing by” (“Todo el día se oyen sonar las danzas, ya en las casas particulares, ya por los órganos que andan por las calles […]” (Tanco Armero in Chasteen 2004: 161, and Barcia 2009).

Regulations for music—particularly African influenced—often times called for the regulation of sexuality by way of the rhythmic stimuli they were thought to effect in driving certain (pelvic) movements of the body (Chasteen 2004). Not only rhythmic but lyric and melodic stimuli were said to motivate certain movements and derive in unacceptable actions, as the utmost moral censor of the early 19th century Buenaventura Pascual Ferrer charged in reference to the titles and lyrics of some of the popular songs at 1801 “No se necesitan más que oír todas esas tonadas y sus versos para encontrar en ellas la obscenidad más torpe y la invención más propia para provocar al desenfreno y la prostitución las pasiones que bien regidas harian la dicha de la sociedad” (Ferrer 1965: 119 “One only needs to hear all of those tunes and their lyrics to find in them the most clumsy obscenity and the most creative inventiveness to provoke the debauchery and prostitution, the passions that—if well governed—would make the happiness of society”). These mixed genres of music and dance were taught in
so called “escuelitas,” since the early 19th century later named “academias,” where sex and race segregation were enforced since mid century. In legislation and in social discourses, the explicit association between dance academies and prostitution was made. Since the early 19th century, dancing had come under moralists’ attacks calling for its abatement in the name of decency, but the full-fledged moral panic around dance came out alongside prostitution debates in the late 1870’s and onto the late 1880’s in the larger context of nationalist debates in public opinion.

By the 1870’s revised ruling statutes for the academies limited the kinds and number of instruments to perform the music for dancing at the academies, held at residences everyday of the week. The piano with no further accompaniment would ensure making “the least possible noise until the sessions finish at 11 o’clock at night” (Fondo Gobierno General Leg 352, Exp. 16917). Dancing was by this time, like prostitution, used as a metaphor of an urban sensory and social disorder. The author of a column on the newspaper La Correspondencia de Cuba, protesting dance academies in 1880, described the bourgeois urban imaginary in terms of the order that should govern under the “laws of morality,”

La pluma se resiste a describir los escándalos que en esos focos de baldón tienen efecto todos los días y no como quiera, sino á la vista de todo el mundo, de la policía primero, de los pacíficos transeuntes después, que imaginándose vivir en una ciudad donde la moral se respete y el pudor sea una ley vigente y no derogada, transitan por las vías públicas sin sospechar que á la vuelta de una esquina van a encontrarse con cuadros que de cierto no son conocidos en ningun otro país. Enfermedad es esta que aquí venimos formalmente a denunciar, no porque solo en la Habana se desarrolle, sino porque ninguna ciudad como esta presenta este grado de triste y deformar ulceración que desafía a los estómagos más fuertes y á las conciencias menos escrupulosas.

The pen resists itself to describe the scandals occurring every day in those foci of dishonor and not in any way, but to the sight of everybody, of the police first, of the pacific pedestrians later, who imagine living in a city where morality is respected and where prudery is a current and not derogated law, [they] transit

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88 The authors of the 1880 column of the newspaper La Correspondencia de Cuba expressed this relationship graphically: “It is the case that side by side of the scandalous corruption that is exhibited, lies the even more refined corruption that is taught; side by side of the market that feeds licentiousness, is the merchandise prepared to be thrown out to the stinking source. We are talking about the escuelitas de baile which are no more than schools of mud, where the unwary youth is lost” (Gobierno General No. 16917 Leg 352.) (“Es el caso que al lado de la corrupción escandalosa que se exhibe, está la corrupción más refinada aún que se enseña; al lado del mercado que alimenta el libertinaje, está la mercancía preparada para arrojarla al foco pestilente. Nos referimos a lo que se da en llamar escuelitas de baile que no vienen +a ser otra cosa sino escuelas de lodo, donde la incauta juventud se estraga y se pierde”).
through the public streets without suspecting that around the corner they will find scenes that for sure are not known in any other country. This is a disease that we are denouncing…[which manifests at that level] of ulceration [in no other city like in this one] challenging the strongest stomachs…

Years later, with his characteristic moralist poetics, the doctor De Céspedes charged, “Por todos los ámbitos de la ciudad resuena el penetrante alarido del cornetín; reclamando al macho y a la hembra para la fiesta hipócritamente lúbrica” (“a maddening fanaticism for dancing spreads in certain months of the year, like an epidemic of satirists…Everywhere in the city the pungent screech of the cornet [cornetín] reverberate; reclaiming the male and the female for the hypocritical and lustful feast”) (1888). To him, the sounds of Africanized dancing and music evoked the sounds of the sexual act corrupting the city’s soundscape

…cuyos ritmos son la expresión musical imitativa de escenas pornográficas, que los timbales fingen como redobles de deseos, que el rispido sonsonete del guayo como titilaciones que exacerban la lujuria y que el clarinete y el cornetín, en su competencia estruendosa y disonante, parecen imitar las ansias, las súplicas y los esfuerzos del que lucha ardorosamente por la posesión amorosa.

…their rhythms are the imitative musical expression of pornographic scenes, that the kettledrum fake like drumrolls of desires, that the prickly droning of the guayo [güiro] like titillations that exacerbate lust and that the clarinet and the cornet, in their thunderous and dissonant competition, seem to imitate the cravings, the pleas and the efforts of who struggles ardently for the amorous possession.

However, as with prostitution, it appeared that moralists did not mind people dancing. After all, it was a recognized fact that everyone in Havana was “irresistibly” driven to dancing, a painful fact for the bourgeois moralists that waged a war against it for decades, and a source of pride towards the 1890’s when danzón was finally incorporated as a defining feature of cubanness. Like prostitution, dancing was at points referred to as a “necessary evil,” (Lane 2006) a healthy exhaust valve that every civilized society with a good sewage system needs in order to let imperfect elements out (Alfonso 1902). The greatest concern appeared to be the tainting effect of dancing in Havana’s ornate or public image. In the context of a media regionalist quarrel between newspapers in Havana and Matanzas over the scandals of danzón, a social reporter of the newspaper La Voz de Cuba lamented in 1879, “Because I love my country it hurts me to see danzón at gatherings of decent people. But if there is no way around it, if this blindness
continues, then I beg you, at least don't play danzón, and don't dance it when foreigners are around” (Chasteeen 2004: 77). As if responding to these claims, years later in 1887, the igniter of the prostitution nationalist fight, the Spaniard Francisco Moreno, included disgusting expressions of “public” dancing at theaters and escuelitas de baile, calling them the “preludes to the whorehouses,” creating a picture of Havana as a corrupted city and Cuba as an uncivilized colony.

Los bailes, esos bailes peculiares de Cuba, titulados la Danza y el Danzón, importados seguramente por la raza africana y que no se bailan en ninguna otra parte como allí, son otro de los fehacientes motivos de corrupción. No puedes tu figurarte, mi querido amigo, lo que es un danzón bien bailado y las ideas lubricas que despiertan las flexibilidades de caderas y el consiguiente vaivén o movimiento. Náuseas me dan al abordar una cuestión tan repugnante...Otra de las cosas que claman al cielo en Cuba, es la libertad de que gozan las prostitutas: campean por todas partes y a todas horas, a pie o en coche, por donde les place, pero sin procurar cubrir su abyección con el velo del pudor ¡de ningún modo! Sino diciendo yo soy una prostituta, yo me vendo al que me quiera. Otro punto de moralidad es el teatro de Cervantes, a donde no pueden ir señoras (1887:143 emphasis in original).

The dances, those peculiar dances of Cuba, entitled the Danza and the Danzón, undoubtedly imported by the African race and which are not danced in any other place like there, are another irrefutable motive of corruption. You cannot imagine, my dear friend, what it is a well-danced danzón and the gruesome ideas that awaken the hip flexibilities and the subsequent swinging or movement. I get nauseated by touching such repugnant issue... Another thing that claims to heaven in Cuba is the freedom enjoyed by prostitutes: they reign everywhere and at every hour, by foot or in carriage, wherever they like, but without trying to cover their abjection with the veil of prudery, no way! Rather, they go saying I am a prostitute, and I sell myself to whoever wants me. Another site of morality is the Cervantes theater, where ladies cannot go.

After naming a list of the “obscene” dances danced at the Cervantes theater “in presence of the governor” he rounded up his critique with a stark statement “the Cervantes theater is the prelude to the houses of prostitution” (Moreno 1887: 142-144).

Echoing these discourses in the post-colonial, republican era, the medical doctor Ramón Alfonso, captured the double standard, “tolerance” rationality of the latter colonial years in his own public policy proposals for prostitution and dance. Aided by characteristic metaphors of contamination which strongly echoed De Céspedes’ rhetoric, he reasoned, if the city cannot build a sewage system that works, neither should the disgusting elements that run through it be
“flaunted at daylight” (“que se ostente a la luz del Sol”). He pursued his reasoning further,

_Todas las sociedades tienen sus lunares, pero sin que pueda citarse como un modelo acabado, debemos fijarnos en el ejemplo de Inglaterra en la cual el ciudadano puede ser en lo privado todo lo pecaminoso que quiera, pero cualquier acto público que realice ofensivo a la moral y al decoro, es castigado con toda la severidad de las leyes, por encumbrado y prestigioso que sea. El caso del gran escritor inglés Oscar Wilde, es una demostración palmaria de nuestro aserto. La publicidad de aquello que nos afea revela despreocupación censurable en quien lo haga cuando no el cinismo. Es visible la pudibundez del funcionario que castiga con una pena subsidiaria la frase grosera vertida en el arroyo por una persona inculta y tolera en cambio que, mediante el pago de un arbitrio, hombres y mujeres remeden con descaro las contorsiones de la Venus Fricatrix junto a las ventanas abiertas de un salón profusamente iluminado, jactándose de lo bien que realizan sus inmundas piruetas, con vergüenza del transeúnte que las note. (Alfonso 1902: 35, emphasis added)

Every society has its dark spots (lunares), but albeit not a finished model, we should look at England’s example in which the citizen should be in private however sinful he may want to, but any public act which is offensive to morality and decorum, is punished with the greatest severity of laws, no matter how prestigious and influential he is (encumbrado y prestigioso). The case of the great English writer Oscar Wilde is a demonstration of this. The publicity of that which makes us ugly reveals lack of care by who allows it, which is censurable. It is laughable the prudery of the functionary that punishes [with a fee] the gross expression uttered in the stream (arroyo) by an uncultured person and tolerates, in turn, that in paying a fee, men and women mimic with baldness the contortions of the Venus Fricatrix right by the open windows of a profusely lightened salon, flaunting of how good they are in performing their filthy pirouettes, with shame to the passersby that notices them.

Alfonso finishes off his digression with a definitive statement, “public dance is unbecoming of our culture” (Alfonso 1902: 34, 35, emphasis added). These examples reveal how bourgeois values of respectability were projected onto the landscape of the city as a sensorial screen of images and sounds, as a metaphor of modernity and progress. They also reveal that the frontiers between “private” and “public” are rather ambiguous and undefined. Practice and performance are key elements in the definition of these categories, which are talked about in terms of their perceptibility, more so than their relationship to strictly bounded geographical units (I elaborate further on the question of discursive practices of public and private in Chapter 7).

As a corollary and thematic hyperlink between chapters, an example from the manual of etiquette by De la Torre discussed in Chapter 8 illuminates the connections between ideologies
of urbanity or “good manners” through the logic of concealment, which also ruled over ideologies of the ornate in the “public” scene of the city described in this section. De La Torre’s is a didactic text directed to children which gives specific instructions on how to be respectable or “urban” by following rules of “decorum” which are based in observing hierarchy and “occupying one’s proper place” in a variety of domestic and public settings. To illustrate the rules of table manners the author poses the following question with the respective correct answer,

-¿Qué haremos al ver un insecto u otra porquería en el plato que nos hemos servido?
-Ocultarlo pronta y disimuladamente, de manera que no lo perciban los demás, dando el plato a los criados, y manifestando cualquiera otra escusa, si se nos preguntare porque no lo comemos (De La Torre 1857: 41).

-What should we do when seeing an insect or other dirt in the plate that we have been served?
-Hide it quickly and surreptitiously in such way that others do not perceive it, giving the plate to the servants, and manifesting whatever excuse, if we were asked why don’t we eat it.

Thus, in the city-scape, like in the plate of respectable families, the ugly and disgusting ought to be covered up, kept out of sight, or more broadly, out of sensory reach, as a general rule of the ornate and urbanity with the major goal to achieve “decorum” as an index of social, moral and aesthetic propriety. Thus, the ornate and urbanity exemplify the parallel regimes of the body and regimes for the city with the overall aim of “making respectable.” This gesture of cleaning up in material, sensory and cultural terms would produce an untainted, orderly image of subjects, of the city and of the prospect of nation. Concealment from sight or from hearing (sensory distance) was a by-measure of separation from touch (physical distance) and symbolic separation (cultural distance). These were interrelated technologies of difference-making through which modernization and subject formation operated in 19th century in colonial Cuba.

Conclusion

By exploring the relationships between bodies and space, this chapter provided a framework to examine the historical processes by which social difference was being made in relationship with its specific “sites of assembly” (Stallybrass and White 1986). During the 19th century, Havana’s transformed built environment created specific material and cultural
conditions whereby ideas, social relations and a space of shared meanings and feelings were being molded. Cuban and Spanish elites mobilized a range of measures to align and orient bodies vis à vis different kinds of social, geographical, symbolic, and affective boundaries. These included segregation—separating bodies physically and visibly in space; stratification—ordering bodies in fields of power and representation; and stylization—molding the contours of bodies and spaces to create codes and systems of distinction. These processes of social adjustment/alignment provided specific meanings to a modernity that was constructed around the building and re-building of difference and hierarchy upon existing colonial social structures.

A useful way to understand the relationship between bodies and space as they inform the functioning of “the social” is to think about “distance” as a measure of proximity to and from subjects, bodies and objects (Ahmed 2006). These may be positioned in different kinds of fields, socio-political, cultural and geographic, where they occupy specific locations. The specific measures used to evaluate these proximities inform systems of perception involving cognitive, psychological, and sensorial processes. These processes are channeled through the body as a complex affective, habituated and habituating apparatus. For instance, social distances express the prevailing relations of power and hierarchy, which assign a location or “place” to subjects in a social structure. Power and resources are key sources of “capital” which can enhance one’s social place (Bourdieu 1986, 1989). Prestige works in a similar way to determine one’s cultural or symbolic place.

Cultural distances are revealed through complex processes of manipulation of symbols of prestige. Resemblance and mimicry are common strategies by which these distances may be altered. Physical proximities communicate a spatial relationship, a closeness to and from something or someone from a specific location or topographic “point” (Ahmed 2006). How this closeness is determined is a question of affect and perception—things or people appear closer or more distant as they are perceived or sensed with embodied instruments of appreciation: eyes, skin, nose, or other sensory instruments and capacities that perceive movement through space (Ahmed 2006). Although all forms of distance depend upon perception, the sensorial is fundamental to the experiential aspect of subjects’ relationships with the material world. In turn, the habitual related to social perception and classification systems or habitus, can be more useful to explore socio-cultural and political relations of distance (Bourdieu 1989).
As an index of arrangements of power, prestige and privilege, distance also expresses a sense of general order of things, a sense of balance. Because of the deep interconnectedness of the three fields—social, cultural-symbolic, and geographical—the arrangements of location/position/place and distance in the three should maintain a correspondence so as to maintain this general order or balance (Stallybrass and White 1986, Ahmed 2006).

Changes happening in the early 19th century in Cuba affected this balance. What ever happened at this time that dramatically altered the perception of naturalness and tacit acceptance of the physical closeness that mediated everyday relations of masters and slaves for near to 300 years? How did these natural and quotidian physical proximities among social unequals become threatening and subject to systematic reform? A set of political, cultural and demographic changes at the turn of the 19th century informed the construction of blackness as a threat. As slave population in general and black population in particular increased with the thriving sugar-planting industry, the white ruling class felt minimized vis à vis a demographically black majority. The imaginaries of the Haitian revolution among Cuban white upper classes helped to construct the black male as a political threat to white colonial rule, and the black female as a sexual-racial threat. Black women’s bodies were constructed as the sexual means by which this black demographic threat increased via racial miscegenation. Finally, the novel urban phenomenon of a strong free working class of mulatos/as resembling or “mimicking” the white master class culturally, was a shocking evidence that the colonial civilizing project had worked, and one that stirred feelings of ambivalence and anxiety among white ruling classes.

Given the shift in “balance” that these changes produced, a thorough re-alignment became necessary. A set of mechanisms were put forth to revise and regulate the arrangements of social, cultural and physical place and distance. The new perceived dangers of inter-racial physical closeness were tackled through segregationist measures in a range of occupations including education, midwifery, painting, dance, and importantly through urban planning projects around the city wall. Stratification along the lines of gender, race and class was mapped onto new and transformed spatial arrangements, structures and institutions such as theaters, cafes, promenades, streets, shops and stratified neighborhoods. Marginal elements such as “prostitutes,” “vagrants” and people of color were ordered according to real and imagined city limits, significantly the city wall. The continued reproduction of racialized and gendered urban imaginaries were continuously reinforced negotiated through performances of gender, color and
class in the space of the city (see Chapter 7). Finally, stylization was a mechanism used to reinforce cultural distances through strategies and discourses of the ornate, meshing measures of spatial ornamentation with policing and sanitation. Stylization of space had a counterpart on the body, which came in the form of the project of moral education led by the white Cuban bourgeoisie in the quest to define their identity in relation to the white colonizers and the lower classes—both white and of color. Books of conduct or of “urbanity and good manners” captured the efforts to implement a regime for the body, which formed part of the broader project of formation of a cultural national imaginary initiated by Del Monte and Saco’s generation in the 1830’s.

In the latter section of this chapter, setting the necessary premises to the discussion that follows in Chapter 5, I bring attention to an aspect of segregation that addresses its aesthetic, where aesthetic serves as a conceptual meeting point of two aspects in the regulatory model of re-alignment in 19th century Havana. These are the material/affective—as perceived experienced through the senses, and the ornamental—what fits an aesthetic and moral standard or order. I labeled these segregation (illustrated in the generalized efforts to draw color lines and culturally cleanse a range of social spheres) and stylization (exemplified in policies of the ornate and the creation of new regimes for the body). I draw attention to an aspect of the workings of segregation and the ornate as it manifested in 19th century Havana that goes beyond the ontology of distance as a fact of physical separation or mere re-ordering of bodies in space, to one that stresses how these measures affect the perceptions of proximity or distance between subjects. To this extent, expressions of protest and measures to reorder the location of marginal subjects and practices like prostitution, vagrancy or dance away from venues or subjects deemed “respectable” were expressions of the manipulation of the sensorial as forms to regulate proximity and secure order. Keeping prostitutes, dancing bodies, African music, out of visual and auditory fields of perception, insisting on their concealment from affective and aesthetic fields, is a technology of governance in the Foucaultian sense, a mechanism to control the field of actions of others. This framework of governance recognizes the experiential and aesthetic dimensions of power.

In providing the necessary discursive and political-economic context to situate colonial narratives of the ornate, this chapter converses with Chapter 8 by highlighting the connections between the ideology of the ornate in the context of the “public” symbolic milieu of the city and
the nation and a parallel and related the ideology of “urbanity” from the perspective of pedagogies of the body and domesticity. This relationship is particularly evident if both these ideologies are approached as technologies of governance and performance of bodies in and through space. Their primary goal of these ideologies was to construct, cultivate, project and preserve a normative, acceptable and “respectable” image as a necessary condition to preserve a moral, aesthetic, symbolic and political order: to occupy a “proper place” in society, in discourse and in space. The parallel function of the regulatory statutes compiled in the bandos de buen gobierno and other related legislation targeting bodies and space in the city introduced in this chapter will become evident through the analysis in Chapter 8 of a similar technology, the textbooks of conduct or of “urbanity and good manners.” Thus, the discursive connections between both regimes’ lie in their concern with the body and the city’s “image” as a measure of a kind of respectability interpreted and negotiated in interrelated domestic and public, national and transnational aesthetic, symbolic and political fields of power and representation.
Chapter 5 – Good Manners, Taste and Sabor: Aesthetic Shapings of a Nineteenth Century Cuban Body

Si cada pueblo desarrolla su vida con especial ritmo, quitad el baile a Cuba y habrá muerto su espíritu. 89
-Fernando Ortiz

Hay naturalezas más ó menos sensibles, más ó menos afectas, y la que constituye nuestra raza lo es en demasía, particularmente en Cuba donde todo contribuye á la mayor espansion (sic) del sentimiento. Es así, que no podemos indiferentemente adaptarnos á ciertos usos, porque la naturaleza se rebela, porque no está en nuestro ser esa frialdad sajona que todo lo calcula y que hasta el cálculo lleva la satisfacción de los goces. 90
-Juan Ignacio de Armas y Bernardo Costales y Sotolongo (1884)

Introduction

This chapter examines the historical construction and progressive shift in the systems of distinction and difference-making centered on the body in 19th century Havana. New measures of social difference were created and redefined in the context of profound socio economic and political transformations. During the first half of the century, urbanization and economic growth via the sugar industry and slave trade activated a capitalist consumer culture and a distinctive cosmopolitan and urban lifestyle and ambiance. The main protagonists of the city’s economic and cultural dynamism were two unequally positioned rising bourgeois classes: white creole intellectuals and planters and the free working class of people of color. As free urban blacks and mulatos sought distinction by actively approaching the lifestyle of their white counterparts, the white creole bourgeoisie actively developed new strategies of social boundary making.

Furthermore, the crisis of representation that lighter skinned black people created in the colonial system of classification based on color coupled with white creole’s anti-Spanish sentiments from their political clashes with the colonial government. This situation inspired the specific strategies white creole elites created to reinforce their social distinction as a class. The regimes they created reached beyond existing systems of rank, race and nationality to ones based

89 “If every people develops their life with special rhythm, take dance away from Cuba and its spirit will have died.”
90 “There are [inner] natures more or less sensible, more or less affective [as excessively is] our race, particularly in Cuba where everything contributes to the greatest expansion of the feeling. Because of this, we cannot carelessly adapt to certain habits, because nature rebels itself, because that Saxon coldness which calculates everything…even the satisfaction of pleasures, is not in our inner being.” Juan Ignacio de Armas, Bernardo Costales y Sotolongo (1884).
on bodily manners, cultural and affective practices and sensibilities. Seeking to project themselves as social leaders and cultural models, creole planters and intellectuals worked to create a distinctively whitened and symbolically elevated social and cultural imaginary. They did so, in part, by claiming for themselves a range of occupational and artistic fields from urban free black and mulato/o working classes.

These actions were part of a broader project of modernization and social reform driven by the members of the Sociedad, which emphasized orderliness in the sense of formalizing and institutionalizing fields of social life and practice. On a deeper level, institutionalization and modernization entailed the redefinition of a range of measures of moral and aesthetic appreciation aimed to redefine the historical associations of work, education, artisanship and other fields with the labor and the bodies of people of color. In this context, “good manners” emerged as an important category with deep connotations of normative sexuality, gender and class. “Good manners” mediated the fluid symbolic gap between the higher-valued “white” and the lower-valued “of color.” Like “good manners,” notions of tone, taste and refinement were discursive practices pertaining to a multifaceted narrative about a developing aesthetic and pedagogical project for the production of a different kind of Cuban bourgeois body.

The first part of this chapter focuses on the program created by white creole elites to produce themselves as models of a particular kind of deeply stylized, perceptive and performative, normative body. These bodily regimes were detailed and prescribed in the 19th century Latin American genre known as Manuals of Urbanity and Good Manners. I read these textbooks as instruments created by white middle and upper classes to enforce the ethical and moral governance and cultivation of white middle class “respectable” bodies and sensibilities.

Using Norbert Elias’ “History of Manners” (Volume I of The Civilizing Process, 2000 [1939]) as a framework, I situate Cuban books of conduct historically and discursively in the broader colonial civilizing project. I provide a methodological framework to read Cuban discourses of manners through a discussion of the concepts of habitus, the everyday, structures of feeling, and the senses as they relate to the processes of body and subject making. I use examples from two textbooks El Arte de Vivir en el Mundo (1841) by a pioneer costumbrista Buenaventura Pascual Ferrer and Reglas de Urbanidad Buenas Maneras y Etiqueta (1857) by the middle class creole educator José María de la Torre. In my reading of these texts, I examine the emphasis given by these authors to the education of the senses and the molding of emotions.
My analysis reveals the interesting function of these textbooks in producing a new kind of body signaled by its performances and its sensations. Authors of books of conduct were proposing a different system of (de)codification to read and classify bodies, by placing more attention on the ways, the manners and the forms of body contours and behaviors, as opposed to skin-deep differences rooted in genealogy. As such, the analysis of books of conduct opens up a window to examine the philosophy or pedagogy to educate bodies to conform to performative and sensuous molds. As such these texts offer an understanding of the multifaceted dimensions of the governmentality of 19th century simultaneously modern and colonial bodies. Interestingly enough, the normalizing of these kinds of bodies came during the century of enlightenment and modernization. The enlightened generation of creoles gathered in the Sociedad pushing forth early 19th century modern reforms in Cuba constructed and imagined highly emotional and sensitive, proper mannered, stylized bodies.

The second part of this chapter provides examples that reveal how new categories of distinction (good manners and taste) introduced in 19th century Creole intellectual discourse were being negotiated by different groups involved. Middle class whites were gradually claiming for them notions of manners and taste in their clashes with working class blacks and mulatos. As both groups negotiated a place in professional and artistic fields, white creoles pushed forth a kind of cultural cleansing of specific occupational fields such as dentistry, painting and teaching. However, the emergence of the aesthetic category of sabor (embodied taste) used to describe local, mixed genres of music and dance challenged white elite’s efforts of boundary drawing. Sabor was an embodied quality of discernment that expressed the specific ways of feeling and of performing new specifically Cuban genres of music and dance. As white elites incorporated sabor into their aesthetic systems on the verge of Cuban independence, the most popular dance genre of danzón was promoted and embraced as a national rhythm and a symbol of what it meant to be Cuban.

**Part I – Books of Conduct: Educating Taste and Manners**

* Bodies and subjects made up through the manners of civilization

As a whole, the Cuban 19th century was a zone of transformation of colonial into modernized subjectivities constructed within colonial social structures and emergent capitalist relations of production. The leaders in this enterprise were the native upper classes of Cubans,
who monopolized intellectual and material resources (particularly land and money) although not much political power. A changing context of higher urban dynamism and services informed new kinds of relations mediated by money such as commercial transactions in addition to relations of forced domination determined by slavery. These transformed relations of inter-dependence involved the bourgeoisie in ascension, Creole white planters in possession of money as their major political weapon (Engels), and a singular kind of rivaling bourgeoisie. Free urban blacks and *mulatos* were the providers of services and consumer products consumed by white Creoles projecting themselves as cultural consumer models and leaders. As Norbert Elias (2000 [1939]) demonstrated for Europe, these political economic changes accompanied transformations in the forms of social interaction, the regimes of manners of the body and, more importantly, of the affective structures that inform stylized body movements.

In Volume I of *The Civilizing Process* “A History of Manners”, Norbert Elias made a groundbreaking historization and discursive analysis of the meanings of the concept of civilization through a reading of books of conduct since medieval times up until the 19th century in Europe. He observed that these regimes and the aesthetic standards of judgment or habitus were constructed as the historic product of centuries’ long “civilizing process.” In Europe, “civilization” was interpreted as the progressive multiplication of constraints and prohibitions on the physical functions of the body such as eating, evacuation, sleeping, sex and violence. Over time, these orientations towards bodily and affective inhibition transformed sensibilities. New social attitudes trickled down from royal courts’ aristocratic society to middle and working classes. Thus, these changes accompanied the rise of the bourgeoisie, of capitalism and the emergence/development of modern states (Elias 2000, Blackwell 2007: 680). Elias’ historical comparison of rules of conduct across a large historical frame (over 500 years) demonstrates that repertoires of bodily manners were progressively modified as new mechanisms of distinction became necessary for new forms of social interaction, for instance, the use of the fork in eating, or the napkin in blowing one’s nose.

In the case of Cuba, the extent of the print record of the history of manners is much shorter than it is for Europe. The 19th century inaugurates this record for Cuba with the printing press and a revitalized educational system. In this context, the publication of a series of Cuban textbooks of conduct formed part of a developing public opinion and culture. This public sphere in embryonic form had a well-established socio-normative goal. Since the late 19th century, the
Papel Periódico, Cuba’s first newspaper set as one of its main objectives, “To attack the habits and customs that are harmful to the community and to individuals; correct the vices by painting them with their own colors, so that by looking at them with horror they will be despised, and depicting, by contrast, the attractiveness of virtues, would be in my view issues very adequate to the objectives of the Newspaper” (02/05/1790 issue, in Bueno 1985). As such, in words of Victor Fowler, the printing press as a broad discursive field where the textbooks of conduct gain meaning, is transformed into a “stable zone of distribution of normativity intended to regulate conduct, specially female” (Fowler, personal communication, 03/24/2012).

Like the early Cuban print press, textbooks of conduct were also inserted in what is considered the first expression of a national literary tradition, costumbrismo. Their authors integrated the circle of intellectuals and of the rising planter bourgeoisie speaking from an undefined subject position. Throughout the century, white Cuban creoles underwent a process of imagining their subjectivity as related but different from the Spanish, tending towards other European models—very particularly the United States—and antithetical to the population of African descent. The first text of this kind, suggestively entitled El Arte de Vivir en el Mundo was written by a pioneer costumbrista, known for his sharp moralist critiques of “costumbres,” Buenaventura Pascual Ferrer (1772-1851).

The famous Cuban writer and literary critic José Lezama Lima described Ferrer as “a typical man of our 18th century...a citizen of the universe...a successful Cuban in the Spanish universe” (“un hombre típico de nuestro siglo XVIII...un ciudadano del universo...un cubano triunfador en el universo español,” Lezama Lima 1970: 65). The latter refers to Ferrer’s acceptance and recognition in aristocratic political and social circles in Spain. These connections allowed Ferrer to acquire important positions as an intellectual in the island. His first publication El Arte de Vivir en el Mundo (The Art to Live in the World) in 1830 was reprinted in 1841 and 1964 in Cuba as “one of the first manifestations of Cuban literature”, although his narrative draws extensively from anecdotes and examples from themes of European courtly manners. Thus, Ferrer’s writing conveys more of a conservative aim to hold on to perceived European traditions, rather than to innovate or discover specifically Cuban ways. From his ambivalent

91“Atacar los usos y costumbres que son perjudiciales en común y en particular; corregir los vicios pintándolos con sus propios colores, para que mirados con horror se detesten, y retratar en contraposición el apreciable atractivo de las virtudes, serían en mi concepto unos asuntos muy adecuados al objeto del Periódico” (02/05/1790 issue, in Bueno 1985).
position, oscillating between the colonized and colonizer worlds of Cuba and Spain, Ferrer emerges as the prototype costumbrista, the pioneering wage-warrior of customs, a normalizer par excellence standing out as sagacious leader of heated battles in print.

Ferrer directed his own newspaper under the suggestive pseudonym describing his mission, “El Regañón” (the scolder) (1800-1802). Lezama Lima described this publication as infused with an “impression of Spanishness” (españolismo) in comparison with later magazines, notably the more “cultured” and “elegant” “La Moda” (1829-1831) directed by Domingo Del Monte, bearing more defined (proto)nationalist airs. Unlike Ferrer at the time of his writings, by the 1830’s Del Monte already had a cultural-political project and a well defined plan to define and educate about “lo cubano” in collaboration with Saco, Caballero and the ample island-wide network he worked to build (Aguilera Manzano 2008).

Ferrer’s editorials in El Regañón have some of the first recorded attacks to mixed forms of dance and music, which was at his time the Cuban contradanza, a product of the fusion of the French contredanse with local rhythmic elements (Carpentier 2001). This attention to dancing as the quintessential styled body movement is not surprising coming from a Europeanized modeler of regimes of manners. Contrary to Europe, where debates about manners centered on the table, moralizing discourses in Latin America focused over popular dancing (Quintero Rivera 2008, Wagner 1997). In particular, Angel Quintero Rivera noted the significance of the consolidation of creole ball dances (“bailes de salón”) alongside the emergence and popularization of books of etiquette in 19th century in Latin America and the Caribbean. For Quintero, these parallel developments were signs of the importance given to social behaviors associated with the body in societies marked by slavery.

Ferrer’s writings on manners symbolize an epochal shift. As Lezama Lima was keen to highlight, Ferrer spoke from a significant turning point in the 18th century, a location between two centuries standing for the enlightenment and romanticism in 18th and 19th centuries respectively. In response to the liberating schemas of the later and of the emancipatory airs that accompanied 19th century political developments in Cuba, “enlightened” Cuban creoles like Ferrer led a determined movement towards “the norm”. While the normative schema that Ferrer represented is more of an emulation of European 18th century bourgeois ideologies, his successors (Del Monte and his generation) made progressive efforts to de-center this European and colonial normativity and re-center it as a specifically Cuban (bourgeois) modern normativity.
Therefore, as an author, Ferrer epitomizes the bourgeois anxieties symptomatic of the crises of value that characterized the broad transformative moment that was the Cuban 19th century.

Mirroring the logic of “ascension of civilization” analyzed by Elias in the 17th through the 18th centuries bourgeois ideologies in Europe, Ferrer’s writings describe an ideological disposition, in the words of Victor Fowler, a tendency towards “pass[ing] from the loose to the regulated, the disperse to the normalized, the brute to the refined… the immense machine of pressures thanks to which a society can be constructed” (Fowler, V. personal communication 03/24/2012). A new kind of society was indeed being constructed since the late 18th and early 19th century in Cuba. Cuban cultural historian Pablo Riaño San Marful described the 19th century best as “a century with many conjuncture changes… it is somewhat of a stock or medium of cultivation of what later, and always forever will be Cuba …” (“…el caldo donde se cultiva lo que después, ya siempre, será Cuba…”) (Pablo Riaño San Marful, personal communication April 3d, 2012). The generation Ferrer inaugurated was invested in the ongoing cultivation or breeding of this societal-cultural project out of which the idea of cubanía and Cuban nationality came about. Elias verified this in his own analysis in Europe by observing the correspondence between changes in regimes of conduct and changes in the structures of the state, as two complementary processes of social change, at the individual and the institutional levels.92 Given the deep entanglement of symbolic, social and topographic systems and structures, changes in topography and social organization of space occurring in the 19th century also explain the general orientation towards body and subject normativity which 19th century Cuban books of conduct epitomized (Ahmed 2006, Stallybrass and White 1986).

Summarizing Elias’ analysis of centuries long construction of restrained, civilized bodies in Western societies, the Cuban costumbrista Ferrer defines civilization in the introductory pages to his textbook of conduct as an “art,” a state of existence reached by action of “polishing” and “domestication” whereby “social reason…triumph[s] over the disordered impulses of nature,” leaving the “savage” and “wild” selves behind (Ferrer 1841: i). Politeness (“la política”) in the treatment of people, as a general and presumably self-evident sense of “courtesy,” Ferrer

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92 In the case analyzed by Elias of the historical constitution of the modern state, it is the monopolization of the right to apply physical violence, which accompanies changes in the political organization of the state. An ethos of infliction of pain during medieval times was dramatically transformed to one that condemned forms of bodily intervention to one that created a greater public distances between bodies. A stylization of bodies and practices accompanied this process.
explains, is a branch of civilization. Good manners, the discursive measure of “politeness”, are “la razón para el mejor órden en el trato social” (“the reason for the better order in the social treatment”) (1841: v). Several elements in Ferrer’s discursive practice about “civilization” illuminate an understanding of processes of 19th century (re)configurations of subject categories and identities: self-cultivation as “art,” moral and affective regulations, and the form or manner of social interaction. Broadly, subject formation involves the construction, internalization through disciplining, and transformation through history and social agency by individuals and social groups, of different kinds of structures and systems—moral and ethical, social and affective—to form specific kinds of social personas who occupy positions assigned by discourse. The making and localization of subjects, however, does not by itself explain the making and localization of bodies, a question to which I return below.

Ferrer’s recourse to art as descriptor for a way of life, as per his book’s title The Art to Live in this World resonates with the long-dated Western philosophical tradition rescued by Foucault’s in his elaboration of the techniques of self-cultivation and the care of the self. Following Greek philosophers, Foucault deemed the concern with the cultivation of the self, the preoccupation and labor to “learn how to live” as an “art of living” (Rutherford 1999, Foucault 1994). From this perspective, ethics is a set of individual/interior norms that the individual willingly/intentionally becomes subjected to aiming for an “aesthetic of existence”, a state of happiness, pleasure or beauty pursued for the sake of it. According to Foucault, these norms are distinct from moral codes, in that are prescriptions for individual behavior deployed by social institutions through disciplinary mechanisms and social sanctions that establish the threshold of social acceptable behaviors. In this sense, ethics becomes not an issue of regulation through social norms, but an issue of personal choice (Foucault 1994: 260). Under this perspective, the moral and juridical are divorced from the ethical and the personal.93

Unlike Foucault, Raymond Williams (1977) and Norbert Elias (2000) have recognized the constant tension and articulated dual workings of moral and ethical systems in subject-
making processes, particularly through their attention on the functioning of structures of affect and performativity. For instance, Elias defined *habitus* as an “embodiment of historical situations and the structural regularities of society… the imprint of society on the inner self…” (2000: 103, 109). Thus, habitus expresses the tension between the moral-external structures and the ethical-internal(ized) structures feeding back into each other over the transformative space of history (Bourdieu 2008). Again, our Cuban author, Ferrer, echoes these theorists’ discussion. In Ferrer’s Europeanized embryonic Cuban imaginary, the making of civilized subjects entails molding sentiments, feelings as much as actions and discourse, it is “The art of molding the person, the actions, the feelings and the discourse in such way that one can capture the will and esteem of the others” (“El arte de modelar la persona, las acciones, los sentimientos y el discurso de tal modo que se pueda captar la voluntad y estimación de los otros.”). The aesthetic of the body, which Ferrer describes here, is simultaneously an aesthetic of experience (Williams 1977) and of existence (Foucault 1994).

From this perspective, the body serves as epistemological meeting site for Elias, Williams and Foucault’s theories of subject formation. The body as surface inscribed with meanings through culture and history is a venue of confluence for ethics, morality and experience, the place where subjects and bodies are assembled. In fact, Foucault’s views on ethics emphasized the body and bodily practice as the place of interaction between the affective (feelings, emotions) and the performative (acts, practices). This constitutes the “substance” that the individual performs on him/herself through a labor of ethics (Foucault 1994). For Foucault, ethics is a “very strong structure of existence” which operates in the everyday, and which “issues forth from ‘visceral modes of appraisal’” (Mahmood 2005: 33). If ethics provides the substance, under a stoic-informed Foucaultian epistemology, morality provides the “form,” as per theorists of practice and embodiment Elias, Williams and Bourdieu.

Bringing together the moral and the ethical, Elias demonstrated that the sensuous experiences driving self-cultivation are historically constituted. Rather than being separate from the disciplinary structures of moral-juridical regimes, they are a product of such processes. He notes:

> New habits are condemned more and more *as such, not in regard to others*. In this way, socially undesirable impulses or inclinations are more radically repressed. They are associated with embarrassment, fear, shame or guilt, even when one is alone…. Much of what we call ‘morality’ or ‘moral’ reasons has the
same function as ‘hygiene’ or ‘hygienic’ reasons: to condition children to a certain social standard. Moulding [sic] by such means aims at making socially desirable behavior automatic, a matter of self-control, causing it to appear in the consciousness of individuals as the result of their own free will, and in the interests of their own health or human dignity (Elias 2000: 150).

In this fragment, Elias exemplifies the tension between the social and the individual, the moral and the ethical, the ideological and the experiential/affective, the same tension that is at the core of Raymond Williams’ “structures of feeling”. In fact, decades before Williams elaborated the concept, Elias used it throughout his text to illustrate his broader argument about the transformations in affective structures and standards. The socially-disciplined subject and the self-disciplined subject are one moral and ethically molded body, a product of inculcated and internalized historical structures, bearing the transformative and creative capacity endowed by agency. Thus, the tension between structure and the individual is driven by resistance and cultural change or—as in the Foucaultian principle—discourse is at once an instrument and an effect of power, a point of resistance and agency (Foucault 1978).

Affective and aesthetic pedagogies of the body

Reading Elias’ “civilizing process” against Williams’ “structures of feeling” enables an interpretation of books of conduct as technologies of the self that enable multi-dimensional and inter-related aspects of subject formation or “subjectivation.” These include discursive/ideological aspects encompassing social/moral and aesthetic dimensions, as well as phenomenological aspects concerned with the materiality of environments and bodies enabling sensorial processes of subject-making. Books of conduct enable processes that are moral and affective, normalizing and embodied, “thought and felt” (Williams 1977), structured and structuring (Bourdieu 2008). They are pedagogic technologies of the body enabling specific ideological, affective, performative processes requiring analyses from both a discursive and ideological stances, as well as from a phenomenological stance.

Discursive implications: Through the complex of social, moral and juridical structures, books of conduct convey knowledge. Their pages are filled with precepts that teach and legitimize meanings, values and beliefs formalized in social institutions, specifically the family, the educational system, the church, the state, and their disciplining apparatuses (the school, the
domestic space, and other regulatory forces such as criminal and medical systems). As pedagogical instruments of these disciplinary systems, books of conduct inculcate knowledge in the form of judgments, evaluations and thoughts that are learned and internalized by individuals through cognitive processes. The results are internalized, naturalized and embodied dispositions for classification, perception and differentiation, *habitus* that activate class consciousness through the possession and mastering of codes of discernment of difference (Bourdieu 1989). Moral and aesthetic systems of distinction and differentiation operate through this cognitive-mediated habitus. Evaluations of high and low, beautiful and ugly, proper and unacceptable, decent, respectable, virtuous, honorable, indecent, immoral, are some descriptors of moral and aesthetic measures of distinction that serve to draw boundaries to organize social and symbolic life. These systems establish who belongs and who does not, based upon the possession of embodied technologies of knowing in the form of codes and the display of its embodied everyday manifestations in individual preferences and bodily habits.

**Phenomenological implications:** Raymond Williams explains that the “formal or systematic beliefs” of discursive social structures operate in relation to affective structures or structures of experience through which beliefs, meanings and values are “actively lived and felt” (Williams 1977: 132). Williams provides a necessary complement to Bourdieu’s cognitive-mediated habitus by describing structures of feeling as a kind of affective habitus. While Bourdieu’s habitus is an embodied structure that teaches *how to distinguish*, Williams’ habitus is an embodied structure or system that educates sensibilities; it teaches *how to feel*. While the disciplining ideology as “official consciousness” describes what is *thought* to be lived (and how it should be lived—an abstract normative structure), the “practical consciousness” of affect describes, “what is being lived” (Williams 1977: 132). Michael Taussig (1991) echoes Williams’ insistence on the experiential dimension of culture, in conjunction with and beyond the strictly symbolic and meaningful. Perception, Taussig suggests, is not necessarily mediated or filtered through the cognitive apparatus of interpretation of meaning. This sensuous capacity is an embodied, automatic knowledge “not ‘ideational’ but sensate, imageric” (Taussig 1991: 259). Within this perspective, both Williams, Taussig and other theorists like De Certeau have pointed to the centrality of the everyday as a common sensuous zone, not only of symbols and meanings but of circulation of feelings, whereby a sense and a space of commonality and collectivity may
be conceived and built. The habitual, is thus cultivated in the everyday and has a sensuous dimension that may be even more powerful in driving action and orienting perception in conjunction to and in relation to cognitive interpretive processes of meaning (Taussig 1991).

This dual symbolic/interpretive and affective/experiential framework illuminates an understanding of the ways in which books of conduct enable on one hand processes of production of ideology—systems of belief on which normalizing regimes of the body are founded and expressed as action, discourse and practice. On the other hand they explain how books of conduct configure structures of affect manifest in the ways in which these practices, discourses and actions (really) are, should be done, lived and felt in a given material and temporal situation, a “here and now”. Williams, Elias and Taussig’s epistemologies of the body remind us that social forms are not debarred from lived experience. Instead they materialize subject formation by acknowledging that social processes and practices are produced in specific material and corporeal conditions of time, of space and of the body.

**Affective thresholds and zones of transgression**

…once such feelings are aroused and firmly established in society by means of certain rituals like that involving the fork, they are constantly reproduced so long as the structure of human relations is not fundamentally altered. The older generation, for whom such a standard of conduct is accepted as a matter of course, urges the children, who do not come into the world already equipped with these feelings and this standard, to control themselves more or less rigorously in accordance with it, and to restrain their drives and inclinations. If a child tries to touch something sticky, wet, or greasy with his fingers, he is told. ‘You must not do that, people do not do things like that.’ And the displeasure toward such conduct which is thus aroused by the adult finally arises through habit, without being induced by another person. (Elias 2000)

Through illustrations like this, Elias’ makes evident that books of conduct convey not only what was said about how one ought to behave, but also how one ought to feel about one or another action or situation. Feelings and performances are re-codified causing thresholds of acceptability to shift progressively over centuries of sedimentation of structures of bodily and affective disciplining, repression and restraint. What once was acceptable and pleasurable, instead progressively produces negative sentiments and feelings like “nausea”, embarrassment, discomfort. Normalized sets of feelings are transformed over time into affective common sense
through the structuring / embodying processes of habitus. “Structures of feeling” are “a matter of impulse,” explains Williams, “We are talking about characteristic elements of impulse, restraint, and tone; specifically affective elements of consciousness and relationships” (Williams 1977: 132). Elias illustrates this in his understanding of the “civilizing process” as the construction of a closed, restrained, inhibited “moderated” self and body, a product precisely of the labor of regulation of “drives and affects.” The increasingly stylized modern body, sophisticated and accessorized, increasingly segregated and hierarchized came about through the progressive shift of moral and affective boundaries over time.

It will be seen again and again how the characteristic of the whole process that we call civilization is this movement of segregation, this hiding ‘behind the scenes’ of what has become distasteful. The curve running from the carving of a large part of the animal or even the whole animal at table, through the advance in the *threshold of repugnance* at the sight of dead animals, to the removal of carving to specialized enclaves behind the scenes is a typical civilization-curve (2000: 103).

Thus, beyond discourse and meaning, this “threshold of disgust” expresses a physical and emotional sensation, a lived experience. Feeling nauseated, disgusted, ashamed, afraid of specific actions, scenes, smells, sounds, movements and social situations are the measures of acceptability and respectability on which normative regimes of the body, of society and of space are constructed and grounded. Under this framework, the notion of manners may be understood as the bodily performances and contours molded and regulated by moral as well as affective systems; the former regulates actions, attitudes and values and the latter regulates “impulses” and emotions, such as shame, disgust, pleasure or desire.

Angel Quintero Rivera encountered these elements in his analysis of the most popular book of conduct in Latin America, the *Manual de Urbanidad y Buenas Maneras* by the Venezuelan Manuel Antonio Carreño (1854). According to Quintero Rivera, 'El Carreño' as this book is popularly known “dictates that the control cultivated over the body and its natural impulses is the foundation of civility” which is measured by the capacity to have “continence”. Carreño defines continence as the “virtue that moderates and restrains the passions and affects of the mood and allows one to live in sobriety and frugality...it does not allow that its [sexual] appetite will turn him into beast” (Carreño in Quintero-Rivera 2008). As I examine below, books of conduct are important instruments of boundary drawing of different kinds. In this case, the
performances of restraint or expression of sexual impulse distinguish the good-mannered, civil human body from the sexual, barbaric, grotesque body.

Thus, “manuals of manners” had the interrelated function of educating bodies and their sensibilities. They were instruments to inculcate bodies to conform to established molds, normative shapes and forms, as well as to restrain certain impulses and model emotions. To that extent, the systems of respectability and morality that these books helped define intertwined with affective, social and aesthetic regimes. Under this light, respectability may be understood as a compound of interrelated moral, aesthetic and affective systems of perception and evaluation organized around relational, opposing categories. Tasteful and distasteful, appropriate and inappropriate, respectful and lacking respect, respectable and indecent, were measures expressing propriety in moral, aesthetic as well as in affective terms. As such respectability signals whether an individual meets the quality standards of morality as well as social and sensorial aesthetics within a specific social group.

Spatialized manners, performative spaces

The comparative reading of Elias and Quintero Rivera’s analysis of pedagogies of books of conduct suggest interesting relationships between bodies and space. In particular, Quintero Rivera highlighted the spatialized imaginary created through discourses of manners around morally coded dichotomies such as country and city, public and private, civilization and barbarism. In his historization of the notion of “urbanity” in Europe, Quintero notes that this notion was related to the distinction between “city” as the opposite of the “country” with a parallel dichotomy civilization / barbarism (Quintero Rivera 2000, Williams 1977). Urbanity was codified in table manners to distinguish the “civilized” and the “barbarian” world with a corresponding divide between public and private spaces. The private and the public were, according to Quintero Rivera, the primary spaces of socialization where class distinctions were shaped. The concept of “urbanity” emerges in this context to mean “courtesy”, good manners, taste, cultivation as opposed to pre-determined, “natural” attributes rooted in binaries of urban, modernity, civilization, mind opposed to rural, barbarism, and the body. “Culture” as opposed to “nature” defines the bourgeois class as determined by a liberal ethics of achievement rather than to principles of rank and heredity. The notion of “etiquette” and manners expresses the codification of manners, “their somatization in the body” as relational patterns that are learned
and performed rather than given by nature or transmitted through biology. Etiquette itself, as a set of norms or ways of being and behaving eventually became an instrument of upward social mobility for the aspiring middle, lower classes.

With urbanity, the notion of “etiquette” is tied to the idea of “civility,” which derives from “civil society,” whose development accompanied processes of national formation, urbanization and the rise of ideologies of capitalism and modernization. Civility appeared for the first time in the courtesan books in Italy in the 18th century and was related to the emergence and consolidation of a capitalist bourgeois class and the hegemonization of an “urban culture.” This bourgeois, urban culture represented the particular lifestyle in towns and cities ruled by state law and commercial transactions as opposed to a communal lifestyle tied to agrarian forms of organization. As I explore in more depth for the case of Cuba in the next chapter, these categories were expressions of historical transformations in the measures of social stratification and distinction from one based on rank and heredity to others based on class and “culture” based on learned and “cultivated” attributes.

Quintero Rivera’s overview of the genealogy of “etiquette” in Europe leaves room to further problematize the affective dimensions in spatialized imaginaries attached to regimes of the body in books of conduct. While Quintero Rivera stresses the embodied and performed dimensions of “manners,” it leaves out the important ways in which affective systems act together with moral systems to determine categories of distinction and respectability. Elias’ analysis effectively brings out the interplaying performative, affective and sensorial aspects of the spatial dichotomies created through regimes of manners. In particular, those shifting “thresholds of disgust” which his analysis points at are spatialized and embodied zones of affective transgression playing out in a sensorial scene or sensory-scape. In particular, the principle in books of conduct “to remove the distasteful...behind the scenes of social life” suggests a spatialized divide that is affectively and performatively marked.

**Performative and affective boundaries**

Affective discourses in books of manners emphasize particularly the visual aspects of respectability through the idea of social life as drama or “spectacle,” playing out in a scenario or stage. Elias’ observation about the “increasingly strong tendency to remove the distasteful from the sight of society” resonates with Ervin Goffman and Victor Turner’s elaborations of the
concept of performance to understand embodied social relations (Turner 1988, Goffman 1959). These authors theorized the analogy of dramatistic concepts to understand social life as a performance that plays out in the scenes or at the stage of the everyday. Elias observation reveals the ways in which authors of books of conduct—the ideologues of new systems of distinction—were elevating the role of “manners” to be a defining performative and affective marker of place and space. The new regimes of manners understood as the repertoire of cultural practices and objects, body movements and performed identities, incorporated prescriptions on “proper ways” of performing specific actions in specific venues. In the case of 19th century Cuba some of these novel performed codes of distinction included promenading, theater and café-going, ball-dancing, outdoor shopping, among others, playing out in the “stages” of new and remodeled modernized urban landscapes of Havana. Chapter 7 expands this discussion through the analysis of popular cultural representations of women in Havana’s venues.

Thus, the performance of manners through space as a form of social drama or “spectacle” is an emic structure of thought used by dominant actors to understand or imagine new forms of social relations. The authors of books of conduct and other dominant actors in 19th century Havana imagined these relations of power playing out in interlocking affective and moral planes. The regulation of affects and actions through these planes takes place both in “public” spaces like streets and other urban venues and more intimate social spaces like bedrooms, dinner tables or ballrooms. Authors insist in hiding from sensation, taking behind or outside of the sensory reach of “respectable” actors certain actions and perceptions deemed “offensive” or indecent. Recalling examples from the previous chapter, medical doctors’ approve of otherwise unacceptable views of prostitution and dance, only if these were not visible to foreigners. Hiding the views of the “distasteful” performative bodies from the field of view of foreign spectators ensured preserving the image of a respectable city in the global stage. Similarly, authors of books of conduct insist on the recommendation to keep appearances by trying by all means to hide from view what they deem “irregular actions,” emotions, objects and situations. The “dirt” in one’s body (nose, head, mouth, etc), in one’s speech (blasphemies) was to be covered up not only from the view/perception of others, but even from one’s own perceptive plane or sensory scape.

De La Torre’s Nuevo Tratado de Urbanidad, Etiqueta y Buenas Maneras offers several examples. On the subsection prescribing rules of conduct for the card games children played during visits with their parents to sories or tertulias. The first rule indicates to “not ever
manifest fondness or particular liking to this kind of diversion, or be the first to propose it: because it would imply an inclination to games which is a very reprehensible defect” ("No manifestar jamás una afición ó gusto particular á esta clase de diversión, ni ser los primeros en proponerla: porque supondría una inclinación al juego que es un defecto muy reprobable"). The second rule is more explicit about the actual manifestation of emotions,

"Y será permitido manifestar alegría cuando ganamos? En el juego debemos procurar siempre que no se conozca en el semblante si ganamos ó perdemos, pues además de ser insultante manifestar una alegría loca cuando ganamos, se dá (sic) a entender que se tiene demasiado apego al dinero y que somos avaros y codiciosos: defectos ambos que nos harían odiosos á los ojos de todo el mundo (De La Torre 1857: 27).

Are we allowed to express happiness when we win? In the game we must always procure not to reveal the countenance if we win or loose, because in addition to being insulting to manifest a crazy joy when we win, it suggests that we are too attached to money and that we are miserly and covetous: both are defects that would make us odious in the eyes of everyone.

Emotions and actions also ought to be concealed from one’s own perceptive field. In his Manual de Urbanidad y Buenas Maneras (1855), the Venezuelan Manuel Antonio Carreño indicates one’s own nakedness should be barred even from one’s own field of vision in the situation of undressing alone in one’s bedroom in preparation to sleep, “When we take off our day clothes to enter the bed, we should proceed with honest demure, and in such way that at no time we appear uncovered in front of others, or in our own sight” (1855: 54 “Al despojarnos de nuestros vestidos del día (sic) para entrar en la cama, procedamos con honesto recato, y de manera que en ningun (sic) momento aparezcamos descubiertos, ni ante los demás, ni ante nuestra propia vista”). Thus, for Latin American philosophers of manners like Carreño and De La Torre, moral and ethical regimes of the body are connected by the principles of modesty (“recato”), which produced and normalized inhibited, closed up bodies.

In his own Reglas de Urbanidad the Cuban José María de la Torre counter indicates a set of “irregular actions” from being displayed in the view or other auditory or perceptive field of others and of oneself;

En toda concurrencia y generalmente en presencia de toda persona a quien se deba respeto, debemos evitar las acciones siguientes ---Desnudarnos, vestirnos, estirarnos las medias, componernos los zapatos,
limpiarlos de polvo, de lodo y otras cosas semejantes, cortarnos las uñas ó roerlas con los dientes ó dedos, ponernos el dedo en la boca ó introducirlo en la nariz ó mirar el pañuelo después de sonarnos. [bañándonos o durmiendo en la misma pieza con alguna persona] debemos cuidar mucho de no dar muestras de poco pudor, bien ofendiendo la vista de los demás, bien demostrando complacencia en el descuido o poco pudor de otros....[Debemos evitar] hacer sonar como trompeta la nariz, bostezar con mucho sonido... Es igualmente descortesía reír a grandes carcajadas y mucho más si se hace con estruendo indecente (emphasis added, De La Torre 1857: 13-15).

In every gathering, and generally in the presence of every person whom is owed respect, we should avoid the following actions: get undressed, dress up, stretch our socks, fix our shoes, clean out the dust, mud or others on them, cut our nails or gnaw them with the teeth or fingers, put our finger in the mouth or introduce it in the nose or look at the handkerchief after blowing one’s nose…. [bathing or sleeping in the same room with another person] we should take much care of not showing low modesty, such as offending the sight of the others, or showing satisfaction in the carelessness or low modesty of others…. [We should avoid] making the nose sound like a trumpet, yawn with too much sound… It is equally discourteous to burst out laughing loudly and even more if it is done with indecent roar.

Time and again, concealing and covering up actions and emotions is indicated as a good principle to follow, “...gargajear ó escupir en el suelo frente del sujeto [sic] con quien se habla pues debe hacerse hacia atrás cubriendo la saliva con el pié” (“[Do not] spit to the floor in front of the person with whom one is talking because it [spitting] should be done behind and covering up the saliva with the foot”) (De la Torre 1857: 14). These examples open up a space to rethink and redefine the sense and meanings of “public” and “private” according to the evident affective and moral boundaries that (dominant) actors used to understand and enforce processes of governance of bodies and sensibilities. In addition, these examples point to the idea that those performatively and affectively marked spaces and boundaries where processes of governance play out have corresponding “limits” in the body. The emphasis on the sensorial and emotional aspects of body regimes found in these manuals suggests that bodies somehow extend or “overflow” (Ahmed 2006) beyond their contours to include an immaterial but highly perceptible space of audition, olfaction, vision, and proprioception. This is a zone of sensory interaction and negotiation which often mediates the representational and discursive relationships between dominant and subaltern subjects—the deject observers/representers/imagers and the abject observed/represented/imagined. These sensory attachments in the bodies of abject Others condition the sense of sensory integrity in the
immediate proximities of sensory reception, capacity and reach of deject subjects. As I showed in Chapter 4, the sense of order, moral and sensorial integrity of deject observers is preserved so long as the images, smells, sounds and movements of the grotesque and indecent abject bodies of the observed remain outside of their perceptive and sensory fields. Thus, social actors construct and define zones of sensory and moral integrity in shared sensory-scapes in terms of the absence of performative and affective (Othered) bodies. Deject subjects often express their disagreement to these interventions or as they often call them “offenses” to their sensory integrity using visceral and emotional expressions such as “nausea,” disgust or “scandal.” As I discuss below, the pioneer ideologues of the regimes of manners in Cuba were aware of the importance of educating the senses as part of their broader project to mold bodies and subjects with new instruments of production and enforcement of difference and distinction of 19th century society.

Offenses to the senses

The frequent expressions of protest against sensory transgressions were an important aspect of the dramatization of performances of distinction in discourses of manners. Authors often refer to these as a kind of manifestation of violence or a form of aggression. For instance, in 19th century Cuba there are many references to notions of “respect” used as synonymous of good manners, education, “tone”, politeness, or courtesy. In context, these expressions are signified against notions such as “offense” and “aggression.” Examples are expressions such as “lack of respect” (“falta de respeto”) used to this day in Cuba also as an adjective to qualify the behavior of an offender (i.e. “usted es un falta-de-respeto” or “you are a lack-of-respect,” a disrespectful person).

In this context, respect is a performative and sensory category of evaluation, which has to be demonstrated or acted out and also felt and experienced. As such respectful and respectable subjects and bodies are regulated morally through value judgments, attitudes and social sanctions as well as through affective expressions and sensations. Moreover, respect is evaluated in terms of the offense or transgression vs. the politeness or observance of the embodied and spatialized boundaries of sensory and moral integrity. In this context, aesthetic and affective categories such as decorum or modesty express performances of respect as in showing respect or lacking respect for the established standards. Transgressions to these sensory and moral boundaries are also often described as offenses to the senses, offenses to “decorum”, offenses to morality or to
modesty ("falta al decoro" “ofende a la moral” “perjudica la modestia”). Disrespect is an “offense” against tact, courtesy and good form. The connotation of an embodied form of violence and aggression carried in the uses of the word offense in 19th century relates to Elias’ observation about the shifting thresholds in the sense of integrity over the notion of personal space since medieval times. In this context, ‘offense’ may be a residual discursive expression that makes reference to the extent of physical violence that characterized medieval social interactions compared to modern standards.

The expressions about offenses to the senses generally convey the violation of established, dominant moral codes, but they also signal an attempt to trespass that zone of sensory integrity of an individual or a social group. These expressions are frequently found on discourses about dance, the quintessential transgressive cultural practice in 19th century Cuba. Zoila Lapique (1979) retrieved a quote containing these expressions in a print periodical at mid 19th century “There are other dances of adulterous and low brood called el zapateo which actively harm the customs: such are el cuero, el gavial, el sardinaco, and others of such kind, whose movements and pantomime offend the modesty of the attendees and damage the decorum of the dancers.” (emphasis added “Hay otras dansas, de prole adulterina y baja del zapateo en que positivamente prenden las costumbres: tales son el cuero, el gavial, el sardinaco y otras de este jaez, cuyos movimientos y pantomima ofenden la modestia de los concurrentes y perjudican el decoro de los bailadores.” Lapique 1979: 67) How the display or “spectacle” of these body movements in a particular sensory setting, without obvious reference to direct bodily interaction may “offend” the observers relates to the 19th century idea of “offenses to the senses.”

In reference to the developmental shift in the standards of performance and sensation, Elias identifies this idea in European books of conduct, “Certain forms of behavior were placed under prohibition, not because they were unhealthy but because they led to an offensive sight and disagreeable associations;” there was “shame at offering such a spectacle…” For his part the pioneer “founder” of regimes of manners in the early 18th century, Buenaventura Pascual Ferrer proposed a plan for a moral education of the senses through a classification entitled “offenses to the senses” in his book El Arte de Vivir en el Mundo. The first entree in his list is entitled “To Olfaction” (Al Olfato). He advises, “no acercarse demasiado a la persona con quien se habla, porque no siempre es muy suave el olor de nuestro aliento ni muy agradable al que lo recibe” (“not to get too close to the person with whom one speaks, because the smell of our breath is not
always soft, or very pleasant to whom receives it” 1841: 3). To illustrate his point he describes courtesans in Europe covering their mouth so as to “not offend the olfaction of the king” with their breath. Things “offensive to the sense of olfaction” include “la suciedad y la espesura de nuestros mismos cuerpos: sería de desear que los baños fuesen mas frecuentes y comunes” (“the dirt and denseness of our own bodies: it would be desirable to have more frequent showers and baths”) (1841:4-5).

In a rather revolutionary gesture for his time, Ferrer identifies the relationship between urbanity and the still embryonic notions of public health and ornate in Cuba. He points to bathing as a measure of public health in Europe, and praises the separation of graves of the dead (“sepulturas de cadáveres”) from churches as well as the statutes that order the “separation from the city center of all of the offices and establishments that are filthy and insalubrious” (“insalubres y asquerosos” 1841: 5). He notes that civilization or the “philosophical laws” of reason as he also refers to it, are bringing these positive changes, which are, nonetheless not enough, because “it is also precise to invoke the decision of the senses, because although it is possible that many men lack a straight and enlightened reason, there are very few that lack the good sense of smell or of any other sense” (emphasis added, “sino que también es preciso invocar la decisión [sic] de los sentidos, pues aunque es posible que muchos hombres carezcan de un raciocinio recto e ilustrado, son muy pocos los que carecen de buen olfato o de otro cualquier sentido.” 1841: 6). Resonating with ideas of his successor José Antonio Saco to democratize nobility, Ferrer proposes the radical view that the perceptive mechanisms for constructing and performing civilization are available to anyone equipped with the bodily senses of olfaction, smell or sight. The senses are endowed with some kind of civilizatory power that is embodied, and thus are not necessarily filtered through the “mind” or involve cognitive mechanisms. Ferrer’s pedagogy places the sensory and performative body at the center of the operations of the moral aesthetic and sensory systems of urbanity, manners and modernization.

Epistemology of taste

The analysis presented in this section demonstrates that in 19th century colonial discourse in Cuba, the senses were constructed as codes of inter-related moral, aesthetic and sensory systems functioning as dispositifs that regulated boundaries of social order (Foucault 1978). Contemporary social theory has privileged the study of the notion of “taste” within this socio
sensory aesthetic system of distinction, significantly through the work of Pierre Bourdieu. Based on their study of European societies, both Elias and Bourdieu’s work helped understand the “classing” of systems of taste as they become instruments or “social weapons” of the dominant classes to create socio-cultural distance with lower classes. These authors also understand the classing of taste as a product of the association of “primary drives” to working classes and the prescription to “surrender” to these drives to produce inhibited and contained, “closed” corporeal and affective (normative) bourgeois bodies (Bourdieu 1984, Elias 2000).

The *Oxford Historical Thesaurus* classifies “taste” (noun) under several categories. Under “external world” subcategory “sensation,” taste is listed among several bodily senses and expressions including sleeping, sexual relations, sense of touch, sight, hearing, among others. Under this category taste is defined as the quality of a body that is perceived by organs such as the mouth or tongue; taste also refers to the embodied faculty of discernment of the quality of a thing sensed (OED Online 2012). Taste also falls under the category “the mind”, and subcategories mental capacity » curiosity » discernment, discrimination. It is defined as mental perception of quality; judgment, discriminative faculty. Under the same category “mind,” subcategories “aesthetics » good taste” taste is defined as the faculty of perceiving and enjoying what is excellent and expresses the sense of what is appropriate, harmonious or beautiful especially in nature and art (OED Online 2012).

These definitions express the polarity between two dichotomous subject constructs that reflect the historical divide between the mind and the body. On the one hand the embodied, perceptive subject possesses a code of taste as capacity or faculty to experience sensations and discern or discriminate among sensorial standards (i.e. pleasurable vs. disgusting). The analysis of Ferrer’s philosophy of manners demonstrates that the education of the senses was a crucial instrument of the emergent bourgeois class to mold distinguished and respectable bodies and subjects *vis à vis* their lower class/racial counterparts. On the other hand, a disembodied type of subject possesses taste as a set of codes or faculty of discernment or judgment of abstract quality aesthetic standards (beautiful vs. ugly). The possession of this code entails a pedagogical process of training the “minds” (of bourgeois, “enlightened” subjects) through which the knowledge of discernment as intangible attribute acquired. The analysis of the writings by Jose Antonio Saco, José María de la Torre and Domitila García de Coronado in Chapter 5 reveal these intangible, abstract processes in the construction of systems of distinction in 19th century colonial discourse.
This chapter’s discussion problematizes the etic category of “taste” from social theory as a framework to read emic notions such as “urbanity” and “tone” in 19th century colonial discourse. These categories may be understood as the range of perceptive regulatory processes of distinction, differentiation and exclusion. This systems were being shaped and understood by dominant classes in Cuba as a faculty or code that can be possessed or acquired, creating a boundary that organizes society based on learned, known and embodied markers of class. This chapter showed that “taste” or “urbanity” is also mechanism of creation of structures of feeling. As such, it was a crucial instrument for middle and upper classes invested in the construction of a project of national imagining and cultural hegemonization at this historical moment in Cuba. This project entailed the construction and legitimation of a sense of collectivity around shared sets of sentiments and sensibilities. The attention Cuba’s Creole intellectuals gave to the modeling of emotions and sensibilities reflect these processes of social and political change.

The analysis of books of conduct showed that the bourgeois body in Europe, as in 19th century Cuba was constructed in relation to a range of bodily functions and emotions and more specifically to the restraint of these functions. Following Mikhail Bakhtin (1984), authors of books of conduct created an imaginary of a good-mannered, civilized body with closed boundaries and regulated or constricted orifices. As such, these pedagogues of manners were simultaneously creating an antithetical body-subject defined by the exaggeration or emphasis of abject zones and basic body functions including sex, eating, defecating, nose-blowing, sleeping, among others. This grotesque body as the antithesis of the norm or as an anti-model of the Cuban bourgeois body under construction appears more clearly delineated towards the late 19th century in the writings on prostitution by the medical doctor Benjamin de Céspedes (1888). In his History of Manners, Elias traced the somatic transformations of the “body proper” through a historization of the attitudes towards the disciplining of bodily contours, orifices and the biological functions that these enable. These include the mouth as in eating, the nose as in nose-blowing, the anus and genitals as in “passing water” or “passing air.” Elias evaluates these changing attitudes by examining the particular discursive practices or ways in which bodily functions are talked about or silenced. His analysis reveals an evident progressive silencing of themes related to certain “low” bodily functions such as urinating or sexual intercourse (Bakhtin 1984).
Among these, sexual intercourse as the utmost silenced bodily action/function in textbooks of conduct is quintessential to the construction of a grotesque body as anti-model of the demure, modest inhibited bourgeois body. This means that a contained, normative sexuality as an important measure of class respectability beyond, but nonetheless informed by gender differences. To the extent that sex was one among a range of body functions, “drives and affects” subject to discipline through the “civilizing process”, attention or inattention to sex is not necessarily indicative of the normative gendering of bodies, but more broadly to the construction of proper performative and sensory bodies. As I further examine in Chapter 7, women’s sexual purity was a crucial instrument of the white bourgeois class to secure their status of racial and class privilege in Cuba’s slave society. To this extent, white women were subjected to stricter social norms of control over their sexuality, compared to black women and to men in general–their virginity was more valued. However, there are many instances where the value of white male decency could be verified. A clear evidence of this is the fact that textbooks for the education of manners and of the body were not exclusively targeted to women in Cuba or Europe. Several texts for the “education of women” published throughout the 19th century read as manuals of feminine conduct. However, the publication of texts directed to mixed gender audiences like Ferrer’s El Arte de Vivir en el Mundo (1800) and De La Torre’s Nuevo Tratado de Urbanidad, Buenas Maneras y Etiqueta (1857) evidence that the project for constructing (proper) performatve bodies cut across gender divides. Embodied and performed measures of social classification interacted with gendered, racial, class, sexual and other categorizations to inform the production of social difference.

This section has examined the new and transformed moral, aesthetic and sensory categories created by Cuban creole intellectuals for the new bodily pedagogies contained in the 19th century genre, the Urbanity Manuals or books of etiquette. The next section will examine how these emergent categories were negotiated at the limits of cultural categories and at middle grounds of the social structure, specifically amongst those subjects to whom these ideologies interpellated: white and black working class professionals (Althusser 1971). I examine the notions of good manners, taste and sabor as discursive practices that were actively being contested and institutionalized in 19th century society as part of the creole intellectual elites’ identity projects. In doing so they created a movement to culturally whiten and segregate a range of fields in their search to create their own systems of distinction.
Part II – Whitening with Manners: Negotiating Aesthetics at Racial, Class and Occupational Frontiers

Dentistry

During the first half of the 19th century, a minority of working-class Cuban and foreign white individuals actively contested the limits of the color line in the highest valued arts and trades professions where they competed with successful free blacks and mulato professionals. These conflicts sometimes turned into deadly power-struggles in sub-fields of medicine, such as phlebotomy and dentistry, which were supposed to be reserved for whites but blacks had managed to gatecrash. Several phlebotomists and dentists of color exceptionally had their professional titles approved by the Real Junta de Medicina y Cirugía (Royal Council of Medicine and Surgery) as a special concession for their expertise and professional quality (Chapeaux 1872: 154-155). Whites were still the majority of phlebotomists although they were rapidly losing ground to competitors of color.94 The dentists Carlos Blackely, and his student Andres Dodge who was killed in the process of La Escalera, were two of the most successful pardos competing with a majority of white Spanish, English and North American dentists in Havana and Matanzas. They were both accused of involvement in the conspiracy of La Escalera in 1844 along with several other dentists and phlebotomists of color.

Jealousy about their successful businesses, which attracted a “selected and solid” clientele of both blacks and whites, motivated some of these white competitors to take direct actions against their peers of color, in some cases, actively working to involve them in the conspiracy process (Deschamps 1971: 161). Four years after the repression, black and mulato dentists had still not lost their fight. Rather, they reemerged and revitalized their businesses. In 1848, a group of outraged white dentists demanded to colonial authorities that dentists of color be forbidden from exercising their profession. In the following statement, they expressed the degrading effect to their field and to their reputation that came with having to share their otherwise exclusive occupational realm with men of color,

94 According to Chapeaux (1971) over the course of only 2 years (1834-1836), blacks and mulatos reversed the majority of white phlebotomists and by 1836, free men of color were 14 out of 34 phlebotomists in Havana.
La profesión de la Cirugía Dental… quizás más que ninguna otra, atrae una íntima relación y consideraciones que profesadas por un negro o pardo lo realza de su clase, mientras que en la alternativa con un blanco le humilla: al hombre de color esta profesión le eleva a un alto grado de estimación entre los de su clase como se vio en la última Conspiración de estas castas, que en su arrojo y osadía dieron los más altos empleos a los dentistas de color, por que los consideraban como superiores por su posición social, su inteligencia y por los buenos modales que adquirieron en el último roce que tenían con sus mejores: Cinco de esos jefes supremos dentistas fueron presos, dos de ellos fusilados y los otros tres que son quizá los más criminales por más astutos e inteligentes, después de sufrir prisión por mucho tiempo fueron puestos en libertad por una inconcebible bondad del antecesor de V.E.. Estos mismos tres Exmo. Sr. están extendiendo el número de sus discípulos por toda la Isla (Diario de La Habana 1839 in Chapeaux 1872: 163-164, emphasis added).

The profession of Dental Surgery… attracts, maybe more than any other, an intimate relation and considerations, which when professed by a black or pardo enhances him from his class, while on the contrary humiliates a white person as was seen in the last Conspiracy of these castes… in their boldness and audacity, dentists of color were the chosen leaders because they were considered as superior for their social position, their intelligence and for the good manners\(^95\) that they acquired through their relations [roce] they had with their superiors. Five of those supreme leaders dentists were jailed, two of them shot and the other three who are probably the most criminal because they are smarter and balder, were set free after being jailed by an unconceivable grace of Your Excellency’s antecessor. Those very three [dentists of color] Your Excellency are extending the number of their disciples throughout the Island.

The underlying resentment in these comments evidences that the politics at play were a combination of racial, class and cultural struggles. Dentists of color appeared as intrusive, pretentious and arriviste, occupying a (higher) sphere where they did not belong therefore altering the established symbols of whiteness and power. For instance, in reference to a successful pardo who perished after being accused as one of the leaders of the Conspiracy in 1844, one of his accusers commented, “…Tomás Vargas with his profession of phlebotomist, had a numerous clientele and with his refined hypocrisy had succeeded in being considered as an honorable\(^96\) man…” (“Tomás Vargas con su ejercicio de flebotomiano, tenia una numerosa

\(^95\) I use the translation “good manners” for the original text in Spanish “buenos modales.” A similar expression “costumbres” also appears in some references.

\(^96\) The original text in Spanish uses “honrado” which has several meanings: honest, honorable, or respectable. In the context of the sentence, the meanings are close to honorable and/or respectable.
These processes of violent negotiation of cultural and symbolic boundaries by (displaced) working-class whites reflected the negotiations at the institutional scale fostered by the more structured projects by white Cuban elites to formalize and simultaneously “whiten” other fields like midwifery, painting and teaching. Good manners, understood as a coded set of actions and behaviors became a social measure through which higher valued and lower valued practices and bodies were evaluated. The terms “refined” and “honorable” in the quote above exemplify these processes: dentists of color “succeeded” in scaling up the symbolic ladder by mastering the cultural markers of class and social behavior in Cuban society.

Midwives, wet-nurses and teachers

The installation of Academies for formal technical training fostered by the creole social reformers gathered in the Sociedad, provided the needed institutionalization and ordering that cultural whitening and modernization entailed. “Good manners” or “customs” had an important place in the established admission criteria of these Academies. For example, the Midwifery Academy of the San Francisco de Paula Women’s Hospital was founded in 1828 with the intention of “upgrading” a profession that had been “degraded and abandoned” by the presence of the majority of black and *mulata* women (Figure 5). That year, a Havana newspaper article commented on that respect, “It was truly painful to know that everywhere in the civilized globe [except in the island of Cuba] the art of assisting birth was considered among the honorable professions…” (Chapeaux 1971: 169). The regulations for admission to the Academy established “Every woman aspiring to be a student of the referred school has to prove that she is over 30 years old and of good customs”\(^97\), bringing to the effect a certification of her parish priest or district judge” (Deschamps 1971: 169). The same certification of good conduct was required from aides and nurses assisting the ill as hiring criteria. It is suggestive that two white male representatives of the Catholic Church and of the colonial government—a reference of moral authority and of order and discipline

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\(^97\) The original text in Spanish reads “*buenas costumbres,*” which may also be translated as “good manners.”
respectively—were in charge of evaluating and endorsing the conduct of black and white women alike.  

The Midwife Academy accepted both women of color and white but was racially segregated according to attendance on different days of the week. Other requirements of conduct included being a good Christian, clean (or neat), charitable, attentive to detail (“cuidadosa”), kind, and most importantly, to show a strong sense of confidentiality. This was a crucial requirement to perform the clandestine births that often happened among women who were pregnant out of wedlock and needed to keep appearances to preserve their and their family’s honor (Chapeaux 1971: 171). Women were instructed to keep great precaution (“sigilo”) and try to even forget the names of their assisted clients to avoid disclosing their names by accident and affecting their reputation.

Figure 5 - *La Partera (The Midwife*) by the Spanish Víctor Patricio de Landaluze (1830-1889) in Bachiller y Morales, Antonio 1881 *Tipos y Costumbres de la Isla de Cuba, Havana.*
Good conduct was also an important criterion in the field of teaching. “Decency,” “honor” and “good conduct” often used interchangeably, were pre-requisites for official approval for licenses to open up elementary schools as well as by individual families requesting the private services of teachers. In spite of complaints about the mixing of white and black children in elementary schools—most of which were directed by women and men of color—efforts to enforce segregation during the first half of the 19th century largely failed. There are references of the persistence of a racially diverse attendees at elementary schools directed by blacks and mulatos up until the 1843 (Deschamps 1771: 126). Although these complaints had issue with the dangerous image of blacks and mulatos as role models and authority figures that “gave orders” to white children who “obeyed” their teachers, skin color was not the only factor that mattered at the moment of evaluating teacher’s qualifications. In this newspaper announcement in Havana, the solicitant (likely an upper-class white as per the prefix) requesting the services of a female teacher did not mind about the color of her skin, but did inquire on her conduct:\footnote{99 Deschamps observed that the sort of announcements requesting services of teachers that did not make color distinctions were frequent. (1971: 127)}:

\textit{Una familia que reside en el campo solicita una mujer blanca o de color para la enseñanza de tres niños, que tenga persona que le abone su buena conducta: en la casa del Sr. Conde de Casa Pedroso, el portero impondrá} (Diario de La Habana 1835 in Chapeaux 1971: 127-128).

A family residing in the countryside requests a woman, white or of color, for the teaching of three children who has someone to attest of her good conduct; in the house of Mr. Count of Casa Pedroso, the porter will provide information (Diario de La Habana 1835 in Deschamps 1971: 127-128).

Class issues also became relevant considering that it was often lower-class and poor white children who shared with black and mulato children at many of the elementary schools directed by people of color, which were often located in their neighborhoods. Perhaps this explains why upper-class white social reformers’ efforts to segregate education did not persist, as this practice probably did not affect their own children directly. In fact, elementary teaching was one of the least profitable professions because of the large number of poor families, many of whom were white, who could not afford educational costs and teachers sometimes accepted payments in kind like “vegetables, birds, eggs and candles” (Villaverde in Chapeaux 1971: 122).
In the field of painting, nonetheless, the efforts and measures to enforce racial segregation were more radical compared to those in midwifery and teaching. The enlightening project of the creole intellectuals of the Sociedad assessed each of these fields differently. The creation of the Academy was part of a broader cultural categorization, a sort of epochal shift in the Cuban socio-aesthetic structure by which “art” and painting was separated from the rest of crafts and trades such as midwifery, tailoring, carpentry. Even Saco, already in the 1830’s used “arts” as the general label under which painting and music were regarded as (higher) forms of “crafts and trades.” Art historian Bernardo Barros illustrates the ideological-aesthetic shift taking place in early 19th century Havana, “The city which had lived until then under the din of the military bands and the constant danger of privateers and pirates, begins to feel some admiration for the artists. It does not have, however, a clear idea of what art means” (Barros in Pérez Cisneros 2011). Although the creation of the Midwifery Academy provided a sense of order, discipline and “professionalism”—as in the attention to “professional secrecy”—the physicality involved in assisting birth had little aesthetic appeal in itself. After all, if even poor white women refused to engage in the practice due to prejudice, somebody (i.e. blacks and mulatas) had to do it, just like somebody had to teach poor white children. As in teaching, the project to whiten the field of midwifery was only partially successful; the registered midwives of color had increased in relation to white midwives since the year of the Academy’s opening up until the 1840’s (Deschamps 1971: 73).

In fact, ideas of cultural contamination surrounded constructions of midwifery and wet-nursing. Like black male bodies, white intellectuals created ambivalent representations of the bodies of black women. On the one hand, their sexuality was pathologized and their bodies criminalized through hyper-sexualized constructs such as la mulata and repressive institutions such as La Casa de Recogidas. On the other hand, medical doctors represented black women with strong, fertile and healthy bodies compared to white women constructed as physically/emotionally weak and prone to disease (Mena 2005, Diaz y Pereira 2006). In fact, black women’s bodies were commodified and commercialized for these attributes in the slave market. Recently given birth black slaves were rented out as wet-nurses, often being prevented from nursing their own children in preference for those of white masters. Newspaper announcements read, “For sale is a young recently given birth servant of good and abundant milk who has served before as a wet-nurse for her good qualities…” (1857 in Perera Díaz and Fuentes
In the dominant white imaginary, enslaved black women’s abundant milk production as a measure of their greater fertility and robustness sometimes rendered them closer to bestial than human status. An evidence is the oral testimony recovered by Perera Díaz and Fuentes of Teresa Oramas, the granddaughter of female slave living circa 1886, “[my grandmother] had very good milk, there were women that did not have milk when they gave birth and doctor Zertudia told them: Go look for the cow Elvira. My grandmother breastfed for free.” (my translation, Perera Díaz and Meriño 2006: 131).

Buenaventura Pascual Ferrer, the early-enlightened Cuban “scolder” of customs went further to suggest that the deficient moral and physical qualities of black wet-nurses could be transmitted through their milk to white children. In an 1801 article published El Substituto del Regaño de La Habana on April 14th, he charges against white women for being “denaturalized mothers who deny their breast to the children,” because “many indispositions that the infant suffers proceed from the irregularities of those who nurse them.” (“…muchas indisposiciones que padece el infante, proceden de los desarreglos de quien les da el pecho…” 1965 [1801]: 193). According to Ferrer, white women have a range of excuses for not nursing their children, which brings them ironically closer to the bestial status where medical doctors imagined hyper-fertile black enslaved mothers to be,

…les oímos decir sin el menor rubor que esta es la costumbre; que se sienten enfermas si dan de mamar al Niño una noche; que les estraga tan insoportable peso y que no lo pueden resistir; que las ensucia el vestido; que no estan aptas criando para recibir las visitas; que las envejece queriendo siempre aparecer de veinte años, por cuya illusion son capaces de arrostrar a cosas que no son imaginable; y en fin que se degradan del character de personas de primer rango, si se ocupan de lo que puede hacer una esclava: de modo que todas estas razones pesan más en el entendimiento de estas fieras, que las delicias del amor materno…(emphasis added, Ferrer 1965: 194).

…we hear them say without any shame, that this is the custom, that it makes them sick to breastfeed the child one night, that such an unbearable weight drives them wild, that it tarnishes their dress, that they are not apt to receiving home visits, that it makes them old wanting to always look 20 years old…and that they are degraded from the character of first rank people if they take up the job that a slave can do: all of these reasons weight more in the reasoning of these wild beasts, than the delights of maternal love…
Ferrer then disclaims the ideas about the presumed ill health or weak constitution of white mothers, noting that they only refuse nursing to

\[ \text{Si fuesen ciertas las razones de enfermedad o débil constitución de las madres podría ser disculpables el hecho, mas sabemos que es por solo procurar una libertad para entregarse a sus devaneos, a excesos abominables, que debilitan mucho más, que traen realmente con el tiempo enfermedades incurables que perturban la paz de su matrimonio, y que las precipita al sepulcro, dejando una serie de infelicidades en sus familias} \quad \text{(Ferrer 1965: 194).} \]

…procure a liberty to surrender themselves to their idle pursuits, abominable excesses, that weaken them much more, and with time really bring incurable diseases that disturb the peace of their marriage which precipitates them into the grave, leaving a series of misfortunes to their families.

For these reasons, Ferrer notes it is not surprising to see children of “distinguished/illustrious women” (“mujeres ilustres”) not resemble their parents “neither in body nor in emotions” (“ni en el cuerpo y en el ánimo”). This resemblance is not due, as it is assumed, to the God-given human diversity, but rather to” the character of the servant, the nature of her milk, and how it greatly affects the kind of creature that is nurtured by her for the first time” (“…el genio de la criandera, de la naturaleza de su leche, y de la gran parte que tiene en la índole de la criatura que la hace su primer nutrimiento”) (Ferrer 1965 [1801]: 194).

*Painting and architecture*\(^{100}\)

Although there were ambivalent attitudes on the need for racial cleansing in the field of wet-nursing, the agenda of the Academy of Painting and Drawing *San Alejandro* inaugurated in 1818 had strict guidelines to do so. Under the liberal institutional and ideological framework of the *Sociedad*, the goal of its founder, the progressive Bishop Juan José Díaz de Espada y Landa, was much more definitive in creating a separate, exclusively white and aesthetically elevated field. In the guidelines for admission to the Academy, the *Sociedad* established in 1817 that

\(^{100}\) There are extensive analyses on the place of intellectuals of color in within the literary movement of *costumbrismo* topic particularly around the impact of the work of the *mulato* Gabriel de la Concepción Plácido and the slave Juan Francisco Manzano. Literature was a field, for definition, hard to permeate given the official sanctions that banned blacks from literacy. The presence and influence of Plácido and Manzano in Del Monte’s literary circle (the tertulias) were perhaps the first expressions of the larger black’ struggle to gain a place in a developing white, bourgeois public sphere, and more broadly in the Cuban nation, as I discuss in Chapter 8.
“students should be always white, of known parents, of good education and customs…” in order to “…abate and contain to their limits a class that is aspiring to place themselves on equal footing (“nivelarse”) with ours, with great risk to the tranquility of the country” (Acta de la Sociedad de Amigos del País in Peramo Cabrera 2011). The specification “of known parents” had implicit racial connotations. Children of unknown parents were often racially mixed children left by their parents in orphanages to hide their racial ancestry and often adopted the standard surname “Valdés” (González 1992, Mena 2001). Under these strict racist premises, the Academy set the terms of a new model of art imagined as a separate sphere of representation and practice, a “safe” symbolic and social space that is not “stained” by the presence and practice of poor, black and mulato painters, but rather informed by the higher and trendier cultural models of Europe. The Academy’s guidelines read, “…[we should encourage] whites to engage in the arts and crafts/trades, convincing them that by doing so they will not be confused with the coloreds; rather they will achieve a more effective superiority” (Peramo Cabrera 2009).

The movement for segregation led by the Sociedad in painting and other fields influenced and happened along a series of broad shifts in the habitus or the discursive, moral sensory and affective structures that Cuban creoles were working to shape and legitimize in people’s common sense. These habitual systems organized the ways in which subjects, bodies, practices and objects were classified, appreciated and felt. For instance, the removal of artisans of color from painting accompanied the shift into new aesthetic models showcasing in the early 19th art and architectural tendencies. Against the popular, realistic and “primitive” tendencies of the 18th century, the Academy introduced academic painting and neoclassicism under the direction of French painters. The Sociedad’s effort to actualize and whiten the visual arts was quite successful, as judged by the overwhelming presence of European, especially French painters in Cuba’s 19th century artistic landscape. French, Italian and North American painters also monopolized the leadership of the Academy while only a few Cubans occupied this role throughout the century (Pérez Cisneros 2000).

The first half of the 19th century also saw shifting discursive structures particularly among creole elites in the process of searching and defining their identity as Cubans in oppositional relation to blacks and Spaniards. This search for a common identity among Cuban bourgeois classes and their political clashes with Spanish colonists projected onto the new tendencies in urban architecture. The parallel neoclassicist movements in painting and
architecture manifested in urban development and modernization plans started in the late 18th century. Havana transformed from a city of fortifications into a city with modernizing airs and a cosmopolitan character. The urbanization of the outskirts of the city wall with opulent neoclassical style mansions, promenades, theaters and other symbols of modernity and progress constituted a large-scale performance of wealth and distinction of the rising class of Cuban sugarcrats in the urban scenery.

According to historian Carlos Venegas, the urbanization style emphasized the academic ornamentation of exterior and interior building decorations, rather than structural changes in the city or in the internal distribution of buildings. As such the reforms driven by contending Cuban and Spanish elites focused on the surfaces of buildings to demonstrate greater distinction and majesty through visible appearances. Draperies, sumptuous fringes, Venetian mirrors, ebony dragons, vases with exotic plants, huge bronze candelabra, silk lace curtains, gold metal ties among other objects conformed the material culture by which the “refinement” and “higher taste” of the elites was gauged. Venegas research denotes an emphatic use of notions of “good taste” or “refinement of taste” in discourses of elites to express their successful emulation of European fashion in matters of architecture as in the expression “a better taste in the fabrication of homes of Havana residents primes today” (Mesa in Venegas 1990: 56).

This movement towards aesthetic emulation was not absolute, nonetheless. In practice, architects trained abroad and construction workers from new schools of arts and crafts initiated by the Sociedad at midcentury produced a mixture of local and foreign elements in the style of building constructions. Configurations for specific weather conditions and local preferences mixed with “elements of more refined taste” from Europe. Furthermore, the larger goal to create a performance of class distinction through spatial surface ornamentation was an expression of the developing ideology of urbanity. As I further elaborate in the following chapters, urbanity speaks to the changing spatial arrangements that accompanied the development and transformation of class habitus expressed in cultural practices like dress, possession of goods, attendance to theaters, and consumption of “high art” commodities such as Opera performances. Although the Sociedad worked to enforce official segregation in city spaces like schools and academies, ultimately it was the manner in which certain spaces were used and occupied by differentially positioned subjects, which “classed” these spaces performatively.
Moreover, the *Sociedad’s* creation of the Painting and Drawing Academy of *San Alejandro* did more than simply whiten and elevate the field by excluding outdated tendencies and their practitioners, low income, black and *mulato* artisans. This move also influenced the aesthetic validation and prestige-endowment of “art” as a category denoting the aspirations for modernization in early 19th Cuba. In particular, the institutionalization of painting effected a change in the social and cultural value and forms of making and of *appreciating* “art.” The Academy contributed to construct a new enlightened “subject of art” by transforming the old black popular *artisan*—regarded merely as a craftsman—to a new white (Europeanized) academized *artist*. In fact, painting in the 18th century was considered a professional, profitable activity of a majority of working class and largely self-taught *mulatos* (artoffer 2011). These anonymous working-class painters along with the other “non-educated,” and racially-suspect lower-class painters that the Academy excluded were considered “popular painters,” remembered for their work “decorating” with frescoes both interior and exterior murals and house walls in Havana. The murals presented historical themes such as commercial advertisings, liberal political ideas, and other themes considered by contemporary critics as “ornamental”, and lacking an aesthetic or artistic value (Govantes in Pérez Cisneros 2010).

A notable figure among the late 18th century popular painters was the *mulato* Vicente Escobar y Flores, known for his portraits of aristocratic families and a series of portraits of Cuba’s Captain Generals (Figure 6). Painting became a profitable activity with the expansion of the sugar industry in the early 19th century. The number of portraits commissioned increased as an evidence of the rising white Cuban bourgeoisie’s search for representative appearance (artoffer 2011). Escobar seemed to capture these aspirations in his portraits of aristocratic *Señoras* and Captain Generals in imposing and haughty poses (Figure 7). The quality of his work earned him the title of Spanish Monarch Fernando VII’s court painter, which paved the way to his up scaling to noble status and obtaining the certificate of whiteness through the special provisions of *Gracias al Sacar* (chevarría 2010). Although Escobar started as self-taught, he was one of the privileged artisans of color to travel abroad to Europe. There he received formal training at the San Fernando Royal Academy in Madrid and became acquainted with the paintings of Goya, which are said to have influenced his style.
Figure 6 - Fernando VII by Vicente Escobar y Flores.

Figure 7 - Portrait of Justa de Allo y Bermúdez by Vicente Escobar y Flores.
Escobar is considered by some to have influenced the later tradition of *costumbrismo* (Pérez Cisneros 2000). During the second half of the 19th century *costumbrismo* represented the shift from the neoclassic and Italo-French academic tide introduced by the Academy to realistic and romantic tendencies. Among the important figures of *costumbrismo* discussed in this dissertation are the French lithographer Frederic Mialhe and the Spanish painter Víctor Patricio de Landaluze. These painters placed their attention on subjects and sceneries in everyday situations with a marked preference for urban marginal subjects including slaves and predominantly black working classes. Escobar’s location in the discursive and representational schema at the specific moment of inflection in the art history of 19th century Cuba offers an interesting symbolism. The transformations of Havana’s plastic arts in its aesthetic, social and institutional dimensions may be read in the body and the life of Escobar himself. His legal and cultural metamorphosis from a “low” *mulato* caste to a “high” legal white nobleman paralleled the cultural and institutional changes in the faces and subjects of Havana’s painting. Racial cleansing and institutionalization served to socially legitimize the sublimation of the subjects of painting from “low” popular craftsmen to “high” academic *artists* and of the visual arts more broadly embracing the “higher,” refined forms of neoclassicism, realism and romanticism.

Moreover, racial and aesthetic upgrading or elevating to an elite status the field of plastic arts eventually gave rise to a racial inversion in the established representational schema. White painters were re-positioned as representers while making blacks and *mulatos* preferred subjects of their picturesque and positivistic representations. Thus, the black popular gaze of “artisans” on white bourgeois “othered” bodies, like those of the Captain Generals and the distinguished bourgeois Señoras of Escobar’s portraits was somehow reversed. *Costumbristas* inaugurated the exercise of gazing at blacks and *mulatos/as* by making them the protagonists of their “pictures of customs”. The same white bourgeois bodies depicted by black *artisans* were discursively relocated as the audience-viewers of white *costumbrista artists’* depictions of blacks and *mulatos* and working class whites. From an anthropological perspective, it is interesting to reflect upon how Escobar’s portraits of white bourgeoisies of turn of the 18th century served as a discursive preamble to Landaluze’s scornful and folklorized depictions of blacks and *mulatos/as* at mid 19th century (Figure 8).

The progressive reframing of white bourgeois bodies and black bodies in mainstream visual representational field of the sublimated visual arts is certainly indicative of the shifting
relations and negotiations of power across interlocking racial, class and gender lines occurring throughout the 19\textsuperscript{th} century in Havana and Cuba. In fact, white upper class women were only admitted 60 years after the opening of the San Alejandro Academy. However, the progressive acceptance and later encouragement of their participation in a re-valued field of “high” painting, ballet-dance and other highly-value practices like literature helped define the specific cultural markers around which Cuban bourgeois identity was framed (Carpentier 2001, Peramo Cabrera 2009).

![Image](image.png)

Figure 8 - “Día de Reyes en La Habana” (Epiphany Day in Havana) by Víctor Patricio de Landaluze in Víctor Patricio Landaluze, Exhibit of the National Fine Arts Museum of Havana Collection, 1998, Museo de Bellas Artes de Bilbao.

\textit{Crafting savory bodies through Cuban music and dance}

The transformations in the fields of music and dance followed radically different dynamic compared to those of the plastic arts. Unlike in painting, the strong manifestation of the transculturative process produced mixed vernacular music, dance and theatrical genres throughout the 19\textsuperscript{th} century. In spite of stark opposition from racist and moralist local elites, by the late 19\textsuperscript{th} century \textit{danza}, \textit{danzón} and \textit{teatro bufo} were embraced as symbols of a distinctively Cuban identity. Alejo Carpentier describes the early stages of the transculturation of music when the emergent Cuban bourgeoisie began to incorporate European music to their systems of distinction. For centuries, Cuba’s classical music had flourished through the work of
accomplished performers of the ballet, opera and symphony. At salons or philharmonic soirées rich creole aficionados oriented their musical tastes with a preference for classical European music. As the sugar industry and slave trade grew in the late 18th century, the Cuban bourgeoisie cultivated their “spirit” “with the sweat of increasingly large number of slaves” (Carpentier 2001: 130, 131). Newspaper advertisements reflected the contrast between “refinement” and “modernity,” and “archaic” and brutal character of the system of slavery, “For sale: A clavichord that functions like an organ and also will accept young bulls as payment (May 1972)…A fortepiano of excellent tones, made in London (September 1792)… Two clavichords, a black woman, and a dresser with a bookshelf…(June 1974)” (Carpentier 2001: 130).

These contrasting elements exemplify the beginnings of a major transition. They signaled the formation of common structures of feeling and habitus, whereby standards of “taste” and morality in music and dance were being codified and negotiated. Speaking with a characteristic elitist tone, the writer and musicologist Alejo Carpentier perceived the aesthetic “sensibility of Havana audiences” as becoming much more “refined” in the last years of the 18th century, only to “regress” in the 1830’s with the widespread popularization of Italian opera. For instance, Carpentier describes the audience’s negative reaction to a company of “Havana comic actors” formed in mid 1802 because “…the public’s musical palate had a taste of the French company, making it a more demanding audience…Hence, the new company made a serious effort to emulate these daunting foreigners…” (Carpentier 2001: 128).

A passionate of Cuban music, writing from early to mid 20th century, Carpentier was born and raised in Cuba but studied in Paris at the Lycée Jeanson de Sailly before he was sixteen; he spoke Spanish with a French accent. Like the anthropologist Fernando Ortíz, Carpentier was part of the intellectual and political reformist elite in Cuba engaging in leftist and anti-imperialist artistic movements during the 1920’s and 1930’s in Havana. From a scientific and nationalist stance they encouraged a movement that celebrated the African component of Cuban culture and repositioned people of color as “informants” in a radical, self-reflective, and cultural relativist anthropological approximation (Yelvington 2006, Palmie 2002, Basail 2006). As radical as these initiatives were for the time, Ortíz and Carpentier were deeply investment in an integrationist nationalist project that erased “race” and racialized “Others” from the ideal of citizenship.

In his book Music in Cuba, a groundbreaking assessment of the evolution of musical genres and preferences in colonial Cuba, Carpentier reflected his subject position through
markedly elitist and Eurocentric appreciations. According to one biographer, Carpentier was often baited for being a “Francophile aesthete slumming in the New World” (Brennan 2001: 9). Indeed, Carpentier viewed the “higher” European classical forms represented by Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven, Schubert as the “the truly great music.” He laments that this music “became a pleasure reserved for a select minority” after 1810 when Spanish and Italian Opera companies marked the musical ambiance in Havana. By the decades of the 1830’s and 1840’s, the “love for Italian opera,” praise for “Spanish actors” of “atavistic bad taste” and outdated concert pieces from France determined, in his view, a “regression in criollo musical culture” (Carpentier 2001: 176). European classical composers’ level of technical difficulty made them unattractive to “vulgar listeners” and variations of opera motifs were the best way to capture audiences. For Carpentier, the formation of musical “taste” and of “cultured music” among select composers of the 19th century only came through their influences of the classical and baroque European tradition.

Through his appreciations, Carpentier identified the interdependency and hierarchization of the “classical” and the “popular” within the sphere of upper classes. By categorizing Italian and Spanish music as a “low” popular genres vis à vis French or German baroque classical “high” forms, Carpentier identified the “low within the high” in academic-European musical forms that were being incorporated into the systems of distinction of middle and upper creole classes in Havana. Classical forms considered popular among upper classes, were distasteful for a “Francophile” snob like Carpentier. The possession of this “higher” taste was, nonetheless, not exclusively reserved for whites.

Black and mulato musicians dominated the musical field as performers and composers of academic, concert music, as well as mixed, popular genres, which were generally danceable. Like in other symbolic spaces of prestige such as dress, middle class blacks had an expanded standpoint as they were situated in what Patricia Hill Collins named an “outsider within” location (Hill Collins 2008b). They mastered the popular and higher forms of the “upper classes” (Opera, concert music), the mixed genres enjoyed by lower free classes (dance orchestras) while they also participated, if often only as distanced observers, in the musical world of African slaves (Villaverde 2010). This multiple positionality enabled certain mobility across class and racially differentiated settings. While their condition of contracted musicians allowed them access to classy theaters and bourgeois saloons, white bourgeoisies enjoyed a similar mobility in their
condition of dance amateurs and casanovas of, especially light-skinned _mulatas_. This expanded masculine mobility in musical and dance settings played a role in the rapid and profound transculturation of music and dance in the 19th century as I discuss below (Sublette 2004, González 1992).

A notable figure among classical musicians was the prolific concert violinist Claudio José Domingo Brindis de Salas (1852-1911) considered one of the best in the world at his time. He was the son of the famed violinist, orchestra director and dance teacher of color, victimized in the process of _La Escalera_ (1833-1844), Claudio Brindis de Salas (1800-1872). In 1852 Captain General De La Concha spared Salas’ life, like that of other imprisoned black and _mulato_ musicians accused of conspiring against the colonial government. Historian Zoila Lapique describes this episode as the “dismantling of the black middle class” with a particularly strong impact on the musical activity in the years after the repression: it became impossible to staff a dance orchestra due to the large number of imprisoned musicians of color (Sublette 2007, Lapique 1879).

The state-sponsored repression that temporarily erased musicians of color from Havana’s musical scenario represented a broader movement to “purge” local music from African influences. Carpentier tells us that over the course of the 19th century, popular mixed music and dance forms excluded African roots from the structure, melody, and rhythms of percussion (2001: 159). He notes “it would take until the end of the century for the ancestral music of Africa, hidden in the slave barracks, held in the minds of slaves and those recently emancipated, to come out of its private domain and imbue Cuban dance music” (Carpentier 2001: 159).

Carpentier is describing the controversial but final embrace of _danzón_, a close relative of the earlier _danza_ derived in turn from the Cuban _contradanza_ (a local variation of the French country dance) into Cuba’s national imaginary. Carpentier takes recourse to the problematic private and public divide to describe the racialization of music in spite of his awareness of the “transubstantiation,” as he calls it, which made categorizing “African” and “European” “black” and “white” into separate spheres in the history of colonial Cuba simply unrealistic, “In the first half of the 19th century blacks played and created white music, without enriching it further, except with their atavistic rhythmic sense, where they uniquely accentuated certain kinds of danceable compositions” (2001:163).
Historian Francisco Morán has observed that the distinction between white music and African music is a common notion in creole or mixed cultures. Categories like “rhythm” and “melody” “black” and “white” are assumed to be predetermined, essential, pure or unmixed. In this analysis, Morán takes up Homi Bhabha’s call to examine what happens at the limits or at the borders of binary categories by noting the eminently transgressive character of music and dance, “if there is any cultural manifestation par excellence where everything is subject to flux and hybridity it is music, dance [and food].” These practices, he notes, present a challenge to those identities which dream of themselves “strong and complete” (Morán 2012). For Morán, dance is always that place where the “dangerous cultural interventions” are revealed. And they sure did in 19th century Cuba.

Historian Zoila Lapique explains the reason for the failed attempts to “take back” “white” music from blacks. There were several projects to create music academies, however the wealthy youth who could afford to pay for a musical education chose other professions such as priesthood, law and medicine and despised the arts and crafts. White creoles expressed their feeling of disentitlement by encouraging the formation of white orchestras “of decent and well educated” men and praising the performance of white musicians in concert music (Lapique 1979, Saco 1974). Like painting, academic European music was a sphere that creole elites were claiming as distinctive of the normative Cuban bourgeois culture under construction. Black musicians transgressions into the higher-valued sphere of European classical music were brutally punished in the process of La Escalera (Morán 2012, Villaverde 2010, González 1992). In a passage of the 19th century iconic novel Cecilia Valdés, the author Cirilo Villaverde gives walk in roles to notable figures in Havana’s professional and artistic sphere including the musician Claudio Brindis, the mulato and black poets Gabriel de la Concepción Valdés Plácido and Juan Francisco Manzano, who were sanctioned for their transgressions to what white elites were claiming as realms of their own. According to Morán, Villaverde’s recreation of these characters in a typical etiquette ball of the distinguished blacks and mulatos of Havana was a “foreshadowing of the macabre and ironic executions of La Escalera” (Morán 2012).

Within and across these violently drawn racialized boundaries of Cuban music and dance in the bourgeois imaginary, certain dynamics of molding, repression and experimentation of feeling and “taste” were taking place. On the one hand, the white creole bourgeoisie was learning to savor the taste of black influences in “low” mixed popular genres,
It seems that the Young bourgeois who rode in carriages and wore top hats and watch chains, who gathered at the dance halls, found an élan in the way black orchestras played, an intensity, a rhythmic force that was unpretentious…[there was] a growing preference for ‘orchestras of color’ when speaking of dances…Certain contradanzas “had greater appeal” when played by blacks. Blacks and whites performed the same popular songs. But blacks added an accent, a vitality, something unwritten that “perked things up”…The black musician was elusive, inventing between the written notes. White musicians stuck to the notation. Thanks to blacks, there was a growing hint in the bass lines…in the accompaniment of the French contradanza, of a series of displaced accents, of ingenious and graceful intricacies, of “ways of doing” that created a habit, and originated a tradition (Carpentier 2001: 158, translated by Timothy Brennan).

On the other hand, the colored bourgeoisie, sandwiched between the world of the masters and the slaves, was learning to conceal their taste and feelings for the “lower” African traditions of their ancestors. In the following quote, Carpentier describes the attitudes of free blacks towards the expressions of Africans in Cuba in public affective performances of respectability of middle class artisans of color. The Day of Kings Carnival Street parade was one of such instances of performance of identification where Havana’s artisans of color demonstrated their mastery of whiteness, not only through their dress and comportment, but also through the control of their emotions,

When the comparsas are let loose on the streets on January 6, with their diablos [little devils], kings, and culonas [big-bottomed women], the “political man” [Havana’s artisans of color] draws back, letting pass, just like whites, that carnival tolerated by the authorities, respecting an old custom. If the drum made the innermost fibers of his heart resonate in sympathy, he did not admit it. It is possible that at times blacks would attend the ritual drum beating of the Carraguao neighborhood. But in the dances where he performed his professional duties, he played the country minuet (emphasis added Carpentier 2001: 163).

Following DuBois, what Carpentier describes so graphically in this passage is a kind of affective double consciousness through which respectability, race and class identity are negotiated, cultivated and structured in and through the effective self-governance of emotions and feelings. This is a particular kind of symbolic violence that reaches beyond the semiotic into the realm of the visceral. Recalling Norbert Elias, a performance of emotion is at play, by which emotions were “covered up” and brought “behind the scenes” of the bourgeois public sphere into the highly regulated expressive cultural “world” of Africans in Cuba. This example also brings
out an aspect of the dynamics of respectability among the black middle class that is often obscured by analyses of white middle and upper class respectability. The double moral standards for which white bourgeoisies are often baited are reproduced among middle classes of color ascribing to similar models of respectability.

In particular, the discourse about “drives” is interesting to examine comparatively as it connected two social classes approximating each other’s “taste:” middle class blacks performing distinction “in whiteface” and white bourgeoisies in their 19th century unprecedented approach to “black” tastes. The idea that middle class blacks’ repressed their drives to “publicly” enjoy music of the African heritage, resembles the reiterated expressions about the somewhat inevitable “drives” of white bourgeoisies towards African-influenced music and dance: contradanza, danza and danzón.

Throughout the century, moralists’ attacks on these mixed genres often accompanied descriptions about the inexplicable and uncontrollable “force” that drove white mid-upper classes to take part in them. For instance, this Spanish observer at midcentury is still ambivalent about his appreciations of the Cuban danza, “it is very animated and cheerful, and it is not played right, except for the local musicians, who are the ones who know how to give it the chic that this kind requires. That who is not accustomed to hear this dances, may figure he is listening an infernal rejoicing, because it seems that each instrument takes its own way” (“es muy animada y alegre, y no se toca bien, más que por los músicos de aquí, que son los que saben darle el chic que reclama su índole. Al que no esta acostumbrado a oir las danzas, se le figura escuchar una algarabía infernal, pues parece que cada instrumento va por su lado.”) (De las Barras y Prado 1925: 89 emphasis in original). Barras y Prado is aware of the unique charm (the “chic”) of the music which requires a specialized skill and a distinctive taste. Those who do not have the taste (as perhaps he has?) will find this music “infernal” and disorderly. He goes on to say that he has never heard a music so “enthusiastic and delicious” and a dance more “lively and inciting” such that it is common to see the “oglers… carry the beat with the feet or with the body, as if they were swept/dragged along by a superior force. The beat is the same that the blacks play in their drums and instruments for their grotesque and voluptuous dances” (“llevar involuntariamente el compás con los pies o con el cuerpo, como arrastrados por una fuerza superior. El compás es el mismo que tocan los negros en sus tambores e instrumentos para sus bailes grotescos y voluptuosos”) (Barras y Prado 1925).
Around the time of Barras y Prado’s writing, historian Zoila Lapique observed similar sentiments in articles of Havana’s print periodicals in the 1840’s,

...la juventud habanera que se movía en un marco social aburguesado comenzó a llamar ‘irresistibles’ a las contradanzas más gustadas, las preferidas por los bailadores por su ritmo y sabrosura. Esta palabra prendió entre nosotros, pues los años posteriores se utilizó también para expresar que una pieza musical bailable era bella y sus sones tan ‘irresistibles’ que no se podía evitar, al escucharlos, los deseos de bailar. (Lapique 1979: 37)

...Havana’s youth, which moved in the bourgeois social frame, began to call the most liked contradanzas ‘irresistible,’ which were preferred by the dancers for their rhythm and savoriness. This word stuck among us because in the coming years it was also used to express that a danceable musical piece was beautiful and its tunes [sones] so ‘irresistible’ that it was impossible to avoid, at listening, the drive to dance.

The expressions “bufomanía” and “bailemanía” reiterated in public opinion since the 1870’s captured the idea of the inertial “orientation” driven by mixed local genres in theater and dance respectively, which seemed to follow an unstoppable course due to their popularity among all social classes, despite the social censorship by the creole missionaries of respectability (Leal 1975).

The idea of “irresistible” music and rhythm informed the developing notion of “sabor” constructed as an aesthetic system organizing the perception, performance, expression and experience of Cuban-made music and dance. As noted earlier for the case of musical performance, the color of the performer and the ways of performing made a difference, irrespective of the type of music played. Samuel Hazard made this distinction for dance according to the kind of setting and social class of its attendees,

The danza… pretty enough and proper enough when danced with fair women and proper men; but as danced here, one of the most indecent spectacles I have ever seen at any public ball…is one of the most immoral spectacles that I have witnessed in a public dance saloon. [At the Tacón Theater…] the danza criolla… is here danced with some degree of propriety to the music of the band… the only recommendation being that [the band] keeps excellent time (Hazard 1971: 198).

A newspaper commentator echoes Hazard’s remarks, now in reference to the ever more controversial danzón “Certain dances do not make people decent, instead decent people make
decent all dances” (Lane 2007: 148). As such sabor was more than an adjective, but rather a capacity of discernment embodied by certain performers and dancers who possessed this specific aesthetic/affective code. While some people possessed and performed sabor, others simply didn’t or couldn’t. A boundary was created.

Moreover, the possession of sabor projected onto bodily contours themselves. The following quote by the Cuban writer Teodoro Guerrero evidence the materiality of sabor as it manifested on white bodies. After detailing the specific dress etiquette of Cuban “ladies” according to weather and occasion, Guerrero describes the seasonal dances around the 1870’s at the square of Havana’s nearby country towns,

... en los bailes de temporada, presenta la perspectiva de un jardín, donde al compás de la música sabrosa... característica del país, revolotean las leves mariposas; los hombres llevan traje blanco de dril y sombrero de jipijapa, y bailan sin descanso, sudando copiosamente, sin que lo elevado de la temperatura les detenga en el ejercicio de la danza, pasión que en las Antillas raya en delirio (Guerrero in Guijarro 1876).

....at the beat of the savory music...typical of the country, butterflies flutter around; men carry around the white drill suit and straw hat, and dance without rest, sweating profusely, without letting the high temperatures stop them in the exercise of the danza, a passion that verges on delirium in the Antilles (Guerrero in Guijarro 1876).

The imagery of uncomfortable white bodies performing racialized movements is recurrent in 19th century narratives about the contradanza, the danza and the danzón. Consider this fragment from Havana’s Regañón “...the contradanza started while all dancers had left aside the judgement and sanity...the contradanza was danced in the worst possible form and after twenty minutes of not so decent frolic, because that’s what that was, all dancers retired full of sweat and extremely suffocated to take some breath only to come back after a while to the same chore all over again” (“...se principió la contradanza, habiendo dejado a un lado todos los bailarines el juicio y la cordura...bailóse la contradanza todo lo peor que fue posible y después de veinte minutos de retozo no muy decente porque aquello no fue otra cosa, se retiraron todos los danzantes llenos de sudor y sofocadísimos a tomar un poco de aliento para volver de allí a un rato a la misma fajina otra vez.”) (Ferrer 1965 [1801]: 104). Sweating, exhaustion and heat expressed the level of (dis)comfort related to the specific dress suites which did not quite “suit”
the kind of dance, the specific weather and—implicitly—the (white) dancer’s body. Much like
the representations of uncomfortable slaves in the elegant “suits” of whites, white dancing bodies
seem to be in a battle with their constrictive body molds—their fluids and their bodies seem to
literally overflow outside their limits (Ahmed 2006). A suggestion is implied: either the dresses
are not “suitable” or the bodies are not made to tolerate these kinds of movements.

On the contrary, black bodies were often “kinestethically hailed” or interpellated as
dancing bodies (Lane 2007). The ability to dance was naturalized in black, and particularly
female bodies. Evidence was that it was never suggested that whites serve as dance professors, or
least so proposed to expropriate blacks from the art of dancing (as in the art of painting, or of
music). As I discuss below, there is a historical construct of the black body as dancing body
whereby dancing was coded closer to African and sexual. In other words, dancing was by
definition embodied in Africanized and sexualized bodies. Furthermore, the call to
institutionalize dancing was not pushed forth, as painting, to try to de-Africanize Cuban dance,
or prevent its form from being “corrupted” with African elements: by the early 19th century local
dance forms were already too mixed and too popular across Havana’s wide social spectrum.
Rather, dance academies were implemented at midcentury with the main objective to prevent
inter-racial mixing between white males and women of color accused of morally and sexually
corrupting the former through dancing. The combined charges against dancing and prostitution
by authorities and elites against “escuelitas” and later “academies” reflected the pressing
anxieties over racial miscegenation characteristic of this period. Regulations were set in place to
control the inadmissible inter-racial (and sexual) intercourse between white men and black
women that occurred at the escuelitas.

The following are excerpts of the 1872 “File created about the dance academies” located
in the Fondo de Gobierno General at the Cuban National Archive (06/26/1971). They are a series
of reports by Inspector Generals of several districts of Havana regarding the scandals of dance
academies and the need to regulate them.

...cada escuelita es un lupanar, donde la juventud lejos de aprender un ramo de adorno de la buena
educación, se corrompe “las referidas academias de baile son un foco de corrupcion, cubierta con el velo
de la enseñanza para la cual se les autoriza [it is necessary to ] extinguir los abusos que en aquellas
Escuelas o Academias se venian consintiendo con ofensa del pudor y detrimento de las sanas
costumbres...White academies personas blancas concurren muchos jovenes decentes a deductir por su
porte, pero como estos saben que las maestras son mas pervertidas y otras faciles de pervertir, acuden de muy buena gana a costa de un pequeño sacrificio con el pretexto de aprender lo que pueden enseñar que es a bailar. Allí se olvidan la pureza de la moral que es la ciencia de las costumbres y toman la virtud por vicio y vicio por virtud. (Gobierno General 1871, No.16917 Leg 352)

...each school is a brothel, where far from learning a branch of good education, the youth gets corrupted...the referred dance academies are a foci of corruption covered with the veil of education for which they are authorized...[it is necessary] to extinguish the abuses that in those Schools or Academies have been tolerated, offending the modesty and in detriment of the good customs... At white academies many decent (male) youth attend judging by their stature, but because they know that the (female) teachers are more perverted and others are easy to pervert, they happily attend...to learn how to dance. There they forget about the purity of morality, which is the science of the customs and take the virtue for vice and the vice for virtue.

Inspectors reported that women are for the most part black, wayward women with “bad customs and vices” who have been “removed from the mother’s womb for the life they have chosen” (“estirpadas [sic] del seno materno por la vida a que se han dado”).

Given the multiple moral, sexual and racial implications of the proximities that couple dancing opened up (as compared to teaching, midwifery and painting) colonial authorities—rather than elite creoles—took the lead to regulate private escuelitas, re-named as dance academies since 1851. The following are excerpts of the project of a Ruling Statute for dance academies from 1872, which set the good customs, especially of women, as particularly important criterion.

Artículo 4o. Los concurrentes observarán el mayor órden y compostura, siendo expulsados de los salones los que faltaren á él, bien con modales, gestos ó palabras ofensivas a la moralidad y a las buenas costumbres ...

Artículo 6o. Queda terminantemente prohibido admitir mujeres de vida licensiosa ó (dedicadas?) á la prostitución, pudiendo ser expulsadas por la autoridad las comprendidas en estos casos sin perjuicio de la multa correspondiente al dueño de la Academia.

...Las mujeres que concurran en los días de ensayos a estas academias para servir de compañeras a los discípulos reunirán necesariamente las condiciones que aconsejan las leyes del pudor....

...Los profesores serán responsables de escándalos que se cometan en las academias, así como de que se

guarden las reglas del pudor….

Article 4. The attendees must observe the greatest order and composure, and whoever is at fault must be expelled, be it with manners, gestures or offensive words to morality and good customs…

Article 6. It is strictly prohibited to admit women of licentious life or dedicated to prostitution, as they may be expelled by the authority without prejudice to the corresponding fine to the Academy’s owner…

…Women that attend the academies on the days of practice to serve as partners of the disciples will fulfill with the necessary conditions that the laws of prudery require…

…Teachers will be responsible for the scandals committed in the academies, as well as that the rules of prudery are kept.

In spite of the attempts to govern dancing bodies, a major transformative movement driven by the affective power of dancing was underway. In particular, at midcentury, white upper class authors like the Countess of Merlin highlighted the embodied, experienced and felt character of “sabor”. In letters written in Cuba to her family in France, the Countess explains how the Cuban danza was done “more with the body than with the feet”. Bailar sabroso entailed feeling the rhythm with the body by releasing the hips and to dance the Cuban way was to dance with savoriness, “Dancing with modesty, with reserve, with prudent restraint [now means] to dance the old-fashioned way 'fretted Felicia. Refusing to 'savor' meant 'now knowing how to dance'. And only danzas—not polkas or lancers or schottisches—were really savory" (Montalvo in Chasteen 2004: 159). As with Carpentier’s observation about the reordering of aesthetic standards of “popular” classical music, Merlin describes the shift in the standards of respectability and taste repositioning unrepressed and somehow liberated dancing bodies as models of an actualized and distinctively Cuban dance fashion. The progressive legitimation and appropriation of “sabor” by white upper classes informed a reconfiguration of interlocking aesthetic, sensory and moral systems. A structure of feeling was created.

The following quote exemplifies the developing metamorphosis of the (bourgeois white Cuban) body, oscillating at midcentury, between a dry, listless, passive body to a savory, warm agentive body with uncontrollable affective drives (for dancing),

*El habanero, aunque bajo la influencia de un clima abrasador, gusta de la danza con pasión, y es un contraste digno de notarse, verle después de haber pasado todo el día blandamente recostado en la butaca, con los ojos medio cerrados e inmóvil, con un negro joven a su lado para abanicarle y hacerle cualquier*
The Cuban from Havana, although under the influence of a scorching climate, likes the *danza* with passion, and it is a contrast worth noting, to see him after having spent all day lying down weakly in the armchair, with the eyes half closed and immobile, with a young black man beside him fanning and doing any light service that requires of any movement; it is a singular contrast, I repeat, to see him get out of that state of voluptuous apathy, to surrender with ardor to the animated exercise of dance. This contrast is reproduced in all of his moral dispositions: sweet until touching in weakness all ordinary circumstances of life, violent and untamable when his passions are in action. The exterior, mainly that of women, always carries the stamp of these two such diverse characters, and that mixture of liveliness and languidness gives them an irresistible charm (Montalvo in Morán 1998).

The irresistibility in the emotionally ambivalent bodies of the Countess’ narrative would eventually resolve, reaching full expression decades later with the creation and popularization of *danzón*. *Danzón*’s popularity was a transgression to class, gender and racial lines provoking a moral panic that mirrored the escalating political tensions after Cuba’s liberation wars (1868-1878; 1879-1880). Between 1878 and 1880 Havana and Matanzas’ elites filled the columns of newspapers *El Triunfo* and *El Diario de Matanzas* with scandals protesting the intrusion of *danzón* into white elite settings (Chasteen 2004: 75, Lane 2006). *Danzón* was considered an indecent dance because of its association with black dancers and lower body movements to the Afro-Cuban *cinquillo* rhythm introduced in Havana from Cuba’s *Oriente* province in the 1850’s. There was something in *danzón*’s rhythm that, according to indignant journalists “forced people into obscene movements” (Chasteen 2004: 80). Apparently there was a cross-regional trend in the orientation of “dance contagion” as the fashion for dancing *danzón* came from Matanzas, the province immediately East of Havana. There, the *mulato* Miguel Failde (1852 – 1921) is said to have composed the first *danzón* entitled “Las Alturas de Simpson,” in reference to a colored neighborhood in Matanzas (Chasteen 2004: 77-80).

As white middle classes embraced *danzón* fully during the 1880’s and 1890’s, dancing served as a vehicle for developing processes of Cubanness. Among others, vernacular theater
Jill Lane studied the refashioning of danzón in bufo discourse and performance in the second half of the 19th century. In several plays, bufo playwrights sheathed the undesirable “African” and “indecent” elements of danzón with the unifying cloak of national identity infused with the affective power of the irresistible forces of sabor. Against creole moralists assaults of the late 1870’s, creole bufo playwrights rose as defenders of Cuban genres like the guaracha and, later, the eroticized danzón made into signatures of their repertoire and political project aligned with Cuban independence. Witnessed by predominantly white audiences, bufo theater was imagined as a vital site for the articulation of an emergent national sentiment, where black bodies and African influenced dances began to be imagined and legitimated as symbols of cubanness (Lane 2007).

In the context of the complex and multidimensional aesthetic shifts in dance and music forms towards the late 19th century, sabor developed as a distinctively Cuban aesthetic. The construction of sabor was not only a result of a transculturative process, whereby elements of different musical traditions fused together to produce a different cultural genre. Neither was the creation of sabor simply about whitening by racializing and classing dance and music. As described above, in fields like painting, segregation and racial cleansing were sufficient mechanisms for creole elites to elevate painting to a higher symbolic sphere and claim it back from blacks and lower classes. However, the popularity and transgressive character of music and dance required a different strategy, which Fernando Ortiz captured in the 19th century idea of “adecentamiento,” which means “to make decent” or “to tidy up.” According to Ortiz, all mixed dance forms “experienced the same phenomenon of metastasis: they are rejected for some time as indecorous… but they are gradually tidied up [or made to be decent] and sheathed a bit to achieve an advantageous social adjustment, and the people gradually transgress another bit to taste the savoriness of the forbidden fruit.” Starting with the early 19th century contradanza, local mixed forms were “creolized in the morbid Cuban sensuality” (“acriollada en la mórbida sensualidad cubana” Ortiz in González 2004: 202, 203). As I demonstrate throughout this dissertation, “adecentamiento” was a coordinated exercise to perform respectability, which manifested on a range of layers of social, cultural and political life in Havana. From living rooms, to dinner tables, to ballrooms, to promenades, urbanity and the ornate were the ideological governance frames whereby subjects, the spaces they occupied and the city that represented them in the global scenario were compelled to be decent and respectable. Manuals of
etiquette, urban planning programs, “good government” edicts and costumbrista narratives were some of the instruments employed by Cuban and Spanish elites towards this aim.

With the eventual embracement of danzón as a national rhythm in Havana’s theatrical stages, “indecency” was recoded as the “sensuality” that gave birth and shape to the Cuban eroticized and sexualized body. In fact, a segment of bufo authors parodied classical drama and opera for being Europeanized, snobbish and lacking rhythm, sensuality and cheerfulness. These latter qualities were being incorporated and legitimized, through the performance of theater, dance and music by and for white Cubans as “inherent” of the developing Cuban identity (Combarro 2008: 95). Further, the recodification of “indecent” music, lyrics, body movements (for which mixed forms were once charged) into sabor, sabrosura and sensuality as aesthetically pleasing, desirable and pleasurable qualities of a nationally hailed body and subjectivity had a liberating effect. The processes of racialization, classing and transculturation of music and dance occurring throughout the 19th century informed and were informed by a redefinition of eroticism and sexual ethics surrounding the body.

In fact, the imaginary of an eroticized subjectivity around Cuban dancing bodies that the Countess described at mid 19th century was eventually claimed as a feature of nationhood. For instance, with his characteristic metaphoric and poetic style, the utmost Cubanist Fernando Ortíz described the sexualized “nature” of Cuban identity. In his posthumous work El Pueblo Cubano (1997, written between 1908 and 1912), Ortíz described the Cuban character with expressions such as “our exaggerated sexualism”, “explosive impulsions” “strong and overwhelming impulsion” “our psychic ambience of infantile imprevisión and sexualism of fire” (“nuestro exagerado sexualismo” impulsiones explosivas” “impulsión [fuerte y] arrolladora” “nuestro ambiente psíquico de imprevisión infantil y de sexualismo de fuego.” 1996: 76-77). For Ortíz, dancing is an expression of Cuba’s spirit because, “…el baile es síntoma o una resultante de su… sensualismo satírico, el cual…casi puede decirse característico en nuestros días de todos los pueblos intertropicales de origen español” (“dancing is a symptom or a result of its…satirical sensualism, which …is…characteristic of all inter-tropical peoples of Spanish origin”) (1997: 76). For Ortíz, the “Cuban people” show a tendency to be sexually precocious, “Nacemos a la vida del sexo demasiado pronto. Nuestra precocidad es integral…el sol se filtra a nuestras venas…sobrexcita nuestra voluptuosidad” (“We are born to early to sex life. Our precociousness
is integral...the sun filters through our veins [and] over-excites our voluptuousness”) (1996: 76).

The idea of an (hyper)sexually liberated Cuban body and identity remains to this day in Cuban popular imagination and academic discourse. From a broader perspective, the construction of *sabor* marked an important transition in the threshold standards of sexual morality as reflected in the collective histories and habitus of the descendants of Europeans and of Africans in Cuba. In particular, scholars of the Caribbean have studied the distinct mechanisms and degrees of governance of both white and black dancing practices in the Middle Ages and modern history. For the case of Africans in the Caribbean, the association of black bodies as dancing bodies in the colonial context informed racist and sexualized constructs representing African descendants as primitive and less rational (Quintero Rivera 2000). Nonetheless, the centrality of dancing to the collective history and memory of the African diaspora in the Americas has a significance that reaches beyond these oppressive stereotypes. In particular, colonial accounts reference what Ned Sublette calls “dances of survival” of Africans in the process of enslavement during the transatlantic passage. Sublette describes the regimen of dancing on deck, a kind of prison-yard exercise that slave dealers conceded enslaved Africans, allowing them to dance to the playing of drums. Testimonies of descendants recall the

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102 Some additional interesting comments in this work: The female body in the urban landscape epitomizes the animality that characterizes Cuban hyper sex-sensuality “In the church, in the theater, in the salón, in the Street, women reign, obsesses... the animalization of our amorous expressions [shows in that] we don’t seek for women, but the female, the good female.” (“En la iglesia en el teatro, en el salón, en la calle, la mujer reina, obsesiona...la animalización de nuestras expresiones amorosas [se demuestra en que] no buscamos a la mujer, si no a la hembra, a la buena hembra.”). He explains the change in legislation about abductions because of the change in the Cuban sexual customs because “El rapto es accidente diario. No el rapto clásico y violento, sino el más racional y moral, que surge del mutuo consentimiento y acción de dos voluntades hervidas en dos naturalezas más fuertes que la ley” (“Abduction is an daily accident. Not the classic and violent abduction, but the more rational and moral [abduction], which emerges from the mutual consent and action of two wills boiling in two natures, which are stronger than the law”) (Ortíz 1996: 76-77).

103 Casa de las Américas Award winner Abel Sierra Madero expressed this idea in the introductory pages of his book *La Nación Sexuada*, “Each nation has a stamp and a culture that distinguishes it from others...In the case of Cuba that stamp is given among other things by its sexuality. Cubans possess a high esteem about their sexual conduct; it is only a stereotype, although one might consider that Cubans dedicate a significant amount of time to the cult of their sexuality...The truth is that Cubans see themselves as paradigms of sexual comportment. Cuba is a country in which people stare at each other constantly and undress each other with the eyes, where the skin surfaces suddenly and the clothes become transparent. (“Cada nación posee un sello y una cultura que la diferencia de las otras...En el caso de Cuba ese sello está dado entre otras cosas por su sexualidad. Los cubanos poseen una alta estima de su comportamiento sexual; se trata sólo de un estereotipo, aunque se puede considerar que los cubanos dedican un tiempo significativo al culto de su sexualidad...Lo cierto es que los cubanos se ven a sí mismos como paradigmas de comportamiento sexual. Cuba es un país en el que la gente se mira constantemente y se desviste con los ojos, donde la piel aflora de golpe y las ropas se tornan transparentes.”) (Sierra Madero 2002: 4).
importance of dancing for the material survival of enslaved Africans in their voyage to colonized lands. Dancing functioned as a kind of escape valve to breathe fresh air, see the sky and use their muscles, even if for a fleeting moment (Sublette 2004: 58). As this colonial disciplinary strategy continued in the continent through regulated public dancing during the Day of Kings parade and cabildo gatherings on Sundays, Africans in Cuba continued to cultivate dancing as an essential function of their bodies and cultural systems. In connection with Elias’ observation about the repression of primary drives inculcated through the civilizing process, understanding dancing as a primary human function in the colonial history of African diaspora in Cuba places the imaginary of black dancing bodies under a different light.

After centuries of being denigrated and repressed, dancing was normalized in nationally hailed bodies during the height of danzón and nationalism’s fervor in the late 19th century, as the creole writer José Fornaris noted with frustration “Today the man who doesn’t dance is considered a ridiculous being to be pitied” (Fornaris 1882, La Aurora del Yumurí in Chasteen 2004: 78). By the early 20th century Ortiz would claim the essentialized carácter of dancing for the identity of Cubans as a nation, “Si cada pueblo desarrolla su vida con especial ritmo, quitad el baile a Cuba y habrá muerto su espíritu” (“If every people develops its life with a special rhythm, take dancing away from Cuba and its spirit will have died” Ortiz 1996: 76).

For the case of white Europeans and its descendants, Ned Sublette documented the historical relationship between the presence of the drum and the development of a sense of rhythm manifested in dancing practices in European history. The Catholic Church historically disapproved and demonized the drum and in this context, the Church “functioned as a rhythmic retardant” actively working to

…banish dancing and dance music from [white] European culture. The effects of this are with us still: the next time you make a joke about white people not being able to dance, consider that for a thousand years or so it was prohibited. And for centuries the Church disapproved not merely drumming and dancing but of instruments, period. Church music was monastic and purely vocal…From about A.D. 370 onward, instrumental accompaniment was not permitted for Christian singing; this prohibition began to lift over the course of centuries, beginning around the twelfth century (2004: 74).

Clearly, the civilizatory forces of the West affected descendants of Africa and of Europe historically in radically different ways. In the case of Cuba at the 19th century, dancing figured in the collective habitus of Afro-descendants differently than among Cuban born descendants of
Spanish colonists. An expression of this was that by the late 18th century, a project of “invention of traditions” became necessary. Since the late 18th through the mid 19th century, Arrango y Parreño, José Antonio Saco, Domingo Del Monte among others actively worked to invent a Cuban bourgeois culture distant from Spanish and African traditions in Cuba. (Aguilera Manzano 2008) For example the Siboneísta literary movement at mid 19th century sought for a “lost” indigenous culture in narratives of a romantic indigenous past. Their contributions included musical compositions with suggestive titles such as La Piragua (The Canoe), La Indiana, Los cantos del Siboney among others (Lapique 1979: 26).

Along these lines, this emergent class of Cubans waged a battle against African-influenced dances for the unacceptable inter-racial and sexual proximities that these incited at places like dance academies and etiquette Cuna balls of free people of color. However, when it came to protecting white bourgeois respectability, intercourse between white men and women of color was not as scandalous. Policing inter-racial and gender interactions and body-movements was strongest over white female bodies.104 An example of these efforts is found in José María de la Torre’s 1857 Manual of Good Manners, Urbanity and Etiquette, where he includes a rule specifically addressed to prescribe white ladies’ appropriate conduct in public dance balls,

142. ¿Y en un baile público, cómo debe portarse una joven?
Con el mayor decoro posible, no desviándose nunca del lado de su madre ó de la persona encargada de acompañarle a menos de obtener permiso. No dar saltos descompasados, ni hacer contorsiones ni figuras en que se falte a la modestia; no bailar sino con los de su clase, aunque sea uno mismo, y por último, desviarse, y aun salir del baile cuando vea que no se observa el decoro que debe reinar en toda reunión (emphasis added, 1857: 3).

142. And in a public dance, how should a lady comport herself?
With the greatest possible decorum, not straying off the side of her mother or of the person in charge of accompanying her unless with permission. Do not give out-of-step jumps, or do contortions or figures by which modesty is offended; do not dance but with those of her own class, even if it is oneself, and lastly go off course or even [procure to], exit the ball when she sees that the decorum that must reign in every gathering is not observed (emphasis added 1857: 3).

104 Prohibitions of interracial marriage and seclusion measures were especially designed to control the access to the white women’s sexuality that ensured their class and racial privileges (Stolcke 1989).
The Countess of Merlin’s earlier remarks about the lack of inhibition required to dance with *sabor* and be in the Cuban fashion, contrast with de la Torre’s imaginary of kinesthetically constrained white women’s (dancing) bodies and sexuality in public dance balls. Indeed, a profound aesthetic, ethical and moral transition was underway. After decades of moralists’ activism to govern mixed dance forms inaugurated with the Cuban *contradanza* in the early 19th century, the embracement of *sabor* that came with the nationalization of *danzón* in the 1870’s marked an unprecedented sexual and affective liberation, particularly for those white (female) bodies that bore the heaviest weight of the moral-sexual repression of creole missionaries of respectability.

In sum, as opposed to other less permeable fields like painting or dress (discussed in the next chapter), the performativity of music and dance in Cuba involved a dynamic process of multi-sided orientations in a range of different ordered planes. In particular, scholars of Cuban music have illustrated the active mobility of the people, of the aesthetic standards and of the substances of music and dance across social, symbolic, affective and spatial boundaries. The examples above demonstrate the orientation of affects and “drives” moving on two “opposite” directions: on the one hand the savoriness of African rhythms conquering the taste and infecting the bodies of white elites and on the other hand their moralizing forces to “*adecentar*” or tidy up the movements, the forms, the lyrics and the places where African rhythms penetrated. A note by Carpentier illustrates this idea nicely, “It is significant that, in 1856, during a great formal dance in Santiago in Honor of General Concha, the most aristocratic elements of society furiously surrendered themselves, at one point, to the rhythms of a *contradanza* titled ‘*Tu madre es conga* [Your mother is conga]’” (Carpentier 2001: 157).

Ultimately, the taste of the lower classes made its way “up” into the hegemonic aesthetic domain of the dominant classes (Stallybrass and White 1986). Ned Sublette has observed that this bottom-up orientation of aesthetic standards in dance “came in marked contrast to the notion that art descended from the nobles to the masses.” Indeed, his examination of the evolution of Cuban music for over five centuries of influences showed a pattern “A dance would start among the lowest people—the slaves and the free blacks. It would spread to the poor whites, deplored by the moralists as obscene until a general popular base was established for it, at which point it would move into the upper reaches of society” (Sublette 2004).

Carpentier and Sublette also observed the localized aspect of the mobility of musical
influences across stratified and racialized venues. For example, Carpentier describes how African music preferred by the working class “crowded in upon the world of the artistic elite, drifting up into the concert halls from the streets and the cabildos” in the late 19th century. As such the making of Cuban music informed processes of mestizaje taking place at “certain salon dances where customs filtered through from the bottom up, that is, from the dance halls to the lordly mansions.” (Carpentier 2001: 157). Music and dance appear to bear a particular permeable power to cut across those boundaries that white elites and colonial authorities worked so hard to construct. More so than at the high-class settings that Carpentier describes, Ned Sublette notes that early 20th century popular music and dance, the son was “incubated” at the lowest public settings imaginable—brothels, “[The brothels] provided work for the musicians, mingled the classes, and kept upper class men in contact with the latest trends in music” (2004: 295).

The 19th century antecessors of these blending sites for the making of Cuban music and dance were dance academies, Cuna balls, and lordly mansions. At the escuelitas and academies, black and mulata women were hired to work as practice partners of a majority of white (male) amateurs learning to dance under the direction of a black or mulato dance teacher. White pupils also practiced their skills at the Cuna balls of people of color, which they attended secretly, often behind closed windows or hidden back rooms (Villaverde 2010, González 1992). Black slaves also served as dance teachers and models to white señoritos in their own residential mansions where black musicians played the tidied up contradanzas, danzas and danzones. People, music, dance and their embodied tastes and feelings traveled in different directions, cutting across the highly divided social, symbolic and affective spaces of 19th century Havana. As historians of Cuban music have suggested, the active movements, orientations and transformations driven by dance and music making throughout the 19th century signaled the broader changing socio political dynamics that eventually culminated in the birth of the Cuban nation (Sublette 2004, Chasteen 2004).

**Conclusion**

This chapter has historicized the construction and transformation of a range of social and cultural standards around which systems of difference and distinction were organized in 19th century Cuba. Going beyond existing discussions on the construction of race, class, gender, sexuality or nationality, my analysis has focused on the body as a conceptual venue to examine
less explored aspects of the transformations affecting Havana society in the 19th century. Specifically, the body enables to see the performative and sensory and affective aspects of the cultural construction of subjectivities and the shaping of bodies as they are informed by practice and experience. The ways of doing, of acting, of behaving and the efforts to care for, mold, and educate/discipline bodies, their sensations and emotions, inform how people relate to each other and negotiate a place in society. The ways of being and behaving, of feeling and experiencing made a difference in the specific ways in which Havana society was structured and transformed throughout the 19th century.

A discursive analysis of books of etiquette or “urbanity” as they were called in Latin America, provides a unique venue to examine the disciplinary systems designed to mold the body during this transformative moment in Cuba’s history. This chapter examined these books narratives’ as pedagogies aimed to shape bodily manners and sensibilities. I demonstrate how the molding of body shapes, contours and emotions was crucial for the creation of shared habitus and structures of feeling that sustained projects of colonial establishment preservation and modern nation building unfolding simultaneously throughout the 19th century in Cuba. More specifically, my analysis examined the specific categories of taste, good manners / good conduct that authors of these books institutionalized as measures of respectability and class distinction of Havana’s (white, middle class) society. My discursive analysis of good manners and taste offers an important venue to reconsider the primacy of race and color as structuring principles of Havana’s society in the 19th century. The importance of good manners to Havana’s middle classes, irrespective of race, brings out just how insignificant skin color could be in the absence of properly shaped and behaved, and emotionally contained bodies and subjects. The editors of the Journal “Cuba y América” writing at 1901, under the ongoing U.S. occupation of Cuba, understood this idea well. To illustrate the subject of “Manners,” (Modales) the Journal editor, Raimundo Cabrera, included fragments of the book by Hardwicke The Art of Prospering (El Arte de Prosperar), with the following teachings about an exemplary role model for Cuban young men:

Pocos ejemplos mejores de dignificada cortesía pueden presentarse á los jóvens para su imitación que el de Washington. Compiló para su uso un código de moral y maneras á la edad de trece años, sobre el cual uno de sus biógrafos dice: “Estaba preparado para suavizar y pulir los modales, para guardar vivas las afecciones del corazón, para imprimir la obligación de las virtudes morales, para enseñar lo que es debido
á los otros en las relaciones sociales y sobre todo para inculcar la práctica de un perfecto imperio sobre sí mismo.” Sin las maneras corteses y conciliadoras de Washington la guerra de la Revolución no hubiera probablemente llegado al éxito (emphasis added, Hardwicke in Cabrera ed. 1901: 297).

Few better examples of dignified courtesy may be presented for youth to imitate than Washington. He edited for his use a code of morality and manners at age 13, about which one of his biographers writes “[George Washington] was prepared to soften and polish the manners, to keep alive the affections of the heart, to instill the obligation of moral virtues, to teach others what is proper in the social relations, and especially, to inculcate the practice of a perfect empire over oneself.” Without the polite and conciliatory ways of Washington, the Revolutionary war would probably not have succeeded.

Setting Washington as an example was rather significant at this historical moment in 1901. It reflected the ambivalent attitude of the Journal’s editors and of the broader Cuban population regarding U.S. occupation in Cuba (Iglesias 2003, Morán 2010). On the one hand Washington’s good manners and self-governance are presented as symbols of the civilized and modern “American way of life.” On the other hand, the author implies the same embodied attributes to be key weapons in Cuba’s political liberation from the North American cultural model on the island. As I further explore in Chapter 8, the legacy of the primacy of manners in the system of difference and distinction was not new to Cuba of the late 19th century. Rather it was a legacy, which Cuban nationalists like Raimundo Cabrera inherited from Del Monte and his generation in the 1820’s and into mid century.

The second part of the chapter discussed the processes of negotiation of categories of taste and good manners by those racialized middle classes over whom those performative, sensory and affective governance technologies were more strongly enforced. I analyzed these negotiations in a range of artistic and professional fields including dentistry, education, midwifery, wet-nursing, painting, music and dance. Overall, the analysis revealed the efforts by white middle and upper classes to reclaim fields dominated by blacks in order to enhance their own project of cultural identity. In particular, scholars across disciplines have used the concept of cultural hygiene to describe a phenomenon of appropriation or entitlement to the realm of art or other cultural / aesthetic domain by certain ethnic or gender based group identities, which is
“clean” or free of the cultural influence or proximity of other subjects (lower classes, women, queer and of color or other nationality) (Hubbs 2004, Igbaria and Tan 1998, Stoler 1997).

In particular Mary Douglas’ groundbreaking book *Purity and Danger* (2002) on the symbolism of pollution provides an interesting metaphorical venue to understand the issues presented this chapter. As Douglas understands it, pollution suggests borders that help maintain order and protect bodily, social symbolic and spatial bounded spaces or spheres. She notes “…dirt as matter out of place… implies two conditions: a set of ordered relations and a contravention of that order… Dirt is the by-product of a systematic ordering and classification of matter, in so far as ordering involves rejecting inappropriate elements. Uncleanliness or dirt is that which must not be included if the pattern is to be maintained” (Douglas 2002: 44, 50). Douglas’ idea of “pattern” speaks to the notion of aesthetics used in this chapter and throughout this dissertation, as a framework to understand arrangements of power, representation and the material world in entangled social, symbolic and spatial fields. Aesthetics expresses the interlocking affective, sensory, political, moral and symbolic thresholds or standards that organize normative and ordered systems and social imaginaries. This chapter evidenced the efforts by the emergent bourgeois intellectual-planter class to consolidate an aesthetic order organized by standards of conduct and of experience to emphasize their own social distinction. Good manners and taste encompassed a set of codes to interpret the symbolic location of body movements, accessories, cultural practices, habits, objects, sites, emotions, and sensations within or outside the bourgeois imaginary of distinction. The hegemonization of these aesthetic and moral codes of difference entailed the disembodiment and displacement of valued practices from African bodies and influences. A “clean” aesthetic and cultural space was thereby created.

However, the labor of cultural and material cleansing from the influence of practices embodied in the bodies of blacks and *mulatos/as* was not equally possible or desirable in all

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105 In her account on the influence of gay composers in the formation of a modernist national tendency in the United States, Nadine Hubs cites the following as an example of what she calls an American discourse of music-cultural hygiene from a 1942 American *Vogue* article by a British conductor “When art is vital and creative, it is the almost exclusive property of a man, who is essentially the creative element in human kind. When it becomes barren and stereotyped, then come the women; the conservative and the reactionary as well as that neutral type of creature, neither man nor woman, which is rampantly prevalent in our stricken later-day world” (Hubs 2004: 80). In her work on sexuality and race in 20th century colonial cultures Anne Stoler also uses the concept of cultural hygiene to illustrate medical discourses of cultural contamination in the context of the dynamics of race and sexual relations in the colonies of French Indochina and the Dutch East Indies. This discourse associated miscegenation to ideas of racial, moral and cultural degeneration associated with proximity with colonial cultures (Stoler 1997).
cultural fields. Music and dance were two intimately tied fields characterized primarily by their transgressive power, rather than for adhering to aesthetic or institutional boundaries of order. As a counterpoint to the notions of good manners and taste, sabor developed as a system that organized the perceptions, practices and experiences around Cuban made mixed music and dance forms. The popularity of African-influenced musical forms like contradanza, danza and danzón among white creoles propitiated all kinds social mixings and transgressions (racial, gender and sexual) in the social interactions and in the unique blends of European and African traditions.

This uniquely transgressive, permeable and unifying symbolic and affective quality of sabor definitive of Cuban music and dance was a fundamental unifying principle in the construction of nationhood towards the late 19th century. Popular culture, and vernacular theater in particular, manipulated the affective and discursive space to challenge the racially and culturally cleansed and whitened imaginary that white creole elites worked so hard to create in the first half of the 19th century. In turn, they embraced sabor as a defining feature of Cuban identity. Future analysis may further examine how the emergent affective structures of sabor may have facilitated or were manipulated politically by independence activists to consolidate the narrative of raceless nationality that grounded their struggle and mobilized supporters across those affective and symbolic boundaries worked over decades by colonial and creole elites.
Chapter 6 – Colonial Mimicry: Embodied Gestures of Class and Racial Emulation in Nineteenth century Havana

Jugando a ser europeos, no copiando las cosas o los usos europeos, sino mimetizándose, simulando ser ellos mismos europeos, es decir, repitiendo o “poniendo en escena” lo europeo, los indios asimilados montaron una muy peculiar representación de lo europeo. Era una representación o imitación que en un momento dado, asombrosamente, había dejado de ser tal y pasado a ser una realidad o un original... una “puesta en escena absoluta”, que había transformado el teatro en donde tenía lugar, permutando la realidad de la platea con la del escenario. Al llevar a cabo esta “puesta en escena absoluta”, esta representación barroca, los indios que mestizan a los europeos mientras se mestizan a sí mismos vienen a sumarse a todos aquellos seres humanos que pretendían en esa época construir para sí mismos una identidad propiamente moderna, sobre la base de la particularización capitalista de la modernidad.106

-Bolivar Echeverría

[The uncanny expresses]...the contrast between the secure homely interior and the fearful invasion of an alien presence; on a psychological level, its play is one of doubling, where the other is, strangely enough, experienced as a replica of the self, all the more fearsome because apparently the same. At the heart of the anxiety provoked by such alien presences was a fundamental insecurity: that of a newly established class, not quite at home in its own home. The uncanny, in this sense, might be characterized as the quintessential bourgeois kind of fear...

-Anthony Vidler

Ambiguous things can seem very threatening.

-Mary Douglas

This chapter explores the tensions, contradictions and transformations in the cultural and

106 “Playing to be Europeans, not copying European things or customs, but rather mimetizing themselves, faking to be European themselves, or repeating or "staging" the European, the assimilated Indians mounted a very peculiar representation of Europeanness. It was a representation or imitation that at any given time, surprisingly, was no longer such and become a reality or an original ... an "absolute staging", which had transformed the theater where it took place, swapping the reality of the pit with that of the stage. In carrying out this "absolute staging", this Baroque representation, the Indians that make Europeans mestizo, while also making themselves mestizos join all of those human beings who at that time wanted to build for themselves a strictly modern identity on the basis of the particularization of capitalist modernity.” Bolivar Echeverría.
discursive construction of two figures in 19th century literary and popular cultural representations, which have been largely disregarded in scholarly analysis of colonial Cuba. Complementing the discussion on female cultural constructs in Chapter 7, I examine the construction of the Cuban “petimetre,” a Europeanized creole white male dandy or fop, in relationship to its racial counter-figure, the “uppity” light-skinned, Westernized Cuban mulato. Cuban costumbrista authors portrayed both figures as somewhat false copies of the “originals”—i.e. the European, and the Cuban creole, respectively—who they are compelled to “mimic” in their quest for social advancement and distinction. Existing in undefined, liminal discursive zones of ambivalence, these figures epitomize the class, gender and racial tensions marking Cuban society on an around the events of La Escalera (1833-1844). The ambiguity that characterizes these figures is an expression of the representational and political crisis that defined this historical moment in Havana. Ambivalence, uncertainty and indefinability about the political, economic, cultural and spatial limits of blacks in colonial society were at the roots of authorities and white elite’s anxieties and their efforts to enforce boundaries. The repression of La Escalera violently epitomized these efforts.

The analysis reveals the crucial role that people of color played in the process of molding a colonial-modern class habitus—a cultural imaginary by white bourgeois standards where Cuban white creoles rose as models of normative bodies and subjectivities. At the same time, the analysis exposes the ways in which educated, working class blacks and mulatos seized control over the instruments of power and disciplining of bodies, such as dress fashion and the larger, developing systems and regimes of “manners” and “taste”. Following Bhabha (1994a) and De Certeau (1988), I interpret these efforts as part of the web of quotidian “tactics” that subaltern actors mobilized in their struggle to negotiate a place within the terms of oppressive systems and highly stratified social structures. Their transgressions, nonetheless, did not go unnoticed or unsanctioned.

The characters of the petimetre and the bourgeois mulato evolved over the first four decades of the 19th century into radically different personas. The Cuban “petimetre” elaborated in early costumbrista articles as an emulator of the norm in the 1800’s eventually evolved into the embodiment of the norm by the 1830’s when the intellectual creole elite recognized itself in this character and subsequently projected white Cuban creoles as cultural models in the national imaginary in construction. On the other hand, the elite, bourgeois mulato formed part of the
developing urban, cosmopolitan educated, professional and politically influential class who was the object of growing fears of the white upper classes and the colonial administration. For his cultural mastery of the manners, the forms and the “taste” of the upper class (i.e. for music, art, dress, etc), the black bourgeois *mulato* was a successful mimic of the colonial project. Rather than being rewarded for the achieved mandate of the civilizing mission, bourgeois *mulatos* of Havana’s black aristocracy were victimized and aggressively “crushed” during the repression of *La Escalera*.

I use Homi Bhabha’s theory of mimicry as a framework to understand the processes of construction and negotiation of subjectivities, as well as the contradictions or the “cracks in the system” that colonial discourse produced (De Certeau 1988). I also examine the complex orientations of the colonial gaze during the processes of “molting” of subjects and bodies transitioning from colonial into modern systems of social classification and distinction. My analysis highlights the usefulness of mimicry to understand processes of cultural transformation in the 19th century in relation to the concept of transculturation. I highlight the agentive and creative dimensions of mimicry as well as the complexity of its workings in multi-dimensional fields of cultural influence. This chapter continues the discussion about the changing social and symbolic systems of perception and value occurring throughout the 19th century reflected in the new subject and bodily pedagogies and its novel disciplinary and creative instruments including changes in the urban space, textbooks of conduct, dress fashion, bleaching devices and spiritual practices.

**Colonial mimics**

Postcolonial theorists like Edward Said, Homi Bhabha and Frantz Fanon have discussed the discursive processes of construction of colonial subjectivities produced during European colonization. Colonial subjects are made through the relationships of domination entailing the contact, conflict, negotiation and resistance between European colonizers and native inhabitants of the colonies. Colonial discourse understood within the postcolonial theory framework, is the set of narratives, ideologies and regimes that produce social differences and hierarchies organized according to gender, sexual, class, racial and national parameters. Colonialism had a pedagogical dimension referred to as the “civilizing mission” whereby Western cultural and value systems were imposed onto colonized populations. While colonized populations
manifested resistance in various ways, this process of imposition compelled colonized individuals to negate and reject their (original, native) selves, in order to become an “Other” in the image of the colonial self or normative subject. The product of the pedagogical “civilizing” process is the colonial subject who is essentially a stereotype, a made-up subject defined by its potential to be disciplinable and knowable (Bhabha 1994a, Fanon 1982, Said 1978).

In *The Location of Culture* Bhabha explains this particular kind of colonial subject formation through the concept of “mimic men” (Bhabha 1994a). The mimic subject is an essentially contradictory persona. The intention of reproducing the “civilized” European in the native produces a subject that resembles the former to the extent of making the mimic unclassifiable, unknowable, undistinguishable from the “original,” producing a crisis of verification. The mimic, as colonial subject, is thus constructed as a fetish, an object and objectified subject of colonial discourse produced through the colonial gaze—a situation of domination in which the colonizer observes, knows, and intervenes on colonized bodies.

Different forms of knowledge and representations about the mutually constituted figures of the colonizer and colonized are produced as a result of this process. Colonized and colonizer identities and representations are created in relationship to each other. Bhabha’s theorization of colonial discourse reveals the intrinsic ambiguity and duplicity of colonial discourse evident in the contradictory attitudes of pleasure and desire as well as fear and anxiety of colonizers vis-à-vis the Othered subjects they produced. Mimic subjects epitomize the ambivalent character of colonial discourse as embodiments of a duple, contradictory social nature which is “almost the same but not quite / not white”. Therefore, to their colonial creators mimics represent both “resemblance and menace”. Resemblance is menacing because it blurs the established systems of meaning on which social distinctions lie, causing a destabilization of the whole social order. McClintock has referred to this situation as a “crisis of representation of difference” (McClintock 1995).

Mimicry, then, conveys the complex political implications of the colonial mission’s pretense to “civilize” (or “humanize”) the subaltern. The colonial project faced the political inconvenience of such an aspiration to the extent that colonial mimics represent successful civilizing products and simultaneously threats to colonial power. Bhabha explains, “mimicry emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal” (Bhabha 1994: 122). That is, colonial discourse requires the Other to ascribe to a norm—it disciplines the
subject. At the same time, the colonial project requires to conceive / construct her/him (make it appear as) radically different to that norm in order to ensure the coherence and stability of the colonial regime and its stratified structure. This ambivalence of colonial discourse defines mimicry. Its effectiveness is dependent on the continuous production of this “slippage” (perhaps, the width of a frontier) between a sharper resemblance (mimicry: a difference almost the same but not quite) and a rougher resemblance (menace: a difference that is almost complete but not quite). The establishment of parameters of appropriate/inappropriateness work to “ensure the strategic failure” of this exercise of “appropriation”. The performance of subjectivities, as Butler and others would argue, is defined by this process of systematic attempts and failures to resemble (Butler 1989).

In Cuba, 19th century discourses and technologies of the body provided the space for the re-configuration of the terms of Otherness, that is, the process of configuration of subjects into “entirely knowable and visible,” (Bhabha 1994a) disciplinable and “docile” (Foucault 1995). The profound social transformations taking place in 19th century produced a set of discourses and institutions that gave rise to new and renewed specific 19th century colonial bodies and subjects. In particular, a distinctively and consciously Cuban bourgeois class emerged and was constructed during the period since 1790 and into the forthcoming decades of the 19th century. Notwithstanding the ideological heterogeneity of its members, a developing class-consciousness united a select circle of Cuban planters and middle and upper class intellectuals around several key elements. First, the creation of the Sociedad provided an institutional space for their consolidation as ambassadors and entrepreneurs of education along with several other areas of social and institutional reform. Education for Cuban social reformists was not only an intellectual project but significantly a moral and cultural project used as an avenue to imagine and define a new kind of normative citizen-subject. This new modernized subject, conceived under enlightenment precepts, was first and foremost a “moral” subject defined by interrelated attributes of being educated, entrepreneurial, heterosexual and white, a compound of measures denoting “respectability”.

This creole class-consciousness also developed in relationship to the means of production of an emerging capitalist system anchored in the thriving sugar plantation industry. Its byproducts, wealth, money, literature and a developing consumer culture were key markers of a process of construction of class-consciousness and social distinction. These assets balanced off
Cuban creoles’ lack of political power since the 1830’s under the Spanish colonial regime. Finally, an incipient nationalist sentiment manifested as a sense of pride tied to Cuba as a geographical unit and to Cuba’s distinctive and common cultural elements. In this context, using the powerful instrument of authorship as a venue, the Cuban creole produced himself in the first decades of the 19th century as the model normative citizen-subject standing in the undefined, hybrid zone of a colonial and modern subjectivity. The changing racial and class politics of the early 19th century opened up a discursive space where the Cuban creole was constructed as a new kind of colonizer subject, rising to be the rival of the “original” Spanish colonizer. At the same time, the Cuban creole was made into a new kind of colonized subject under the new disciplinary guise of Spanish colonial authorities. Spanish colonists responded to the emancipatory airs that marked the political atmosphere of Cuba and Spanish America during early 19th century. Particularly since 1834, Spanish authorities made Cuban creoles, from allies and collaborators, into subjects in need of subjection and disciplining. The political disjuncture created by Cuban creoles’ existence in an unstable and ambivalent discursive zone as colonizer and colonized, activated a complex “game of gazes” whereby the object and directionality of the colonial gaze was shifted and re-oriented.

The consolidation and empowerment of the bourgeoning free black urban class complicated the picture. For both Spanish and Cuban creoles, blacks in general, but particularly free blacks emerged as menacing figures to white hegemony. Spanish authorities gazed at Cuban creoles and blacks as potentially destabilizing elements to colonial hegemony in Cuba. For their part, Cuban creoles looked to Europe, and as the century advanced, to the United States as referential cultural models (Iglesias 2003, Riaño San Marful 2002, Pérez 1999). The racial legitimacy enjoyed by Cuban white creoles due to their color and class status, granted them an authority, a “power to be models” (Bhabha 1994) making them into particularly successful “mimic” products of the colonial civilizing project. For their part, urban free blacks were the epitome of the mimic subject, gazing (back) to a range of referential cultural models of subjectivity, including Cuban creoles, Spanish royalty, and black political leaders (especially after Haiti) as described in Chapter 3. In contrast to Cuban white creoles, urban and free black creoles, especially the lighter skinned and Westernized type, would ever more since the early 19th century and throughout, be persistently depicted as fake copies of the “original.” In Bhabha’s words, these were “inappropriate” colonial subjects who although may seem white,
will never actually be or become white. As the author of one famous poem about the utmost colonial racial and sexual fetish, the Cuban mulata reminded her with contempt “Tú no eres blanca, mulata, ni es oro puro tu pelo, ni tu garganta es de plata…” (“You are not white, mulata, nor is your hair made of gold, or your throat made of silver…” Zorrilla in De las Barras y Prado 1925: 117).

As introduced in Chapter 4, satire was one common mode of representation of colonial subjectivity specific to or characteristic of 19th century authorship, particularly by way of costumbrismo. Ridiculing the “Other” was a strategic, rhetorical recourse of authors, providing a venue for representing, seeing and imagining the colonized subject. Moreover, satire served a powerful socio-psychological instrument to “sedate” the representer, that is, to normalize or neutralize the anxiety-producing effects of the colonized subject in its menacing face (Lane 2010).

Costumbrista literature is filled with examples of stereotypical subjects that appeared in articles published in periodicals since the emergence of the printed press in 1790 (Bueno 1985). This chapter will focus on the racialized and classed masculine figures constructed and transformed in costumbrista writings during the late to mid 19th century in Cuba. Reading the evolution of these subject types in costumbrista narratives at different moments reveals the complex processes of transformation, transmutation and “re(de)fining” of colonial bodies and subjects as an ongoing cultural project throughout the 19th century. One very peculiar, early subject type that appeared in costumbrista literature, which has been largely ignored in scholarly analysis of costumbrismo is the figure of the “petimetre” or fop. In the next section I will analyze the transformations of this figure through a comparative reading of an early costumbrista writer, Buenaventura Pascual Ferrer (writing since the late 1700 onto the 1830’s) against later writers leading more rounded intellectual and political projects like José Antonio Saco and Cirilo Villaverde (writing between 1820’s and onto the 1850’s). The analysis also includes examples from novelists, artists, educators and authors of books of conduct, all of whom helped define, re-define and polish the emerging bourgeois Cuban cultural imaginary and its models of normative and anti-normative bodies and subjects.

Petimetre pedagogy, classed mimicry
Petimetres were one of Buenaventura Pascual Ferrer’s preferred types. In a typical normalizing format, and with a hinge of satire, Ferrer constructed this character and subject type in a series of editorials published between 1801 and 1831 in the magazine he directed, entitled El Regañón, and its subsequent re-appearances as El Substituto del Regañón and El Nuevo Reganón. According to the Royal Spanish Academy, the Spanish term “petimetre” comes from the French petit maître meaning little gentleman or “señorito”. The fop was a fictional and historical character, a social stereotype representing the mid 18th century European bourgeois, a middle class white man or woman, although it is generally represented as male, who aspires to be an aristocrat and a “gentleman” by imitating the ways and fashion of the upper class, especially French fashion and dialect. Petimetres were objects of ridicule for their exaggerated preoccupation with dress, fashion and appearance bordering on effeminacy.

Given Ferrer’s wide insertion and frequent travels to Spanish courtly circles, he was aware of the stereotype specific to Spanish society in the 18th century, where the Spanish petimetre was the equivalent of the Anglo-European fop. Thus, the petimetre embodies the specifically bourgeois subject type, a subject and body made up and molded by modern regimes of “good” manners and good dress, a master of social emulation, and as such, the successful product of the “civilizing process” of the West (Elias 1939). At the same time, petimetres can be seen as epitomizing a kind of metamorphosis of the normative subject and body in Spanish and Cuban cultural history who transmuted from the colonial noble or gentleman’s body into the modern bourgeois’ body. Petimetres went from being constituted through “essence” to being determined by “form”, from being marked by descent, lineage and blood, to being made and cultivated through manners, dress and moral education. An early kind of mimic subject, the Spanish-Cuban petimetre lies at a turning point between epochs. The ideological shifts brought by enlightenment, capitalism and modernity brought profound effects in the re-ordering and molding of systems of social distinction. With the socio-economic and cultural ascension of the bourgeois subject rose capitalism, its consumer culture, and its enabling bourgeois institutions—

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107 Ferrer directed El Regañón de La Habana (9/30/1801-3/3/1801) and El Nuevo Regañón (2/11/1830-11/22/1831). His “substitute” during a trip to Mexico was José Antonio de la Osa as director of El Substituto del Regañón. However, Ferrer was author of the articles published under this title (Lezama Lima 1965). While he was the sole contributor to the numbers of the earliest titles, El Nuevo Regañón had other contributors including Antonio Bachiller y Morales, Claro Veráz, among others. (Almanaque de la Prensa Cubana 2012)

108 Historically, the first reference to the character type of the fop is found in theater, specifically the French playwright Molière’s 1671 classic piece Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme. The fop was the Enlightenment forerunner to the 19th century dandy (Hovey 2007)
the family, education, the printed press and literature—making up the disciplinary complex where the bourgeois body and subjectivity were consecrated as citizenship ideals.

In an article labeled “School of masculine fops” (“Escuela de petimetres masculinos”, 1801) Ferrer provides detailed prescriptions of how should (or does) an “average” petimetre go about in his daily routine as an “exact mimic of [those of] beautiful spirit” aspiring to pass a gentleman. Ferrer narrates how young white men or “señoritos” ought to dress, what matters of conversation they ought to (and do) engage in, what furniture (should) they prefer to sit on, and what bodily manners express their closeness to Europeanness, particularly Frenchness. The “excess” between what the petimetre actually does and what he ought to do to be a successful mimic heightens the ridiculing effect that Ferrer intends to convey. In this passage Ferrer prescribes/describes the interaction of “señoritos” during their routine visits to respectable ladies’ homes,

*Empezará su discurso con la más profunda erudición; esto es: tratará de cortejos, de comedias, de novelas, de perritos de falda, de jaquecas, cintas, abanicos, hebillitas de resorte, lacitos para los zapatos y otras mil preciosidades semejantes. Luego seguirá haciendo conmemoración de todas las visitas que tiene que hacer: ponderará su fatiga por el mucho sol, el calor intolerable, el mucho polvo o lodo de las calles, (cosa en que no hay medio en esta ciudad), y concluirá con dar tres o cuatro bostezos... se despedirá a la francesa: esto es haciendo cabrioles, estirándose el pantalón, componiéndose el pañuelo del pescuezo, tarareando, dando castañetazos con los dedos. En todo esto tendrá tanto cuidado y esmero, cuanto le sea posible para no exponerse a ser la risa de las Damas: con seguridad de que la exacta observación de este precepto, le proporcionará los epítetos de galán de sans facón y naturalísimo, marcial y exacto imitador de los de bello espíritu. (Ferrer 1965 [1801], El substituto del Regañón de La Habana, p 256-260)*

He will begin his speech with the most profound erudition, that is: he will discuss about courtships, comedies, novels, little dogs, migraines, ribbons, fans, little rubber buckles, little ribbons for shoes, and a thousand other such treasures. He will then continue to commemorate all the visits he has to do: he will ponder over his fatigue from the long sun, the intolerable heat, the heavy dust or dirt in the streets, (something that in this city there is none), and conclude with giving two or three yawns ... he will say goodbye the French way, this is: capering around, stretching his pants, adjusting the scarf in his neck, humming, sounding the fingers like castanets. In all of this, he will put much care and attention, whenever possible, so as to not be exposed to the ladies’ laughter, being confident in that the exact observation of this rule will provide him with the epithets of beau of ‘sans facón’ and most natural, martial and exact imitator of those of beautiful spirit.
Ferrer’s description underscores the inauthenticity of the petimetre. He is no more than a false “gentleman” making efforts to imitate the “true” aristocracy, or as he described petimetres in a more graphic characterization, they are “straw and rag figurines” (“figurillas de trapo y paja”) (Ferrer: 1865, 295)

Decades later, the canonical 19th century novel “Cecilia Valdés” portrayed a petimetre of this kind. The author Cirilo Villaverde typified this figure in one of the protagonists, Leonardo Gamboa. Villaverde characterized Leonardo as an “idle, pretentious and philandering wastrel” a typical señorito, the spoiled child born to a “rich if not quite noble family” destined for the legal profession to which one with “rich and with ample pretensions of nobility” might aspire (Villaverde in Harney 2009: 169, emphasis added). In her analysis of the novel, Lucy Harney observed what she termed a pedagogical bias of Enlightenment liberalism in Villaverde’s characterization of Leonardo (Harney 2009). Villaverde was in fact part of the social reformist movement led by José Antonio Saco and Domingo Del Monte which put forth the radical idea of exhorting hard work, self-improvement and education as virtues of their imaginary new (normative) bourgeois subject. This new, enlightened subject was constructed as a superior being in contrast to the aristocrat colonial subject whose honors were conferred on account of birth rather than on their abilities and virtues (Harney 2009).

As I examined in detail in Chapter 5, Ferrer symbolized the developing Cuban authorship located at a turning point between two centuries and ideological structures. Ferrer was a Spanishized bourgeois paving the way to the evolving, more defined subjective stances of Cubanized intellectuals like Saco and Del Monte (Lezama Lima 1965). From this transitional discursive and historical location, Ferrer’s concerns with upward social ambition evidence his fondness of essentialist notions of nobility and class status. To him, the “little bourgeoisies” can only pretend to be “true” noblemen. Already with Saco, the quintessential Cubanist creole intellectual of the 1820’s through mid century, this mentality starts to change. Ferrer represents the Spanishized Cuban aristocrat who still gazes to Europe, and from there—the symbolic and discursive space of the West—gazes back at the emerging Cuban bourgeois subject, makes him a fetish in European terms and classificatory boundaries, creating a ridiculed stereotype, the “petimetre.” What happens when this “petimetre” strips off from the colonizing gaze of Europeanized Cubans and reincarnates from anti-norm into norm, from being the object of the gaze to being the gazer, the objectifier, the orientalizer?
The *petimetre* that Ferrer ridicules in his early 19th century writings transmutes into the new colonizer subject—the new enlightened, refined Cuban creole—bringing with him a renewed civilizing repertoire under the guise of enlightenment, capitalism and modernity. New systems of social appreciation and differentiation become necessary to validate this modern civilized ideal subject embodied in the Cuban creole. Notions of taste, manners and distinction become crucial intangible and embodied attributes that may be acquired through pedagogies of morality. These attributes and their manifestations in the forms and ways of the body, play out in an economy of appearances, which de-authorize essentialist criteria of Spanish colonial mentality. *Cultivated* class status and privilege gain ground over *ontological* attributes of blood and skin color as measures of social distinction, creating a structural space of a widened threshold zone for social mobility across the class structure.

The following quote taken from José Antonio Saco’s classic essay *Memoria sobre la Vagancia* (Memoir on Vagrancy 1974 [1831]), exemplifies this idea. As part of his prescription to recuperate the “arts” for the white middle classes and away from the free class of color in Havana, Saco’s bourgeois redefinition of “nobility” signals the transcendental changes in social ideologies of distinction taking place at the time of his writing around the early 1830’s. Nobility titles, in his opinion are not a good mechanism “to induce the white population to embrace the arts.” Such a high distinction is not necessary to make the arts flourish because,

*Las artes son muy modestas: los artesanos no ambicionan títulos de nobleza; buscan tan solo un pan con que alimentarse; pero pan que no esté envenenado con el insulto del rico, ni con el desprecio del grande. La nobleza es una calidad que no depende de las leyes; dála solamente la opinión, y si le falta la herrumbre de los siglos, no será, ni aun á los ojos del pueblo donde se tenga en gran estima, sino un nombre insignificante y ridículo. Yo compararía la nobleza con los vinos que se sirven en las mesas de gran tono, pues por excelentes que sean, si no se sabe qué tienen cuarenta ó cincuenta años, los convidados no les dan su completa aprobación.* (Saco 1974: 206, my emphasis)

The arts are very modest: the artisans do not ambition titles of nobility; they only seek the bread with which to be fed; but a bread that is not poisoned with the insult of the rich, or with the disdain of the great. Nobility is a quality that does not depend on the laws; *it is granted only through opinion*, and if it lacks the rust of the centuries [or the rust of time], it is not, even to the eyes of the people where it is held in great esteem, but an insignificant and ridiculous name. I would compare nobility with the wines served in the tables of great tone, because although they might be excellent, *if one does not know* that they are aged forty or fifty years, the guests will not give their complete approval.
In line with the broader statements made throughout his essay, Saco’s call to democratize nobility is a rather radical vision for his time and a convenient principle for a bourgeois like him and the class he represented. Saco implies that everyone, rich or poor, is entitled to nobility in as much as nobility is redefined so as to not depend on attributes given by “nature” or even by “law” but rather on cultural processes of cultivation of individual effort and merit. Furthermore, nobility is an embodied, internalized condition that requires a cognitive process of deciphering or knowing gained through the possession of a symbolic code, a system of distinction, a class *habitus* (Bourdieu 1989).

The kinds of changes in ideologies of distinction evident in Saco’s writing reflect broad ideological transformations ongoing in both Cuba and Spain during the late 18th and early 19th century. In words of historian McAlisterr (1863), there was a gradual erosion of a social structure based on estates, corporations and juridical inequality and the outlines of a new system based on economic class with the growing strength of a mercantile bourgeoisie. These political-economic transformations brought changes in the systems of meaning around which social relations were structured, interpreted and organized. For example, in Spain, the formal categorization of hierarchies of social rank included the measure of social “quality” (*calidad*). Quality was signaled by “honor,” a category of rank entitled to warriors who made up the nobility. Bearing arms was a highly valued, honor-granting function in relation to the demeaned professions in agriculture, trade and manufacturing of the lower estates deemed “dishonorable”. The socio economic transformations brought by industrial and agricultural capitalism, population growth and a broad range of institutional reforms towards late 18th and into 19th century facilitated the rise of the bourgeois class of merchants, bankers and men of “letters” (*letrados*). The growing indispensability of this class increased the social value of money, allowing the “purchase” of social rank and its privileges of “social quality”. Through their powerful weapon—money—bourgeoisies eventually displaced “hidalgos” at the lower end of the nobility estate along with knights, marquises, and “grandes” (Engels 1884, Mcalister 1963). The social structure became more permeable as a space opened up for greater social mobility compared to the more rigid estate-structured society.

As a result of these changes, the meanings of honor and related notion of “honesty” shifted meanings, from self-esteem earned from status or rank (“pundonor”) to the modern
bourgeois concept of honor as rectitude, strict accounting for responsibility and moral conduct. In the colonies, the meanings of honor changed from being signaled by deeds, as in colonizers occupation of territories or founding of towns, to mean a kind of “state of mind” given by the possession, cultivation and social acknowledgement of one’s moral virtues (McAlister 1963). As somewhat complementary forms of symbolic capital, nobility was devalued as a category signaling rank as it lent room to wealth as an indispensable validator of nobility, “Some compare nobility to the zero of the decimal system; by itself it is nothing but joined with a digit it acquires a great value” (Huarte de San Juan in McAlister 1963: 351). New social categories emerged which reflected these symbolic transformations. In reference to New Spain in the eve of Mexican independence, McAlister observes,

…identifications based on place of birth and ethnic origins tended to be replaced by others expressing only social quality. In the service records of militia and regular officers in the 1770’s, under calidad [quality] are found the terms mestizo, castizo, pardo, español europeo and español americano. By 1806 these were largely replaced by such identifications as noble, ilustre, conocida, distinguida, honrada, and buena

(McCalister 1969: 369)

In Cuba, manuals of conduct published progressively throughout the 19th century compiled and shaped moral and body regimes that constructed and recreated this transmuted spiritual “noble” in the body of the white, heterosexual Cuban creole. Textbooks published since the 1830’s, around the time of Saco’s writing, already stated the transformed, bourgeois constructions of nobility as part of the developing ideologies of distinction they promoted. Their authors convey an understanding of a sublimated nobility transformed from a localizable “quality” attribute in bodies’ substances and legal certificates, into an intangible, embodied attribute, a virtue that is achieved, learned and known. In the 1850’s Villaverde’s publication of Cecilia Valdes contains this definition in the epigraph of his Chapter II, “A gentleman is not the

109 Also in reference to New Spain at the turn of the 18th century, the author notes the proliferation of in-between social categories, blurring the lines between whites and the lower class, racially mixed “castes”, such as the terms “pardo” and “moreno” as opposed to “negro” and “mulato”. White-signifying categories like “Spanish” were less cautiously employed to identify people of mixed ancestry that could “pass.” These were the times of the Spanish Crown’s concessionary policies through special royal licenses, such as Gracias al Sacar (see Chapter 3). These special license was aimed to ease out political and class conflict in the colonies, by offering legal opportunities to access privileges of rank through military careers, the purchase of nobility titles to creoles and legal whiteness to the racially mixed.
man who is born one but the man who knows how to be one.” (“No es caballero el que nace, sino el que lo sabe ser”, Villaverde 1882[1839]: 109, emphasis added) Decades later, the pioneer female journalist and teacher, Domitila García de Coronado (1847-1937) reiterated the definition in a textbook of conduct for women published in 1881,“Noble is not whom is born noble but who knows how to be” (“Noble no es quien nace noble, sino quien sabe serlo”). This premise exemplifies the modern logic of liberal achievement winning over the rules of pedigree as a sign of the decadence of Spanish colonialism and its founding seigniorial social structures during the second half of the 19th century in Cuba (Paquette 1988).

The redefined conception of nobility was inserted into a developing ideology of modern socio-cultural differentiation referred to as “urbanity”. Textbooks of conduct in 19th century Latin America were commonly titled “Manuals of Urbanity and Good Manners.” The Venezuelan middle class educator and entrepreneur, Manuel Antonio Carreño, authored the best known of such texts published in 1854. This manual written for the middle classes in Venezuela extended to various parts of the Hispanic Caribbean and Latin America including, Puerto Rico, Mexico and Ecuador, reaching peak popularity at the turn of the 19th century, and enjoying currency to date, being recently re-published in Venezuela (González-Stephan 1999). “El Carreño” as this text was commonly known has been widely examined in scholarly analyses. In particular Angel Quintero Rivera studied its influence in late 19th century Puerto Rico and Cuba in a groundbreaking analysis on “dance etiquette” exploring the intersections of dance, body movement, gender, race and class. However, there are no references of the use of El Carreño in 19th century Cuba. The first reference found of its use in Cuba dates from the early 20th century, in an autobiographical piece by Alejo Carpentier where he remembers having read El Carreño as part of the school curriculum110 (2003: 50).

110 The transnational circulation of knowledge on urbanity and “manners” between Cuba and Venezuela could be the matter of a separate project in it of itself. I have found several “footprints” that could serve as a guide in this endeavor. The pressing question is whether Carreño and De La Torre ever met and if they did, given their similar projects, how did they influence one another’s work? An important link is found in the biography of Teresa Carreño, the daughter of Manuel Antonio Carreño, who became one of the most famous internationally acclaimed pianists of her time. Teresa Carreño debuted at the early age of 8 at Irving Hall in New York where she emigrated with her family in 1862. According to a biographer, months after her birth in 1853, Carreño traveled to Havana to promote his book Manual de Urbanidad y Buenas Maneras para Usos de la Juventud de Ambos Sexos (Milanca Guzmán 1990: 38) The year after her New York debut, in 1863 she gave a masterful performance at the Liceo Artístico y Literario and at the Tacón Theater following the steps of one of her teachers, Louisiana’s Louis Moreau Gottschalk, consecrated as virtuous concert pianist in South America after his own debut acclaimed by Havana’s audiences in 1854 (Star 1995: 180). As mentioned earlier, several references testify of the use of Carreño’s text in Cuban schools.
However, there were several texts of this kind published by Cuban authors throughout the 19th century. Two textbooks authored by José María De la Torre (1857) and Domitila García de Coronado (1881) provided detailed definitions of the concept of urbanity. According to the authors, urbanity is a state of the mind and of the body, which may be attained by “carefully observing well educated people and procuring to imitate them” according to “the country where we are, to our age and the place that we occupy in society” (De La Torre 1857: 3) The authors emphasize, “it is not acceptable to wear attires” and “there is nothing more ridiculous than taking the manners and tone that correspond to persons of superior character” which do not go “in harmony with one's own position” (De La Torre 1857: 3; De Coronado 1893).

These definitions evidence that rather than being downplayed and ridiculed as an attribute of false, empty, or inauthentic “superiority” within modern ideologies of urbanity, mimicry is encouraged and praised as a value and a virtue, the fundamental pedagogical principle of the made-up good-mannered, “proper” subject. At the same time, however, performing urbanity implies that mimicry is only acceptable to the extent that the social order or “proper place” is preserved. This paradox, inherent and characteristic of colonial discourse, makes mimicry mandatory and simultaneously reprehensible and punishable. The pressing concerns with social place and manners expressed in these texts along the broader social reformist movement of costumbrismo, speak to the profound transformative moment that was the Cuban 19th century. In particular, white elites had a growing anxiety about the evolving artisan class of free blacks and mulattos. Concerns grew about their stronger presence in the cities, greater economic autonomy and—more importantly—perceptions about their closeness to white cultural standards.

White and black gendered ambivalence: transferring gazes, transmuting bodies

Wandering in an undefined border class-subject-zone between the strictly bourgeois (determined by wealth) and the strictly noble or aristocrat (determined by bloodline), the figure of the fop, rescued by Ferrer at such a crucial moment of inflection in Cuban cultural history, epitomized the utmost ambiguous subject. The emergence and consolidation of Cuban creole during the early 19th century, but a reference to its use by General Fulgencio Batista, Cuba’s dictator overthrown by the 1959 revolution is even more intriguing, “his political philosophy was firmly grounded in three Little books: the Cathecism, the Constitution of the Cuban Republic and the Manual of Urbanity of Carreño… good Christian, good Cuban and good Human” (“su filosofía política estaba firmemente basada en tres libros: el Catecismo, la Constitución de la República de Cuba y el Manual de Urbanidad de Carreño...buen Cristiano, buen Cubano y buen Humano” Órgano Oficial de la Junta Cívico Militar, Huntington Park, California, 1959)
bourgeoisie of planters and intellectuals as political and social leaders over the first decades of
the 19th century altered the representational scenario where the “fop” was situated. Fops were the
sons of the Cuban creole bourgeoisie, like the señorito Leonardo of Villaverde’s novel. Not
surprisingly, Ferrer’s forceful satirical depictions and critiques of both men and women of the
white middle and upper classes were widely challenged by his readers, as Ferrer himself
repeatedly reported in many of his articles. These conflicts of class-culture were a sign of the
times of self “discovery” of Cuban creoles “playing out the disorders of their own identity”
(Stallybrass and White 1986, Paquette 1988). Throughout the process of cultural construction
and self-definition, Cuban creole authors effectively “de-centered” the figure of the petimetre
from the imperialist gaze (on themselves) as they gradually reconfigured and projected a
renewed self-conscious image of themselves as embodiments of a normative (national) cultural
subjectivity. As such, they assumed a role of “disembodied” observers and authors, re-centering
their renewed, creolized and modernizing gaze onto a different kind of racialized petimetre: the
Cuban mulata/o.

Like Havana’s white petimetres of Ferrer’s accounts, mulatos/as existed in an in-between
border zone, “sandwiched” “between the world of the masters, to which they also belonged, of
the great peninsular and native bourgeoisie and the world of the slaves…” (Chapeaux 1971: 62,
Paquette 1988). Mulatos/as epitomized the culturally Westernized urban middle class of light
skinned blacks, fetishized by an emergent 19th century white, bourgeois Cuban authorship. While
people of color had most certainly been objectified by the colonial gaze for centuries, it was
during the 19th century when lighter-skinned blacks were produced and polished as fetishes,
essentially constituted by a range of interrelated ambiguities of class, race and sexuality. In the
context of racial and political tensions of the mid 19th century which had the 1833-1844 massacre
of La Escalera as a high point, black stereotypes flourished in popular culture many of which
ridiculed black's pretentious “uppity” airs like the bufo types el Negro Catedrático (the black
professor), or la mulata.

Alejo Carpentier described the black “professor” as “the refined black man who resorts to
the most affected kind of language, the most unusual locutions, in order to say the simplest
things. Deprived of a formal education, he fished for those obscure words that seemed profound
and distinguished, heard in the conversation of educated whites, thereby creating a character of
appears as a linguistically atrophied white, a bad or imperfect replica of the authentic. Vernacular
\textit{bufo} theater exploited this character in plays airing in the second half of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century; extensive scholarly analyses exist on the subject. (Lane 2006, Frederik 1998, Leal 1975) As for the female version of the uppity black, Barras y Prado’s description at mid-century is a good example of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century stereotype

\textit{Las mulatas forman aquí en La Habana un tipo especial, pues son muy graciosas en sus conversaciones y movimientos, y gozan de muchas simpatías entre los europeos, a quienes ellas prefiere casi siempre por el interés. Son en general indolentes y no piensan más que en colocarse para gozar de las diversiones y el lujo. Su afición al baile llega al frenesi…} (De las Barras y Prado 1925: 115, emphasis in original)

\textit{Mulatas} form here in Havana a special type, because they are very graceful in their conversations and movements, and enjoy many sympathies among Europeans, whom they prefer almost invariably due to interest. In general they are lazy and they only think of posing [colocarse] to enjoy diversions and luxury. They are spendthrifts and vain. Their fondness of dance reaches frenesi…

Related to the image of excess in the ways and forms of blacks and \textit{mulatos/as} was their frequent representation as either dangerous rivals of whites or as bad copies of these models they tried to mimic. In their accounts, travelers in Cuba noted the known rivalries “between the secluded white Habaneras and their sable sisters” by emphasizing “the proud and ‘jaunty’ air that the latter displayed while walking in Havana's streets” (Martínez-Fernández 1995: 30). Martínez-Fernández notes that at midcentury “moralists criticized Havana's women of color for seeking the status of white women by using bleaching devices and by luring 'men of all classes.” (José María Gomez Colón 1857 in Martínez-Fernández 1995: 30) The use of “cascarilla” or white paste made of eggshells to cover face and neck formed part of the developing material consumer culture particularly among white women during the 19\textsuperscript{th} century.\footnote{Walter Goodman, an English traveler in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century observed \textit{cascarilla} was distributed by street vendors, specifically “\textit{la carretillera}” as an already prepared paste for use and purchase for women (Sarmiento Ramírez 2002)} Martínez-Fernández’ observes that excessive use of the makeup among white women produced “a clown like effect meant to contrast sharply with dark eyes and hair” (Martínez Fernández 1995: 38). However, the efforts by white women to stress their whiteness only acquire meaning in the relation to their
discursive counterparts, black women. This is particularly relevant considering that no one in Cuba, even among the white upper classes, was above suspicion of their presumed “racial” purity (Mena 2005). In this context, emphasizing whiteness by any means possible became crucial.

White women in Havana were indeed closely constructed in relation to black women. The stricter codes of conduct applied to white women made black women of working classes who walked the streets of Havana (likely out of necessity rather than choice) appear as having greater freedom of mobility and visibility in the city’s public spaces. Historian Martínez Fernández observes the added attention of travelers on the attires that revealed black women’s bodies said to be used to attract (particularly white) men making white and black women competitors and stirring jealousy among the former. There were frequent representations of black women in streets, flirting openly, or smoking daringly, enjoying the kinds of freedoms that white upper class women could not. In her famous travelogue, the Countess of Merlin described such image with a scornful tone which perhaps projected jealousy “Only the negras (female blacks) stroll around everywhere with shoulders and breasts uncovered, with a cigar on their mouths and throwing a flood of smoke…”. (Montalvo 2008: 97) Similarly demeaning were other travelers’ depictions of black women “walking nonchalantly, allowing their low-cut garments to ‘slip with picturesque negligence from their dusky shoulders’” (Martinez-Fernández 1995: 30).

Contemporary and current historians have emphasized the image of free blacks as conspicuous consumers, “the free black and mulatos assumed the easy external of a kind of excessive flaunting displayed by the rich creoles and pretended to compete with them, to live in luxury and show off their resources” (González 1992: 189, my translation) Another 19th century intellectual of color adds “their crime was to stand out (“hacerse notar”) for their fantasist competition with the privileged colonizers” (Morúa Delgado in González 1992: 189). Rather than taking depictions of blacks as conspicuous consumers at face value, they must be studied for what they reveal, in this case a degree of anxiety on the part of 19th century representers.

Chapters 3 and 7 describe the ways in which both female and male mulatos/as were constructed as political, economic, cultural and sexual threats to white hegemony and the colonial status quo. Their inherent ambiguity is the common trope that connects these stereotypical constructs as threats. Scholarly analyses have devoted extensive attention to the 19th century Cuban mulata, particularly in regard to the “duplicity” of her sexuality at once enchanting and deviant, desirable and dangerous (Kutsinski 1993). However, most analysis have
failed to observe the multiple and interconnected dimensions of the ambivalence that both *mulatos* and *mulatas* embodied, whereby the correspondence between class, gender, racial sexual undefinedness, heightened their anxiety-producing fetishization. A closer look to the figure of the fop in its white and black versions from a gender perspective becomes a useful method to explore the zones of intersection of the multiple social ambiguities that characterized these stereotypes.

In fact, the Cuban bourgeois *petimetre* was profoundly gender-ambiguous. The historical and fictional figure of the *petimetre* was in fact historically associated with homosexuality. Male, light skinned free blacks and *mulatos*, embodied this combined class and gender ambiguous subjectivity. The image of the pretentious, “uppity” *mulato* was effectively and extensively elaborated in literature, theater, artwork and social and political discourse. Chapter 3 discussed this question in relation to the political and mythical figure of the *mulato* poet Plácido, the controversial martyr of the 1844 repression of *La Escalera*. The mythical construct of Plácido exemplifies the correlated racial, class and political ambiguities of colonial discourse. Plácido belonged to the intellectually and socially influential circle of free artisan blacks in Havana, known for their “refinement” and mimicry of the ways and practices of white elites, in their forms of sociability and leisure like dancing, traveling, reading and gathering in cafes, dress fashion, and in their performances of colonial loyalty as members of the military corporation. The indefinability of Plácido’s true racial and political loyalty given by his simultaneous closeness to the world of whites and the world of blacks produced an unmanageable uncertainty to colonial power, making his assassination in the process of *La Escalera* almost predictable (Deschamps 1971). Plácido’s ambiguity extended from his racial, and political subjectivity to his work as a literary figure. Literary critic Fransico Morán notes, “the adjective that can best define [Plácido’s writings] marks the thickness of the mask and the pose: *almost.*” The alluded mask is of course, Plácido’s skin color. The literary and political commentary equally defined Plácido with ambiguity, “almost popular… almost refined…” simultaneously servile and patriot, and a sort of moral hybrid, wandering between savagery and civilization, nativeness and whiteness (Morán 2008, Echeverría 2008).

Although the gender ambiguity is not explicitly suggested in the politicized and racialized colonial narrative of Plácido’s myth, popular culture produced effeminate figures of blacks particularly through the paintings of the Spanish Victor Patricio de Landaluze. Two of De
Landaluze’s famous paintings depicted domestic slaves trying to emulate the ways of their white mistresses. In the painting “En la Ausencia” (In the Absence, Figure 9) a domestic male slave stands in front of a mirror in the bedroom of her mistress impersonating her, wearing her attires and pretending to perform “like” her. In another painting entitled “José Francisco” (Figure 10), a domestic slave “mirrors” a bust of his white aristocratic mistress as he bends over pretending to kiss her mouth (Kutzinski 1993). Representations of black women, particularly _mulatas_ present a similar trope. In the painting “_Calzándose los Guantes_” (Putting on the Gloves, Figure 11), Landaluze satirizes the pretension of _mulatas_ and black women to “put on airs,” or to pretend to be aristocratic or refined, like white women. The painting shows a _mulata_ staring at the mirror in a coquette pose “looking demurely over her shoulder”, wearing a white elegant dress with a fan in her hand, and a black man dressed elegantly for the dance, admiring her. Jill Lane and Vera Kutzinski have each written provocative analyses of these and other paintings by Landaluze (Lane 2010, Kutzinski 1993). In particular, Lane suggested that Landaluze used the mirror as recourse to present black women and men as appearing in effect to be in “whiteface”. I take this analysis one step further below to suggest that the mirror was a crucial symbol recurrently used in 19th century popular culture to communicate what I describe as an “allegory of colonial mimicry.”
Figure 9 - “En la ausencia” (In the Absence). By Víctor Patricio de Landaluze, In Colección Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes de La Habana, *Víctor Patricio de Landaluze (1830-1889)*. Bilbao: Museo de Bellas Artes de Bilbao. 1998.

Figure 10 - “José Francisco” by Víctor Patricio de Landauze. In Colección Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes de La Habana, *Víctor Patricio de Landaluze (1830-1889)*. Bilbao: Museo de Bellas Artes de Bilbao. 1998.
Race, class, gender ambivalence and metamorphosis in Marta Rojas’ Francisco Filomeno

In her novel *Santa Lujuria o Papeles de Blanco* the contemporary Cuban writer and historian Marta Rojas made a most provocative statement about the 19th century *mulato* stereotype (1998). Marta Rojas recreated her own critical version of a gender/racial/class ambiguous *mulato* subject in the main character of the novel, Francisco Filomeno. The son of a *mulata* and a white Marquis, Filomeno is an “almost white” *mulato* who transmutes over the course of the novel’s argument (1773-1812) into a legally white Marquis. Physical, spiritual, legal and extra-legal strategies are employed to achieve the goal of making Filomeno white. After the deaths of his white wife and son, Don Antonio, now without an heir, decides to whiten and legitimize his natural son through the purchase of the “*papeles de blanco.*” These white papers are the legal title that will change Filomeno’s racial classification from *pardo* to *blanco*, allowing him to inherit wealth and titles, and facilitate his social ascension in colonial society.

In the first part of the novel, the author uses a third person narrative, which later, in part IV, lends place to a first person narrator’s biographical account presumably written by Filomeno.
himself. This text is a sort of “memoir” by Filomeno, which makes reference to themes, and stories that the author tells throughout the novel. With Filomeno, as with other characters of the novel, Rojas performs an incarnation of fictional characters in historical bodies and subjectivities existing in a past of social, political and cultural structures. In doing so, the author creates fictional characters with socio-historical validity. In fact, the novel is inspired and grounded in the author’s historical investigations including research in various archives and libraries in Cuba and oral testimony of family members, including her maternal grandmother Cecilia (1886--1958) the grand-daughter of slaves brought over from Africa (DeCosta-Willis 2004). Rojas’ meshes history with fiction to create Filomeno’s memoirs, in what literary critic Carmen Marcelo has termed a “semi-literary discourse,” by which the author “fictionalizes with false historic-documentary pretension, the lives of men without history, who even within their anonymity, star in it...[la protagonizan]” (Marcelo 2006: 52).

Below I transcribe and comment on a set of rich fragments from Filomeno’s memoirs that read simultaneously as a (semi-fictional) auto-ethnography and as a colonial ethnography about the part of his hybrid self, which he denies. Filomeno starts his account with a description of himself, “No soy ni tan alto ni tan bajo, pero espigado. Ni flaco ni grueso, más bien proporcionado, envuelto mi esqueleto; sin nuez de Adán ni costillar visibles. Color quebrado. Glúteos discretos pero levantados, un poco altos, pero no demasiado.” (“I am not too tall or too short, rather willowy. Neither slim nor stout, but rather proportionate, my skeleton wrapped; without Adam’s apple or visible rib cage. Broken color. Discreet but erect buttocks, a bit high, but not too much” Rojas 1988: 82) Marta Rojas had previously told the readers about Filomeno’s suggestive nickname, “marquesito de color quebrado” (little Marquis of broken-color). The diminutive of Marquis—marquesito—denotes his inauthenticity as a nobleman; “de color quebrado” (of broken color) denotes the undefinedness of his racial status as per his skin color,

\[\text{An example is her characterization of Salvador Hierro, a mulato who joins the Militias of Pardos and Morenos and later reveals his ties with the historical rebellion known as the Aponte Conspiracy of 1812. Historical figures also appear in the novel as interlocutors with fictional characters, such as the pardo painter who later legalized as white Vicente Escobar (1757 - 1834).}

\[\text{For a critical assessment of Rojas’ novel as a unique critical piece on the construction of racial ideologies in early 19th century Cuba, see Victor Fowler (2001) and Miriam Da Costa Willis (2004). Da Costa Willis provides an important analysis of the novel’s significance in terms of its attention to legacies of slavery in the politics of property and identity. The elaboration of these themes was a result of Rojas’ investigation at Archivo de Indias on 18th century institution and laws, particularly “the law that gave male colonists the right to land and women”. (Da Costa Willis 2004)} \]
but also, as we will see, of his ambiguous classed and gendered self. The self-appreciation of his body as somewhat “balanced” between two extremes, speaks to the broader trope of ambiguity that Rojas creates around Filomeno’s figure.

Rojas constructs Filomeno’s skin as a fetish, shown by his extreme precautions for its care and treatment, “El mar me apasiona, pero sigo los consejos que se me dan en cuanto a la moderación para que mi color no se quiebre todavía más, con lo cual puedo ofender y de hecho ofendería el gusto de la sociedad a la cual pertenezco.” (“I have a passion for the sea, but I follow the advice I am given about the moderation [to bathe in the sea] so my color won’t break even more [through exposure to sunlight], which can offend and in fact would offend the taste of the society to which I belong” Rojas 1998: 82) Offending “the taste of the society” expresses the strong aesthetic and affective connotation in the use of the concept of “taste”, whereby the need to preserve entangled social, aesthetic, moral and racial orders is revealed. In fact, specific corporeal techniques are used to achieve Filomeno’s racial-class metamorphosis. Filomeno’s transformation is carried out not as an individual, but as a family endeavor where the entire community of color whom he simultaneously rejects and needs, plays an active role. Filomeno’s biological mother, a free mulata, is socially assigned the role of “Aya”, a tutor and adviser. By hiding her true identity as Filomeno’s mother to the public, the family was able to conceal Filomeno’s “true” African origins thus facilitating his social advancement. His half brother, the black slave José, his mother Lucila, and even the mulato pharmacist employ western and non-western mechanisms and strategies to make Filomeno white(r),

En mi armario no faltan desde hace tiempo los potes de unturas de ateje de hembra, ni de ateje hermoso de Osaín con que Aya me quita las manchas que oscurecen mi piel cuando la expongo al sol, los resplandores y la mar. Esas especies de Cardia Valenzuela, como las identifica don Cipriano Mestre y Espinosa, el boticario (tambié de color quebrado) que hace las unturas, José las arranca del huerto antes de la salida

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114 In the edition of March 10th, 1801, El Substituto del Regañón provides an eloquent description of the characteristics and role of “Ayos” “It would be desirable that the Ayos of known integrity, estimation and good principles, would bring the children to the Schools, like in Europe, to instruct them in their duties, teach them to be aware and judge of what they see, talk and listen, conducting them to the promenade for the same purpose, and avoid that in such venues they mesh with the mob of wild and daring boys, of whom they learn the greatest insolence ... To put Ayos in charge of the children would be very decent and most trusted...” (“Convendría mucho que fuesen los Niños conducidos a las Escuelas por Ayos, como en Europa, de probidad, estimación y buenos principios, que los contengan en su deber, les enseñen a advertir y juzgar de lo que ven, hablan y oyen hablar; conduciéndoles al paseo con este mismo fin, y evitar por semejante medio se acompañen con la turb de muchachos desenfrenados y atrevidos, de quienes aprenden las mayores insolencias...Este encargo de Ayos, ya se ve por su objeto ser muy decente y de la mayor confianza...” In Lezama Lima 1965: 161)
del sol. Diz que en su religión, que desde luego no puede ser ni es la mía, José paga un derecho para que me sirva mejor y le ora a Osain …dueño que dicen que es […] de la farmacopea en su nación. Las unturas de don C. Mestre y Espinosa hacen efecto, pues ni una mancha encuentro en mi piel. Hasta poníéndome decúbito supino lo ha verificado mi aya a ruegos míos, aunque me dijo que hay partes sin importancia más oscuras, pero yo sospecho que si importan y me aplicaré a mi modo en ellas. Lamento que no me frotaran las unturas desde que naci; de habérseme hecho quizás yo fuera igual de blanco que mi padre el marqués. Empero, seguro estoy que mis riquezas me favorecen, y si son más esas riquezas, abochornaré menos el gusto de mi sociedad. Yo creo que mi color quebrado ofende más por mi oscuro origen.

In my closet I have long had the unction jars of ‘ateje de hembra’, or ‘ateje hermoso’ of Osain which Aya employs to remove the stains that darken my skin when I expose it to sunlight, glare, and the sea. These spices from Cardia Valenzuela, as the pharmacist don Cipriano Mestre y Espinosa (also of broken color) who makes the unctions calls them, José picks from the garden before the sun comes out. They say that in their religion, which of course it is not and cannot be mine, José pays a right so that it serves me better and he prays to Osain…the owner whom they say he is…of the pharmacopeia in his [African] nation. The unctions of don C. Mestre y Espinosa are effective, because not a single stain I find in my skin. Even getting on supine pose Aya has verified this upon my pleads, although she said there are darker parts without importance, but I suspect that they do matter and I will apply [the unction] my way on them. I lament that the unctions were not applied on me since I was born; if it was done so, maybe I would have been equally white as my father the Marquis. Although I am sure that my wealth favors me, and if this wealth is greater, I would cause less shame to the taste of my society. I think that my broken color offends more because of my obscure origin.

Beyond the fact of his skin color, Filomeno’s obscure origin derives from his coming from the orphanage or “Casa Cuna.” According to the custom, Filomeno was “exposed” or brought anonymously to the Casa Cuna or de Beneficencia to hide his true “origins” and better his future by concealing his ancestry and making it officially “unknown”. It was a habitual practice of black and mulato parents to secretly leave their lighter-skinned children at orphanage doors where they were often given the surname “Valdés” in memory of its founder, the Bishop Jerónimo Valdés. These children were then not registered as “mulato” but rather as “born of unknown parents.” Being known as orphans rather than as recognized mulatos/as was a way to conceal the children’s racially mixed ancestry, therefore presumably improving their life opportunities. In his travel accounts of Havana towards the mid 19th century, the Spanish Antonio Barras y Prado noted that children coming from the orphanage were “ennobléd” because they could use the prefix Don like white people and have the benefits that came with having
However, the benefits of the artificial status of white or the greater opportunities that it provided didn’t always hold since the racial origin of a child who was known to be an orphan—or named “Valdés”—was considered suspect (Mena 2011). In this sense, the figure of Filomeno inserts within the broader mythicizing trope of 19th century *mulatas* and *mulatos*, notably Villaverde’s Cecilia Valdés and Gabriel de la Concepción Valdés, alias Plácido. As opposed to Cecilia, Filomeno is a recognized child by his white father, making the omission of the surname “Valdés” from his identity rather significant. Only when Filomeno’s metamorphosis is completed does the simple *mulato* Francisco Filomeno acquire the high-flown complete name Francisco Filomeno Ponce de León. This name is up to the standards of his numerous titles and white status including judge, director of the Mad House, adviser of the Captain General of Cuba and the Floridas and after his father, Marquis of Aguas Claras.

The ambiguity of Filomeno’s self escalates even more. His socio racial ambivalence projects onto a gendered and sexual ambiguity and both appear somewhat complementary. Rojas signals the constructed character of compulsory heteronormativity in the following self-reflective narrative by Filomeno upon turning 18, “…me conservaba célibe, con el carisma de la castidad, sin haber tenido ningún comercio carnal, con lo cual estaba muy inconforme mi señor padre, por lo tanto que ello le demeritaba ante sus amigos…” (“…I had preserved my celibacy, with the charisma of chastity, without having had carnal commerce, with which my Sir father was very unhappy, because this discredited him in front of his friends…” 1998: 85) Filomeno’s father, the Marquis of Aguas Claras, is said to be personal friend of King Charles IV. The Marquis gained fame for giving the King advice on sexual matters. Filomeno was introduced to (hetero)sexual matters through the homosocial conversations of his father about the important help (*auxilio*) that “slaves of pleasure” provide to men. Nonetheless, he had been warned by his advisors—Filomeno says—that unless a “noble prince like don Antonio [the Marquis, his father], a gentleman immune to the commentary, for his *hidalguía*, others [like him] should not maintain relations like his [the Marquis’] so active, with the [slaves of pleasure].” (1998: 86) Through this episode, Rojas signals the importance of male sexual respectability as mutually constitutive of class and racial status, a question widely silenced and obscured under the metanarrative of

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115“I remember having heard many times... throw an insult with the word *mulato*, and responding the alleged person with much emphasis: *I am not mulato, I am Valdés*” (De las Barras y Prado 1926: 114).
racialized female sexual respectability that Cirilo Villaverde’s “Cecilia Valdés” and its multiple scholarly interpretations helped normalize in historical and scholarly narratives.

In Filomeno, Rojas constructs a sexualized masculine counter-figure of the foundational “Cecilia” effectively de-centering the historical and theoretical focus on the sexualized black female body that she epitomizes (Fowler 2001). Cecilia seeks the love of the white rich creole Leonardo, and rejects her mulato suitors with the purpose of social advancement. She is the icon of the racially mixed female body as racial-sexual media for social mobility towards “whitening” through miscegenation. The commonsense imaginary of black female sexuality created through this narrative is her de facto sexual availability for white men. Under this frame, norms of respectability apply more strictly to white women as the utmost protected social assets of white creole bourgeois families. This feminized socio-sexual scenario makes it seem as if class structuring revolves around and ultimately depends upon the sexuality of women. Rojas story forces a shift of focus towards male masculinity and sexuality as structuring forces of Cuban society. Cultivating hegemonic masculinity was as important as cultivating whiteness for an aspirant to noble/bourgeois like Filomeno. While “nobility” made Don Antonio “immune” to having his reputation affected by having relations with slaves, Filomeno is advised to be more careful as his “obscure”, i.e. impure, biological origin puts him at disadvantage. This lack of “biological” capital may be balanced off by exhibiting a restrained sexual conduct with black women. Rojas highlights the ongoing processes of validation of a heterosexual hegemony by mandating and normalizing heterosexuality within normative gender and sexual structures. By shifting the focus from (black) women as sexual agents driven by social mobility aspirations, to the historically, sexually silenced (black) men, Rojas reminds the readers that this hegemonization of heteronormativity entails complex processes of racialization and classing: certain men ought to have sexual relations with certain women.

To top it all, Rojas created Filomeno as an ambiguous ideological being, his positionality swinging between the role of distanced observer and participant-in-denial of the black world contained in his subjectivity. In his revealing memoirs, Filomeno positions himself as a self-conscious, presumed “outsider” to this world. This is particularly evident in the ethnographic-type narrative about the religious commemoration of the Day of Kings. In this segment, Filomeno reports on this celebration led by his mother, in a participant observant fashion, i.e. distanced and even hidden from sight of the Othered black/African subjects, which are its
protagonists (Rojas 1998: 101-112). A notable passage is Filomeno’s horror at the sight of his mother lying possessed on the floor at the end of the ceremony (1998: 110). Early on in the account, he lamented that she still “thinks like blacks” although he praised her white-like physiognomy as a sign of beauty and her Westernized “refined” habits as in her dress, reading and writing, math skills and language mastery (in both English and Spanish). In doing so, however, Filomeno does not acknowledge his own ideological and cultural partaking in what to him is the strange “African” world of his mother. His sense of cultural separation from this black/African world exemplifies a “double-consciousness” defined by W.E.B. DuBois as a “sensation… of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity…[producing] two warring ideals in one dark body.” (DuBois 2008, [1903]: 12, emphasis added) As the quotes above show, Filomeno expressed his ambiguous existence with reiterated expressions of “shame.”

More importantly, DuBois’ note about the coexistence of opposing “ideals” in one body wonderfully captures Rojas’ hybrid creation in Filomeno. While Filomeno openly rejects his African heritage and the black “Others” he considers alien, he also depends, requests and believes in their power and effectiveness to achieve his racial/social advancement (“adelanto racial” Fowler 2001). While he inhabits the body of a “renegade petimetre” (Rojas 1998: 96) wearing the accustomed wig and attire of the aristocrats, Filomeno’s body is simultaneously accessorized and “treated” with all kinds of cultural products from African belief systems carefully crafted and practiced on him by his relatives of African descent. He understands the whiteness of his skin as the result of the effectiveness of the creams, an effectiveness that is validated within African belief systems. He carefully carries the protective amulet hidden in a catholic charm bag sewed with the figure of “Jesus’ heart” (Ibid, 198). He also undergone a spiritual cleanse or “limpia” directed by his mulata mother and black brother to invoke Yoruba religious deities on the definitive moment previous to traveling to the Spanish Cortes to be “racially” cleansed and have his white and noble status officially recognized (Ibid, 268). Elements of a devalued African culture are put in the service of the dominant ideology of blanqueamiento with a pragmatic objective: social mobility. Filomeno (and also Lucila, his mother) exemplify a discursive contradiction, the coexistence of racial ideologies and multiple subjectivities, inadmissible in colonial binary structures that demand neat boundary divisions.
According to cultural critic Victor Fowler, Rojas’ observance of the coexistence of cultural ideologies in the dual subjectivities of her characters is a statement about the cultural syncretism at the heart of the Cuban nation. In addition to this, I consider that at the early moments of the 19th century where the novel’s argument unfolds, Rojas makes a statement about the ambiguities that defined the hybrid kinds of subjects that the colonial project and its civilizing mission produced, with the resulting anxieties that these ambiguities stirred among white elites.

*The social skin of Cuban petimetres*

Through the character of Filomeno Marta Rojas’ brought out the embodied and corporeal dimensions of the ambiguous “mimic” colonial subject. Filomeno’s body is molded by a combination of bourgeois and African subject and bodily regimes. The altering of a social and physical skin makes Rojas’ “mulato” version of the petimetre an effective (hybrid) mimic. For his part, the white creole version of the petimetre recreated by Buenaventura Pascual Ferrer—writing during the same historical period as Rojas’ Filomeno—focuses more on dress as a kind of social skin that makes his efforts of mimicry effective. Using his characteristic satirical tone, in the quote below Ferrer notes the utility of tailors to mold bodily contours of aspiring petimetres as he mocks and protests the emergence of this (anti) model of a nobleman at the dawn of the century of Cuban modernity.

*El que quiera entrar en esta ilustre clase [de petimetres masculinos] deberá inquirir primeramente cuál es el sastre que hace más ajustada la ropa, y lleva más caro por su hechura pues aunque en otros tiempos se buscaba un Maestro de danza para aprender a hacer peninos, plantarse con gracia, sacar bien el pie, y la mano, y mantener el cuerpo en una figura airosa; en el día no se necesita más que del sastre, porque siendo bueno, mete en una prensa el cuerpo de un Petimetre, de forma, que aunque sea el más payo, queda rigurosamente derecho, y tan estirado por todas sus proporciones que no hay más que pedir.* (Ferrer 1965, El Substituto del Regañón de La Habana, 21 Julio 1801)

Whoever wants to enter this distinguished class of [masculine fops] should first inquire about which tailor can make the tightest clothes, and charges the most for making them, since although in other times one sought for a dance teacher to learn to make ‘peninos,’ stand gracefully, make graceful moves with the foot, and the hand, and keeping the body in an elegant figure; today one does not need anything but the tailor, because if he is good, [he will ]insert the body of a fop in a press, in such way that, even if he is the most
rustic peasant, [he will] stand rigorously upright, and so stiff in all his proportions, that one cannot ask for more.

Ferrer’s description captures the power of dress to effectively and dramatically alter the configuration of the body by inhibiting or facilitating certain body movements and accentuating certain contour-shapes. While suits served to mold men’s bodies and shapes in the 19th century, women’s tight laced corsets were constricting: they accentuated a small waist and sloping shoulders (Connerton 1989). In Cuba, the medicalized versions of the Manuals of Urbanity, refashioned as “Manuals of Hygiene,” emerged as forceful opponents of the corset on grounds of its detrimental health effects in compressing women’s internal organs. In the second half of the 19th century, bufo (blackface theater) playwrights questioned the use of the corset as part of their broader contest against the “discourse of morality and good manners” of the Cuban creole bourgeoisie (Leal 1975). The reactionary character of bufo Cuban playwrights in matters of sexuality was a strategic recourse in their anti-colonial, nationalist agenda during the second half of the 19th century, an aspect that has been widely discussed by scholars Jill Lane (2006) and Rine Leal (1975)116.

Ferrer’s expressed anxieties over the growing attention and changing social value of dress and manners in early 19th century Havana’s society raises questions about the altering of surfaces of the body, which anthropologist Terrence Turner graphically named the “social skin” (Turner 2007). Ferrer’s satirization of tailoring and manners is suggestive of a “change of skin” in the normative subject, from one defined by biology and bloodline to one defined by manners, ornaments and intangible/immeasurable qualities given through education. The social skin of the new, emergent bourgeois subject is made up less of meaningful bodily substances—flesh, blood and their genealogies—and more so of shapes and accessories, of dress and of manners. This

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116 Bufo theater was blamed by the elites as “immoral and sometimes “pornographic.” Bufo has been characterized as a form of anti-colonial resistance to cultural forms. As such, bufo parodied and satirized European forms such as the opera or the zarzuela which followed a melodramatic form. To this extent, bufo projected a way to resist or subvert class hierarchies. More specifically, Leal has argued that bufo contested a discourse of “morality and good manners” espoused by the creole elites. These were the same opponents of abolition, the discontinuation of the women’s corset, divorce and danzón, and the feminine vote at different points in the 19th and 20th centuries. More specifically “choteo” is the form of the bufo which means to mock the discourse of morality and malicious, double-sensed jokes. At the same time, bufo playwrights constructed bufo as the authentically Cuban genre, with important nationalist intentionality and deeply involved in the movements for Independence. Bufo’s performed for a white popular audience at theaters such as the Torrecillas, Villanueva, Lara, Cervantes, Cuba, Alhambra and Irioja. Only occasionally they performed at the Tacón or Payret Theaters attended by an upper-class white audience (Leal 1980).
subject is thereby performativized and dramatized rather than essentialized around its body substances. Domitila García de Coronado (1893) illustrates this in her textbook of conduct for girls when she discusses the appropriate treatment to servants. She says, they should be treated with charity, “like our equals”, but keeping the distance determined—not by color, or by race—but “by the manners, beliefs, customs and education which differentiate them from us” (“…tratémoslos con caridad, como a nuestros semejantes pero sin olvidar que sus modales, creencias, costumbres y educación los diferencian de nosotros.” De Coronado 1893: 153).

Rather than denoting solidarity or even compassion, “charity” has an intrinsic hierarchizing connotation and function. Coronado, like other authors of 19th century texts of conduct in Cuba devoted entire sections to discuss the importance of cultivating charity, which emerged in the 19th century as one of the most important institutions of the rising Creole bourgeoisie (Kingman Garcés 2006, Chaple 1890, Costales 1884).

In the context of 19th century Cuba, we can interpret Terrence Turner concept of the social skin as a modernizing device, which he defines as “the symbolic stage upon which the drama of socialization is enacted and bodily adornment…becomes the language through which it is expressed” (Turner 2007: 83, emphasis added) Following Turner, the ascension of manners along with the “civilizing” and enlightening turn in Havana’s society perhaps also pushed forth a dramatization or, to use Echeverría’s expression in the epigraph above, a “theatralization” of sociability, which characterized the transculturative process of the american baroque (2008, Ortiz 1940). Books of conduct convey exactly this: the dramatization of everyday, routine practices serving symbolic systems that confer class status. As José María de la Torre observed in his own text of conduct “in the end, urbanity does not consist in doing ceremonies that we like, but rather, doing those that please others” (De La Torre 1857: 1, emphasis added).

Terrance’s concept of the “social skin” allows us to approach dress as a removable device with highly plastic properties that may be altered, put on, taken off or changed. Thus, dress as a social skin enables the performance of different identities, which in turn open up spaces for social mobility and the reconfiguration of systems of distinction. Shompa Lahiri (2003) discussed strategic practices of mimicry and passing including cross-dressing in the colonial context in Britain, as a mechanism for concealing and performing identities to enable mobility within otherwise forbidden class, gender, racial realms. From this perspective, in the case of colonial Cuba, dress performances created a space for middle classes to perform in an otherwise
exclusive space of distinction of upper classes, somehow democratizing this sphere of distinction. At the same time, dress performances may enable re-instating a system of distinction and social inequality whereby middle classes distinguish themselves from lower classes. This British traveler noted the homogenizing effect of dress around 1820’s in Havana in that liminal middle-class space, where dress performances sometimes blurred racial divides between working class blacks and whites,

[Gambling] and the immoderate love of dress are the bane of the labouring class. You would smile to see groups of black females with silk stockings, sateen shoes, muslin gowns, French shawls, gold ear-rings and flowers in their woolen head-dress, gallanted by black beaux, with white beaver hats, English coats, and gold-headed canes, all smoking in concert like their superiors. These are your washerwomen and cobblers, festivalizing on a “días de dos cruces,” or a church holiday. The next day you will have them at your door with some article of this finery, which they are seeking a sale for, to pay for the day’s subsistence! The distinction arising from holiday array is all this class of people can aspire to, or in which they can vie with the whites. The principle of depression, universally acted on with respect to them, keeps them down as a body, and puts them aside from the race of honourable emulation, excluding them from a course, which the indolent whites are seen merely walking over. It is not to be wondered at, that the plant, which is prevented from rising, should grow crooked (Jameson 1821: 39)

The last remarks reveal Jameson’s political bias as an advocate of slavery abolition in Cuba. He depicts dress performances as providing a somewhat superficial means for distinction to free blacks and mulatos, who were otherwise widely excluded from the privileges of whites. However, other testimonies bring up a different perspective. For instance, theater critic Rine Leal observed bufo playwrights used the recurrent symbolism of upgrading the sandal (“chancleta”) worn by lower class and black people to the “shoe” to signify upward class mobility (Leal 1982). José María de la Torre’s textbook of conduct included an explicit rule to not walk in sandals, “No andar en chancleta” listed under the section “Aseo y Limpieza” (Cleanliness and hygiene, De la Torre1857). Dress also allowed blacks’ entry to spaces otherwise reserved for whites when by late 19th century, as part of the changes that came with the abolition of slavery, “appropriate” dress became a prerequisite for blacks’ admission to theaters.117 However, many decades before

117As I explore in more detail in Chapter 8, until late 19th century, theaters were part of a white dominated public sphere where the Tacón and the Payret theaters stood out as microcosms of class society. Seat distribution at the luxurious Tacón reflected class and racial divisions: the right half of the main floor reserved for women only, the left side for white of both sexes, the first three levels with private boxes for the wealthy, the fourth floor for the white
dress code became a mechanism to regulate black people’s entry to the white public sphere, free blacks had been using dress as an exclusionary measure towards lower class blacks and slaves from their own elite circle of urban lighter-skinned skilled artisans—the “politicals” of Carpentier (see Chapter 3).

In fact, dress etiquette was an important indicator of the stratification of dance gatherings in Havana. Zoila Lapique quoted the costumbrista Gaspar Betancourt Cisneros’ characterization of different kinds of balls among white upper classes around the 1840’s,

El baile noble, el baile de las primeras clases se divide en dos…: baile de etiqueta o de tono y baile familiar. A la primera pertenecen los que se dan en los dias solemnes, en las fiestas nacionales, o en obsequio de persona determinada de categoria. A la segunda pertenecen los bailes improvisados, de ponina, de tertulia, que nuestras muchachas han clasificado llamándolos bailes de seda y bailes de muselina. En unos y otros se acostumbran las mismas danzas; la diferencia consiste en la orquesta, mayor lujo en el mueblaje, más etiqueta en la invitación y más gusto en el embigu, refresco. (Lapique 1979)

The noble ball, the ball of the first classes is divided in two…: etiquette ball or tone ball and family ball. To the former belong those given during (national) holidays, or as a gift to a person of higher category. To the second one belong the improvised dances, dances of ‘ponina’, of ‘tertulia’, which our ladies have classified naming them balls of silk and balls of muslin. In both types of balls the same dance is accustomed; the difference is in the orchestra, greater luxury in the furniture, more etiquette in the invitation, and more taste in the snacks and refreshments.

Dress and even different women’s dress fabric, are among the range of elements denoting the quality or “taste” distinguishing one kind of dance from another (Lapique 1979: 24). The word “ponina” derives from “poninero,” the dance host who charged a fee to offer refreshments and snacks during the ball. “Tertulia” balls, according to Buena Ventura Pascual Ferrer at around 1800 were offered every Sunday and are characterized by “the decency in the behavior” the attendance of “la decencia del comportamiento”… “en ella está reunida la asistencia de los Jefes principales, la compostura de los individuos, el buen órden en las disposiciones, la concurrencia de las principales familias y la alegre sencillez de la danza, separada de los abusos y libertades que por su medio se toman algunos escandalosos” (“the principal middle class, and (until 1885) the fifth and last, or cazuela, for people of color. After 1885, blacks are allowed access to box seats “adequately dressed” (Leal 1982).
Authorities, the comportment of individuals, the good order in the dispositions, the attendance of the principal families and the kind simplicity of the dance, separated from the abuses and liberties that some scandalous individuals take for themselves” El Regañón, October 28 1800, in Ferrer 1965) Ferrer laments that this honest “tertulia” is empty while other “indecent” dance balls enjoy such popularity in the edition of the 23d of December,

Es posible que habiendo aquí una casa pública de bailes donde concurren todos los Jefes principales de esta Plaza y donde reina la moderación, la compostura, la urbanidad, la modestia y el trato de las gentes este casi siempre tan desierta que es una lástima, y que estos bailes de medio carácter o por mejor decir de los barrios bajos sean tan concurridos que es una furia la gente que acude a ellos contentándose hasta con verlos no más. (El Regañón, 1801)

Is it possible that even when there is a public house of dance where the principal Authorities of this Plaza and where moderation, composure, urbanity and the treatment of people reign, is almost always deserted that is such a pity, while those dances of half-character or of the low-neighborhoods are so popular, that it is a fury the people that attend and make do even with only seeing them.

In their efforts to reach distinction, free people of color “mimicked” the forms of upper class balls creating their own “bailes de cuna” which Villaverde recreated with detail in “Cecilia Valdes”. “Cunas” as they were also called were the sites par excellence for the reprehensible but widely practiced social intercourse between white young men and mulatas, “A great number of black and mulatto women had just entered… And there were not a few Young Criollos of decent and well-off families, who without inhibition rubbed elbows with people of color and participated in their most characteristic entertainment. Some participated out of whim, others were moved by motives of a less pure nature” (Villaverde 2004: 18, translated by Brouwers-Fischer) Angel Quintero Rivera (2002) pioneered the cultural-historical study of dance manners in the Caribbean in his exploration of the intersections between dance, body movement, class and race. Who could and could not attend what kind of dances, where these took place and how and with whom certain people danced became important measures of social distinction to define “respectable” men and women in 19th century society, with casinos de sociedad (in Cuba), or bailes de confianza (in Puerto Rico) at one end and Cunas (in Cuba) and bailes de reuniones (in Puerto Rico) at the other. While colored men and women and white young men attended Cunas, mulatos and blacks were banned entrance to casinos de sociedad. Costumbristas like Villaverde
and *bufo* playwrights conveyed through their writing the double moral standards which censored white men’s attendance to *Cunas*, but which they often attended secretly to avoid affecting their reputation.

Esteban Pichardo defined *Cunas* in Cuba in his *Diccionario Provincial de voces Cubanas* (1836) as “*Reunión de gente de color o gentualla, para bailar y muchas veces jugar: casita reducida pocos músicos, arpa o guitarra... todo en pequeño y nada de etiqueta.*” (Gathering of people of color or riffraff, to dance and often to play: reduced house, few musicians, harp or guitar, all in small size, no etiquette” (Pichardo 1836: 81). While Pichardo stressed the lack of “etiquette” at *Cunas*, Villaverde noted they were actually known as “*baile de etiqueta o de corte*” (etiquette or court balls Villaverde 2004: 249) the same label as the balls of white “nobles” and “first class” people reported by Betancourt Cisneros above. Villaverde described *Cunas* as follows:

*Por baile de etiqueta o de corte se quiso dar a entender uno muy ceremonioso, de alto tono, y tal que ya no celebraban los blancos, ni por las piezas bailables ni por el traje singular de los hombres y de las mujeres. Porque el de éstas debía consistir y consistió en falda de raso blanco, banda azul atravesada por el pecho y pluma de marabú en la cabeza; el de los hombres, en frac de paño negro, chaleco de piqué y corbata de hilo blanco, calzón corto de Nankín, media de seda color de carne y zapato bajo con hebilla de plata, todo según la moda de Carlos III, cuya estatua, hecha por Cánovas, se hallaba al extremo del Prado, donde hoy se ostenta la fuente de la India o de La Habana.* (Villaverde 2004: 249)

The phrase ‘etiquette or court ball’ was meant to convey the idea that it was a very ceremonious, high-toned affair, both, with respect to the music played and to the singular dress of the men and women; balls of this kind had long since gone out of fashion among the white people of Cuba. It was requisite that the women wear white satin dresses with a blue band or sash over the right shoulder and diagonally across the breast and a marabou feather on the head. The men were dressed in black swallowtail coats, piqué waistcoats, white linen cravats, nankeen knee breeches, flesh-coloured silk stockings and low black shoes with silver buckles. These costumes had not been in fashion since the reign of Carlos III, whose statue by Cándovas once stood in the spot now occupied by the fountain of La India or La Habana at the upper end of the Prado (translation by Sydney Gest 1962: 314)

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118 Quintero Rivera speculates that the term *cuna* (cradle) might allude to a “place of mating”. This makes sense in the context of representations of *cunas* at the time by writers like Garcia de Arboleya as “a meeting of immoral or uncouth people where whites, blacks and mulattos dance together” (Quintero Rivera 2000).
In addition to being an individual of recognized reputation ("de conocida decencia")\textsuperscript{119}, appropriate dress was among several “credentials” that were pre-requisites for admission to Cunas, most of which were applicable to black more than to white male attendees, “To gain admission and take part in the fiesta a man had not only to be dressed as required, he had also to present their ‘ticket’ [papeleta] to a committee in the zagüán who was in charge of assigning [aposentar] the female dancing partners” (Villaverde 1981). Thus, the “papeleta” served as a mechanism of regulation of access to women and indirectly as a mechanism of social control during the dance ball\textsuperscript{120}. The “aposentadores” or “bastoneros” performed the function of consulting and recording on the said “papeleta” the approval by women of the petitions to dance made by male guests at their entry\textsuperscript{121} (Fowler 2012, Hernández 2010). Being an artisan known as such by the attendees also guaranteed admission and social acceptance in the select gathering (Villaverde 1981).

Villaverde’s description of the Cuna ball includes an incident by one slave, Dionisio Jaruco, who smuggled into the party along with other uninvited guests, “Though correctly attired they failed to present tickets and were actually not even artisans” (Villaverde, translation Sydney Gest 1962: 314). The ball’s attendees included some of the most renowned characters of Havana’s black aristocracy including the musician Claudio Brindis, the tailor Francisco Uribe, and the poet Plácido, who took turns to chat and dance with the coveted and highly protected Cecilia. After several incidents with the attendees because of his audacious approaches to Cecilia, Jaruco was eventually expelled from the dance in spite of his efforts to pass as free by using attire that went with the specified dress code established for the dance. In the first incident, a tailor shop supervisor, an employee of Uribe, tells him to know his place “Don’t come

\textsuperscript{119}Pedro Deschamps Chapeaux transcribed the following 1833 advertisement of a dance ball entertained by the orchestra of the renowned mulato violinist Tomas Vuelta y Flores, where the requirement of “known decency” for admission is stated: “Para celebrar el fausto acontecimiento de la proclamación de Nuestra Augusta Reina y Señora doña Isabel Segunda se ha dispuesto uno en cada noche de los días señalados por el gobierno para tan digna función. La casa está adornada como corresponde a tan grande objeto y no serán admitidas otras personas que las de conocida decencia. El director de la orquesta es el profesor Tomás Vuelta y flores cuyas grandiosas composiciones tanto agradan a los que concurren a esta honesta clase de diversión y para más corresponder al objeto la entrada será gratis” (Diario de la Habana, October 14th 1833 in Chapeaux 1971: 113, emphasis added).

\textsuperscript{120}Jorge Hernández observed that for the higher-class balls existed at midcentury (1841) a “book of dancing” a kind of menu of male dancers from which women could chose by writing their name next to a partner of their choice (2010).

\textsuperscript{121}Victor Fowler observed the currency to this day in Cuba of the original expression “papeleta” in the popular usage “te sacaste la papeleta” or so and so “se sacó la papeleta” to mean s/he got what s/he wanted (Víctor Fowler personal communication 05/03/2012).
pretending to be mysterious and uppity [*señorón*], because I know who are you and you know who I am” and later reminds him that he is an individual “inferior to me, a cook and… slave” (Villaverde 2004: 250, my translation) Villaverde emphasized the subtle differences in the quality of the dress that Dionisio used which were easily de-coded by higher-rank black attendees, making him the target of attention of the concurrence (“*el negro...se hizo el blanco de las miradas de todos*”).

Although he was dressed in the required costume, his tailcoat was a little too tight-fitting, his waistcoat looked quite short on him, his stockings were so old they were faded, his shoes were missing their buckles, his shirt front was not ruffled, and his collar rode up so high that it nearly covered his ears, perhaps because he had a short brawny neck. (Villaverde, translation Brouwers-Fischer 2005: 270)

Robert Paquette’s metaphor of free blacks’ “sandwiched” between the slave and the white class is illustrative at this point (1988). There appeared to be two “border” zones, where black middle classes negotiated at one end with lower class blacks and slaves and at the other with whites. Dress enabled a resemblance or mimicry effect that allowed a space of negotiation at these two border zones. At the lower-end border, dress strategies of mimicry worked for the uninvited guests at the *Cuna*, some slaves and lower class blacks to negotiate entry into a privileged space of middle class free blacks. In a similar way dress strategies of mimicry enabled free, lighter skinned blacks to negotiate with whites at the upper-end limit. Thus, through the active labor of mimicry at these two class-racial border zones of negotiation, the functionality of dress oscillated between mechanism of distinction and zone of homogenization that created an illusion of sameness. For example at midcentury, the Spanish traveler De las Barras y Prado noted the homogenizing potential of unsanctioned use of “civilized” dress suits, whose latest fashion in Havana was quite actualized,

*No hay en el pueblo distinción de trages (sic); todo el mundo viste con igualdad, aunque claro que con más o menos lujo según sus recursos. Aquí gastan levita el carnicero y el conde, el negro y el blanco. El torero que llega de España acostumbrado a su sombrero calañez, su chaqueta y su faja, no aguanta ocho días en su traje nacional, y se avergüenza de llevarlo cambiándolo por el de moda corriente en los pueblos civilizados. Esto lo he visto yo varias veces.* (1926: 46)
There is no distinction of dress among the people; everybody dresses with equality, although of course with more or less luxury according to their resources. Here the butcher and the count, the black and the white spend on frock coat ["gastan levita"]. The bullfighter that comes from Spain accustomed to his calañez hat\(^{122}\), his jacket and his wide belt, cannot stand even 8 days in his national suit, and is ashamed of wearing it, changing it to the one that is in fashion in the civilized countries. I have seen this many times.

He added that the “equality of dress” parallels an equality of “conditions” determined by the possession of money, which allows anyone who has it to show a “tendency to refinement.”

Already by the late 18th century the *Papel Periódico*, Havana’s first newspaper made a similar observation, expressing the homogenizing potential of dress in less positive terms, not as a measure of “equality” but as an indicator of “confusion” or social disorder. Marta Rojas paraphrased the newspaper article,

\[...en parte alguna del mundo se ve la misma confusión que en nuestro país en orden a los vestidos y porte de las personas. Los adornos y trajes estaban establecidos...para diferenciar las condiciones mientras al presente sirven para confundirlas. No se distingue al noble del plebeyo en Cuba, ni al rico del pobre, ni al negro del blanco en materia de vestidos...se necesita verles las caras para no equivocarse por el vestido.\] (Rojas 1998: 43)

\[... no where in the world one sees the same confusion as in our country with respect to the dresses and stature of persons. The adornments and suits used to be established...to distinguish the conditions while today they serve to confuse them. One cannot distinguish the noble from the commoner in Cuba, or the rich from the poor, or the white from the black in matters of dress...one has to see their faces to not mistake them for the dress.\] (Rojas 1998: 43)

The word “confusion” was a common descriptor used by moralists like Buena Ventura Pascual Ferrer and other “adversaries of dance” (Wagner 1997) throughout the 19\(^{th}\) century to protest popular dance forms that involved closer physical proximity and more inciting (i.e. pelvic, lower body) body movements. These discursive practices read as indexes of the level of transgressiveness akin to certain spaces and practices like dress and dance (Hernández 2010). Marta Rojas included the quote by el *Papel Periódico* to illustrate the comparable dress uses and preferences of the Marquis’ Don Antonio’s (white) wife a respectable “señora” and her *parda*

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\(^{122}\)“Calañes” derives from Calañas, a community of Andalusia, Spain.
lover. Don Antonio’s perceptions about the sameness in the performances by one and another is telling, “My fiancé Merceditas was demure, like all of the ladies I know, although both [Lucila and her] walked the same way, they dressed the same suits…” (Rojas 1998: 43 my translation)

The practice of what seemed like a “downward dress recycling” occurring within the frame of a complex system of transactions of prestige, added complexity to the picture. Historians have documented the custom by masters and mistresses to give, lend or rent their used or unwanted garments to their servants. The latter reserved savings for the purpose of buying or renting suits to attend balls. The up-to date and luxury in dress fashion that black people exhibited at churches, streets and festivities was attributed to this practice (González 1992). In exchange, masters gained prestige from their servant’s appearance wearing their suits. Cultural critic Jose Angel Hernández claimed that money from dress rentals was taken as payment in advance of slaves or freemen’s debts to masters working as day laborers, an evidence of an interesting entanglement of economies of domination, money and prestige in the transformative times of mid 19th century Havana (Hernández 2010, González 1992).

As black middle classes effectively strategized mimicry and distinction through dress, white middle classes expectedly protested this intrusion into “their” symbolic territory of prestige. The ideology of urbanity promoted through books of conduct provided the frame to regulate this kind of transgression. Under the section “Elegancia y buen gusto” (“Elegance and good taste”) in her textbook of conduct for women, Domitila García de Coronado charged against the inappropriateness and dangers of attempts by young women to “trespass the limits of social decorum” by dressing pretentiously “para el lucimiento” (to flaunt) which only makes fools of themselves (“atraer el ridículo”). Young women make a grave mistake, she notes, “querer vestirse igual y alternar con las personas de posición; sin tener en cuenta que su efímero triunfo les acarrea el peor de los males como es el juicio temerario de las gentes al pensar ‘con qué medios sostendrán ese fausto’” (“[to] pretend to dress equally and interact with superior persons; without realizing that their ephemeral victory will carry the worst of evils which is the reckless judgement of the people who may wonder how are they affording these attires” De Coronado 1893: 167).

De Coronado’s solution is to propose new measures of distinction focused not on dress design itself but on specific accessories and fabrics. Different kinds of apparel and dress fabric have been invented and made for different classes of women, “For the rich are made the
expensive fabric, jewelry, laces, satins, lamés. For the modest young women have been invented the tulle, sheer ‘tartalanas,’ gauzes, muslins, ribbons, flowers…” coral jewelry from Venice and pearls to adorn their necks (“Para las ricas se hacen las telas costosas, las joyas, encajes, los rasos, el tisú. Para las jóvenes modestas se han inventado los tules y tartalanas vaporosas, las gasas, muselinas, cintas, flores…”). The lesson: elegance and good sense of touch consist in conforming oneself and dressing according to one’s living conditions. (1893: 165-167) In fact, conformity was a common premise in 19th century Cuban textbooks of conduct. Juan Francisco Chaple (1890) included the following in his own prescription of educational premises for women: “P: Cual es la virtud que debe distinguir a los ricos R: La beneficencia P: Cual a los pobres? R: La resignación P: En que consiste? R: En sobrellevar sin impaciencia la suerte que le ha cabido uno, o acomodarse y someterse espontáneamente a cualquiera que sea.” (“Question: What is the virtue that should distinguish rich people? Answer: charity. Question: What about poor people? Answer: resignation. Q: What does it consist of? A: In enduring without impatience the fate that has fallen over one, or accommodate and submit oneself spontaneously to whatever comes.” Chaple 1890: 29)

Finally, as a highly symbolic and performed practice, dress was a relatively unregulated or sanctioned space for cultural expression and negotiation, so long as the “rules” of morality and decency and the established roles dictated by heteronormativity were observed. The city ordinances or regulatory statutes, bandos de buen gobierno had express regulations to enforce “decency” in dress and presentation in public spaces of the city. Article 26 had express prohibitions for cross-dressing, “se prohíbe el uso de trajes (sic) pertenecientes a distinto sexo, clase o categoría social” (“the use of dress belonging to different sex, class or social category is prohibited” Valdés 1842) The case of Enriqueta Fabez in the early 1820’s is perhaps the best-known episode of cross-dressing of the Cuban 19th century. Fabez, a Swiss medical doctor, passed for a man and married another woman to be able to practice her profession in Cuba. Two years into the marriage, the wife denounced Fabez who was then jailed and exiled.123 Decent or acceptable dress and presentation was also explicitly required for actors and props in the bandos in staged, theatrical performances. Furthermore, as an effective embodied kind of language, dress

sometimes communicated political identities. Historians have noted the performance of rivalries between Cuban creoles and the Spanish through the use of different colors—blue and red, respectively—in dress and home decorations to express political alignment and sympathy for the United States or Spain (González 1992, Pérez 1992).

**Subaltern hacking, multi-directional mimicry**

*Dress etiquette*

Throughout this chapter, I have shown how dress served as a crucial instrument or technology for molding the bourgeois normative bodies that emerged with the rise of modernity and capitalism. Dress as a technology for distinction became available to a segment of the emergent black and white middle classes, enabling if not a degree of upward social mobility, at least the illusion of it within changing socio-symbolic fields during the first half of the 19th century in Havana. Free blacks played a crucial role in administering and crafting a range of cultural instruments shaping bourgeois bodies and subjectivities. Free blacks were the dominant faces in the urban craftsmanship, and exemplary of the developing work-class ethic which white creole intellectuals started to value. As the majority and most respected tailors in Havana, free blacks took part in the act of molding and modeling the newly consecrated normative black and white bourgeois bodies.

Tailors’ prestige and power within the community of color derived from their control over the symbols of prestige that framed the (masculine) subjectivity of colored elites. As members of the colored military body, tailors designed their own military uniforms, enabling a degree of control over the symbols of prestige of the military institution that they so proudly integrated (Barcia 2009). Outside of their communities, within the world of whites, tailors also enjoyed wide prestige and recognition as fashion designers. As such they held control over these important symbols displayed by Havana’s white aristocracy in public performances of prestige in promenades, dances and theaters. Villaverde illustrates this as he makes the most popular of Havana’s tailors, Francisco Uribe, speak “…this humble tailor can call nothing his own save his reputation, since for more than ten years he has clothed the elite of Havana *[la grandezza de la Habana]*)” (Villaverde 1962:126). Below I comment on an episode in Villaverde’s novel which provides a vantage into the dual dynamics of Havana’s working class “black aristocracy” as models and molders of dominant symbolic codes of prestige through dress.
Leonardo Gamboa, Villaverde’s sample of a creole señorito is one of Uribe’s best clients. Leonardo requests a dress suit be made with an “invisible green cloth I had sent me from Paris for the express purpose of having you make me a dress coat…like the ones being worn by people in the height of fashion (‘a la dernier’)…” Villaverde implies that Uribe was a fashion connoisseur, actualized with the latest European trends. In fact Cuban fashion kept closely up to date with the fashion in Madrid and Paris, and newspapers even had special correspondents by the late 19th century for this purpose (Fowler, personal communication 03/01/2012). José Dolores Pimienta, a mulato musician and assistant of Uribe’s at his tailor shop is the (hopeless) rival of Leonardo for the love of the pretty mulata Cecilia. Uribe asks Pimienta to serve as model for the coat that Uribe is sewing for the rich Leonardo as he realizes that Pimienta has the same body measurements as Leonardo. Villaverde suggests a symbolism: the contradictory modeling of Leonardo’s body forms and sizes in the black body of the counter-model, the inauthentic bourgeois mimic, the mulato Pimienta, “Así el embrión del frac tomaba poco a poco la forma del cuerpo del oficial bajo la tijera y la astilla de jabón de Uribe, sin que todas estas tuviese el la certidumbre de que le viniese bien a su legítimo dueño pero fiaba el maestro mucho en su experiencia…” (Villaverde 1982: 108) (“Thus the embryo of the dress coat little by little took on the shape of his assistant’s body beneath Uribe’s shears and his sliver of French chalk, without the master tailor being certain with all that it would fit its legitimate wearer well; but he placed great trust in his experience and well known skill” Villaverde 1962: 124, translation by Sydney Gest)

Through this vignette, Villaverde suggests the possibility of the free mulato Pimienta to be the legitimate owner and model of the coat (Mena 2005), where “legitimacy” is measured terms of a joint aesthetic of race and class. The vest of a rich white aristocrat looks good on the body of a mulato, or alternatively, a dress fit for a mulato is a dress fit for a white bourgeois. This white Cuban author’s slight hint of defiance to established racial/class standards contrasts with the scornful depictions by white foreign authors common throughout the 19th century. The elaborate elegant attire of black coachmen (see Chapter 6) or of slaves in funerals, was depicted

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124. “…el caballerito Leonardo vino aquí la semana pasada y me dijo ‘Maestro Uribe, tenga usted este paño verde indivisible que he hecho traer de París expresamente para que ustede me haga una casaca como se debe. Pero déjese usted de vejeces, de talle encaramado en el cogote, ni de colas de colondrinas. Yo no soy ningun zacateca, Juanito Junco, ni Pepe Montalvo. Hágame una casaca como la gente, a la dernier, que yo sé que usted sabe pintarlas en el cuerpo, cuando le da la gana.” (Villaverde 1962: 140 – 141)
as uncomfortable, as if their bodies were not suited for the sophisticated dress (of whites) used for these occasions, “they unbutton themselves, gasp, they roll up their sleeves and the hats barely keep their balance” (in Barcia 2001: 37). Another North American traveler noted “We met numbers of negroes in long blue coats, trimmed with red and other colored facings and cuffs, with cocked hats and broad bands upon their heads, and these, we were told, were dressed to attend a funeral” (Wilson 1860 in Barcia 2001: 37). Furthermore, Villaverde’s scene of Pimienta’s dress-code modeling, indirectly validates legitimacy by acknowledging the skillfulness of Uribe. Free blacks were not just passive, mechanical mimics. They had stepped into a symbolic zone of white prestige through their active appropriation not only of the symbols of prestige per se—dresses—but of the skillful knowledge, a kind of cultural-epistemic capital which enables the design and control of these symbols. As such, black tailors mastered and controlled the technologies of manners and the underlying structures of feeling or “taste” that enabled the making of (modern, white) bourgeois bodies and subjectivities (Williams 1977, Bourdieu 1989).

As I discuss below, in dress-fashion and other aesthetic and performative fields, blacks gradually but surely came to control the codes of distinction, the “etiquette” of white dominant classes in Havana as they more broadly administered many vital aspects of their daily living and social reproduction. Blacks controlled these systems of distinction but also appropriated them as their own forms of dress, in turn deemed “presumptuous” and of “bad taste” by upper class whites. Thus, the civilizing forces created an absurd predicament for colonial subjects by commending the challenge to be, as Bhabha says, “almost the same but not quite/white.” “Mimic men” like Uribe “must mimic an image that they cannot fully assume” producing an internal subversion that renders colonialism a failed project given the questionable effectiveness of the “normalizing' authority of colonial discourse” (McKintock 1995). However, the episode of La Escalera in 1844 as the deadly outcome the struggle between the normalizing forces of colonialism and the efforts by agents to conform to these norms, confirms that colonialism was as of yet far from a failed project for the time being at mid-century Cuba. To the gestures of resistance launched by Uribe and other blacks and mulatos/as at mid century in Havana, colonial power responded with full-forced repression. These measures politically and socially erased their presence and influence for at least 2 decades before they re-emerged within movements for independence in the 1860’s.
To wrap up the suggestive scene of dress modeling-molding, the author uses the mirror as a symbol that conveys the gestures of racial-class emulation. The scene exaggerates the tension between “legitimate” and entitled wearers of the dress and the mere “copies” unworthy though perfectly suited for it, “plantado Leonardo delante del espejo, se había despojado del frac con la ayuda del sastre, mientras le probaban el nuevo, creyó ver reflejada en aquél la imagen de alguien que le miraba a hurtadillas desde atrás de la puerta del comedor.” (“Standing in front of the mirror, Leonardo had removed his dress coat with the master tailor’s aid and the two of them were trying the new one on him, when all at once he thought he saw reflected in the class the image of someone who was looking at him on the sly from behind the dining room door” Villaverde, translated by Brower-Fisher 2005: 127). As with the examples of Marta Rojas’ Francisco Filomeno and Landaluze’s paintings of mulatas and slaves, the novelist uses the mirror to create an allegory of colonial mimicry.

Villaverde’s allegory is nonetheless much more ambitious than Landaluze’s through his paintings of domestic slaves “mirroring” their mistresses. In Landaluze, these acts of mimicry were used as gestures of blind, inconsequential emulation, which rather than stirring anxiety among his white upper class audience, were intended to produce laughter (Lane 2010). Amusement and comedy through satire and ridicule eased out and concealed the deeply felt underlying fears that these performances of mimicry produced on Landaluze’s white spectators/audience. By contrast, Villaverde sought to expose and to some extent de-stabilize these colonial strategies of anxiety-control through satire. The different political alignments of Landaluze and Villaverde with respect to the colonial establishment may explain their divergent intentionality. Landaluze was a white Spanish, and his representations were aligned with the interests of the colonial government (Pérez Cisneros 2000). By contrast, Villaverde was a white creole who became deeply involved in Cuba’s struggle for independence.

In spite of these hints of defiance, a discourse of ambivalence is present throughout Villaverde’s narrative. As a pupil of Del Monte’s anti-slavery literary school, Villaverde’s representations were filled with inconsistencies. His contradictions reflect his own bourgeois crisis of identity meshed with the characteristic ambivalence of the colonial structures within which he and his generation still functioned. In fact, some of Villaverde’s descriptions leave room for doubt as to who—blacks or whites?—“set the tone,” or the cultural aesthetic standards in Havana’s “high” society. On the one hand, as the utmost Havana’s dandy, Leonardo ought to
be the model as in Uribe’s comment, “…como es tan elegante y bien parecido, da el tono en la moda, y si acierto hacerle una cosa buena, me pongo las botas” (Villaverde 1981: 141). (“since he is so elegant and good looking, he sets the tone when it comes to fashion, and if I manage to make him a fine dress coat, I’ve saved my neck” translation by Browsers-Fischer 2005:121). Teodoro Guerrero expressed the symbolic role of creoles in Havana in a similar fashion, “La gente rica, que en la Habana lo mismo que en todas partes pone la ley del buen tono…” (Guerrero 1866:19 emphasis in original) (“Rich people, who in Havana the same as everywhere set the law of good tone…”)

Early on in the novel, however, Villaverde introduced Uribe with a description that clashes with these observations, “As the tailor who was responsible for setting the tone for the fashion of the day, Uribe wore nankeen trousers with tight-fitting legs that narrowed at the top, so that they looked like italic M without serifs, with the indispensable leather strap passing underneath each foot… However little Uribe’s appearance worked in his favor, there can be no doubt that he was the most likable of tailors, ceremoniously polite and both well paid and not paid enough for his skill with his shears” (Villaverde 2005: 116 translation by Brower-Fischer). The question remains, is the cultural model the dandy Leonardo, or the mulato fashion designer Uribe, or perhaps the mulato Pimienta during the modeling scene in front of the mirror?

More broadly, Villaverde used an overall demeaning tone to depict the pretensions of blacks to mimic white cultural forms using descriptors like “estrafalario” (outlandish), “of bad taste” “ramplona” (coarse, vulgar) “estrepitoso” (loud) to refer to dress and overall comportment in speech and gestures. As cultural critic Reynaldo González observes, Villaverde focused on those instances where the “imitation failed” as did costumbristas in the visual and vernacular arts, creating caricatures that ridiculed black middle class “mimics” of whiteness. White, dominant historical narratives devote less attention to the many instances of mastery of dominant cultural forms by colonized subjects. This silencing of actions of (legitimate) mastery were coded as unacceptable transgressions producing often violent and deadly consequences.

Dance etiquette and music

Carpentier captures the quandary of colonial discourse in his analysis of blacks’ participation in the performance and transformation of musical forms, “Despite his yearning to draw closer to whites, to emulate their good manners, to raise his cultural level to that of whites,
the black ‘political’ man was not above suspicion” (2001). During the first half of the 19th century blacks performed “white” music, while rejecting to participate in African cultural celebrations and forms, such as those led by cabildos during the Day of Kings. In the film *Roble de Olor*, Rigoberto López represented fictionally the dramatic reality of white repression to black cultural transgressions in the sphere of music. The film represents historical records of an orchestra of about 40 black slaves funded by the German Cornelio Souchay, owner of the “Angerona” coffee plantation in the western part of Cuba during the first half of the 19th century.

Towards the end of the film, the musicians of Souchay’s orchestra are massively executed by the foremen of the plantation. The implication of the scene along the lines of the film’s argument is to emphasize white attitudes of “astonishment” and disapproval at black slave musicians’ masterful performances of European classical music; the combination of blackness and Europeanness in the bodies of black classical musicians was beyond the white racial imaginary.

The participation of black musicians in ensembles and orchestras at white societies has been extensively studied, and several references exist about the skillfulness of black slaves as singers of opera music125 (Carpentier 2001, Fowler 2012, Montalvo 2008). These references bring to the fore questions about blacks’ contributions to mainstream cultural forms. As scholar Reynaldo González observes, blacks’ capacities of imitation were largely developed in familiar spheres of domesticity. Master-slave relations provided the frame for racialized domination whereby the cognitive, affective and corporeal processes of internalization and habituation emerged in spaces and situations of intimacy and close physical and cultural proximity. For instance, black women’s nursing of infants nursing and teaching of white children influenced language intonation and words to specifically Cuban language forms. Black cooks incorporated elements from African cuisine to dishes served at the masters’ house, thus controlling and shaping the aesthetic standards of “taste” of white people through food. As the majority of musicians in Havana, blacks were active contributors to what were later consecrated as specifically Cuban cultural forms in music and dance (Sublete 2004, González 1992).

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125 Victor Fowler commented on the recent findings by a colleague historian about 19th century Havana newspaper references of black slaves’ attendance with their masters to the opera where their entrance was forbidden, but where nonetheless they could listen and memorize entire pieces from hidden or nearby outside locations to the theater. Witnesses claim to have heard these black geniuses walk away singing the pieces out loud. (V. Fowler personal communication May 7 2012)
Examining the specific ways in which blacks influenced creole cultural forms is necessary to de-center commonsense understandings about the directionality of blacks’ contributions to mainstream cultural forms in Havana. Cuban mixed forms and genres were the product of the blend of European and African influences. The examples above show that influences from European music to Cuban music did not come, in this case, only through Europeans but quite significantly through embodied musical performances of European and African music by African descendants in Cuba. Considering the contributions of Cuban people of color to mainstream forms within this multi-routed symbolic field of cultural influence, provides elements to re-think the concept of transculturation developed by the Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz in the early 20th century, a question to which I return in the conclusion.

Under this expanded frame of analysis, the meaning implied in the postcolonial tradition of “mimicry” as a one-way process of incorporation of dominant cultural forms by colonial subjects—a form of “cultural whitening”—may be better understood as a multi-sided cross-class racial process whereby directionalities of influence follow multiple paths. In fact, the appropriation by people of color of elements of European clothing and leisure activities such as dance, music, drinking or smoking did not follow just one direction (Fraunhar 2008). Dancing was one particular instance where the opposite occurred.

As the majority of the city's musicians, blacks and mulatos/as influenced the development of specifically Cuban forms of music and dance through the progressive incorporation of African elements into European forms (Sublette 2007). This “darkening” of aristocratic music and dance resulted in the evolution over the course of the 19th century of the imported European contradanza, into the Cuban danza and finally into the most popular danzón (Quintero Rivera 2000, Guevara 2005). Danzón became an authentic “dance fever” during the 1870's and 1880's in which people of all social classes in Havana engaged, making boundaries of class, race and gender difficult to enforce (Chasteen 2004).

Ignacio Sarachaga, the most popular bufó playwrights of the 1980’s captured the idea of a double sided, “upward” and “downward”, “blackface” and “whiteface” mimicry in his play entitled “In the Kitchen” (“En la Cocina”, 1881). Sarachaga's play satirizes the attempts of black middle-classes to imitate an aristocratic dance-party which takes place “in the kitchen”, as opposed to a luxurious saloon where upper-classes held their dances. Sarachaga's critique goes
both ways as he describes an upper-class *criollo* sneaking into a *baile de cuna* or a lower-class dance of color in secret or behind the back of his family and friends to keep up appearances (Sarachaga and Leal 1990). In fact, dancing the *danza* (in the first half of the century) and the *danzón* (in the second half) was a marker of respectability especially for white upper-class men who often secretly attended lower-class dances of people of color and dance academies to dance with *mulatas* (Leal 1975, González 1992). By the 1980’s dance academies and theaters, where public dances were held and where blacks and whites “mixed” scandalized white respectable families. Not surprisingly, dances and theaters were soon associated with prostitution and official segregation by sex and race at balls and academies was enforced (Egüez Guevara 2008, Chasteen 2004, Mena 2005).

The “darkening” impulse in music and dance throughout the 19th century in Cuba involved heavy negotiations reflected in heated public opinion debates of the late 19th century. The consolidation of a nationalist discourse particularly through the movement for Cuban independence provided a space to incorporate and legitimize *danzón* as a specifically Cuban cultural form. As a symbol of the Cuban nation, *danzón* was finally openly embraced by a segment of the white population—particularly *bufo* playwrights—with a profound anti-colonial project of defining a Cuban national identity or *cubanidad* (Iglesias 2006, Lane 2006, Leal 1975).

Like in the field of dress fashion, the greatest number and most popular dance teachers were black and *mulato* men and women. The sons of *hacendados*, like the *señorito* Leonardo, learned to dance from free and enslaved black and *mulatas* and *mulatos* like the famous violinist and dance teacher, Claudio Brindis de Salas who was among those victimized in the process of *La Escalera*. (Chapeaux 1971, González 1992, Gilabert in Bueno 1985) Like Salas, many of them, especially men, had their own dance academies. As in the case of other sociability and professional spheres, to obtain official permission from the colonial government, dance teachers had to demonstrate, among others, their status as of “known decency”. (Egüez Guevara 2008) Black dance teachers mastered both “white” / European dance forms like the waltz or the minuet as well as African influenced local dance genres like the increasingly popular *danza* and *danzón* (González 1992). As such, black and *mulata/o* dance teachers defined and controlled the etiquette of their white pupils, as scholar Reynaldo González put it “*para que no tuvieran mala actuación en los bailes aristocráticos*” (“so that they don't embarrass themselves in aristocratic
balls”) (González 1992: 137). One imagines how then black and mulata/o dance teachers created and adjusted a body movement repertoire according to the class and race of their student audience as they slowly informed and transformed the forms of dance. An active selection and codification of body movements would have been necessary, encouraging or silencing certain movements (less pelvic, more distanced) according to the status of the ball and its attendees.

Blacks and mulatos’ expanded “subaltern” perspective or angle of vision, their capacity to molt and transmute, to switch codes according to the social setting derived from their existence and participation in two spheres, whose members related to each other asymmetrically: the world of whites and the world of blacks. Drawing from Patricia Hill Collins’ black feminist epistemology, blacks and mulatas/os in Cuba were “outsiders within” enjoying a privileged epistemic position from standing at particular simultaneous locations, both outside and inside the boundaries of the white and privileged world where they interact in a position of subordination (Collins 2008). Their particular experiences of oppression allowed them to operate in unique “in between” or “moving across borders” locations, informing the ways in which they “see” the world and engage in society and politics (Collins 2008). The established racial norms denied white people the same privileged epistemic standing that allowed both free and enslaved blacks access to everyday intimate and public life of white middle and upper classes. The systematic repressions and ongoing regulations to segregate blacks from the world of whites led by the colonial government and the white Creoles of the Sociedad since the 1820’s were signs of a heightened consciousness of this racialized epistemic asymmetry and the related growing dependency of white elites on the black community.

Conclusion

This chapter reflected upon processes of subject formation in 19th century Havana with a focus on less explored subject types in Cuban cultural historiography. Going beyond the focus on Cuban mulatas, so fetishized in scholarly analyses of Cuban social history, I examined comparatively the figures of the white creole dandy or fop, the “petimetre” found in literature and the early print press from the beginning to mid 19th century and the sexualized and gendered male “petit-bourgeois” mulato. The chapter revealed the existence and making-up of these subjects in discursive zones of ambivalence inherent to colonial discourse through mechanisms of racial and class emulation or mimicry. These zones of ambivalence signal the failure of the
colonial project’s mission to create clearly distinguishable, knowable subjects through an exercise of abjection (Shimakawa 2002).

Abjected subjects are produced through the drawing of boundaries of difference that make up the hierarchies sustaining the established socio-political and symbolic order. Abjected subjects are constructed as inherently different but also indispensable for the cultural existence of the normative (deject) “self”. They are the normative subject’s symbolic point of reference, a symbolic opposite and a radically different but necessary “Other”. The production of this dichotomous subjective social order requires of processes of performance whereby boundaries between differentially positioned subjects are produced, reproduced, enacted and negotiated. Mimicry is a particular modality of performance and a conceptual venue to understand how structures of power operate to impose cultural systems and models, while providing a creative space for agents to actively redefine, appropriate and contest them. Practice enables the performance of subjectivity or the making of subjects through acts of mimicry (Bourdieu 2008, Butler 1999).

Some of the examples of cultural practices enabling subject formation discussed in this chapter operate within the realm of the everyday: food, dress, language, dance and music. The latter two were without a doubt part of Havana’s everyday social interactions and the daily routine of the city: dances every weekday afternoon at dance academies, street musicians playing, military retreats, dance and music of cabildos resounding on Sundays, among others (Carpentier 2001). Following Bhabha, Foucault and De Certeau, these everyday cultural practices are embedded in discourse, thus, they are transferrable powers “no longer elevated beyond the reach of the disempowered” (The Imperial Archive 2012).

Recent discussions on performativity engaged the concept of the everyday to expand the analysis of processes of subject formation. In particular Martin Manalansan proposed to bring analyses of performativity beyond staged realms, to the realms of ordinary life where subjectivities are made through power negotiations in ongoing, routine spaces of material and social interaction (2001). Following postcolonial theorists, Manalansan proposes to study these everyday practices as strategies of resistance deployed by those who are being disciplined within the disciplining structures themselves, where parameters of difference are continuously challenged, subverted, negotiated or assimilated (De Certeau 1988, Manalansan 2001). Thus, the frontiers or zones of ambivalence where subjects are made under a range of surveillance and
disciplinary mechanisms, may be reconceptualized as “borderlands” bearing a potential of subversion and empowerment for those deemed abject. From this perspective, in the quotidian realm, performances within borderlands operate as structuring and disciplining as well as sites of resistance and the deployment of symbolic and biological “survival tactics” (Manalansan 2001). Therefore, the everyday is as much a technology of disciplining bodies (a structure) as a possibility of resistance and unstable form of survival and social and cultural reproduction (a venue for agency). Abjected subjects perform their possibilities of subversion and or survival within rather than outside discourse, through the effective appropriation or seizure of the terms of colonial discourse (Bhabha 1994). Under this framework, I propose to approach mimicry as an act of appropriation of systems of value for strategic purposes in a range of fields of forces and of power (Bourdieu 2008). Mimicry is not simply an appropriation of forms, but rather of the authority that endow those forms with value.

The last section of this chapter highlighted the role of Havana’s working class blacks as both objects and subjects, models and molders, and also as a kind of “hackers” of 19th century Cuban colonial-and-modern habitus—the systems of disposition, perception and categorization organizing the symbolic and social schemas of Cuban colonial society (Bourdieu 2008, 1980c). Blacks and mulatos’ in Havana had subverted the mechanisms of production of value, taking the place of whites as legitimizers of colonial and modern(izing) value systems. This perspective is useful to redefine the concept of mimicry as simply an imitation of social codes of practice and performance. Free blacks mastered and embodied the parameters of evaluation, the system of codes of distinction and not simply the performed or enacted forms. They did this in their role as cultural creators and models of highly valued cultural practices in the spheres of dress, dance, music, painting, food, and a range of middle class professions like dentistry, midwifery, education, among others. Acting against the fetishization of their bodies under the colonial disciplining and civilizing gaze, blacks and mulata/os imposed a way of seeing, feeling and experiencing the world in a way and from a social location largely unavailable to whites.

A hacker in today’s popular understanding is “someone who accesses a computer system by circumventing its security system” by finding out the “weaknesses in a computer or computer network and exploiting them…” (Wikipedia 2012) The metaphor of hacking transposed to the colonial system brings out the creative dimensions of mimicry beyond an understanding of a passive, mechanical process. By launching a continuous web of creative strategies, people of
color learned, mastered and altered to their advantage dominant colonial systems of prestige. These processes of mimicry or of symbolic hacking as cultural strategies of creative improvisation were inserted in the creolized (white) ideology of urbanity. Urbanity was a cultural model “copied” from European textbooks of etiquette. Yet Cuban ideologues of manners did not envision urbanity as a mere copy of European or North American models. Rather, the specificity of Cuban culture was the centerpiece of their cultural project for imagining a national community. José María de la Torre made this very clear at the outset of his Nuevo Tratado de Urbanidad in a preface subtitled “Advertencia” (Warning)

Para la formación de este compendio hemos tenido á la vista multitud de obras nacionales extranjeras que tratan de la materia; tomando de ellas aquellos Buenos principios no introducidos aun en nuestra Sociedad y que no están en abierta oposición con las buenas prácticas del pais para que escribamos; pues como dice un excelente escritor nacional, “aunque nunca varía la obligación de ser urbanos y corteses con los demás, varía, si, con el tiempo el modo de espresar (sic) nuestra urbanidad; y este no es el mismo en todos los países. Por ejemplo, ofrecer vaso de vino en el mismo vaso en que se acaba de beber, sin haberlo limpiado antes, sería en nuestro país una falta de atención pues bien mirado es una cosa sucia; con todo hay algunos cantones en Holanda en los que se mira como una cortesía que hace el dueño de la casa a los convidados, el presentarles la bebida en el mismo vaso en el que él acaba de beber...

(emphasis in original, De La Torre 1857: 2)

To create this textbook we have taken into account the multitude of national and foreign texts [from which we have taken] those Good principles which have not been introduced yet in our Society, and which are not openly opposed with the good practices of the country for which we write; as an excellent local author notes, “although the obligation to be urban and courteous with others does not vary, the mode of expressing our urbanity does vary; and this is not the same in all countries. For instance, offering a glass of wine in the same glass which one just drank from, without having cleaned it beforehand, would be considered a lack of courtesy in our country, because if observed with caution it is a dirty thing; however there are some provinces in Holland where it is seen as a courtesy by the host to his guests, offering them to drink from the same glass which he drank from…

The awareness and tolerance of cross-cultural differences in global scope\textsuperscript{126} promoted by De La Torre extends to subtleties in gendered interactions, as in the following example under the

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\textsuperscript{126} A very interesting difference between De La Torre’s text and the most famous Manual by Manuel Antonio Carreño is their treatment of religion. While the latter grounds its moral philosophy in fundamentally Christian
sub-section (El Paseo) “The Promenade”. Rule 157 discusses the appropriate duty of courtesy for men when encountering respectable women (señoras) trying to get on or off the carriage. The author says, they should offer their hand to help them while taking off their hat and responding with the reverence “beso a Vds. Los pies” (I kiss Thy feet) to which the women should give thanks. The footnote to this rule is a lesson on cultural relativism “Véase cuanto varían las costumbres de los distintos países. En Inglaterra y los Estados-Unidos, en que se dá la mano á todas las damas de una reunión (sic) que se visita, y en que las señoritas pueden salir solas ó acompañadas de los amigos de la casa, está considerado como una injuria el que cualquiera persona desconocida ofrezca la mano para subir o apearse de un carruage [sic]” (“It should be observed how much customs vary across countries. In England and the United States, where the hand is offered to all ladies in a social gathering, and where ladies can go out alone or accompanied of their family friends, it is considered an offense that any unknown person offers his hand to get on or off a carriage” 1857: 37)

The author of a literary Journal in 1882 summarized the claim for a culturally specific Urbanity in Cuba,

\[
\text{Si bien es cierto que las buenas costumbres deben imitarse y que de los países más cultos y adelantados hemos de tomar ejemplo para el desarrollo de nuestro progreso no debemos empero llevar la emulación hasta romper con los usos peculiares de raza y de localidad aceptando lo bueno y malo de otras partes No se adaptan á todos los países las mismas costumbres y lo que es bueno en una parte puede ser pernicioso en otra.} \quad \text{(Costales y Sotolongo 1882: 81)}
\]

Even though the good customs should be imitated and that we should take the example from the most cult and advanced countries for our development and progress, we should not take this emulation to the point of breaking with the peculiar uses of race and locality, accepting the good and bad from other countries. Not all the countries adapt to the same customs and what is good in one place may be pernicious in another.

The analysis in this chapter also revealed that blacks and mulatos/as had different degrees of access to these systems. For instance, dress—like language or food—were relatively

values and the bible, religious rhetoric is virtually absent from De La Torre’s narrative, and the tolerance of religious belief diversity is even promoted. Rule number 45 describes the situation where criticizing persons of different religious beliefs is sanctioned as a bad indication of “good education”. “¿Y podremos en una reunión de personas de diversas creencias religiosas criticar los ritos y ceremonias de las religiones que no se conforman con la nuestra? No es indicio de buena educación hacerlo de palabra habiendo presente alguna persona de la religión que se critica; ni por escrito describiendo la historia ó costumbres del país en que prevalecen” (De La Torre 1857: 13)
unregulated symbolic spheres. Moreover, they were key sites to measure the subaltern’s progress in the school of civilization. People of color were encouraged to learn to speak or to dress “well”—the European and Cuban creole way. This processes exposed the predicament of colonial discourse, which mandated subaltrn to mimic dominant forms as it simultaneously produced a loophole in its boundary surveillance system. Free people of color took advantage of these “cracks in the system” to create and recreate their own spaces, systems and codes of distinction vis-à-vis black slaves and middle and upper class white people. Examples of these creative spaces were the colored etiquette balls where they exhibited their “taste” for European dress fashion in the first half of the century or their veladas or soirees in the second half of the 19th century where they demonstrated their mastery and appreciation for “high art” forms in drama, music and literature. As I discuss in Chapter 8, through these actions people of color negotiated their way to the (white) public sphere as they developed a more defined rights-claim stance in the developing prospect of Cuban citizenship in the latter part of the century, on the eve of Cuban independence (Lane 2006, González 1992).

Nonetheless, there were other spheres were blacks’ “intrusion” was perceived as more destabilizing or threatening to white hegemony. This was the case of professional fields claimed by middle class whites like dentistry, midwifery, education, painting, the arts and crafts and of course, politics. The proposed solution of white elites was to institutionalize these fields as a strategy to segregate and “cleanse” professional and artistic spheres culturally from the influence of blacks and mulatos/as. The creation of academies of art, midwifery, crafts and the measures to segregate the field of education and dentistry in the first half of the century are examples of these efforts. Nonetheless, in the fields of dance and music, creole elites’ measures to code and distinguish “high” from “low” artistic forms by segregating dance balls and academies, was largely unsuccessful. The “forces” of transculturation and mestizaje, manifested and were perceived as somewhat irreversible processes of fusion of African elements into European forms and vice versa. In fact, the term “irresistible” was recurrently used in print periodicals to describe the attitudes of particularly upper class whites towards dancing the mixed forms contradanza, danza and danzón. By the 1870’s danzón was referred to as a “dancemania” and dance fever (Lapique 1979, Lane 2006). Danzón reached a popularity that surpassed racial, class and gender divides, evidencing the transgressive character of creole, mixed cultural forms and their
centrality to the construction of body regimes in Cuba and Latin America, as Angel Quintero Rivera observes,

Los grandes debates en torno a los modales en la América 'mulata' no se dieron como en Europa respecto a la mesa, sino en la interrelación social del movimiento y aproximación corporal por excelencia, el baile en pareja y sus primeras músicas 'mulatas' nacionales merengue, maxixe, vals criollo, danza del país y danzón. (Quintero Rivera 2008: 108)

The great debates around manners in the mulata Latin America did not happen like in Europe respect to the table, but rather in the social relationship of the movement and bodily approximation par excellence, the dance in couples and its first mulata national music forms, merengue, maxixe, creole waltz, danza del país and danzón.

The analyses made in this chapter also problematize the concept of mimicry beyond an understanding of a unidirectional process of class, gender or racial circulation of codes. Mimicry was not a merely a gesture of unilateral imitation in the direction of “progress” “civilization” or “whiteness”. Cultural influences follow multiple paths, revealing the fluidity of the socio symbolic structure and the creative potential of actors across racial, gender or class divides. Directions of cultural influence, performance and symbolic appropriation followed upward and downward, “whitening” and “darkening” orientations. Stuart Hall captured this complexity in his own definition of black popular culture,

The point of underlying over-determination—black cultural repertoires constituted from two directions at once—is perhaps more subversive than you think. It is to insist that in black popular culture, strictly speaking, ethnographically speaking, there are no pure forms at all. Always these forms are the product of partial synchronization, of engagement across cultural boundaries, of the confluence of more than one cultural tradition, of the negotiations of dominant and subordinate positions, of the subterranean strategies of recoding and transcoding, of critical signification, of signifying. Always these forms are impure, to some degree hybridized from a vernacular base. (1998: 474)

More over, the examples provided demonstrate that the field of circulation of values, codes and symbolic resources enabled complex mechanisms of exchange that may help rethink processes of cultural mixing explained through concepts like mestizaje and transculturación (transculturation), the latter developed by the prominent Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz.
This chapter showed that in 19th century Cuba, the contributions of European traditions to creole, Cuban cultural forms came by way of it’s “mimics” –black people, who had internalized these elements by virtue of necessity, survival, and the compelling forces of civilization. As people of color came to excel the skills of mimicry of white-European culture, in areas such as music, dance, language or food, they embodied them. Thus their contributions to shaping new creole cultural forms came from their non-essential, already creolized bodies, knowledge and cultural baggage combining expertise on both European and African traditions.

Cultural critic of Latin American history, Carlos Alonso, raised this question in an important critique to Ortiz’ notion of transculturation. Alonso questions the assumptions about the supposedly fixed or monolithic “sources” of influence to a “creole culture” implied in Ortiz’ widely accepted concept. Alonso named the “myth of modernity” the belief that there are clearly identifiable foci from which “the modern emanated” from the metropolis “rippling and deploying expansion” founding and transforming American cultural systems. (Alonso 1998: 228) Ortiz made a groundbreaking contribution to the study of cultural phenomena by questioning the unidirectional, top-down perspective implied in the earlier concept of “acculturation” whereby colonized subjects merely “took from” the dominant white-European culture. This perspective minimizes subaltern subjects as cultural agents. According to Ortiz, transculturation implies a “give or take” (“un toma y daca”) of cultural elements which create an always undone “constantly simmering” stew or “ajiaco,” the classic Cuban culinary metaphor of mestizaje, “Lo característico de Cuba es que siendo ajiaco, su pueblo no es un guiso hecho, sino una constante cocedura” (“What characterizes Cuba is that being an ajiaco, its people is not a done stew, but rather a constant simmering” Ortiz1991: 16 in Galván Tudela 2000: 2628.)

Alonso’s critique aligns with the contributions of Caribbeanist Sidney Mintz and Richard Price (1992 [1975]) and scholar of colonialism Ann Stoler to rethink the assumptions about the presumably “original”, pure or unchanged elements that fed the Cuban “ajiaco” to produce the transcultured, blended “creole” “Cuban” identity and culture. Mintz and Price, Alonso and Stoler point at the constructed and complex character of cultural categories such as “African” or “European.” These categories transmit an idea about a presumably original, “model” or “stereotype” constructed as pure categories, which were always already transformed, “transcultured” through relationships of contact during colonization. For instance, enslaved Africans arriving in the colonies were a highly heterogeneous, disperse, and already culturally
transformed cohort, coming together as a unified collective under the specific historical circumstances of enslavement, uprootedness and relocation. Thus, their individual and collective subjectivities were constantly being transformed through continuous processes of cultural negotiation and change (Mintz and Price 1992). Similarly, postcolonial scholars like Anne Stoler have contested essentialist conceptions about monolithic “European” subjectivities in the colonies and the metropolis. Stoler has drawn attention to the important points of reference that colonized peoples and ideologies served to socio-cultural formations in Europe which developed in constant interlocution with parallel processes in the colonies. For instance, two textbooks of manners discussed in this dissertation by Cuban authors José María de La Torre (1857) and Domitila García de Coronado (1893) were “exported” to European metropolis in Madrid and Paris respectively to be used in schools there (De Coronado 1893). De la Torre and Coronado developed culturally specific normative regimes for Cuba based on European “imported” ideologies of domesticity. Thus, regimes of manners were being continuously reshaped and interpreted in global circuits of knowledge between the colonies and metropolis. The questions that this chapter has raised only support the contributions of these scholars to question not only the sources of cultural influence, but also the multiple, non-linear directionalities or orientations of cultural influence by the range of actors that participated in the making of a common yet heterogeneous and fragmented “creole” or distinctively Cuban culture as a product of colonizing, civilizing and modernizing processes during the 19th century.

Finally, the chapter helps to rethink subaltern actors of color as active agents and contributors to the construction of Cuban modernity and nationhood. Sidney Mintz and Angel Quintero Rivera have made this claim for the broader Caribbean. In particular free blacks in Cuba contributed to shape the terms of a Cuban (colonial) modernity through their important numerical presence and influence in Havana’s everyday life. This unique positionality endowed them with a cosmopolitan identity compared to that of many white creole planters, who spent an important part of their time in the rural haciendas. Thus, in Cuba, as in the broader Hispanic Caribbean, free people of color contributed to shape the terms of an urban, modern and civic culture and to the formation of a civil society informing processes of national formation.
Women’s bodies and their sexuality had an important place in the dominant images of Havana popularized in artwork, travel logs and literature in the nineteenth century. The glorified images created of decent white Havana “ladies” taking a stroll in the volantas or carriages through the promenade, contrasted with scandalous images of prostitutes drifting through the streets calling the male passersby, or the mythical image of the dancing mulata—the quintessential object of white male desire converted into the symbol of the Cuban nation. This chapter builds upon narrative and visual depictions of women’s bodies in urban settings created by a majority of male Cuban intellectuals, and North American and European and travelers visiting Havana between 1820 and 1888.

My reading of the narratives reveals how the positioning of differentially valued women’s bodies in contrasting performative spaces (Goldstein 2007) was crucial to an emergent bourgeoisie’s construction and refashioning of ideologies of class distinction and respectability. For example, during the 1830s and 1840s, images of white aristocratic women promenading in carriages through the recently built Prado Boulevard were part of a cultural narrative of Havana as the symbol of a disciplined colony headed towards modernity and progress. Around the same time, the urban myth of la mulata prostituting her body in streets, or dance halls for the ideal of whiteness was being developed in Cuban literature, and polished decades later in vernacular bufo theater. Together these antithetical images created a gendered imaginary of Havana signaled by power and prestige and ordered by strict gender and racial boundaries. This picture contrasted with recurrent images of prostitutes used to describe Havana and Cuba as corrupt, chaotic and uncivilized during the 1880’s. These images transmitted elite’s perceptions and anxieties about a greater social permeability unfolding in the context of deep social and political tensions during the decades prior to Cuban independence in 1902. The changing aesthetic of the city during and after the demolition of the city wall in 1863 and the changes in legislation allowing greater freedom of the press later in the century, on the eve of Cuban independence informed these divergent perceptions. Overall, I argue that the changing visions of the urban landscape conveyed through contrasting gendered narratives revealed growing elites’ anxieties about
shifting power fields in gender, race and class relations accompanying the broad political economic changes of the late 19th century.

As a necessary background to understand gender politics in 19th century Cuba, in the first section I present a critical reading of major scholarly analyses covering the broad legislative, religious and social complex governing sexual and gender relations throughout the century. In particular, legislation regulating interracial marriages enforced since 1805 through 1881 was part of a broad system of segregationist measures targeting inter-racial and gender proximities perceived as politically threatening, and very particularly racial miscegenation. The archival traces of negotiations between parents, lovers and authorities surrounding interracial marriages offer a window to understand the complexity of the 19th century system of social classification. My own reading of the archival evidence in the major work by Verena Stolcke draws attention to intersectionality, or how power structures organized by class, gender, sexuality, color, bodily practices, and legal markers mutually informed each other to determine a person’s place and opportunities in society. In addition, I examine the important scholarly critiques to conjugal practices, family, gender and race relations from alternate views to those long reproduced in the literature and sustained by a long fed imaginary of women of color as “concubines” of white men. By critically approaching hegemonic heterosexual partnering and family models that support common racial stereotypes, I raise attention to the silenced schemas of sexual desire such as those between men and women of color, or white women and men of color.

In the second section, I center my analysis on the contrasting representations of women in Havana in different venues and at different moments in the nineteenth century. My reading of these narratives is twofold. First I analyze representations synchronically, that is, focusing on similar images in a specific period of time across different urban venues, i.e. bourgeois women riding carriages or mulatas smoking or walking in the street. Second, I examine representations diachronically by comparing depictions of women at different moments in the century, i.e. mid century (1830-1850) and late century (1880’s). I draw special attention to the multiple ideals, values, aspirations and anxieties that a range of differentially positioned authors (Cuban, European and North American, white and educated men and women) conveyed and silenced through their travel, literary and visual narratives of women. Moving beyond the descriptive value of these texts, I use a theoretical framework of urban imaginaries to examine the city and the images created of it in their symbolic and discursive dimensions. I expose the ways in which
travelers and intellectuals speaking from a position of class and gender privilege created and used racialized female constructs, i.e. white aristocratic women, black and *mulata* women and prostitutes, to signify space and place performatively, that is, according to a range of significant cultural practices and objects (Goldstein 2007, Butler 1999). Riding carriages, walking through streets, dancing, and smoking were coded as signs of class, racial, sexual and gender difference. From this perspective, authors and political actors used women’s bodies as topoi—common visual themes in urban narratives—to create, negotiate and imagine desired boundaries of difference in Cuba as a contested project of nation building throughout the 19th century (Joseph 2008, Canclini 2007).

Using this framework, my discussion in the last part of the chapter is a contribution to feminist scholarship about the public/private distinction in colonial Cuba from a performative and everyday perspective. Far from being an exclusively gendered divide, the “public” in 19th century Cuba was an essentially performative category that cut across gender, racial and class divides. Embodied quotidian practices performed both inside and beyond the domestic realm, created highly mobile and fluid urban boundaries that shifted across space attached to the bodies of their signifiers: raced and classed Cuban women.

**Intersections of gender, sexuality, color and class in 19th century Cuban social structure**

In nineteenth century Cuban society gender, class and race operated together as categories of social stratification. Prevailing racial values constructed *blanqueamiento* (whitening) as a class aspiration given the association of darker skin shades with slavery. Gender values determined female sexuality and chastity as measures of a family’s honor or respectability and class status. In this ideological context, the specific socio-demographic characteristics of the Cuban population in the 19th century informed marriage and union patterns with important implications for gender, class and racial stratification. Among the free and slave classes, there was an overall disparity in terms of sex ratios across racial groups throughout the colonial period. Among the free population, a there was a higher number of free women of color compared to their male counterparts, while white women were in the minority with respect to white men. For instance, between 1817 and 1862 for every 100 there was an excess of between 14 to 50 white men over white women (Stolcke 1989: 57).
Migration patterns over the centuries of colonization explain this tendency. White women’s migration was restricted to those who traveled accompanied, usually as wives and servants of Spanish government and military officials. In Cuba, Spanish males often coupled with female slaves, few of them married, but in some cases they granted their offspring freedom. (Reid 2004: 24) In this context, there was a relative scarcity of European women in general and creole white women in particular compared to white males.

Conventional gender norms centered upon ideas of women’s “sexual purity” and “honor,” demanding a strict control of women’s sexuality. Controlling white women’s sexuality was a strategy of elite white criollo families to ensure their class privileges, which depended to a large extent on their demonstrated white status proven through the judicial process of limpieza de sangre or purity of blood. Inter-class and racial marriage practices including inbreeding (arranging marriages among relatives), and prohibitions of interracial marriage enforced since 1805 served to unite economic and prestige resources in a tightly knit circle of white wealthy families (Paquette 1988, Stolcke 1989). Demographic imbalances coupled with race and class-endogamous marriage practices informed perceptions about white women as being inaccessible and over-demanded. In this context, racial miscegenation was common and even acceptable within unions of women of color and white men of usually lower classes, in addition to being a common strategy of social mobility for families of color. However, the opposite was extremely rare and prohibitive: white women's unions with men of color.

Elite families also discouraged unions between white women and Spaniards due to prevailing rivalries between Spanish and Cubans. In this context, inter-racial unions between Spanish whites and women of color were frequent. So were elite Cuban white men’s relationships with women of color. These relationships were rarely formalized and even less so since 1803, when legislation to restrict marriages among individuals from different race and class status was implemented. From then until 1881, parental consent was required for approving marriages until the legal age (23 for men and 25 for women). Making existing social attitudes official, this early 19th century legislation regulated marriages among persons of unequal caste and “condition”, i.e. between white persons and people of color. Authorities alleged these kinds of unions “tainted” the family’s honor and jeopardized the “integrity of the State.” (Stolcke 1989, Abreu García 2008) Throughout the century, racial miscegenation was a state security concern under the premise that offspring from mixed unions increased the population of color. Given the
conflicting racial atmosphere informed by fears of revolts and claims for abolition, mixed unions and other forms of racial proximity were perceived to place white colonial establishment at risk. In fact, the number of inter-racial marriage licenses granted reflected the political atmosphere at different points during the century. For instance, during the war years in the 1860’s and 1870’s the concession of licenses was suspended (Abreu García 2008, Stolcke 1989).

Later dispositions (since 1805) did not require parental consent for interracial marriages beyond the legal age, except for individuals “of known purity of blood.” In practice, white families regardless if they were noble or not, generally opposed the marriages of their children with persons of inferior status. Parental opposition was very common because women generally married before the legal age. In addition, brides and grooms themselves came before authorities to object to their parents’ dissent and expose the reasons for their decision to marry (Abreu García 2008, Stolcke 1989).

Therefore, interracial marriages were subject to authorities’ evaluation of the comparability of the status of the partners. Verena Stolke’s review of innumerable allegations of dissent and petitions of interracial couples in the period between 1805 and 1881 reveal that status incompatibility was not measured simply in terms of racial status (as color or phenotype). In addition to legal credentials of the partners such as baptismal certificates indicating sex, color/caste or legal status, a formal requisite to evaluate the acceptability of an interracial marriage were certificates issued by parish priests and local authorities reporting on the moral reputation and economic status of the suitors. These reports were based on authorities’ research carried out among the partners’ neighbors and acquaintances informing on their good or bad reputation.

From a gender perspective “honor” was a measure of reputation transported from the woman to her entire family. Female honor, signaled through a woman’s virginity and conformity to conventional gender norms informed family honor. For instance, cohabitation or sexual union with a man out of wedlock (i.e. concoubinage) placed the honor of the woman, of individual family members and of her entire family at risk. This fault fell under the legal category of “scandal” or “public scandal.” In this case families would often attempt to “save” their honor by seeking to formalize the union through marriage. However, a mixed marriage with a person of inferior status could also taint a family’s honor (Stolcke 1989, McCabe 2003).
Furthermore, honor and the related but different notion of “honesty” had specific meanings and uses in discourse as well as serving as crucial categories within the juridical system in 19th century Cuba. The notion of family and female honor differed from the 19th century conception of “honor” used to express abstract measure of social “quality” given by the cultivation and social acknowledgement of moral virtues (discussed in Chapter 6). Besides indicating one’s social reputation, “honesty” was a legal category used widely as criteria for criminalization. In her study of prostitution in 19th century Cuba, Marikay McCabe demonstrated that determination of innocence or guilt in juridical cases followed an “inquisitorial hermeneutic” by which accused were not charged for a singular act or category of crime, such as murder or robbery. Rather, a successful demonstration of a “doubtful reputation” measured in relation to a series of events and general comportment of the individual were sufficient evidence to prove the accusation. Popular opinion and testimonies of residents were often the ultimate arbitrators. According to McCabe, honesty was a racialized category—white people had it, but black people had to “earn” it (McCabe 2003). Common descriptors of honesty or decency (“honradez”) included expressions such as “of good or irreprehensible conduct” “of good repute” “good comportment” “good education” “virtues” or at the other end “de baja esfera” (low life) “escandaloso” among others (Chapeaux 1971:187-197, Stolcke 1989) Like honor, honesty was also a gendered category: for women, more than men, honestly implied moral virtue in a sexual sense. From a combined racial and gender perspective, by virtue of their sexual purity or virginity and conformity to gender norms, women of color possessed honor, they could “lose it” and thus her and her family had to work to preserve it (Stolcke 1989: 112). Honesty, like honor, was also used to indicate a legitimate or acceptable occupation (i.e. poor people, vagrants and accused prostitutes fell in this category, McCabe 2003: 86, 87).

In direct relation to honor and honesty, from a juridical perspective, “escándalo público” was a (practical) legal category used to accuse and convict generally women informed by

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The current definition of honor by the Diccionario de la Lengua Española of the Royal Spanish Academy includes honesty as the third definition of honor, “honestidad y recato en las mujeres y buena opinión que se granjean con estas virtudes” (the honesty and restraint among women and the good opinion which they gain from this virtue). The second definition is reminiscent of the medieval concept of honor, discussed in Chapter 6 “Gloria o buena reputación que sigue a la virtud, al mérito o a las acciones heróicas…” (“Glory or good reputation that derives from virtue, merit or heroic actions.”) The first entry defines honor as “a moral quality that carries the fulfillment of the duties with respect to fellows and to one self.” (Real Academia Española 2013) According to another dictionary, honesty (honestidad) is defined as “Decency, decorum. Demure, modesty. Urbanity, composure” (Diccionario Enciclopédico Larousse 2009).
neighbors or police agents of being “public women.” In this context, prostitution was not coded as a fault. Rather the fault was in a woman’s conduct. In fact, throughout the 19th century an idea of “innate criminality” is non-existent. Rather, criminality was a deeply culturalized notion measured by actions, behavior and conduct. As McCabe noted based on her analysis of cases of convicted, alleged prostitutes and vagrants “…one could not be arrested for the simple fact of drinking too much or selling sexual services, but rather for disruptions related to these activities that were perceived as a nuisance to others or threatening to the ‘public tranquility’” (McCabe 2003: 203). As such, in the 19th century, the “crime” as opposed to the “criminal” was used as the measurement of fault. The “criminal” as a subject and object of disciplining by institutional apparatuses was yet to be created by Cuba’s first criminologists in the early 20th century, notably Israel Castellanos and the early Fernando Ortíz.

This review makes clear that honor and honesty were codified indicators of conduct inserted in official systems of evaluation and governance, which involved the participation of authorities and the community at large. One’s behavior and the opinions of it by authorities and members of one’s community directly affected the form of social relations and constrained the field of action of individuals, as in the case of marriage choices. Furthermore, categories indicating moral quality and conduct worked together, intersectionally, with a multiplicity of other social and legal categories to inform the “total” status of a specific person. Stolcke’s review of interracial marriage petitions revealed the calculation of this ultimate social status was based on a combination of positive and negative interrelated markers of gender, class (indicated by occupation, color, legal status –slave or free), color, sexual and moral conduct (i.e. concubinage, “good conduct,” “education”), or economic status (wealth). Other conditions such as legitimacy, baptismal status, or specific personal qualities or physical defects of the suitors (i.e. mental illness, being an orphan) and of their extended families and of their ancestors were also considered. According to this system, individuals willing to marry unequal partners alleged to have any of these factors as a form of social capital that compensated for racial, economic or other disadvantages. For instance, an individual willing to marry “up” could “trade” negative markers such darker skin shades for his/her social assets such as wealth possession, moral standing or by demonstrating his/her legitimate status.

Given the value placed on white women’s sexuality, petitions or parental opposition to marry men of color were rare, but not inexistent. When this occurred, the suitor would often be a
free *pardo* (lighter skinned black male) and she would need to demonstrate her extreme poverty or to be an orphan with no family to oppose this socially reproachable union. Given the prevailing ideology of white supremacy, lower status women, and very particularly women of color were generally expected to marry “up” and never down. A category existed to describe offspring from a “backward” union: *saltatrás* which means leaping backwards (Paquette 1998, Shawn 2004: 63). For women of color reports on good or “honest” conduct were especially required to marry a white partner. Marriage petitions were between poor white males and educated lighter-skinned *pardas* of “proven” respectability were common and likely to be approved. Common cases were white males of advanced age, suffering from an illness, or immigrants with no family petitioning to marry *pardas* expected to ensure health and care-services while obtaining racial advancement in exchange through her union with a white man. As Stolcke notes, in these cases whiteness is “almost conceived as a material asset exchangeable for the services rendered” (Stolcke 1989: 65).

Furthermore, because in Cuba there were multiple color lines within “black” and “white” categories, partners seeking to marry within their racial group abided to the same system of sanctions regarding unequal status marriages. For instance, parental dissent among free *pardos* or *morenos* (lighter skinned black) objected their children’s marriage with persons from slave families were common. Distinctions were made between “ingenuos” or born free and persons born into slavery. “*Ingenuo*” status was a measure of “distance from slavery” and was verified for suitors as well as for their parents or extended family. In addition, legitimacy was a very important marker of status given the high number of children born out of wedlock among families of color (Abreu García 2008).

The compound of legal restrictions and social norms informed a tendency of marriage rates to be much higher among whites than among people of color throughout the 19th century (Pérez Murillo 1988). However, social pressures to conform to gender norms were equally applied to people of color. The social and symbolic value endowed to the institution of marriage backed by the moral authority of the Catholic Church compelled both whites and people of color to seek to formalize their relationships128 (Perera Díaz and Fuentes 2006). For choice or

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128 From the stage of slavery, white masters compelled Africans to get married, who in turn were subject to pressures of the Church. Slaves married other slaves but also free people of color and inter-ethnic marriages were common in spite of the rivalries that authorities attributed or sought to incite among them. Díaz and Meriño found a
obligation, Africans and their descendants engaged in ritual practices of Catholicism such as baptism, communion, marriage, church attendance, all of which carried important connotations of respectability, status and prestige in Cuban society. In particular, the participation of the free black population in Catholic religious rituals was significant. For instance, in the 1830’s more than half of free black children were baptized and one fourth of those who died were given Catholic funerals (Sagra in Mena 2001: 177). However, their participation is likely to have been limited by economic status given the high fees that the Church charged to provide religious services. Thus, marriage and other socially mandated Catholic rituals were significantly conditioned by class status, affecting both lower class black and white classes.

The importance of the institution of marriage and other forms of status tied to Catholic religion evidence its influence on systems of social stratification. Catholic religious ideology provided crucial symbolic and social premises to measure the “moral worth” of individuals, sometimes working for and other times against the interests of the colonial state and the established class and racial order. For instance, ideologies of sexuality and gender informed religious precepts of women’s virginity and purity. In combination with the colonial taboo of miscegenation, ideas on gender worked to sustain prevailing divisions of class along racial lines. While the Church shaped and sanctioned heteronormative models of family, its fundamentalist stance on marriage, which openly favored inter-racial marriages to prevent concubinage and illegitimacy, challenged the racial order imposed by the colonial state and the system of slavery.

greater proportion of marriages among slaves than among free people of color in the parish of Bejucal in the outskirts of Havana throughout the 19th century. Greater marriages among slaves might have been influenced by the will of masters. However, once pressures by the Church decreased as tensions between Church, state and planters manifested, planters were no longer interested in getting their slaves married –while saving on costs. Thus marriage rates decreased significantly and illegitimate births increased among slaves. (Perera Diaz and Fuentes 2006)

129 Historians have noted that the Catholic Church did not have as big of an influence in Cuba as it did in other colonies of Spain. The marks of the Church’s presence in Cuba’s urban architecture demonstrate this. (Mena 2001, Diaz and Fuentes 2006, Echevarría 2010) The colossal religious monuments adorning the urban centers in South American cities evidence the influence of the Catholic Church as an overarching “civilizing” entity among the indigenous populations. These developments do not have a parallel development in Cuba. The indigenous populations were nearly decimated and Havana did not develop as an urban center per se until the late 18th and early 19th century, when money from the sugar industry placed Havana as an important commercial center in the world economy. In the early years of colonization, Spaniard settlers preferred to migrate, settle into and develop the promising and already highly developed continental urban centers of Mexico and Peru. Benitez Rojo described Havana as a settler city, with a disperse population that mostly concentrated in Havana, more than an exploitation city like its continental counterparts. Majestic churches and elaborate urban centers developed in the continent, while these developments came late for Havana, conceived only as a “way station,” a terminal for the fleets connecting the Spanish empire to Seville. (Rojo 1989) In spite of these observations, the analysis in this section demonstrates that Catholicism and its institutions indeed influenced and structured Cuban society in the 19th century in important ways.
Catholic priests tended to favor marriage even among racially unequal partners. For the same reasons some priests opposed ideas of purity of blood as they were used to prevent marriages, and “legitimate” births (Mena 2001, Stolcke 1989). Other priests viewed slavery as fostering promiscuity and immorality particularly as in the sexual relations between white male masters and female slaves (Rojas 1998). Even though the clergy didn’t share a single political or social stance with regards to social and racial inequalities or slavery, their indoctrinating mission sometimes favored the rights of those excluded by the colonial system. For instance, some historians have noted that churches were probably the only unsegregated public space in spite of the efforts of white elites to reverse this at specific moments in the 19th century (Martínez-Fernández 1995, Mena 2001).

In this context, the parish priest was a figure of moral authority and governance in the community in charge of registering and charging for spiritual services of births, deaths, marriages and Christian indoctrination. Civil status, baptism or other conditions such as

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Progressive stances with regards to slavery date from the time of Archbishop Las Casas in the 16th century, and more recently in the 18th and 19th century several other figures challenged the views of the master class with respect to racial equality and the political system. Towards the 1820’s as the growing population of color troubled white elites’ tranquility, elites’ relations and attitudes towards the Church changed as it appeared as a useful mechanism of socio-cultural and ideological control. Priests used doctrinal discourse that justified the subordinated situation of slaves and the superiority and authority of whites as a divine state of things or given by God’s will. Jesus was represented as a good mayoral, white sugar served as allegory for white souls that went to Heaven, and black souls simile burnt sugar that was thrown to waste (Pérez Murillo 1988). The following quote is a good illustration, “People of color… are very passionate about [celebrating religious holidays] as their constant attendance to the churches and the great amount of religious fraternities [cofradías] where they are enlisted. The conservation and if possible the increase in the cult is one of the most simple and effective means that the legislation can use to keep them submissive and obedient and increase their respect and adhesion to our class and institutions, and in that sense the regular ordinances [neighborhood-based] are the most appropriate to this effect…” (Superintendencia de la Real Hacienda in Pérez Murillo 1988: 201)

This perspective is by no means absolute or unproblematic. For instance, Carpentier (2001) noted that black musicians could not work as choir members at churches in the 19th century.

Indoctrination of Catholic traditions was not always in the hands of the clergy and at points community members assumed the role as evangelizers. This was particularly true during the sugar boom (1792-1804) when the criollo wealthy class came into conflict with the Catholic Church for economic reasons. The number of slaves introduced to the island required a high investment in religious dues to fulfill religious duties and rituals, and the salaries and maintenance of priests and chapels in plantations. Planters were reluctant to pay the continuous fees—in many cases, lifelong— for the services provided by the Church such as baptism, wakes of different kinds, masses, religious holidays, marriages, among others (Pérez Murillo 1988, Perera Díaz and Fuentes 2006) The reduction in activities of the clergy resulted in the decrease in the number or elimination of chapels, cemeteries as well as priests to provide spiritual services, particularly in plantations. During this this moment of crisis, by a convenient initiative, planters themselves “authorized” “older Christian” slaves who often served as godparents of children to indoctrinate the recently arrived, thereby avoiding the dues. Later in the century, foremen, midwives or “in case of necessity” any man or woman was authorized to baptize by simply pronouncing the sacred words and spilling water served as substitutes and were authorized to offer certain crucial services, especially baptism. (Perera Díaz y Fuentes 2006; Pérez Murillo 1988)
legitimate birth became key moral credentials complicating the prevailing pigmentocracy, and affecting the status and prestige of all individuals in society. For instance, baptism of all slaves was mandatory for masters upon a period of slaves’ arrival or at birth, and was strictly supervised and penalized by Church authorities at risk of being accused of “infidels and bad Christians” (Perera Díaz y Fuentes 2006: 74).

Similarly, being an “illegitimate” person or offspring of an unmarried couple and extra-marital conjugality or “concubinage” also carried social and even economic sanctions (Stolcke 1989). Illegitimacy was a condition indicative of being born to unmarried parents or even to priests. Illegitimate individuals were considered infamous and stained by “vile” origins (Stolcke 1989: 167). The majority of illegitimate children were born to parents of color (about 75% compared to 20% among whites) (Pérez Murillo 1988). Many of them were racially mixed given the social stigma (first) and the stricter regulations (later, since 1805) of marrying across racial groups. Besides the social sanctions, there were important legal sanctions affecting illegitimate and unmarried individuals. Thirteenth century Spanish laws prevented illegitimate persons from inheriting property, ensuring that material resources (in particular land) were concentrated in hands of whites. Being illegitimate also lowered the status of a white person making it closer to the status of a mulato (Mena 2001, Stolcke 1989).

Racialized imaginaries about family and sexuality

Illegitimacy and interracial marriage formed part of a dominant imaginary about the family and sexuality of people of color. Matrifocality, concubinage, and the naturalization of white men as the subjects of women of color’s sexual desire were some of the stereotypes that supported this imaginary. In their 19th century study based on reconstruction of families of color in the parish of Bejucal, Havana, Perera Díaz and Fuentes reconsider some of these ideas. They question the long held idea that concubinage was more prevalent among people of color and that practices of cohabitation informed “matrifocal” type families led by women of color. The authors use a critical approach to the concept of matrifocality to discuss practices of illegitimacy and cohabitation, which were widespread in Cuba and in Caribbean societies. These practices have been pathologized as “lacking stability” in relation to the Western normative model of the nuclear family. The authors argue that for whites and blacks, slaves and free individuals, consensual union rather than marriage was the generalized practice of conjugal relationships in
Cuba. They explain that it was often the children, and not the formal agreement of marriage, which gave meaning to familial relationships as held in the African tradition. While there were class and racial disparities in marriage rates, in the overall Cuban population these were relatively low and consistent with a Caribbean trend (Perera Díaz and Fuentes 2006).

In challenging the notion about the primacy of matrifocal families of color, the authors debunk the myth about the absence of the paternal figure in the family. This was particularly true among inter-racial couples that, while being prevented from legalizing their union due to inter-racial marriage legislation, were also unable to officially recognize their parenthood due to ecclesiastical sanctions to extramarital cohabitation. The authors cite cases in which fathers (regardless of their race) sought to recognize their children in order to enable their inheritance of their property or even to perpetuate their lineage by passing on their surname (Perera Díaz y Fuentes 2006: 157-188). Their argument echoes the narrative presented by Marta Rojas in her novel Santa Lujuria. (1998) Rojas tells the story of a white Spanish nobleman who recognized his mulato child resulting from his sexual affairs with a free mulata. Not only did this aristocrat father pass on his name to his mulato son and acted as a “responsible provider” in terms of material needs and education. He also actively worked by all legal and extra-legal means to make his son inherit his title of Marquis by erasing his racially tainted genealogy (Rojas 1998).

Together, Díaz Perera and Fuentes and Marta Rojas’ research effectively challenge the normative imaginary about family and sexuality built around the story of Cecilia Valdés, the quintessential Cuban mulata of the novel by Cirilo Villaverde. Villaverde’s novel is considered the foundational piece of Cuban literature in the 19th century. Popular refrains like “adelantar la raza” (“to improve the race”), “la necesidad hace parir mulatas” (“need makes mulatas give birth”) or “mejor querida de blanco que mujer de negro” (“better to be a lover of a white man than married to a black man”) capture the image of the sexually available mulata depicted by Villaverde and the plethora of cultural critical works that continue to discuss his novel. Cecilia became the archetype of the Cuban-born light skinned sensual mulata seeking to ascend socially through her relationship with a rich white criollo. Cecilia is an “almost white” mulata and the unrecognized child of a white rich Spaniard and a black mother. Cecilia’s surname is “Valdés” because her mother left her at an orphanage where she was registered as born of unknown parents, hoping to improve her life chances by erasing her black ancestry from her identity (see Chapter 6). As a counter-figure of the mythical Cecilia, Rojas’ novel Santa Lujuria presents the

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story of a racially and sexually ambiguous black male character, Francisco Filomeno who, unlike Cecilia is the recognized son of a white aristocrat. In a critical gesture to centuries of academic discussions surrounding Villaverde’s imaginary, Rojas effectively decentered and engendered narratives about sexuality from the bodies of black women towards less explored questions of hegemonic masculinity and male respectability. (I elaborate on this analysis further in Chapter 6).

Furthermore, the trope of la mulata as the concubine of white men which Villaverde’s Cecilia epitomizes, has informed a generalized perspective that for people of color, illegality, i.e. not marrying with sexual partners and having children out of wedlock, was an avenue to dodge the social and legal segregationist barriers and achieve a degree of social mobility (Pérez Murillo 1988, Stolcke 1989). The fact that people of color generally sought upward mobility through informal unions with whites created a normative partnering schema supporting a stereotype about women of color driven by a materialistic and racist logic. Cultural ideologies of biological “whitening” and pragmatic logic of “survival” were tied to the promise of higher life chances for racially-mixed lighter skinned offspring and potential economic and other forms of support.

Perera Díaz and Fuentes’s work provide elements to think critically about these images by observing that interracial marriage restrictions affected the possibilities of cohabitation for both people of European and African descent. They observe that concubinage was an option for a stable relationship both white and black couples whom, for various reasons could not and did not formalize their unions. As exposed above, parental opposition was a major limitation to white couples seeking to formalize their marriage before the legal age. Elopement—women running away from their home with their boyfriend—was a common strategy used by mostly white ”lovers” to put pressure on the woman’s family’s approval of the suitor and concede a license to formalize their relationship 133 (Perera Díaz y Fuentes 2006, Stolcke 1974). This strategy was not always successful and cohabitation was an option, though heavily sanctioned, for white couples. It is worth noting that while the expectation from women of color to demonstrate their respectability was high, by the same logic, much harsher social sanctions were imposed upon white women who diverted from established norms of conjugality and marriage.

133 Stolcke noted that inter-racial couples also used this strategy, though less frequently and less successfully than white couples (1989).
Furthermore, while it is undeniable that the racial ideology of “blanqueamiento” was internalized and strategically used by people of color in general and women in particular to navigate through a highly stratified society, there are problematic aspects to generalizing this perspective. Perera Díaz and Fuentes present a legitimate concern with the view that illegality and extra-marital sexual relations would always be a preferable option for women of color as opposed to marriage with a man of their own race and class. The authors question the promise of social advancement that drove pardas (mulatas) to engage in sexual relations with white men. While their lighter-skinned offspring may have “whitened” their lineage, economic betterment was not self-evident or related to this fact, unless the father chose to recognize the child, which did not always occur as was the case of Cecilia. An additional question for consideration is the supposed preference of women of color to maintain relations with white men outside marriage. How did they balance the benefits or sanctions that came from the stigma of their children as “illegitimate” and to their own condition as “concubines” with respect to the gains by “whitening” their offspring as a result of their unions with white men? Ultimately, the authors deconstruct the deep-rooted imaginary of the sensualized and sexualized black female body as lustful, pretentious and lacking sexual and political agency, a point I expand below.

Along the lines of Díaz and Fuentes, María del Carmen Barcia (2009) and Pedro Des Champs Chapeaux (1971) studies’ on class differences among families of color demystify the image of women of color’s discrimination against men of color as potential suitors. Their work demonstrates the important avenues for economic advancement of intra-racial marriage practices, such as between slaves and free people of color or class-endogamous marriages among lighter-skinned elite families of pardos. Furthermore, although marriages across racial lines were legally regulated, those that crossed legal status were not uncommon. Marriages between slaves and free people of color were usually a means for slaves to achieve freedom, a common goal in the couples’ decision to formalize their union (Barcia 2009, Perera and Díaz 2006). What possibly compelled a free person of color, who was already positioned above the denigrated status of slavery, to seek to marry a slave? Affective and solidarity ties created during their shared experience of enslavement may explain this phenomenon (Perera and Díaz 2006). This example raises an important point to address the assumption of the selfish and banal character of marriage decisions by people of color.
Furthermore, these authors tackle the assumption that social mobility was only possible and sought for by people of color by crossing the “race line” or seeking unions and/or proximity to whites (Barcia 2009, Perera Díaz and Fuentes 2006 Deschamps 1971). At the lower ranks, marriage to a slave or a free person of color was the starting step for many recently arrived African slaves as well as criollo blacks and mulatos. These individuals made fabulous rises over the course of their lifetimes to become successful entrepreneurs, community leaders and businessmen within the community of color. Marriage was also a common strategy among slaves and free people of color to concentrate resources among their kin or with corporate partners at slave barracks, cabildos and milicias. Finally, among elites of color, class-endogamous forms of marriage were strategies of wealthy families of color to unify their property through marriage. Marriages were arranged within a selected group of “distinguished” families of color, and partners were chosen either for their economic, military, religious prestige and leadership roles in their communities. These practices reinforced the sense of a corporate subjectivity that defined their prestige and status in society, both in the eyes of the community of color and among whites (Barcia 2009, see Chapter 3).

In light of these considerations, the imaginary created around Cecilia Valdés did silenced those pardas or mulatas who married wealthy artisans and cabildo leaders, prestigious militiamen of the elite circles of the colored bourgeoisie. Were these men of color not “good matches” for these well-positioned women of color? Villaverde’s picture of the (victimized) poor mulata Cecilia, pursuing the love of a white rich criollo (Leonardo Gamboa) while rejecting a man of color of her own class, Pimienta, expectedly gave the story a tragic ending. Pimienta ends up killing Leonardo after he abandons Cecilia for a white rich woman; he is executed and she is thrown in jail.

In this section I examined the normative structures that constrained gender relations throughout the 19th century. Establishing normative frameworks to mold female bodies was important because class privilege was closely tied to racial and class privilege. Protecting and controlling women’s virginity and her sexuality was crucial to secure or advance a higher racial and class status. The ideology of racial advancement or blanqueamiento conditioned the (upward) orientation of social mobility, which could be gained by, but was not limited to heterosexual unions of women with lighter skinned men. The lighter skinned offspring these unions produced, ensured the preservation or advancement of class status through color. For this
reason, there was a higher normative burden placed on white women compared to women of color. White women embodied the white privilege of her whole family and social circle. If she was wealthy then there was technically no more room for social advancement and the greatest concern became to ensure the privilege preservation of the entire family by ensuring marriage with a comparably high status suitor.

This does not mean that people of color in general and women of color in particular were not judged by the same standards. Demonstrating respectability, pursuing education and other avenues for economic betterment, as well as abiding to normative family patterns such as marriage and sexual purity increased the social capital and life chances of women of color and of her family. However, the racialized cultural constructions, imaginaries and stereotypes about women’s sexuality created different social expectations from black and white women. While an imaginary of white privilege was attached to white women’s bodies, an imaginary of whitening through racial miscegenation was adhered to the bodies of women of color. For both white and black women the stakes were high for partnering or marrying “down” or otherwise challenging normativity. Women and their entire family circle lost grounds of privilege, status and power. However, the generalized perceptions about mulatas’ lax sexuality were predicated upon the stereotype of her body and skin color as the whitened product of an inter-racial union. Just like the white women’s body was the instrument of privilege preservation of the creole bourgeois class, the mulata’s body was seen as the avenue to racial advancement for the entire population of color.

For this reason, Cuban social reformists like José Antonio Saco proposed whitening via women of color’s bodies as a solution to Cuba’s “black” demographic problem. People of color would be gradually incorporated to the Cuban nation through the unions of women of color with white men. The entire population would be whitened through the gradual production of lighter skinned offspring from these unions, and through the preservation of racial purity among white bourgeois class ensured by the social and legal surveillance of white creole women (Guevara 2005: 106).

Nonetheless, there were forces of resistance to the to the 19th century legal and social normative gender system. These elements of agency rendered the system permeable, unstable and subject to active negotiations. For instance, there were racialized planes of gendered normativity, whereby the specific class interests of families of color were not always aligned
with those of the creole bourgeois imaginary. For example, women of color married within their racial and class group, supporting the class interests of wealth unification to which Havana’s colored bourgeoisie abided. Ties of solidarity drove free individuals married slaves challenging the expectations of upward social mobility conditioned by the ideology of *blanqueamiento*. In addition, individual interests often challenged established gender structures. As Verena Stolcke observed (heterosexual, romantic) love was the greatest threat to the preservation of the social order because it asserted individual choice over social conventions (Stolcke 1989: 66). For instance, white women “eloped” with their un-fit suitors to put pressure on their families to accept the unequal marriage. In all of these cases, the agency of white women and women of color enabled their mobility across the tight normative colonial schemas.

While this discussion examined how women navigated through the a vertically stratified social structure, the next section moves on to discuss how their positionality facilitated or constrained their mobility and the perceptions of it across the urban space.

**Public or Private? Gendered spatializations and performances of color and class in nineteenth century Havana**

*Affective and Performative Spatial Imaginaries*

Chapter 5 introduced the discussion about the processes of construction of spatial imaginaries of Havana defined by the emotions, the sensations and the performances of bodies occupying those spaces. The analysis suggested that the public/private divide may not only be understood according to a division of gender roles. As such, liberal understandings of this divide might be insufficient to grasp the processes of performative spatialization historically and culturally specific to 19th century Havana.

In her influential essay “A semiotics of the Public/Private Distinction” (2002) Susan Gal discussed the ideological character of the distinction from a historical and cultural perspective. The doctrine of the “separate spheres” present in republican and liberal political thought since the 19th century in Europe and the United States stressed the idea that moral principles linked to public or private are incompatible. Feminist liberal critiques of the public/private divide recognized the gendered character of the ideological schema of “private” and “public”, whereby spaces and practices of the home, family, bodily and affective intimacy, and female domesticity were viewed as opposed to male activities outside of the home signified “public.” In her article,
Gal provides an overview of feminist interventions challenging the supposed incompatibility and autonomy of moral principles associated with each sphere of life in liberal political thought (i.e. emotion/politics, personal/political, economy/emotion). Feminist research showed how these principles do in fact coexist in everyday life and practice. Furthermore, feminist research demonstrated that the boundaries of the public/private divide are not stable but constantly being negotiated and that the terms of their meaning and use change over time (Gal 2002: 77-79).

Although feminist liberal critiques effectively denounced the structures of gender oppression sustained through this division, they have received several critiques. For instance, building on the influential debate sparked by Michelle Rosaldo’s theorization of the genderized domestic/public opposition, Sherry Ortner concurs with Silvia Yanagisako in stating that gender differences presupposed in the association of women with domestic and men with public should not be assumed, but rather be unpacked. To do so Ortner proposed a framework to understand the differential valuing of spheres of social life by recognizing the ways in which those aspects of life associated with males encompass those associated with females. Whether one encompasses the other explains why male associated spheres of social activity are accorded a higher value (1990: 55, 56). Ortner proposed examining the dialectics of the encompassing/encompassed spheres of life in a given society, what is the politics of their distinction in terms of the value association with gender oppositions, and how their meanings change over time (1990: 56, 57).

Critiques to liberal feminist understandings of the public/private distinction also came significantly through black feminist critics from a perspective of race and class differences. Black feminist theorists demonstrated that the public and the private are not only sexualized/gendered but also racialized constructs. These scholars questioned the liberal public/private dichotomy for its implications of a hierarchical, sexualized and gendered binary order. For instance, Patricia Hill Collins charged against the Eurocentric bias of the public/private divide as based on the experiences of white middle class nuclear family. The experiences of African-American women as domestic workers earning paid-domestic labor, or sharing public venues with men did not correspond to the private-home, public-work, private-woman public-man divisions (Bergetz 2009, Hill Collins 1999). Other theorists like Iris Marion Young and bell hooks called to reconsider the liberatory possibilities of the home as a space traditionally coded as “private” and oppressive for women (Bergetz 2009). In general, these theorists highlighted the
importance of experience to bring out the important ways in which these spaces were classed and racialized (Hill Collins 1999).

The racialization and classing of “public” and domestic spaces was particularly evident in 19th century Havana. Because of their lower class status and their dependency on their own work for survival, working class black and white women experienced greater mobility in the city space compared to elite white women. In particular, due to their numerical presence in occupations such as laundering, selling, working at tailor shops, midwifery, teaching, among others free women of color were visibly more present in Havana’s streets and other public venues. As such their scope of action was not exclusively within the home. On the other hand, middle and upper class women’s mobility outside of the home was strictly regulated. Bourgeois white women were set as models of normative gender regimes condensed in numerous textbooks of female education published throughout the century. In these texts, the domestic sphere was constructed as the primary space for action, negotiation and construction of a bourgeois white female subjectivity. White women appear as “governesses” and authorities within the bounds of the bourgeois home (Childs 1997, Chaple 1890).

To this extent, the dominant social imaginary produced a divide between home and street, private and public, that was clearly gendered, but it was also clearly classed and racialized. Working class free women of color were normalized in the (male) space of the “streets,” while ideologies of domesticity created an imaginary that assigned the bourgeois white woman a place within the bounds of the home. Nonetheless, anyone standing in between this polarized imaginary was somehow obscured or rendered invisible. This was the case of lower-class working white women facing contradictory expectations to work and thus go outside of the home, and simultaneously comply with gender norms of seclusion to gain or preserve their respectability.

In addition to prevailing gender norms, social control measures that took force during Tacón’s regime further conditioned the fields of action and representation of women’s bodies in the city. Street walking was criminalized and associated with sexual and mental deviancy. The specialized Junta de Represión de la Vagancia (Board of Repression of Vagrancy) was in charge of persecuting and confining women in female prisons and hospitals, making lower class white and black women the targets of such measures (Hevia 1979, Álvarez Estévez 1976). As medical discourses consolidated during the second half of the century, specialized measures to regulate
prostitution were launched further accentuating the interlocking moral and sexual boundaries delineating the place of women in the city’s imaginaries. In the context of the complex gender politics across space, additional performative measures whereby female respectability could be signaled became necessary.

As a contribution to feminism’s efforts to unpack the gendered public/private polarity from the lens of race and class, the analysis presented in this section underscores the importance of affect and performativity playing out in space to understand emic conceptualizations of public and private in 19th century Cuba. The anthropological reading of a range of sources including textbooks of conduct, costumbrista literature and artwork and travel literature brings attention to the important dimension of the quotidian as a space for the shaping and enactment of affective and performative (female) bodies.

For Raymond Williams (2010), quotidian are the sites, places, practices, knowledge and experience that make up the substance bodies and subjects. As such the everyday is the grounds over which a common set of meanings, feelings and understandings is expressed, enacted, and interpreted. In conversation with Judith Butler (1999) and Martin Manalansan (2001), the everyday may also be understood as the cultural frame where subjects and bodies are produced and reproduced through processes of performativity. Performativity stresses repetition as the means by which subjects, bodies and affects are shaped. To that extent the quotidian may be examined as a site of repetition and practice that offers a structured space for performance and disciplining as well as a space for creativity, “urgency” and improvisation. In sum, the everyday may be approached as a space of experience, of enactment, of learning, internalization, subject and body making, and also as a field of political contestation, where power relations and negotiations play out.

In 19th century Cuba, European and North American travelers, costumbrista artists and educators used the quotidian space of Havana’s urban landscape as a canvas for their visual, literary and pedagogic narratives of social life in the 19th century. These authors reserved special place for women’s bodies and their performances. The following section draws from a range of visual and narrative sources by male, educated Cuban intellectuals and foreign travelers visiting Havana, writing between 1820 and 1898. These authors created representations of different kinds of women—black and white, upper and lower class, respectable and indecent—occupying certain venues of the city such as streets, promenades, theaters, and performing in specific ways
such as walking, strolling in carriages, smoking or dancing. I read these narratives as imaginaries: shared ideas and values conveyed or silenced through dominant images of the city about the place that subjects (should) occupy within geographic and cultural limits (Canclini 2007, 1997, see Chapter 5).

This analysis reveals the ways in which place and color were performatively marked and gendered in the landscape of 19th century Havana mystified by costumbrismo, travel literature and educational textbooks of urbanity. With this analysis I make a contribution to the literature about color, race and gender in 19th century Cuba. Existing scholarly analyses have largely centered upon the figure of the Cuban mulata (Lane 2010, 2005, Quintero Rivera 2009, Fraunhar 2008, 2002, Guevara 2005, Arrizón 2002, Bost 2003, Williams 2000, Kutzinski 1993, González 1992). Specifically nineteenth century studies interpreted the mulata’s skin color in the context of ideologies of blanqueamiento (whitening), which were at the center of processes of construction of class, race and national identities throughout the nineteenth century (Lane 2010, 2005, Guevara 2005, Kutsinski 1993). Nationalist discourses consolidated in the second half of the nineteenth century, when revolutionary leaders organized towards Cuban independence mobilized a discourse of racial equality or integration (Ferrer 1999). In this context, multiple images of mulatas emerged in popular culture as epitomes of the principle of racial mixing and integration that founded ideologies of Cuban nationality or Cubanidad (Lane 2005, Kutzinski 1993).

More broadly, studies on gender in Latin America focusing on the political significance of the mulata body, made important contributions to de-center feminist studies agendas by highlighting the centrality of race to understandings of gender and sexuality in the Caribbean and Latin America (Williams 2000). Alternatively, they have helped to unpack the gendered dimensions of the discourse of racial mixing, so central to constructions of national identity in the region. The correlations of class, gender and color are explored in discussions of blanqueamiento as a common strategy of social mobility of mulatas through unions with white men—a pervasive theme in popular cultural discourses of the nineteenth century (Barcia 2009, Perera Díaz and Fuentes 2006, Stolcke 1989). However, less attention has been given to the performative aspects of skin color in relation to constructions of female sexuality. This entails exploring the ways in which color was acted out and interpreted in relation to coded cultural practices, body movements, material objects and the built environment operating together with
systems of class, gender, sexuality and racial difference. In using this framework I recognize that color or racial phenotype, as a given or self-evident marker of difference, did not by itself assign subjects a place in the social structure, but rather, it entailed a process of embodiment and performance of shared codes in social and symbolic fields (Butler 1999, Bourdieu 1989).

‘Señoras’ y ‘mulatas’ de la Habana: Gendered urban imaginaries

*The glory of the Havana is the Paseo... This is the public drive and fashionable lounge of the town—the Hyde Park, the Bois the Boulogne, the Cascine, the Corso, the Alameda...the glory of the Paseo consists in its volantes [sic].*

Anthony Trollope, 1860

Travelers in the nineteenth century often had recourse to images of white aristocratic women to narrate their impressions of Havana. The image of elegantly dressed upper class, young “respectable” women taking a stroll in their horse-drawn carriage or volanta (also named quitrin) through promenades or paseos was archetypal of Havana in the nineteenth century (Figure 12, Cueto 1994, Pérez 1992, De Acevedo 1919, Martínez Fernández 1996). The modern *Paseo del Prado* (also known as *Isabel II*) was a preferred site for an evening stroll. The *Prado* was the first paseo or boulevard of Havana built in late eighteenth century on the outskirts of the city wall bordering the coastal line, on the image of the Prado Boulevard in Madrid. By the time of its remodeling under Tacón’s modernization project in 1834, evening strolls through the *Prado* had turned into an everyday ritual with connotations of status and prestige for the privileged white wealthy families who owned or could afford to rent a carriage. Both the *Prado* and the Tacón Theater were among Captain Tacón's creations used or “consumed” predominantly by the wealthy Cuban *hacendados*, the sugar plantation-owners (Venegas 1990).
Borrowing from European ideologies of urban hygiene, the Prado in Havana was beautified with trees, water fountains, and a Botanical Garden to promote an ordered and civilized culture of leisure (Venegas 1990). Government buildings and elegant mansions of wealthy residents and religious authorities were built nearby and decorated with fountains and busts. The paseo was meant to provide a structured and aesthetic character to the path that residents from the inside of the wall had spontaneously formed around the outskirts of the city wall, where they went seeking a fresh atmosphere. In this spirit, Tacón remodeled the Prado with parallel lines of trees that ordered several paths, a central path for carriages, two lateral paths for pedestrians, and two outside streets for carriage transit (Figure 13). Two gates connected the inside and the outside of the wall and served as limits to the paseo, orienting incoming carriages through the path onto the statue of Charles III (relocated and replaced for the fountain Fuente de La India in 1837), which served as roundabout. Thus, the paseo was configured as a kind of stage for what looked like a procession of carriages (volantas) that transited back and forth in the central path, with the pedestrians on the two lateral paths as the spectators. Several musical bands featuring black musicians played at different spots of the paseo and complemented the atmosphere of leisure for the wealthy hacendados. (Venegas 1990, De Acevedo 1919)
However, the main attraction that drew men by foot or horse to the *paseo* in the evenings was the privilege to catch a glimpse of Havana’s “ladies,” who dressed elegantly for the everyday evening stroll, waived to friends and acquaintances from the comfort of their *volanta*, as they repeated their rides back and forth along the *paseo*. An essential part of the promenading routine was shopping right at the volantas, “The ladies in shopping do not in general leave their *volantes*, but have the goods brought to them, the strictness of Spanish etiquette forbidding them to deal with a shopman and it is only when the seller of goods is of their own sex, that they venture into a store.” (Wuderman 1844 in Pérez 1992: 9) Furthermore, promenading was all about fashion display, as one traveler observed, “*Las mujeres van al paseo tan elegantemente vestidas como si fueran a un baile.*” (“Women go to the *paseo* as elegantly dressed as if they were going to a dance ball”) (Ney 1831 in De Acevedo 1919: 21) Some accounts reported the dresses were specifically confectioned for the occasion of evening promenading in the *volanta* and for some elite white women, this was the only time of the day when they went out until as late as midnight without ever touching Havana’s streets (Montalvo [1844] 1922: 201).\(^{134}\)

![Figure 13 - “Habana / Vista general del Paseo de Isabel II” (Havana / General View of the Isabel II Promenade, 1860s) by French artist Fréderic Mialhe (1810-1881) in Cueto, Emilio 1994 *Mialhe’s Colonial Cuba*, p. 90.](image)

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\(^{134}\) On elite Cuban women, a North American traveler wrote, “…no one who has any regard for her reputation for being well dressed would be seen at theater, ball or opera in a dress that had been worn before.” (Wallace 1899 in Pérez 1992: 247)
Narratives from the period (particularly 1830-1850) stress that this was one of the few instances where upper class white women could be seen in public. The absence of white “ladies” in the visible spaces of the city struck travelers as one of the city’s salient features, often referring to Havana as a “male city” (Martínez-Fernández 1995, Guerrero in Guijarro 1876). As this traveler observed,

The custom of appearing in public only in a volanta is so general, that some of my fellow-boarders, American ladies, who ventured to do their shopping on foot, were greeted in their progress by the half suppressed exclamations of the astonished Habaneros, who seemed as much surprised to see a lady through their streets as a Persian would see one unveiled in his. (Wuderman 1844 in Pérez 1992: 9, see also De Mellado 1864: 474)

Strict social and gender norms forbid white upper class women to go out by foot and unaccompanied. Therefore women were transported in their *volantas* from the interior of the house directly to *paseos*, theaters, shops and churches, so that—as narrators stressed—their feet never touched the street (Martínez-Fernández 1995, Guerrero in Guijarro 1876). In addition, white upper class women in public venues like *paseos* and theaters were protected and policed by at least two older women or close relatives. They drove with the women in the carriage in addition to street guards that kept order along the *paseo* or kept the gates of exclusively female theater boxes.

Adding to the imagery of heavily policed elite white women’s bodies at public venues, travelers often depicted white women “caged” inside their homes, staring from inside windows, resembling prisoners behind bars,

I have watched them from early morning till late at night, and coquetting with their fans is about all that I have been able to see them doing. Sitting in front of the tall, prison-barred windows, with chairs arranged to catch the breeze, looking at every passersby, is a favorite occupation—seldom do you see them reading...You occasionally see the gentlemen talking to them through the iron bars. (Williams 1871 in Pérez 1992: 237)

This North American traveler rounded up his story with an anecdote about an American sailor who confused the women with “inmates” and “threw them a silver dollar” to their astonishment. The Spanish painter Landaluze captured the imaginary of the caged white women in his
Travelers described the scene of women in *volantas* at the Prado Boulevard as a pleasant visual spectacle where the upper classes went to “see and be seen,” to exhibit themselves, their wealth and “their” women (Venegas 1990). In this scenario, the *volanta* was a cultural object comprised of various symbols of status and prestige, including the attire of the women and of the driver, a black man, usually a domestic slave, the *calesero*. In travelers and other contemporary narratives the *calesero* is often represented as an object, which is part of the overall ornamentation style of the *volanta*. His elaborate attire included silver/golden accessories designed to match the fancy, elaborate *volanta* decorations. The *calesero's* often expensive attire and his body as part of the family's coterie of domestic slaves formed part of the material culture of the elite along with *volantas*, which were indicators of a family's wealth, a source of rivalry among Cuban and Spanish elites and the aspirations of middle classes. For instance, *volantas* were kept inside homes and mansions near the lobby where guests could admire them along with other luxury furniture items such as grand pianos, as this Spanish chronicler reported, “…from the street one enters directly into the living room, where on one side figures, as a principal furniture, the quitrín or victoria, thereby having to pass the horse in front through the guests”
de la calle se penetra en la sala, donde á un lado luce, como mueble principal, el quitrinó la victoria, teniendo por tanto que pasar el caballo por entre las visitas.” Guerrero in Guijarro 1876)

The expression el calzado de las damas (the footwear of ladies) used by the Cuban writer Teodoro Guerrero to describe the volanta is a powerful illustration of its significance for the material culture of the Cuban aristocratic class, “The carriage in Havana is a main necessity, because since the ladies never go out by foot, they say that the vehicle is their indispensable footwear” (“El carruaje en la Habana es de primera necesidad, pues como las señoras nunca salen á pié, dicen que el vehículo es su calzado indispensable.” Emphasis in original, Guerrero in Guijarro 1876)

Both Cuban and foreign observers were fascinated with white women’s feet. They often commented on their tiny and delicate shape, creating a fetish framed around the trope of comfort and idleness by which aristocratic women and their mobile device appeared inseparable, “…peeping out from beneath their dresses, are the tiny feet for which they are celebrated, evidently never intended by nature to walk on…” (Hazard 1871: 404, see also Marmier 1851 in De Acevedo 1919: 34). A female traveler wrote about the mysterious erotic power of white women’s feet effected on a Spanish officer, “he fell in love with the lady of his admiration at first sight of seeing her foot as she descended from a volanta at El Caney…” (Wallace 1899 in Pérez 1992: 246) Very much like the calesero's attire, travelers’ accounts noted women's dresses creating ornamental effect to the visual spectacle of el paseo en volanta. Narrators described women's full-flowing skirts spreading over and covering the side panels of the carriage giving it “the appearance of being furnished with wings,” adding another element to the scenery's aesthetic of prestige (Martínez-Fernández 1995: 33). Women themselves, their bodies in display in the spectacle of volantas at the Prado, like the objectified calesero, were among the possessions exhibited by upper class white families for the appreciation of women’s aspiring lovers or future husbands. Martínez-Fernández illustrates this symbolic arrangement noting that wealthiest families owned one volanta for each “marriageable” daughter (Martínez-Fernández 1995).

Like the Prado Boulevard, The Tacón Theater was another recurrent urban space associated with Havana's progress towards modernity. Travelers compared the Tacón Theater
Only the principal theaters of the greatest European capitals can match Havana’s theater in the beauty of the decorations, the luxury of the lightening, and in the elegance of the spectators, who all wear yellow gloves and white pants. In London or in Paris this theater would be considered an immense salon of great tone. (Montalvo [1844] 1922:72,73)

Here again, upper class women formed part of the spectacle and even competed with the dramatic performances for the attention of the assistants, “In order to separate the gazes of the spectators from these balconies, the spectacle of the scene must be very attractive, Salvi has to be what it is, a great tenor, and the Bozzio has to sing with all her talent…” (Marmier in De Acevedo 1919: 34, see also Martínez Fernández 1995: 36). Seated in reserved and exclusively female boxes, women were admired from head to toe by the equally elegantly dressed (white) gentlemen seated below at the pit, through the golden and velvet-covered railings showing their elegant dresses, silk shoes and socks, “…delante [de los palcos] un simple barandaje muy ligero que permite ver a las bellas habaneras en toda su gracia, desde los bandeaux de sus ondulantes cabelleras hasta sus pequeños pies…” (‘…in front of the boxes there is a] simple and light railing that allows to see the beautiful habaneras with all of their grace, from the bandeaux of their undulating hair to their small feet…” Marmier in De Acevedo 1919: 34, see also Martínez-Fernández 1995, Morelet [1857] in De Acevedo 1919: 40, Montalvo 1922: 72)

In these narratives, women are again objectified as “furnishing” and “adorning” the theater's pits, adding a visual effect to the “shining” and “cheerful” atmosphere that pleased
travelers visiting the Tacón Theater (De Acevedo 1919). Again, white men and women appear as protagonists in this public and modern venue where Havana's heterogeneous society converged, but where class and racial hierarchies were clearly marked: people of color (both men and women) in a small section in the upper story, middle class whites in the corridors and other non-seated spaces, wealthy white men in the pit and white “ladies” in secured boxes, with separate doors and stairwells, zealously guarded by relatives and police guards (Leal 1975, Hazard 1871, Otto 1843).

A 19th century urban imaginary of prestige was created by inseparable landscape objects: women, volantas, theaters and promenades. The latter three were novel, modern urban configurations and defining elements of a developing urban (bourgeois, consumer) culture that increased the visibility of white, upper class women, otherwise secluded in the confines of the home. Narratives by both Cuban and foreign writers depict white women's bodies “performing” in these venues to visually highlight the city's beauty, order and sophistication of habits of Havana's residents. In other words, upper class white women’s bodies and the array of cultural commodities and prestige practices were dominant elements in an emergent cultural narrative of urbanization and modernity. Together, these objects and subjects conformed the cultural repertoire for the performance of class and gender distinction. In the context of the political motivations of Tacón’s urban reform plan in the 1830’s, the image of accessorized bourgeois women served to code the promenade as an element denoting Havana and Cuba’s modernity. The “public” image of white women in objectified and rather de-sexualized representations of Havana by travelers, contrasts sharply with the overtly sexualized and tainted “public” image of black women.

Black and mulata women were preferred objects of representations in popular Cuban theater or teatro bufo—blackface theatrical performances of the 1850's and 60's—as well as costumbrista literature and artwork. Cuban costumbrismo was a nineteenth century literary and artistic movement whose authors generally focused on specific topoi or visual themes creating patterns of the city’s landscape as a static visual surface or snapshot. Costumbrista authors’ narrative and visual representational style epitomized a two-dimensional visual metaphor captured in the genre’s suggestive label cuadro de costumbres (picture of customs). Speaking from a privileged stance as members of the elite intellectual and planter circle of Creoles, costumbrista writers used satire or moralizing undertones to describe local mannerisms, and
customs. They claimed to “paint” everyday life scenes and situations in streets populated by a range of urban characters constructed as representative “types.” The colorful and folklorized images of city life created by costumbristas were later consecrated as mythical of colonial Havana (Bueno 1985).

Costumbrista articles and paintings appeared in periodicals and magazines since the early nineteenth century and on lithographs that decorated wrappers and box labels of cigars since the 1840's (Fraunhar 2008, Kutzinski 1993). Since the 1820’s and throughout the century, costumbrista writers and playwrights depicted black and mulata women persistently in public urban settings such as streets, markets and plazas. In reality, women of color were more visible in public realms due to the major role that they played in urban daily life, making up the majority of peddlers, artisans, midwives, caretakers and preschool teachers at mid-nineteenth century (Mena 2005a). However, black and mulata women's “publicness” acquires very different meanings in costumbrista narratives compared with travelers’ descriptions of white women in public settings.

While representations of Havana's “ladies” emphasize their elegant dress graciously adorning volantas and theater boxes, black women are said to wear their dresses provocatively (with shoulders uncovered) and pretentiously like white women to attract white men, denoting both their presumed sexual and economic ambitiousness (Figure 15, Lane 2010, Kutzinski 1993, Martínez Fernández 1996). In contrast to the constrained image of white ladies, overtly policed and even “caged” behind window bars inside the home, blacks and mulatas are depicted walking and strolling “freely” up and down streets, which are their “natural” performative realm (Lane 2010, Fraunhar 2008, Kutzinski 1993, Pérez 1992). Therefore, in the nineteenth century gendered urban imaginaries of Havana, black and mulata women were constructed as the discursive antithesis of white aristocratic women.

The costumbrista character “La Mulata de Rumbo” epitomizes Havana’s white “ladies” symbolic point of reference. (Figure 4) In the article accompanying Landaluze’s illustration, Francisco de Paula Gelabert ([1875] 1985) describes la mulata de rumbo as the prototype of the inherently attractive mulata, who disdains work, loves dancing and lives off her lovers’ gifts. She “performs” in the lower-class dances of people of color and is an anti-model of respectability and decency, living “la vida indolente, la vida del desórden, del abuso y de la inmoralidad” (an “indolent, disordered, abusive and immoral life” 1985: 435).
Standards of female respectability at the middle grounds

In constructing a dominant gendered imaginary of Havana, costumbristas and travel chroniclers created standards of female respectability measured according to stereotypical images of women. At the “high” end stood the bourgeois white woman and at the “low” end the wayward *mulata de rumbo*. Outside of this fictionalized and stereotyped imaginary, in the uncomfortable and undefined borderzone where high and low overlapped stood middle and lower class white women and “respectable” *mulatas*. Both classes of women had to make persistent efforts to demonstrate their decency.

*Costumbristas* like Cirilo Villaverde and educators like José María de la Torre, the author of the popular educational textbook on urbanity, good manners and etiquette recognized this reality. (De La Torre 1857) Their writings convey that moral worth and respectability were qualities that could be learned, cultivated and achieved through the systematic internalization or embodiment of social norms and values, as opposed to being determined by given or inherited biological conditions like skin color and sex. This logic of differentiation particularly applied to lower-class white women as well as to light-skinned *mulatas*, like the protagonist of Villaverde’s novel *Cecilia Valdés. Mulatas*, Villaverde wrote, could become respectable women, for instance by “covering their dark origins,” and by staying away from streets which served as “schools of
vice” (Villaverde 2005: 14). Also, those privileged mulatas who are “raised in abundance” may cover their “physical and moral defects” with “gold,” which according to the novelist, “purifies even the most turbid blood” (Villaverde 2005: 86).

Confirming these ideas, the analysis on marriage ideologies in the previous section demonstrated the centrality of “conduct” in the definition of gendered and racialized categorizations of class status. Despite her emphasis on occupation understood within a Marxist framework,135 Verena Stolcke’s study on interracial marriage is filled with examples proving that meanings of class and color extended beyond occupational status into essentially performed and embodied categories. These included demonstrated (verifiable) and intangible cultural, behavioral, sexual, moral attributes and markers of difference. Many of these were gauged through ideas of honor and honesty, which were subject to the verdict of community members and authorities. To a large extent these categories assessed actions, behaviors and performances of others within the limits of acceptable social, spatial, symbolic, aesthetic or other boundaries. The complex operations of representation make it difficult to establish whether social actors read performances as signs of color (i.e. promiscuous women are women of color), or conversely, stereotypes created around color drove expectations of a certain action or performance (mulatas are promiscuous). What is clear is that, as judged from the discursive practices, color and class were not given or assumed, but rather they needed to be actively performed and “publicly” i.e. socially demonstrated.

The following quotes drawn from Stolcke’s study illustrate this point. In 1854 a neighbor reported on one light skinned girl of color aspiring to marry a white man,

…in the class of the coloured she is held to be among the most respectable on the account of her distance from the black colour and from slavery and on account of the good manners of her ancestors which is what bestows distinction in the classes of colour. (Stolcke 1989: 25)

Similarly, on the parents of a parda, the justification to marry a white man of a low occupation (coal carrier) are stated:

135 The choice of a strictly Marxist framework conditions Stolcke’s analysis to a narrow interpretation of race and color differences by associating these with the concurrent division of labor and class. Her broader underlying argument insists that color signals class status according to occupational status, which ultimately polarized society along racial lines between enslaved and free (black and white).
…the good qualities of honesty and Christianity have gained them the highest distinction on the part of the first families of the municipality, so that this family only lacks the colour as it is commonly said, for anybody I asked were full of praise for them as much with regard to the good upbringing and education. (Stolcke 1989: 23)

Good manners and virtues placed this family and her daughter closer to, although never at white status. Color boundaries were not clear-cut, but embodied performances allowed a level of fluidity across interlocking class-color lines.

Costumbristas and travel chronicler’s dominant Havana imaginary had erased white women from the streets, in an effort to project their own aspirations of gender normativity. However, a creole educator brought them to the prestigious quotidian stage of the promenade, complicating the romantic and ordered picture of the city created by costumbrismo. In his textbook of urbanity and good manners, José María de la Torre (1857) devoted one section to prescribe the norms of conduct for “ladies” in paseos “by foot.” The fact that De la Torre did not depict girls or women strolling on the ever-popular volanta but rather walking by foot, is an indication of the lower class status of the women and of the broader middle-class audience to which De la Torre appealed. The prescription for ladies places a special emphasis on the manners of walking and of gazing at others, especially men, while walking through the promenade,

...deben presentarse y andar con paso moderado y que anuncie dignidad, modestia y pudor. Deben levantar pocas veces las miradas del suelo y no fijarla nunca en los que la miran, y mucho menos corresponder a la de los hombres. Tampoco deben volver la cabeza de un lado a otro, ni atrás para ver a los que la miraban, ni detenerse en la calle no siendo preciso.

162. ¿Y qué deberá hacer si un desconocido la hablase en el paseo?
No volverse a mirarlo, manifestando seriedad y hacer como si no le oyera: y si aun continuase hablándola, debe hacerlo observar a su madre ó persona que la acompañe, para si tiene á bien retirarse á su casa. (De La Torre 1857: 38)

…they should present themselves and walk with a moderate step that announces dignity, modesty and prudery. Very few times they should they higher their gazes away from the ground and should never fix their gaze on those that stare at her, much less correspond to the eye-contact from men. Neither should they
turn their heads from one side to another, or back to look at those who were staring at her, or stop in the street if this is not proper.

162. What should she do if an unknown man talks to her at the promenade? She should not turn back to look at him, showing seriousness and pretending not to listen to him: and if [in spite of this] he persists in speaking to her, she should let her mother or companion notice it, so she may withdraw to her home if they think appropriate.

In a separate section describing rules of urbanity specific to women, De La Torre explained the importance of a woman’s gaze as a performed and embodied sign or code that communicates an internal moral state, not easily or simply detectable by visible markers such as skin color,

La conducta de la muger (sic) en la sociedad debe ser más reservada que la del hombre, puesto que se las juzga con más severidad. La decencia es el cuidado más preciso en su sexo. Las miradas anuncian lo que pasa en el corazón, y así debe dar à las suyas la expresión de la modestia pues por medio de la modestia solamente puede conseguir la mujer que la respeten; y que las gentes sin educación teman decir ó hacer cosas que la ofendan. (De La Torre 1857: 50)

A woman’s conduct in society should be more reserved than that of a man, because they are judged with more severity... Decency is the most precise care of her sex. Gazes announce what happens inside the heart, and therefore, she should give her [gazes] the expression of modesty; because only [by showing] modesty she may attain to be respected; and [make] the uneducated people fear saying or doing things that offend her.

In the normalizing narrative of this Cuban educator, the codification of women’s walking as a rule of “good” conduct became necessary to create distance from other street-walkers who are the silent Others in his narrative: black and mulata women. These examples suggest that color by itself was not the only marker of female respectability; place, performance and economic factors were symbolic resources that added new meanings to skin color in the complex economies of class in nineteenth century Cuban society.

(Not-only-black) Smoking ‘habaneras’
Dancing and smoking are the most common ways or “performative modes” in which blacks and mulatas were portrayed in urban settings particularly in both visual and narrative representations.
by Cuban costumbristas. While there are numerous works that explore the sexualization of black women's bodies in dance settings, the significance of the act of smoking in constructions of black women's sexuality has received few interpretations (Quintero 2000, Fraunhar 2008, Kutzinski 1993, Lane 2005). Some scholars observe that smoking accentuates the idea of black and mulata women's greater “freedom” and a form of agency derived from their greater mobility in the context of the street (Lane 2010, Fraunhar 2008). Others see smoking associated with the literary trope of sexualization of the mulata's body (Kutzinski 1993). For their analyses, scholars Lane and Kutzinski drew largely from popular costumbrista visual representations, particularly illustrations of cigar boxes or “marquillas” as well as paintings by Landaluze. Landaluze’s paintings made the smoking mulata famous, standing against a wall in the street and speaking with other black men in a flirtatious and relaxed manner (Figure 16 and Figure 17). However, along the lines of the prevailing imaginary of cross-racial desire, mulatas were principally portrayed on cigar marquillas in sexually allusive situations with white men, as if self-consciously prostituting their own bodies for money or for the ideal of whiteness (Kutzinski 1993). Interestingly none of those mulata aspirants of white men appear holding cigars on their hands as do Landaluze's mulatas playing the opposite role, as objects of the courtship of black men. One significant example is Cecilia, a mulata that conforms to strict gender norms, is constructed as the object of and subject of desire of/for white men, and never appears smoking in Villaverde’s narrative.

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136 Besides mulatas, other smoking “types” in costumbrista's depictions of women of color were negras curras, an ethnic urban minority descendant from enslaved Africans in Spain. Ortiz represented the typical negra curra whose common way of life was to be a “mulata de rumbo” (woman of the street) (Ortíz 1986).
Figure 16 - “Soldado y Mulata,” by Víctor Patricio Landaluze, From the series *Tipos y Costumbres de la Isla de Cuba* (1881). In Colección Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes de la Habana 1998 *Víctor Patricio Landaluze* (1830-1889), Museo de Bellas Artes de Bilbao, Bilbao.

Figure 17 - “Calesero Cortejando a una cocinera,” by Víctor Patricio Landaluze, From the series Tipos y Costumbres de la Isla de Cuba. (1881) In Colección Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes de la Habana 1998 *Víctor Patricio Landaluze* (1830-1889), Museo de Bellas Artes de Bilbao, Bilbao.
According to scholars, representations of flaunting smoking *mulatas* walking proudly with a “jaunty” air and revealing attire conveyed a message of bourgeois frustration or jealousy, revealing well-known rivalries between secluded bourgeois white women and free women of color (Martínez-Fernandez 1996). Deep anxieties about unacceptable gender and racial proximities with white men informed these depictions. Less restrictive spatial mobility provided free women of color greater visibility in “public,” the normative realm of men where both shared a “dangerous” space of intimacy. For instance, in her travel chronicles the Countess of Merlin commented on the performances of territoriosity of black women, “*Pero las negras, ¡oh! De ellas solamente es la calle; se las ve en gran número colocadas en los portales con el cigarro en la boca, casi desnudas, con las espaldas redondas y lucientes como escudos de cobre, dejándose requedar por los que pasan.*” (“Only theirs are the streets…You can see them in great numbers positioned in the portales, with a cigar in their mouth, nearly naked, their nude backs shining like copper shields, accepting the compliments of passersby.” Montalvo 1922: 67) Along those lines, British observer charged against black women’s way of walking “nonchalantly, allowing their low-cut garments to 'slip with picturesque negligence from their dusky shoulders’” (in Martínez-Fernandez 1995: 30). While prevailing gender norms limited the avenues whereby white women became sexually and visually available to white men, these same norms produced an ironically empowering effect for women of color. The imaginary of liberated women of color appears contradictory in Cuba’s 19th century slave society and simultaneously reveals the agency that these stereotypes obscured. Following the strategic schemas of the free colored class at this time, free women of color used dress practices and greater physical mobility as key instruments to advance their objectives of social mobility and visibility in a highly oppressive and stratified environment (Mena 2005b).

The perceived increased sexual and kinetic agency of free women of color contrasted with the built disciplinary complex of the bourgeois white woman “at bay” in the promenade or at the home. White women were frequently represented in passive postures (i.e. lying down in rocking chairs, staring hopelessly behind windows) as somehow chronically idle and as natural inhabitants of the home (Figure 18). Villaverde provided his own version of passive bourgeois femininity through the counter figure for Cecilia, Isabel Illincheta, the perfect suitor for their lover Leonardo Gamboa. Villaverde describes her as a “wealthy, well-educated, modest and virtuous young lady” although physically unattractive, characteristically frigid, and bordering on
masculinity\textsuperscript{137} (Villaverde 2005). By contrast, the \textit{mulata} is a natural street-walker, persistently depicted in “low” moral geographic urban fragments like streets or dance balls. The cigar formed part of this iconic or imagined performative mode of \textit{mulatas} and other “public” women such as prostitutes.

As Kutsinzki noted, costumbrista depictions presented the street and the dance balls serving as a “sexual” market of sorts where white men and \textit{mulatas} serve as protagonists in a play of censored heterosexual desire. However, her analysis disregarded the ways in which this \textit{imaginary} “public” (i.e. visible) market was somehow fragmented across class and racial lines operating in two different aesthetic and material registers: bourgeois white women “consumed” and displayed at promenades and behind window bars; \textit{mulatas} at streets and dance balls. In general, analyses of race and gender the Cuban 19\textsuperscript{th} century could use a more integrated analytical scope to discuss their politics. In this chapter, I propose to place the image of the smoking black or \textit{mulata} into perspective with its discursive antithesis, the white woman giving special attention to class distinctions. While dominant imaginaries center their attention on the

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{figure18.png}
\caption{“Señora de la Habana” in Miguel Guijarro, \textit{Isla de Cuba}, 1876.}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{137} “Isabel had not a trace of feminine softness, or naturally, of voluptuousness in her bodily contours…To complete the description of the virile and resolute air of her person, we must add that a shadow was cast upon her expressive mouth by the dark and silky down on her upper lip, which needed only frequent trimming to become a black and bushy mustache” (Villaverde 2005: 145, translation by Sibylle Fischer).
oppositional figures of the bourgeois white women vs. light skinned *mulatas*, I draw attention to a less studied “type,” rendered invisible in colonial imaginaries and their contemporary scholarly analyses: poor white women.

*Costumbrista* writers created at least a few white female “urban types”, which depict white lower-class women who smoke cigars. These characters are described in suggestive articles entitled “La Vecina Pobre” (“the poor female neighbor”) by José Victoriano Betancourt ([1852]1985: 269) and “La Vieja Curandera” (“An Old Conjure Woman”) by Francisco de Paula Gelabert ([1875]1985: 471). The Spanish painter Landaluze illustrated Gelabert’s article in the 1881 volume *Tipos y Costumbres de la Isla de Cuba* (Figure 19).

![Figure 19 - “La Vieja Curandera” by Spanish artist Víctor Patricio de Landaluze (1830-1889) in Bachiller y Morales, Antonio 1881 *Tipos y Costumbres de la Isla de Cuba*, Havana.](image)

As opposed to the young provocative *mulata*, these characters are depicted as poor and ignorant aging women. Landaluze’s portrays *La Vieja Curandera* visually as a rather masculinized and “rough” in her facial features. In the corresponding narrative representation, Gelabert depicts her as an ignorant low class woman who cures other equally ignorant poor whites with traditional medicine and herbs. For his part Betancourt’s *La Vecina Pobre* is the prototype uneducated, poor woman with too many children. To his misfortune, the poor *vecina* moves to his neighborhood and lives right next door. Her characteristic is to ask for things, or rather send her children one by one to him for a sip of water, a cup of sugar, a clove of garlic, a
bit of salt, or a penny in loan. Her “barbarous” children, who run around poorly dressed or half naked, without shoes or with *chancletas* (flip-flops) become his greatest nightmare.

Betancourt describes the vecina’s physical and moral attributes as “dreadful” as also are her teeth “blackened by the smoke of cigar”. He creates a caricature through expressions such as “Es *cigarrista* mi heroína” (My heroin is a “cigarrist”). He condemns her habit of smoking as a bad example to her children, which ultimately stems from her “ignorance” or lack of education. Only education, he notes, what will ultimately solve the problem of poverty among poor white classes. As judged by his insistence on manners, this “education” which he speaks of is not merely formal school instruction, but rather education at a deeper level: on the virtues, manners and ways of bourgeois respectability. Smoking in addition to “being in the street at all times” “dragging the characteristic flip-flop [chancleta]”, and singing out loud day and night are behaviors that prevent this woman from attaining the respectability that her color allows for. For Betancourt, her lack of economic resources does not justify her lack of morality and “decorum” i.e. manners, which she ought to express by showing gender specific values like “*recato*” (restraint) and “*pudor*” (modesty), which are the “precious ornaments and attractive of the beautiful sex” (Betancourt 1985: 269-273). Topping up the picture of indecency is Betancourt depiction of the vecina’s child, a nine-year-old girl, dressed with thorn and dirty clothes, wearing *chancletas*, and with knotty hair. She entered his house to ask for a broom for her mother, with a cigar on her mouth.

Smoking is not only indicative of moral, sexual or class status among women as in the case of *La Vecina Pobre*. Smoking among white women in the bourgeois *costumbrista* imaginary also correlates with “Low” occupations among working class women, like street fruit vendors (Gelabert 1985). More broadly, the commonality that white smoking types share in this bourgeois urban imaginary is their poor or lower-class status signaled by their place of residence (marginal extramural neighborhoods), and the demeaning tone of the narratives which emphasize their ignorance, poverty, or immorality. While *costumbristas* provided a clear picture of what a poor smoking white woman looks like, they did not depict white upper-class women performing in this “mode”. This omission is most evident in Villaverde's novel, with not even one reference of a white woman smoking.

By contrast, traveler's accounts by British and North American men offered plenty of detailed descriptions of the ways, the places and the kinds of cigars that Cuban aristocratic
women smoked (Hazard 1871, Philippo 1857: 421, Jameson 1821: 75, Ballou 1885: 260). The North American traveler Samuel Hazard’s detailed observations reveal that there even was specific etiquette for women’s smoking of cigarettes—something that set them apart from women of color who, at least in costumbristas’ depictions, always smoke cigars.

I do not wish to influence my lady readers when I say that nearly if not quite all the ladies in Cuba smoke cigarettes; if not habitually, then at least poquito; and it is quite the proper thing to do, if you happen to be with the ladies in the railroad car, to present your cajilla of cigarettes to them, being quite sure that the elderly ones of the party will often accept, with a courteous “Gracias, Señor.” (emphasis in original, Hazard 1871:155)

How can this omission be justified from costumbrismo, with all its’ realistic pretense for giving sharp attention to detail on everyday habits and customs? (On a side note, how can this omission in the scholarly literature on gender and race in 19th century Cuba be explained?) The evident “silencing” images of smoking aristocratic women by Cuban intellectuals created a gap in the dominant gendered imaginary of mid 19th century colonial Havana. This discursive gap reveals the symbolic significance of the act of smoking as a measure of female respectability in 19th century society. Speaking from a different cultural positionality, which was alien to the class interests of white creole men, a British traveler offered a clue. It is likely that upper class white Cuban intellectuals chose not to depict women of their own class smoking as a way to protect their own reputation, “I have seen the wives and daughters of Abogado’s, Physicians, and Alcalde’s smoking, and yet it is certainly true, what the gentlemen tell you, that no lady smokes” (Jameson 1821: 74).

A similar cultural distance given by chronological time, informed an early 20th century Cuban white creole intellectual assessment on the issue. In his seminal historical analysis of the cultural meanings of sugar and tobacco published in the 1940’s (1987) Fernando Ortíz declared, “el tabaco es cosa hombruna” (“tobacco is a masculine thing,”) speaking of smoking practices in the colonial period (1940: 21). In the 19th century, smoking was indeed a generalized male homosocial practice that cut across class boundaries.\(^\text{138}\) By contrast, Ortíz noted, women smoked

\(^\text{138}\) For example, a German traveler in Havana at mid century was bothered by the custom among men of mutually lightening cigars. He noted rejecting a lightened cigar was a grave offense: even when a man of inferior status asked
tobacco “by exception” and among upper class women this practice was “an eccentricity too commentated as a manly feature.” (Ortíz 1940: 21, see also Otto 1843, Hazard 1871) Nineteenth century textbooks of urbanity directed to middle class school children instructed boys about smoking etiquette, with emphasis on the observance of a “personal space” that ensured not disturbing girls with the smoke (De La Torre 1857, see Chapter 8). Clearly, educators like De La Torre followed an agenda when they chose to leave women’s smoking etiquette out of their program.

In this context, there are reasons to believe that creole women (and men) wanted to take this shameful practice “behind the scenes” of public life where “public” represents what was visible or otherwise perceptible to the moralizing gaze of bourgeois society (Elias [1939] 2000). In fact, in traveler’s descriptions, white women who smoke appear primarily in the interiors of homes, rather than in “public” venues, like the streets where costumbristas depicted smoking mulatas. With U.S. occupation of Cuba and the cultural influence brought therein around the 1900’s, smoking cigarettes became acceptable and even coded a marker of class status among white women (Pancrazio 2005). However, Spanish colonial values persisted well into the first half of the century, as one informant during my field visits in Havana related to me in 2011. My informant’s grandmother, born in 1912 had the habit of smoking cigars (not cigarettes) only inside the home where no one outside her close family could see her. Smoking was considered unacceptable for “decent” white women of the middle and upper class and women generally did it indoors, outside the view of neighbors.

As a reflection of its symbolism to female respectability, smoking was a salient feature in depictions of prostitutes in the city and of guajiras—peasant women from the eastern part of the island and one of many costumbrista types (Otto 1843, Vidrieras in Bueno 1985: 221). These orientalizing images confirm the importance of the practice of smoking as an element in the construction of ideas and models of normative femininity, which notably used marginalized Others in city and island-wide moral geographies as referential standards139 (Benitez Rojo 1989, Bueno 1985).

139 A fragment from a French traveler’s chronicle about the early colonial period in the Eastern part of Cuba cited by Antonio Benitez Rojo provides additional elements to further explore the regional dimensions of the gendered imaginaries of the practice of smoking, and of more broadly of the spatialized constructions of gender normativity in an aristocrat, he did not refuse it, although a white man would always refuse and would never ask for fire to a man of color (Otto 1843).
Gendered imaginaries across time and space

The introduction of images of prostitution into Havana’s urban imaginaries during the 1880’s, altered the picture of prestige, order and modernity built around the dominant scenes at midcentury of bourgeois women in *volantas* at the promenade. In the midst of political clashes and following a ten year armed struggle and on the eve of Cuban independence, prostitution and *danzón* provoked a moral panic (see Chapter 4). A range of political actors participated pressing debates on these interrelated controversies in public opinion with marked nationalist undertones. In these narratives, “prostitutes” and “dance” came to represent disgusting elements that tainted the refined image of theaters like the Tacón or of the Prado Boulevard where prostitutes now were said to openly transit in carriages alongside honorable white “ladies” (De Céspedes 1888, Moreno 1887). Using characteristic metaphors of contamination, the medical doctor Benjamín de Céspedes provided the most graphic depictions of this transformed Havana imaginary at late century,

*Una meretriz desea pasear libremente...gozar en traje de alcoba y en carruaje descubierto, como audaz triunfadora, del azoramiento del pudor ofendido, circulando en la misma fila de coches particulares ocupados por mujeres recatadas y honestas...Por esos mismos paseos públicos se consentirá que discurren esa nefanda clase de negros, mulatos y blancos pederastas que van arrastrando las chancletas con vaivenes y contoneos de hembras...* (De Céspedes 1888: 133)

A prostitute wants to stroll freely…to enjoy in her bed garments and uncovered carriage, like an audacious winner, of the offended prudery’s shame, transiting through the same line of private carriages occupied by modest and honest women. Through the same public promenades [the authorities] permit the transit of an abhorrent class of blacks, *mulatos* and white pederasts that go dragging their *chancletas* with female swings and swayings…

Such was the concern of certain moralists with the racial and sexual contamination of Havana’s streets that they explained white women’s seclusion as somehow compulsory, not...
to comply with current gender norms, but rather to actively avoid dangerous proximities with low classes.

Sometimes we have thought about the detours that a modest and honest woman has to take to avoid transiting through those streets, which are precisely those that communicate the main neighborhoods of the population. We recommended one day to a young woman devoured by that anemia of tropical countries, where the sedentary lifestyle plays such an important role, that she ought to exercise by taking frequent strolls; we understood from her expression and from the delicately expressed phrases she directed to us, that the prescription could not possibly be fulfilled. Our unfortunate women are condemned to stay retreated in their homes, for prudery, fearing to observe the customary infractions to morality and public decorum… trapped in their homes, the honest woman lives sadly, fearing to travel through our streets, as if we were living the days of the plagued city.

The stakes were clear: public women had taken the place of bourgeois white women in Havana's visual spectacle of prestige and modernity. Along with prostitutes, dancing and theaters were interrelated elements of a transformed imaginary of Havana tainted by "lascivious", sexual, African and barbarian bodies and practices. In particular, African influenced dances like danza and danzón taught at escuelitas or dance academies and held at public balls in major theaters were associated with prostitution. Theaters and dance academies were deemed “preludes to the brothels” (“antesalas de las casas de prostitución,” Moreno 1887 see chapter 5). Theaters, dancing and prostitution became a complex of public immorality, portrayed as a dangerous social disease winning over civilization and culture in the streets of Havana. Their sole visible presence or “publicness” affected the moral integrity of treasured bourgeois white women and of the
Cuban nation as a whole. De Céspedes captured this sentiment in a description of a public dance at the Tacón Theater,

_Se debe desconfiar grandemente de los destinos de un pueblo que consiente la confusión lamentable de la raza civilizada y culta del país con elementos extraños e inclutos, que a la postre triunfan en sus vicios y costumbres salvajes, inoculándolas como un virus en el organismo social ya en forma de diversión popular, ya en sus rebeldes instintos._ (De Céspedes 1888: 144)

One must mistrust the destiny of a people that allows the sad confusion of the civilized and cultured race of the country with strange and uncultured elements that in the end triumph in their savage vices and customs, introducing them like a virus in the social organism either in the form of popular entertainment, or in their rebel instincts.

This late 19th century picture of social chaos reflected the anxieties about a symbolic misalignment, a “confusion” that touched upon the white bourgeois family and “their” women as key symbols of social order and strictly delineated social boundaries.

In sum, travelers, Cuban intellectuals and artists produced different pictures of the city at different moments by resorting to female urban types such as the bourgeois white woman, the _mulata_ or the prostitute. Reading their narratives synchronically across space, reveals the prevalence of seigniorial ideologies that valued hierarchy and order in Havana’s society of the 1830’s and 1840’s. Authors depictions of white and black women, the places they occupied and the practices they performed corresponded to a vertical scale of values ordered according to binaries of high and low: white women vs. black women, street vs. home, civilized vs. barbarian forms of leisure, hygienic vs. contaminated city venues, respectable vs. indecent sexuality, upper vs. lower class status, secluded vs. free prospects for mobility, modern vs. colonial buildings and institutions, European vs. African aesthetic and cultural forms. Social realities, however, were much more complex than those seen through the rigid binaries and impermeable boundaries that viewers speaking from privileged positions of power wanted to believe.

By reading against the grain of a variety of sources to compare and contrast depictions of black and white women with attention to culture and class differences, I exposed the topographic silences or gaps in Havana’s dominant imagery. While, images of white aristocratic women were a common recourse in the positive moral and aesthetic pictures created of Havana at mid century, black women were rendered invisible in this picture of modernity. In her famous travel
log, the Cuban aristocrat Countess of Merlin illustrates this process when she directly excludes black women from the human category "woman" in her picture of Havana at mid century, "...the woman, nonetheless, barely exposes herself in public. Only the negras (female blacks) stroll around everywhere with shoulders and breasts uncovered, with a cigar in their mouths and throwing a flood of smoke..." (Montalvo 2008: 97). The dominant narrative of modernity created by travelers and costumbristas also excluded lower class white women who walked the streets and promenades with no means to travel around in carriages. In creating a fetish of white women's feet as inseparable from their carriage or silencing images of smoking white women, they codified streetwalking and smoking as markers of normative (white middle class) bourgeois femininity.

Reading these narratives diachronically over a period of 50 years since the 1830’s and into the 1880’s offered a window into the far-reaching social crises and transformations leading up to Cuba’s independence. On and around the 1830’s and 1840’s costumbristas and travelers used the remodeled urban center as a backdrop for their picturesque impressions of Havana. Using the glorified image of impeccable aristocratic women enjoying civilized and hygienic forms of leisure as an aesthetic recourse, these authors emphasized strict social and geographical, real and imagined limits, creating an illusion of an orderly, un-conflicted society in the course towards modernity and progress. Later in the century in the 1880’s, prostitution and morally sanctioned practices like dance became the rhetorical strategies in nationalist political debates presenting Havana in a radically different guise, tainted by permissiveness, permeability and chaos.

For example, the Spanish visitor Barras y Prado illustrated the aesthetically pleasing spectacle of Havana at mid century through his quote of a Havana news report. Nothing more than pleasurable feelings, sounds and sensations stem from a city headed towards progress and civilization, as some were convinced Havana and Cuba were by mid century,

En la esquina de Tacón o de Escuriza, al extender la vista por su alrededor, evocando recuerdos...sonríen de satisfacción y aplauden el progreso de la época, que corre por los hilos del telégrafo; que marcha por encima del ferrocarril urbano; que atraviesa por la alameda del Prado; que se escucha en el silbido de la locomotora; que se ve en el humo que despide la máquina de vapor y se advierte y saborea en los cafés y en los hoteles que se han levantado en aquellas inmediaciones que eran años atrás
lugares yermos, muladares y barrancos donde solo se veían algunas casuchas sin forma de arquitectura conocida y gente miserable y perdida. (Prensa de la Habana in De las Barras y Prado 1925)

At the corner of Tacón [theater] or of Escauriza [cafe], while extending the sight through its surroundings, evoking memories… smile of satisfaction and applaud the progress of the times, that runs through the lines of the telegraph, that marches over the urban railroad; that crosses through the Prado’s promenade; that is heard in the locomotive’s whistle; that is seen in the smoke emitted by the steam machine and is noticed and savored in the cafes and in the hotels that have been built in the surroundings of what years before were barren places, dunghills and ravines where only a few shapeless shacks without known architectural forms were seen alongside miserable and lost people.

Decades later, the Spaniard Francisco Moreno, and the interlocutors in the nationalist fight his writings sparkled, used prostitution to describe the same corner at the Tacón theater and café Escauriza with disgust and hopelessness as they wondered whether the colony was heading towards “corruption” and ruin under the Spanish regime or perhaps towards progress under a different either republican or neo-colonial political schema (Moreno 1887, Cabrera 1891).

These perceptions did not reflect social realities but rather projected the changing discursive conditions, by which authors expressed the collective aspirations, interests and anxieties from their own gender, class, race and nation standpoints. Far from a peaceful moment in Cuba’s history, the 1830’s and 1840’s were marked by profound racial and political tensions. The positive representations of Havana and Cuba of that time by North American and European travelers (French and British in particular) conveyed colonial expansionary and nostalgic views of a rich, promising colony presented as an object of colonial ambition and desire (Joseph 2008, Barcia 2001). Neither was prostitution a new phenomenon to Havana of the 1870’s. Rather, the profound changes in legislation of the early 1880’s allowing greater freedom of press, created a discursive space where the topic became an instrument in the political contest of the Spanish empire vs. the Cuban nation. In addition, the wars of independence starting in 1868 driven by the principle of racial integration, and subsequent changes in legislation including the abrogation of the law prohibiting interracial marriages (1881) and the abolition of slavery (1886) informed white elites anxieties about empowered classes of color. Changing spatial configurations in the city contributed to strengthen imaginaries of social permeability expressed with contrasting perceptions of “high” and “low” in the urban landscape.

In particular, the demolition of the city wall in 1863 had a profound effect in creating an
unbounded, disordered visual landscape of Havana affecting elite’s awareness of proximities with marginalized Others (Venegas 1990). Historian Carlos Venegas observed that the wall’s demolition revealed the illusion of containment created by modernization reforms made on the surfaces of the city’s streets and buildings since the late 18th century but especially since 1834 under Tacón’s regime (see Chapter 4). Upon the wall’s demolition, unpleasant elements were suddenly uncovered and appeared near those denoting modernity and social distinction. The tenement houses (solares) of poor residents, the houses of African cabildos, the alleys of brothels literally built onto the extramural portion of the city wall, appeared nearby and immediately in front of industrial buildings and luxurious palaces of Spanish and Cuban bourgeoisies (Venegas 1990). Along these lines, authors of the late 19th century prostitution controversy highlighted the contrast between “corrupted” and “respectable” through suggestive symbolisms such as “the temple of pleasure” (i.e. a brothel) situated next to the “family home” and in front of the “house of God” (Moreno 1887: 144, De Céspedes 1888).

In this context, images of prostitution and generalized social chaos dominating the visual representations of Havana at late century belong to a broader discursive pattern of symbolic contrasts in what Venegas called a “heteroclite vision” of the urban space. Quoting a French artist during his stay in Havana in 1882, Venegas noted his surprise at seeing that,

...at very heart of the city, the houses of suspicious morality are neighbors of an aristocratic urbanization, the milkmen stopped their cows in front of the new hotels to sell fresh milk, old black women chewing tobacco trumpeted their sales under high portals, or heavy ox-drawn carriages driven by Chinese roamed around the Central Park alongside the best harnessed carriages (Venegas 1990: 80).

Thus, the late 19th century witnessed a processes of aesthetic transformation in the city following the wall demolition which intensified the play of contrasts between symbols of the “refined” and “uncivilized”, the modern and the old, the European and the tropical. The presence in the city setting of a black woman chewing tobacco—an image with marked connotations of class, race and gender—or a milking cow delivering to house portals—a reminder of “rurality”—marked a contrast with all things “urban” as a symbol of the modern, appropriate, and “in proper place.” These marginal and low figures appear as necessary points of reference to measure the “appropriate” and the “beautiful” expressed in developing aesthetic and affective discourses of “good taste”, morality and “good manners.” Overall, like earlier in the century, changing urban
configurations affected the symbolic arrangements in spatial and social fields of power within which dominant and subaltern classes negotiated their sense of place and national belonging.

**Gender performativity in quotidian space**

Feminist scholarship has highlighted the usefulness of the everyday as a conceptual venue to unpack the gendered dimensions of the public/private distinction (Bergetz 2009, Gal 2002, Montoya 2002). For instance, Rosario Montoya has pointed out that although the public/private distinction exists as an ideological feature of official cartographies, men and “women do not necessarily live their lives according to this distinction”. Rather their practices acquire meaning as they move across various realms exceeding the public/private divide (2002:68).

Using the everyday as a framework, Chapter 5 discussed philosophies of manners and of the body within the highly dynamic, structured, creative and permeable space of the everyday. This framework offers a venue to understand the “private” as a site not exclusively marked by gender values but more generally by aspects of human everyday actions and affects that have been progressively concealed from spaces of sensory and performative acceptability. Private spaces may be thought as those spaces of intimacy and concealment, a kind of escape or safe zones where actions, feelings, objects and things (such as bodily fluids) must be inhibited or “hidden” from sight or perception. This everyday understanding of an affective/sensory and performative private space is for the case of colonial Cuba, closer to a liberal understanding of the public/private schema. For example, in her reconceptualization of the classic liberal understanding of the divide, Iris Marion Young stated “Instead of defining the private as what the public excludes, I suggest that the private should be defined, as in one strain of liberal theory, as that aspect of his or her life and activity that any person has a right to exclude others from. The private in this sense is not what public institutions exclude, but what the individual chooses to withdrawal from public view…” (Young 1990 in Public/Private Distinction 2007) Following Norbert Elias (2000), in the quotidian space, bodies are produced through a kind of microphysics of intimacy where their surfaces and planes of emotion and sensation operate as fields of power deployment and negotiation. Within this framework, and for the case of Cuba in the 19th century, the public/private divide may be interpreted according to a classification of performances and affects in a drama stage of social relations,
More and more, people keep the functions to themselves, and all reminders of them, concealed from one another...with the advance of civilization the lives of human beings are increasingly split between an intimate and a public sphere, between private and public behavior. And this split is taken so much for granted, becomes so compulsive a habit, that it is hardly perceived in consciousness. In conjunction with this growing division of behavior into what is and what is not publicly permitted, the psychic structure of people is also transformed. (my emphasis, Elias 2004: 160)

Elias, like the pedagogues of manners of 19th century Cuba, envision the public and private as spheres defined by normative repertoires of body movements and sensations regulated by moral, aesthetic and sensorial regimes. The public is a highly regulated space of action, evaluation and perception where performative, sensory and affective bodies exist. Only bodies performing within acceptable moral, affective and aesthetic standards are admitted in this public plane. Conversely private is a space where emotions and certain behaviors and actions are “kept” concealed, restrained from public expression, manifestation and socio sensitive perception. When this order is transgressed, as in the display of unacceptable practices in “public,” the word public is used as an index of the unacceptable (i.e. “public” women, “public” dances.)

This performative approach to discursive practices of the “public” and the “private” reveals the specificity of these notions for the Cuban 19th century. It identifies the everyday as a useful site to examine how practice, performance, affect and the senses helped construct the public and private as imaginaries that organize social life, perception and action beyond exclusively spatialized, gendered schemas. Classed, gendered and racialized everyday performances as identity enactments, both within and outside the boundaries of “homes” informed understandings of public and private categories.

Exploring discursive practices of the word “public” in 19th century narratives reveal that this was more than a spatial or gendered category, but also a moral and aesthetic one. As used

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140 Susan Gal (2002) provided a semiotic framework to examine discursive practices of public/private. This framework questions the uncritical usage of categories of public private, without reference to their indexical properties, that is, the referential content and the context of use on which it relies (2002: 79). Gal explained that public and private are co-constitutive cultural categories, but also indexical signs that are dependent through their referential meaning on the interactional context in which they are used (2002: 80). Gal also discussed the ways in which categories of private and public are re-created in different, more particular or more encompassing contexts to mean their opposite. She posits discursive deployment of categories in different settings create new contrast sets of meaning and value of public and private. Following Judith Butler, she demonstrated how every reiteration of categories produces a transformation in meaning (an altered repetition).
in Spanish, the word public must be accompanied by the verb “to be” which in Spanish has two meanings: *estar* and *ser*. Being as in “ser” expresses a state of being, and being as in “estar” expresses a location in time and space. Thus one can “be at public” (*estar en público*) as in a state of exposure in a specific position in material space. Following Elias’ analysis, to be at public means to be visible or more broadly perceptible, localizable in space and time, and positioned with respect to other objects, boundaries and bodies. Using the second definition, one can also “be public” denoting a state of being or a specific a subjective / discursive location. In 19th century Havana, this use of the word bore strong connotations of respectability. Public denoted the counterpart of decent or respectable. “Public” or “publicness” (“*publicidad*”) implied a specific performed situation or a way of behaving “publicly,” i.e. indecently or immorally regardless of the place one occupies (see Chapter 7). For example, in the 19th century penal code, crimes coded as of “public scandal” were those that any way “offend the prudery or the good customs with acts of great scandal or transcendence, not included specifically in the code, and those which expose and proclaim with *publicity* and scandal doctrines that go against the public morality” (emphasis added, Sierra Madero 2006: 77).

In her study on prostitution in 19th century Havana, Marikay McCabe argued that the public/private divide does not correspond to gendered categories of work as in liberal theorizations of the public and the private. McCabe demonstrated that the limits of acceptable and licit commercial activity for women had little to do with whether it took place inside or outside of the home. Instead, these were measured in terms of one’s “honesty” which was evaluated in terms of social conduct, irrespective of whether this happened within or outside the home.

The following example further confirms the idea of the public as a situation not associated with gender values or with a specific place. Under the section labeled “Public Performances” (*Espectáculos Públicos*) located in the *Fondo* (record collection) *de Gobierno Superior Civil* in the Cuban National Archive, a file dated from 26th of December 1848 in Havana, records the case of the cancellation of a license granted to hold a dance at the home of Don Ramon Cabral, a white lieutenant retiree resident of Arroyo Naranjo, a neighborhood in Havana. The license was cancelled, among other reasons due to reports of having found white
men dancing with *mulatas* (or *pardas*). In his report to the Captain General, the Captain of the neighborhood reported an unacceptable action that further validated the decision to revoke the license for the dance at the house of Don Ramon Cabral.

*Debo poner igualmente en conocimiento de V.E. que en el mes pasado con motivo a una fiesta la casa del expresado (sic) Cabral hubo el escándalo de que en el baile de su noche no solo bailaron pardas con blancos sino que un hermano de la que aparece criada del ya referido Cabral bailó públicamente en dicho baile... (ANC, Fondo de Gobierno Superior Civil, Leg 997 No. 34487)*

In addition, I must let Your Excellency know that last month in a party in the house of the mentioned Cabral, there was the scandal about the dance not only of *pardas* with white men but also a brother of the house maid [*criada*] of Cabral danced *publicly* in such dance...

This statement challenges commonsense conceptualizations of the “public” space which do not carry an association with a specific place outside the home, as dances like the one offered by Don Ramon Cabral were held inside the homes of residents. Dance academies or *escuelitas* also operated in the interiors of residential homes. Nonetheless, their intolerability was defined by the “publicness” of the act of dancing. This “publicness” was, together with “decency” and “respectability”, a language that projected colonial anxieties over race and sex as fundamental driving forces in authorities’ and white elites’ attempts to regulate both dance academies and prostitution in 19th century Havana.

This historically and culturally specific definition and discursive practice of the word “public” in 19th century Havana, also reflects the specific architectural structures and spatial arrangements of Havana’s buildings in the 19th century. In accordance to a large extent to climate conditions, buildings were and still are characterized by a fluidity and permeability between outside and inside. Venegas described these boundaries as “transparent” especially in reference to “urban saloons.” (*salones urbanos*) These were large halls with open windows and doors providing unobstructed views of domestic live as well as with the active social life of the city’s plazas and markets. Accustomed to more rigid separation between domestic life and public visibility, travelers frequently expressed their surprise with Havana’s transparent boundaries,

*Strangest thing of all, perhaps, to a foreigner, is the fact that as soon as he appears on the streets of Havana, he is taken into the very heart of its domestic life. The broad doorways are wide open, and the*
window-gratings do not, in the least obstruct his observation of what occurs within. As he passes along, so close to the windows that he could easily thrust his arm between the iron bars to its full length, he sees ladies chatting and sewing—rocking, meanwhile, as if their lives depended on the regularity and continuity of the vibratory motion; he sees children playing, and servants dusting and scrubbing, and meals being served and eaten; he even gets glimpses of cooking, washing, and other domestic processes, going on in the courts and kitchens in the rear; and he may possibly find himself involuntarily witnessing the finishing touches of a fair señorita’s toilet… (Woodruff 1871 in Pérez 1992: 28, 29)

We know how much travelers enjoyed the view of the public performances of elite women’s promenading in volantas. After reading the above descriptions, evidently the public views of elite women in domestic settings also formed part of travelers’ preferred scenery of Havana’s landscape. Havana’s elite domestic life was as “public” as it could get according to some of their narratives, and for that purpose it was equally spectacular as the volanta promenading,

…cuando el sol comienza a declinar, se abren las ventanas por completo y todo queda visible, siendo la casa objeto de distracción para el que pasa frente a ella. Las pequeñas escenas domésticas ofrecen, sobre todo para el extranjero, motivos de observación y entretenimiento… (Morelet 1857 in De Acevedo 1919: 41)

…when the sun starts to decline, the windows are opened wide and everything becomes visible, and the house becomes the object of distraction for anyone who passes by in front of it. The small domestic scenes offer, especially for the foreigner, motives of observation and entertainment…

Particularly attractive were scenes of young white elite ladies in sexually suggestive settings, like her bedroom:

…[en las casas..] de inmensas ventanas enrejadas, las puertas y las ventanas, todo está aquí abierto, se puede penetrar con una mirada hasta en las intimidades de la vida doméstica, desde el patio regado y cubierto de flores hasta el aposento de la niña, cuyo lecho está cubierto de cortinas de linón con lazos de color de rosa. (Montalvo 1844)

…[in the houses...] with large barred windows… everything is open here, a gaze can penetrate well into the intimacies of domestic life, from the untidy backyard covered with flowers to the girl’s chamber, whose bedding is covered with lawn curtains and rose colored laces…
After reading the Countess of Merlin’s description, the seclusion of women, which formed such an important part of the bourgeois repertoire of gender norms, needs to be qualified. Either in volantas, or inside their homes and even in their bedrooms, elite white women were not visually secluded, but merely physically distant. As one historian described, norms of seclusion were qualified to place women out of reach but not out of sight (Martínez Fernández 1995). A traveler described the reach of this seclusion referring to the suitor of a white woman, “He cannot see her alone and cannot come regularly to the house until a fair understanding of his intentions is arrived at... Until they have been to church, they two are never left alone. The whole family, take sly turns in watching them” (Williams 1881 in Pérez 1992: 240).

Nonetheless, these governance tactics stimulated concomitant tactics of resistance. The long iron bars of large residential windows, which were intended to be symbols and instruments of gender discipline, were somehow subverted into borderlands of affective intimacy. William Henry Hurlbert illustrated this idea in reference to amorous encounters at windows, noting “iron bars failed to keep lovers from engaging in the most intimate expressions of tenderness” (in Martínez Fernández 1995: 31). Thus, actors refashioned and resignified these disciplinary instruments into avenues and opportunities of otherwise inadmissible contact. Perhaps, such was the intentionality of by Landaluze’s painting “El Amante de Ventana” (Figure 14).

Furthermore, there were clear double standards when it came to evaluating morally and aesthetically urban scenes of women in domestic situations. As much as elite women were part of the spectacle of domestic life from Havana’s streets, “public” women, or prostitutes in brothel rooms could and were equally visible from streets as both foreign and Cuban writers testified. (De Céspedes 1888, Otto 1843) However, the white bourgeois gaze clearly discriminated between the two. Bourgeois observers were educated to classify aesthetically pleasing from disgusting gendered public-domestic scenes in Havana’s landscape. While the scene of publicly exposed elite white women in bedding garments was said to be “intimate,” pure and “pink” as in the Countess narrative, the same scene protagonized by prostitutes was scandalous and shameful, recalling De Céspedes narrative above, “A prostitute wants to stroll freely...to enjoy in her bed garments [traje de alcoba] and uncovered carriage, like an audacious winner, of the offended prudery’s shame...” (De Céspedes 1888: 133). Moralists like De Céspedes demanded concealment from sight of these awful views of a “low” or unacceptable kind of visual proximity (Chapter 6). These examples make clear that spatial boundaries did not per se function as
structuring elements of hierarchy and distinction. Rather, sensed perceptions and embodied performances of class, gender and color made up the boundaries that organized these interrelated hierarchies.

The attempt to enforce these real and imagined boundaries was largely a failed project of the Cuban bourgeoisie throughout the 19th century. Windows were just one of several instances of cross-class-gender-racial colonial encounters or “contact zones” where social boundaries and conventions about social distance were actively contested and negotiated (McClintock 1995, Stoler 2002). Dance or religious gatherings at balls, plazas and churches provided opportunities for otherwise inadmissible proximity, particularly between men and white upper-class women. Discourses of anxiety about social distance in public settings clashed with the colonially institutionalized intimacies that slavery produced in the domestic realm, such as the nursing of infants or sexual relations between masters and slaves (Mintz and Price 1976). Such were the inherent contradictions of colonial discourse reflected in the essentially undefined boundaries of public and domestic, defying increasing efforts to enforce segregationist policies throughout 19th century Cuba. The historically and socially admitted proximities in everyday and “intimate” affairs of the aristocracy by both slave and free blacks and mulattoes were inserted into narratives of fear and Africanization during the 19th century. These contradictions challenged the efforts of upper-classes to enforce boundaries and explained the development of newer discourses and systems of social classification and distinction.

From this perspective, it is fair to assert that many of these boundaries were often just aspirations or hopes of the upper-classes. The active effort of mapping social and moral hierarchies in urban imaginaries is most clear in textbooks of urbanity and good manners. In his the popular school textbook Nuevo Tratado de Urbanidad, Buenas Maneras y Etiqueta José María de la Torre actively claimed and coded a range of urban spaces for white middle class women, the representatives of an emergent Cuban bourgeoisie. De La Torre depicts women sharing a space with men in several class-coded venues like ballrooms, theaters and promenades, and social situations such as conversations, street interactions, home visits, salons (tertulias), churches, or children’s games. De La Torre’s objective as an educator is to provide a normative schema of gender performance in public spaces by prescribing specific rules of conduct for women.

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At the other end, *costumbrista* authors created highly racialized and classed moralizing narratives of everyday venues like, streets, promenades and practices such as smoking, dancing, or walking. As opposed to the pedagogic focus on prescription of norms, *costumbrismo’s* moralizing style centered on criticizing anti-normative, marginalized bodies and subjects, particularly lower class and black men and women. Thus, using different avenues, *costumbristas* and educators worked towards the same bourgeois, normalizing mission (see Chapter 8). While *costumbristas* depicted streetwalking and smoking *mulatas* as the example of feminine impropriety, educators like De La Torre depicted white women in a wide range of public venues and situations effectively coding these as “safe” places. The section on the rules for ladies’ walking through promenade discussed above is a good example. De La Torre’s bald gesture of depicting white middle class women sharing a place in venues otherwise coded as “male” “black” or “lower class” such as streets or ballrooms, reveals an interesting trend. Middle class white men like De la Torre may have in fact been claiming “public” spaces for women of their own class.

An article dated from 1890 evidences the eventual success of bourgeois negotiations of public performative spaces for white women. The article is entitled “*Habaneras de a pie***” (Habaneras by foot) by the Cuban writer Enrique Hernández Miyares. As the title suggests, the article describes a novel situation in the streets of Havana encountered by two Habana *flaneurs*: white “ladies” walking the streets in their routine shopping. Contrasting with Havana’s imaginary at midcentury, these elegantly dressed “*habaneras de a pie***” represented a sign of progress towards a new cultural paradigm of civilization given by the United States. In the context of North American expansionism in Cuba particularly since mid century, a shift in the standards of female normativity was informed by a cultural reorientation from the Spanish colonial model to the new North American cultural ideal. This reorientation of cultural hegemony began as early as the late 1700’s when the short-lived British intervention gave Cubans a “taste” for a different imperial model (Paquette 1988). Attempts to annex Cuba to the U.S. during the 1850’s were actively mobilized and supported by Cuban and U.S. elites, propitiating the atmosphere for a new kind of cultural hegemony *a la americana* (Iglesias 2003, Riaño San Marful 2002). Only 8 years after this article’s publication, the 1898 U.S. military occupation would establish a radically different cultural model in a range of fields including education, public health, and a wide repertoire of everyday practices and preferences including
dress fashion and entertainment (Iglesias 2003). Marikay McCabe views the transformations in gender specific cultural values starting in the decades of the 1880’s, which she referred to as the feminization of domesticity. Only then bourgeois notions of gendered public and private space began to be delineated and naturalized. According to McCabe, during these years, the “entrenchment of capitalism and democratic ideals” reflected in pressing issues like prostitution regulation and the gradual abolition of slave labor, demanded more rigid gender codes, marking an important point in the feminization of domesticity and the delineation and naturalization of bourgeois notions of gendered public and private space (McCabe 2003).

In accordance with these changing politics, our enthusiast flaneur Hernández deemed “tiempo viejo” (old, outdated) the time when “ladies” went out exclusively in their volanta. The writer describes his discovery with excitement as pleasurable surprise and a visual liberation: the fetishized bourgeois ladies can now more openly be seen in public, “pudimos ver, admirados y gozosos, lindas y frescas caras juveniles, que no habíamos visto nunca sino a la luz del gas…” (“…we could see, admired and joyful, beautiful and fresh young faces, that we had never before seen but under the gas-light…”)

However, this transformed gendered urban scene transmitted a deeper sense of another kind of liberation. Shifting to a nostalgic tone, the author confesses his uneasiness with the situation of intimate bodily closeness created inside the volanta by the most dangerous encounter between a man of color, the coach driver or calesero and the bourgeois female sexual fetish, the “lady” of Havana,

Y era censurable -- como me lo parece aun, cuando veo que la escena se repite -- ver que pieles, y que el mancebo humilde se apresuraba, introduciendo cabeza y cuerpo en el interior del carruaje, a demandar órdenes. Nunca he podido sino protestar de esta costumbre. Para el dependiente, es denigrante ¡los pobres....! para las damas es, no sé, es.... feo. ¿Cómo dejar que un indiferente se introduzca, por costumbre tradicional en casa? Porque el interior de un coche de familia, es como un íntimo budoir.

It was censorable—as it now still seems to me, when I see the scene reproduced—seeing how skins, and how the humble lad hurried, introducing his head and body inside the carriage, demanding orders. I haven’t been able but to protest about this custom. For the employee, it is denigrating ¡poor them…! for the ladies it is, I don’t know, it’s… awful. How could it be allowed to let a stranger be introduced at home, by traditional custom? Because, the interior of a family carriage is like an intimate budoir.
This quote makes evident the discrepancy in racialized perceptions of “deserving” male subjects of white female desire. While the proximity between the black *calesero* and her white female customer makes Hernández anxious, a North American traveler “pities the [white] Cuban young man who is in love” because his physical proximity to white women is censored and extremely policed (Williams 1881 in Pérez 1992: 240). Further, Hernández latter remark places the whole idea of bourgeois domesticity as reduced or limited to what lies or what happens within the confines of the “home” in a totally different light. Domesticity is carried over and along with the woman’s body onto her *volanta* to produce a *sui generis* mobile extension of the bourgeois home in Havana’s streets. As such this mobile carrier of the bourgeois “lady” becomes as “intimate” a space as her own dormitory. These were the kinds of proximities with which colonizers and colonized cohabitated in shared spaces for almost four centuries. However only in the early 19th century they become an issue. It somehow never felt “right” to this enthusiast *flaneur* who in the modern times *a la Americana* in 1890 does not have to wait until 6 pm to see an accessorized white lady perform the repertoire of bourgeois domesticity in public, “*El que quiera pasar un buen día, que se levante temprano; se eche a la calle con el pie derecho y trate de tropezar en las aceras con una hermosa señorita.*” (“Whoever wants to spend a good day, has to wake up early; get off to the street with the right foot and try to run onto a beautiful lady in the sidewalks”).

**Conclusion**

This chapter demonstrates that *costumbristas*, educators and travelers depicting Havana in the 19th century were active participants in the construction of dominant urban imaginaries. Imaginaries were a set of organized images of the city according to social and spatial, real and imagined boundaries. Urban imaginaries were a particular form of highly subjective knowledge about the city, whose production was conditioned by the politics of location of their creators. More than showing a material reality about 19th century Havana, imaginaries conveyed the complex power negotiations driven by specific interests, aspirations and fears of their creators. In this complex field of representations, travelers and Cuban intellectuals reserved an important space for women and their sexuality. The dominant representations of the city and the place these narrators assigned women to occupy were important avenues or instruments to construct gender normative structures or gendered *habitus*. By carefully selecting images of women within
specific spatial limits or urban fragments, elite Cuban and foreign narrators constructed spatial
and social limits by omission and silencing as much as through visual and narrative utterances.

In the first section, the important work by Perera Díaz y Fuentes provided a framework to
critically examine the silencing of specific inter-racial partnering schemas in historical and
contemporary scholarly literature. Stereotypical representations of women of color as subjects of
an almost pathological desire for white men were normalized around dominant popular culture
images of the Cuban *mulata*, in particular the literary figure Cecilia Valdés. This particular
imaginary of inter-racial desire obscured the social and historical realities in which men of color
were legitimate subjects of black female desire.

Throughout this analysis, the discussion of white women’s sexual desire for black men
was absent. While Stolcke’s study made clear that white women’s partnering with men of color
was unthinkable from the perspective of class and gender norms, the discursive conditions by
which the sexual desire of white women for men of color are not even discussed must be
unpacked. This image was perhaps the most arbitrarily concealed by the creators of Havana’s
gendered imaginaries during the 19th century and for a good reason. As the author of the article
“Habaneras de a pie” revealed, the picture of erotic closeness between a white woman and a
black man directly exposed the fundamental contradictions of colonial discourse in 19th century
society. Acknowledging that colonial gender regimes consented interracial and gender
proximities in a systematic quotidian basis, exposed the inherent vulnerability and profound
dependency of white elites on whom they deemed sexually and politically threatening black men.
Precisely because the entire bourgeois and colonial racial order depended on protecting the
sexuality of white women, according to 19th century literary critic Victor Fowler, there are
virtually no references in 19th century Cuban literature to relations between white women and
black men (personal communication 10/01/2012). Future research explorations should deepen
the examination of the silenced imaginary of heterosexual desire between white women and men
of color, and more broadly on the silenced sexual agency of white women in 19th century Cuba.

With regards to periodization in this chapter, I have attempted a comparative analysis of
urban imaginaries at two different moments in the 19th century broadly referred to as “mid
century” and “late century.” I have retracted from providing precise date cut offs because the
processual nature of culture, power and ideology makes this a fruitless task. Cultural
construction and ideology formation are fluid and continuous. Attempting to establish an exact
point in time when an idea or an image started to be created or developed is unrealistic. Nonetheless, as I explained in Chapter 4, promenading may be labeled a modern 19th century practice whose beginnings date from no earlier than the late 18th century when urban planning reforms were first launched in Havana. However, images of elite women promenading in carriages are more frequent since the 1830’s and specifically since 1834 with the inauguration of the Prado boulevard. The particular political significance given to the Prado by Captain Tacón as one of many urban symbols of Cuba’s progress towards a modernity under Spanish colonial rule made this promenade unique. In this context, recurrent images of elite women at the Prado must be inserted within the discourse of governance and the ornate that gave Havana its cosmopolitan character and added to its global image of respectability, discussed in Chapter 5. This dominant imaginary persisted well beyond the 1850’s, as travelers and writers portrayals of it in this chapter testify. In parallel to the Havana “lady,” costumbristas developed la mulata as an urban type especially since the publication of Cecilia Valdés in the late 1830’s, evolving into the bufo type la mulata and her close relative la mulata de rumbo. Lithographers of cigar box labels or marquillas produced perhaps the widest and most complex typology in the series “Vida y Muerte de la Mulata” (Kutsinski 1993, Fraunhar 2008). The divergent discursive spaces where these two contrasting gendered visual themes were inserted and consumed reveals the contradictory political projects of their creators. While most of the visual record of the theme about Havana “ladies” carriage promenading comes from travel literature and significantly from the paintings of French artist Frederic Mialhe, mulatas were a distinctive and favorite urban type of Cuban costumbrismo. As an extension of literary costumbrismo, bufo playwrights inserted la mulata in their nationalist narrative along with other elements they embraced as distinctively Cuban. From this perspective, while the picture of the bourgeois woman in the urban platform of colonialism conveyed stability, the proliferation and displacement of her image for marginal and “Cubanized” female subjects, the prostitute and la mulata announced times of change.

Indeed, changes in the urban landscape and in the political atmosphere since the 1860’s altered the conditions of production of gendered urban images. The demolition of the city wall in 1869 affected the perceptions of social and spatial distance and proximity emphasizing a sense of disorder and heightened social and symbolic contrasts in the plane of the city. In addition, the gradual abolition of slavery and related measures such as lifting the interracial marriage legislation produced an atmosphere of social, and especially racial emancipation and democracy,
which projected onto the field of gender relations. For instance, in relation to the early 19th century, by the 1880’s women had gained important grounds in the access to formal education (Childs 1997). However, in the less formal, quotidian realm, decriminalization and gradual normalization of previously sanctioned embodied practices of (white) women’s walking and smoking were important gains for (white) women in the context of broader cultural shifts towards North American models. Nonetheless, rather than moving towards the ideal of racial democracy for which Cuban black and white rebels fought, during the actual U.S. occupation in Cuba, racist measures were reinforced (Iglesias 2003).

Through the use of both synchronic and diachronic analyses of gendered urban imaginaries, in the second section I showed how white women were used as the referential, normative standard against which discourses and values attached to the figures of black women and prostitutes are constructed. This relational framework is useful to avoid the frequent methodological trap in studies of gender and race in Cuba, which often center their attention on analyses of black women and mulatas, disregarding their counterparts in discourse, the white women. Similarly, this analysis is an effort to de-center discussions on race by examining less explored subjects living “in between” social boundaries. Here the actively interplaying performativities of class, color and gender made up undefined border zones characterized by fluidity rather than by precise delimitations. Quotidian practices like smoking or walking, as more generally, the ways of occupying and moving through space were crucial elements manipulated by women at the middle grounds to negotiate a highly valued moral status or respectability in the highly stratified social structure.

From this perspective, this framework expands the possibilities to study the construction of difference beyond the association of race with skin color, revealing the important meanings that bodily practices, social conduct and place add to categories of color, race and female sexuality. More broadly, and in the tradition of postcolonial and cultural studies theorists like Homi Bhabha and Stuart Hall, I have recognized the importance of culture—the collection of meaningful practices, places and objects—in the definition of social and physical boundaries of difference in mutual interaction with social systems and ideologies of class, race, gender, modernity and nationality (Bhabha 1994a, Hall 2005, 1998).

Finally, by drawing attention to the symbolic dimension in which these interactions play out, I offered a creative conceptual articulation of the concepts of urban imaginaries (Canclini
2007) and performative spaces (Butler 1999, Goldstein 2007). This framework is useful to understand the profoundly culturally and historically constructed character of (urban) space. Approaching visually evocative and realistic narratives, such as those describing Havana in travel literature and costumbrismo, as cultural representations and historical productions implies recognizing that they were merely claims to truth, rather than absolute or objective portrayals of reality. Certain authors painted or narrated the images they wanted to see in specific places or social situations, while erasing others to protect their class interests. Two examples discussed here are middle class white women “publicly” smoking or walking, arbitrarily rendered invisible in costumbrista depictions of Havana’s everyday life, but exposed in narratives of foreign travelers not conditioned by the same gender interests of Cuban intellectuals.

Furthermore, the concept of urban imaginaries recognizes the immaterial expressions of space. The limits that structure different urban fragments (buildings, streets, plazas, etc.), organize social life, and drive relations and actions were not simply physically marked in the ground or in specific locations of the built environment. Social value and power systems endowed these urban limits with meanings. As such, the city and its fragments functioned as political stages for the quotidian enactment or public demonstration of specific social identities and power negotiations. Urban imaginaries meet performative spaces at the realization that space is importantly signaled through embodied performances. Symbolically charged or coded actions and bodies make up the substance of urban limits, not easily localizable in any specific point in space but rather imagined, perceived and felt. Depictions of 19th century Havana revealed that spatial boundaries were to a large extent aspirations or hopes of the elites to sustain their particular ideal of social and gender distribution of power. Spatialized notions like the “public” were creatively built and reproduced through continuous stylized and structured performances of class, gender, color and sexuality. Male dominant actors were shaping systems of distinction through the distribution of racialized and classed women’s bodies in “public” venues of the city. However, the presence (or absence) of men or women, blacks or whites per se did not define categorizations of “public” venues in 19th century representations of Havana. Their racialized and classed performances did.

Finally, as the fundamental instrument or medium of perception, the body was trained to sense and discern these performed and spatialized social boundaries between a (visible) inside and an outside according to moral and aesthetic standards of acceptability. Thus, enacted
identities and sensed or perceived meaningful actions and spaces structured a performative and affectively based notion of public and domestic, which was organized by gender hierarchies as much as by racial and class hierarchies.
Chapter 8 – Public Spheres, Public Spaces: Urbanity and the (Pedagogic and Performative) Imaginings of a Cultural Community

This dissertation has examined the place of the body and of cultural practices in the construction and transformation of categories and measures of social difference and distinction in 19th century Havana society. I have drawn attention to discursive practices of “manners” as an important index among social groups at all levels negotiating a place in colonial society and in the city space. Manners organized a complex spatialized and performative register based on the changing forms of the body through the manipulation of accessories, gestures, emotions, and appearances in a symbolically ordered map of places and spaces. These negotiations were revealed in the analysis of relationships between bodies and space (Chapter 4 and 7), relationships of power and prestige (Chapter 3 and 6) and cultural discourses about body performativity and aesthetics (Chapter 2, 5 and 6).

This chapter ties together the themes and arguments made throughout the dissertation by taking the analysis beyond the discursive and representative aspects of “manners” to examine the practical aspects of the production of narratives of manners. I engage with the concepts of public sphere, public space and popular culture to discuss the material and discursive conditions enabling the internalization and enactment of “manners” informing the process of formation of a national cultural community.

Bourdieu’s theory of habitus, as the broader theoretical tradition of practice theory, demonstrated that principles and systems of difference-making are embodied by a process of learning, internalization and naturalization of symbolic codes. This process entails the continued enactment, re-enactment and repetition of practices. (Butler 1999, Bourdieu 2008) These stylized repetitions take place in diverse settings, including the everyday (the quintessential performative site), “staged” cultural sites of performance (such as the theater, dance, music) and social institutions such as the educational system, the family, the Church, the press, the literary apparatus, among others (Manalansan 2001, Williams 2010[1958]). At these sites, cultural differences are produced and reproduced through simultaneously pedagogical and performative processes that “continuously signal the differences” between more or less valued cultural forms, heritages and histories (Hall 1984, Bhabha 1994a). These cultural processes are communicative in their essence insofar as messages, codes, signs, symbols, narratives, and representations are
emitted and received, encoded and decoded by actors and institutions in their roles of actors and audiences, authors and readers.

From a cultural studies and postcolonial studies perspective, these processes of cultural construction and imagining are inserted in fields and relations of power that orient processes of cultural domination and hegemony. In a context of the social transformations brought by urbanization and the rise of liberal capitalism, these institutions and sites of cultural production and reproduction gain much of their power from their capacity to transmit culture massively (Canclini 1987, Hall 1998). Emergent bourgeois dominant classes created and controlled these institutions aiming to build a cultural hegemony to impose their values among large subaltern masses. Institutions like the press, the educational system and literature functioned to “popularize” certain cultural forms and values over others, while simultaneously building an imaginary of a cohesive and unified “people-nation.” By creating the discursive space of cultural domination over “the people” bourgeois classes led the project of building the nation as an imagined community (Anderson 1983, Bhabha 1994a, Canclini 1987, Hall 1998).

This chapter provides the necessary theoretical and historical context to understand the production, circulation and consumption of print literature in general and books of conduct or urbanity manuals in particular in the Cuban nation building process during the 19th century. Specifically, in the first section I discuss the creation of discursive, symbolic and material spaces of circulation for these texts in the context of a nascent Cuban public sphere and the developing topographic network of public spaces where these ideas took form. I situate these developments in the literary tertulias led by Domingo del Monte and his intellectual circle. I approach this embryonic public sphere and the public spaces where it developed as a site where Cuban intellectuals representing the emerging creole proto nationalist bourgeoisie led a project to imagine and design Cuba as a nation. The core of this project was a concerted program of moral and cultural education in an early attempt to construct the nation’s “people” as symbolic counterparts of a newly invented, normativized creole bourgeois tradition. My discussion engages with a range of critiques to the concept of public sphere, with particular attention to its materialization in emergent public spaces of sociability where novel, bourgeois systems of difference and distinction were being molded.

These developing cultural systems in a novel national imaginary were the discursive and material spaces of circulation and legitimation of two complementary ideological instruments of
the creole bourgeoisie: costumbrismo and urbanity. In the second section, I argue that costumbrismo—the literary school which Del Monte founded in Cuba, and urbanity—the ideology his corporation promoted through the educational system were complementary technologies of habitus creation and bodily governance through space. Costumbristas and urbanity pedagogues were members of the same bourgeois creole corporation of social reformers at the Sociedad. In some cases, authors were both urbanity pedagogues and costumbrista writers tackling the pedagogy of normativity through both satirical and moralistic “pictures of (bad) customs” in newspaper articles as well as through didactic textbooks of “good manners” used at schools. As such, costumbrismo and urbanity enabled processes of molding, internalization and embodiment of new and transformed social principles, cultural values, norms and ideologies. Similarly they served as useful devices to localize differences in the contours of bodies and in the boundaries of space. For their part urbanity pedagogues created highly elaborate spatialized regimes for molding and locating the body in real and imagined city and national space and time. Their textbooks of conduct were part of the broader narratives of the city and the nation born out of and inscribed in the fundamental discursive, cultural and material grounds of the Cuban anticolonial public sphere inaugurated by Del Monte. By engaging with existing literature on bufo theater, my analysis raises attention to the quotidian (spatial and chronological) dimensions of the performativity and pedagogy of cubanidad. My contribution is to examine these processes beyond the theatrical stage, the site of inquiry of range of scholars’ discussions on the public sphere and the nation.

The third and final section places the ideas of Del Monte and his generation in perspective with novel ideas of cubanidad pushed forth by revolutionary leaders of the armed struggle for Cuba’s independence since the 1860’s. I argue that the (white creole) bourgeois imaginary forged by Del Monte’s pedagogical project of nation building in the 1830’s outlived his more racially progressive ideological successors of the second half of the 19th century. The form of Del Monte’s embryonic anti-colonial public sphere changed over the course of the century as it was taken up in theater, the expanded print industry and the proliferation of associations—particularly post-abolition of slavery (1886). However, the moral and cultural grounds of the project that Del Monte’s tertulia facilitated prevailed as the discursive and affective space and socio-spatial, performative and pedagogic schema where subsequent negotiations of nationhood played out. As such, Del Monte’s tertulias were the material and
discursive “cradle” of a common sense imaginary where white bourgeois value standards were set as the cultural grounds for national subject making over the rest of the century and onwards.

My contribution with this discussion is to raise attention to the less regarded aspects of culture and morality in formations of citizenship and nationality in scholarly discussions of Cuban nation-building, beyond questions of gender and race. I demonstrate that cultural forms and moral standards of value—a moral and cultural national identity model—inform and conditioned arrangements of belonging to the prospect of an imagined community that was Cuba on the verge of its last war of independence (1895-1985). This discussion brings to light the many points of intersection in systems of social value and difference-making where measures of morality and cultural value serve as meeting points in negotiations of racial, gender, class and national belonging. In engaging with recent elaborations of the concept of “cultural citizenship,” I interrogate how a shared moral and cultural ideal served as the fundamental backdrop, the taken-for-granted grounds on which measures of national belonging based on race, gender and class were negotiated.

Creating hegemony for a moral and cultural bourgeois national imaginary

I introduced this dissertation with the challenge to interpret books of conduct and the broader concern with embodied social categories of “manners” in a 19th century society deeply divided along race, class and gender lines. I have taken up this challenge by approaching the 19th century as a moment of symbolic realignment (Stallybrass and White 1986). Realignment suggests a change from a previous state of presumable order. The many interconnected structures and systems that hold this social order in place may have been weakened because one or more of their parts were removed or their meanings changed. Some elements might have emerged that were not present in the system before, or the perception of their presence was altered.

These changes happened in Cuba between the late 18th and the mid 19th centuries. Africans and their descendants became not only numerically more present in the white dominated social structure, but also the social perceptions of their presence in a shared geographical and social space with ruling classes shifted. To white ruling elites, they appeared not more threatening but rather, simply threatening compared to the times before 1804. Then, the triumph of the slave rebellion in Haiti and the concomitant demise of its sugar export industry opened a wide door of opportunities for sugar planters and slave dealers in Cuba. These changes
drove a boost in slave commerce and dramatically changed the racial composition of the Cuban population. Furthermore, a previously invisible and symbolically and politically problematic class of racially mixed free urban entrepreneurs of color altered the simplified distribution of power between ruling white masters and subjugated black slaves.

As a consequence of these “misalignments” and the parallel ideological influences of liberal and independence thought in Cuba, a profound restructuration occurred throughout the 19th century. It was a process of imagining and “brewing” of a previously inexistente political and cultural form of socio political ordering and alignment—the Cuban nation. As a projected vision and aspiration of a future state of things, the nation was a novel idea being negotiated and debated early in the 19th century by local white elites as a political alternative to gain control and power. The nation appeared as a (risky) opportunity for creole elites to liberate themselves from the obstacles placed by the colonial regime to commercial expansion and to their leadership over the country’s affairs. This new socio political project required a parallel cultural and symbolic foundation to legitimize their authority in the new social order. To make the nation a viable alternative, social strata and places were to be clearly assigned and the terms of this new social contract legitimized and normalized.

Domingo Del Monte, José Antonio Saco, José de la Luz y Caballero, Antonio Bachiller y Morales among other members of the corporation of liberal autonomists gathered in the Sociedad led the project to create this necessary symbolic and affective, cultural hegemonic space. Raymond Williams called it a “structure of feeling,” the sense of a shared experience of unity and collectivity in historically specific time and place (Williams 1977). Only in this shared cultural field could Del Monte and his contemporaries imagine and position themselves as leaders and cultural models vis à vis a range of subaltern and colonizer “Others”. However, the conception of a common culture that would somehow create the illusion of binding disparate elements in the highly stratified Cuban society into a shared community—a people-island-nation—was challenging to even imagine.

How could Cuban elites possibly share a common culture that represented them all as one with African slaves? If the solution was to simply eliminate African presence in the island as some had proposed, how then could African slaves and their descendants be dispensed of given their necessity as major labor forces fueling the thriving sugar capitalist industry and slave trade from which they profited? Centuries of racial miscegenation made the idea of racial purity a
well-established but hardly acknowledged myth. As traditional measures of social difference such as phenotype became less reliable and asset and nobility title-holding less valued, the affective and embodied (as incorporated in the body) and the performed (as made up through practice) became key sites for difference making in 19th century Havana. The interface between bodies and space became the locus where these differences were given meaning, read and interpreted. “Manners”, in the context of the 19th century social and symbolic realignment, became an index of changing systems of hierarchy, power, and privilege.

Within the framework of embodiment and performance in which the Cuban nation-building project developed, creating a cultural structure that gave primacy to manners, habits or “customs” entailed a pedagogical labor. Stories and histories needed to be made up, legends and myths needed to be told, memorized and remembered, proper habits needed to be taught, learned, and cultivated and manners needed to be learned and enacted on a systematic and quotidian basis. These embodied, cultural and moral aspects of the creation of national identity were the major contributions Domingo Del Monte and his generation made to the notion of cubanidad perfected by his successors in the late 19th century. They emerged as precursor cultural and moral designers working together in a mission to establish “a way of being proper” and a mechanism to make this moral-cultural model hegemonic. As such, Del Monte’s project of cultural normativity connected two broad historical processes that eventually brought Cuba to nationhood in the early 20th century. Del Monte’s struggle was a continuation of the colonial civilizing mission under an anti-colonial, oppositional discursive frame. Del Monte’s cultural project was also the precursor of the liberating mission of Cuban revolutionary leaders in the late 19th century. To channel this mission of cultural, political national imagining Del Monte and his group utilized the space of literature. For the same purpose they founded a genre of socialization—the tertulia—to function as discursive and material space to communicate and practice their model of Cubanness. The following section discusses the emergence of Del Monte’s literary tertulias as a public space and a developing public sphere where he experimented and launched his mission of national imagining.

Considering Del Monte’s literary tertulia as the expression of a Cuban ‘public sphere’ poses some epistemological challenges. First, it requires situating its development under the specific historical and discursive conditions of a non-democratic, non-European colonial context, as opposed to the metropolitan spaces that inspired Habermas’ elaboration of the notion of public
sphere. Second, it entails engaging with the multiple contestations of the concept as they apply to Cuba, among which from a feminist standpoint is Nancy Fraser’s concept of “subaltern counterpublics” (Fraser 1990). I take up these challenges by discussing a range of epistemological models to understand the developing Cuban public sphere. A set of authors have used binary conceptual frameworks to theorize the public sphere in its 1) material and discursive dimensions (Stallybrass and White 1986), 2) popular-pedagogic or performative dimensions (Bhabha 1994, Méndez Rodenas 1998) and 3) print or performative dimensions (Lane 2007, Anderson 1983, Habermas 1989). I emphasize the “or” in my attempt to reconsider these categories as mutually constitutive as opposed to mutually exclusive, while engaging with less-explored epistemological frames that consider the quotidian dimensions of public spheres operating in and as public spaces.

**Del Monte’s ‘tertulias’: Theorizing the Developing Cuban Public Sphere**

Chapter 4 introduced the discussion about *costumbrismo*’s role in a project of national imagining. *Costumbrista* intellectuals were collaborators or themselves leaders and members in the elite circle of Creole intellectuals and landowners who gathered in the Sociedad since the late 18th and into the first half of the 19th century. They included Francisco Arrango y Parreño, Félix Varela, José Antonio Saco, and Domingo del Monte, among others. They espoused the more progressive lines of liberalism later grouped under the liberal autonomist party. Although they did not support Cuba’s separation from colonial control through independence or its annexation to the U.S., they did advocate greater representative power for their class in the political and economic affairs of the colony. This political axis of their proto-nationalist project had a corresponding and perhaps more radical cultural axis. As social reformers they placed emphasis in the promotion of education and the arts, which was seen with suspicion by colonial authorities because of their nationalist undertone.

In assuming a self-conscious political and moral authority as intellectuals in a “mission” (Benítez Rojo 1986: 22) to promote “*ideas cubanas,*” (Lane 2007: 28) this elite circle planted the seeds for later elaborations the notion of *cubanidad. Cubanidad* entailed envisioning of Cuba as unified community of subject-citizens with common, distinctive cultural characteristics bound within the geographical limits of an island-nation (Aguilera Manzano 2007). In particular, Domingo del Monte and his intellectual circle are attributed with “coining” the idea of the
“imagined community.” According to historian José María Aguilera Manzano, until his date, the idea of “being Cuban” in relation to a geographical-cultural unit did not exist. Rather the town or region or birth (for instance Havana or Matanzas) were the units associated with a specific categories of identification (Aguilera Manzano 2007: 86).

To advance this project, Del Monte and his circle attempted a calculated political strategy to use the space of the less-censored literary writing as a protective front against state censorship, in what Antonio Benítez Rojo described as “the conspiracy of the text” (Benítez Rojo 1986: 22). Print periodicals were the prime textual avenue to channel these “Cuban ideas” packed in literary, scientific and historical form including poetry, prose and novels. Domingo del Monte was a leader in this endeavor. Trained in liberalist principles by the precursors Félix Varela and José Agustín Caballero (1762-1835), Del Monte helped build a network of liberal activists across the island and beyond to promote awareness about their views on Cuban identity and culture. For this purpose he reached out to Romantic writers in Spain who provided the methodology to carry out his plan by teaching him “how to express political thought through literature” (Aguilera Manzano 2009: 71).

State censorship constrained the material conditions where these ideas were produced. Del Monte and his circle gathered to deliberate in emergent urban and modern sites of “rational and enlightened” critique, a colonial version of what Jürgen Habermas’ termed for Europe the bourgeois public sphere (1989). Elite sociedades, literary tertulias or salons, theaters and café’s were the newly available urban sites offering new sociability schemes for an elite circle of intellectuals to discuss and consolidate their views on their political and cultural strategy vis à vis a colonial power. The literary tertulias led by the prominent writer and planter Domingo del Monte epitomized this new embryonic sphere of civic participation for the cultivation of an (bourgeois) aesthetic of lo cubano (the “Cuban”).

The tertulias delmontinas periodically gathered a group of young writers to receive training and engage in a “tertulia” or chat about literary and political matters with Del Monte at his home. The meetings were held in the late 1830’s and 1840’s out of which came the first major works of Cuban literature, including Cirilo Villaverde’s “Cecilia Valdés” (1839, 1882). Albeit being a primarily male and white space, Del Monte’s tertulia admitted few outstanding Cuban writers of color and white women, including the poet Gabriel de la Concepción Valdés “Plácido”, the slave Juan Francisco Manzano whom he and his circle help emancipate, and two
pioneer female figures in Cuban literature including Gertrudis Gomez de Avellaneda and Mercedes Santa Cruz y Montalvo, the Countess of Merlin, whose own at-home tertulias were famous at the time.

As political activists and representatives of the landowners’ interests, Domingo Del Monte and his collaborator José Antonio Saco, were two major critics of the Spanish colonial political and economic model, favoring greater representative rights, freedom of press, and the abolition of slavery. Their abolitionism was nonetheless firmly grounded in the racist views upon which their prospect of a national model was founded. Del Monte and his intellectual circle saw the increasing slave population as a dangerous threat that could spark a massive black rebellion, which could give Cuba the same fate as the former French colony of Saint-Domingue. Such insurrection in their view, could also either facilitate North American slave interests to have Cuba annexed as another slave state, or British abolitionists’ interests to convert Cuba into an “Africanized” republic with freed slaves (Benítez Rojo 1986: 19). Del Monte’s circle interpreted the growing ratio of “barbarous” African slaves to “civilized” whites as an indicator of Cuba’s reduced potential to advance economically and culturally towards “progress and civilization.”

For these reasons they advocated the suppression of slave trade for plantation labor to be replaced with white immigrant labor from Canary Islands, Galicia and Ireland. In the long run, these policies to stop and reverse the black demographic threat combined with an extensive educational program would produce, in their view, a country free from African influences. The plan also included miscegenation via the sexual unions of white European immigrants with women of color in Cuba as a strategy to gradually whiten the population (Benítez Rojo 1986: 20, Aguilera Manzano 2009: 73). As cultural activists, Del Monte and Saco stood out as forceful critics of local manners and customs and their moralistic discourse informed the general tone of their social reformist project. Their major quest was to settle the alternative cultural grounds to a Spanish or African model, or even North American (as per Saco’s warnings of its cultural imperialist threat, see Chapter 2) in order to establish one that would be culturally and racially superior and specifically bourgeois, white and Cuban. Del Monte expressed this idea graphically in a letter to a colleague writer in 1837 “today we Cubans are no more than a graft (‘injerto’) of Spanish and Mandinga, that is, of the last two last links of the human race in ciliation and morality” (Del Monte in Morán 2012).

With these views in mind, through his literary activism Del Monte and his colleagues
contributed to define and legitimate a model of “lo propio” (what is “proper”) both in the sense of typical, peculiar and specific of a yet undefined Cuban culture and identity as well as that which is morally appropriate or suitable to be included in that future collective project. In framing this pedagogic cultural project, they simultaneously dismantled old, invented and legitimized new standards of value within which measures of belonging would operate. For instance, Chapter 2 exposed how Saco contested an old-dated schema of work ethics rooted in the Spanish tradition by proposing the radical idea that work, specifically manual work, was valuable and desirable culturally and morally. While Saco’s more overtly political and confrontational statements during the colonial administration of Captain General Tacón led him to exile sooner, Del Monte’s cultural activism prevailed for longer. This was due to the euphemizing effect of literature to Del Monte’s political and social reformist strategy, which lasted until the dismantling of his literary circle with the banishment and exile of most of the members upon the events of La Escalera (1833-1844).

Like the Habermasian public sphere, Del Monte’s tertulias were a primarily masculine and heteronormative space defined by exclusiveness rather than inclusivity. (Fraser 1990) There, a select circle negotiated and consolidated their views on a normative cultural regime, a project of moral education and distinction that placed themselves as cultural models for a mass of low, “popular” Others. However, elite’s spaces of sociability were not the only site for the making of public opinion in the 19th century. Scholars of Cuban cultural history have studied alternative sites for the making of public opinion at mid 19th century (Iglesias 2003, Ferrer 1999). Iglesias named “plebeyan” public spheres the spaces where popular classes gathered around oral transmission of news from print sources. These spaces included newspaper vendor cries, informal gatherings and family, informal meetings at stores, barbershops, or markets. Particularly important were the collective oral readings in tabaquerías which opened up a space of participation of overwhelmingly illiterate population. Tabaquerías were oral transmission chains were otherwise excluded people gathered around one reader who spoke the news out loud, creating what historian Marial Iglesias called “communities of interpretation”. For instance, Rebecca Scott documented the case of a former female slave in a peripheral zone of the city of Cienfuegos born in the 1860’s who recited the press to community members congregated in the outskirts of her home. People heard and debated the news creating a space for diffusion and exchange of opinion and issues of interest to a community (Scott in Iglesias 2003: 145).
Within this scope, the illustrated public forums represented by Del Monte tertulias appear as dominant spaces for a privileged public opinion. As a slave and plantation owner Del Monte, like the average tertulia participants had a privileged standing vis à vis the plebeys of Iglesias’ account. However, Cuban creoles were simultaneously situated in a peripheral location with respect to the Spanish class of ruling colonists. As such, their literary-political project was, in its own way, a project of resistance. The marked oppositional character to colonial discourse and the strict conditions of surveillance and state censorship under which Del Monte’s tertulias developed characterize them as a form of bourgeois anti-colonial public sphere (Lane 2007, Sinha 2001, Aguilera Manzano 2007).

Del Monte’s tertulias were one among several strategies to carve out alternative political and discursive spaces to channel their cultural and political project to the extent that their primary organizational site—the Sociedad—did not provide the sufficient autonomy that this endeavor required. The Sociedad, which liberal Creoles used to channel their proposals for reform, was not entirely sterile to colonial state control. In fact, Economic Societies like the Sociedad in the colonies were state institutions. In Cuba colonial authorities influenced the political alignment of the Sociedad by favoring the appointment of loyalist-aligned directives, which shifted political prospects away from the more radical autonomist liberal tendencies espoused by Saco, and others. (Aguilera Manzano 2007) In spite of these limitations, Del Monte and members of his group gained important leadership positions in the Sociedad, specifically as directives of the Sección de Educación (Section of Education). A more calculated attempt to secure an institutional space to channel their Cuban cultural project were their efforts to create a Comisión permanente de literatura (Permanent Commission of Literature) within the Section of Education. Although authorities approved of this Commission since 1831, Del Monte’s later proposal to extend it into an independent Academia de Literatura (Academy of Literature) was turned down by the Captain General’s suspicion of it as a site to spread ideas on Cuban independence.

The truncated project of the Academy of Literature reflected the repressive political atmosphere prevailing at mid century in Cuba. While stricter sanctions to public gatherings of people of color were in place, even upper class whites like Del Monte suffered restricted rights to congregate freely—reunions of 2 or more were labeled suspicious of conspiratorial activity against the colonial state. (Aguilera Manzano 2007, 2009) Thus, while the form of the discourse
(literature) served to euphemize the political content of the gatherings, the form of the setting of production of this discourse (Del Monte’s home) performed a similar function as a front to avoid state persecution. Del Monte’s tertulias were thus, for more than one reason, a peculiar kind of “public sphere.” There, not precisely a public space but rather a domestic space served as the setting for a not so public but rather quite selective and intimate private gathering.

Approaching Del Monte’s tertulias as a public space as well as a public sphere brings out the importance of the material conditions where the deliberation of ideas and the socialization it entailed, actually took place. Stallybrass and White’s important critique of the Habermasian public sphere explores the dual sense of the “public” both as a discursive sphere and a material, spatially and temporally localized space for ideological assembly and molding of social relationships (1986). The authors argue that ideologies born of the public sphere are produced through particular modes of social interaction, which in turn are informed by specific kinds of spatial arrangements. Thus, specific discursive and material conditions of production inform how ideas are assembled, affecting the substance of ideology itself as well as shaping the form of social relations.

*Nineteenth century Havana’s everyday social geographies*

Viewed within this framework, Del Monte’s tertulias were part of a “topographic network” of public spaces of sociability along with emergent and stratified city venues such as dance balls, theaters, cafes, circuses, lottery and game houses, and taverns, among others. Since the 1820’s and 1830’s, these modern public venues opened up a space for processes of differentiation symbolically and through geographical and social space of an emergent civil society in an early stage of self-representation under the collective subject-category of “Cuban.” As discussed in Chapters 7 and 4, novel urban spatial configurations and practices such as promenades, outdoor shopping or theater going played an important role in defining and refashioning classed subjectivities. Textbooks of conduct were perhaps the quintessential technologies to make new (bourgeois) subjects, body shapes, and social forms into spatialized city molds.

These essentially pedagogic textbooks used in schools created regimes for new bodies and subjectivities by articulating symbolic, social and geographical systems of difference. The key principle taught in these texts was urbanity. Urbanity teaches how and where to situate
oneself socially and geographically in alignment with the established symbolic material and
discursive orders of status and hierarchy (De La Torre 1857, De Coronado 1893). Urbanity
manuals produced an imaginary of the city, its modern venues of sociability, and of the proper
place and form of bodies and subjects within those venues. To this extent, the ideology of
urbanity directly speaks to the construction of the public sphere/space as the key cultural site
where the nation was being discursively and materially brewed.

Within this framework, Del Monte’s tertulia had an assigned place in the symbolic
ordering that ideologues of urbanity helped construct. Tertulias not only provided a space for
coding “high” culture and “higher” forms of appreciation as such based on the substance of the
gatherings, i.e. Cuban and European literature. The tertulia also inaugurated a new genre of
sociability—literary talks in a lordly mansion—coded “highly” in the spectrum of old and
emergent forms of sociability. Promenading, theater going, artistic liceos (lyceums) or soirées
were places were middle and upper class white men and women cultivated urbanity and “good”
taste. These sites were also the material platform through which authorities performed the ornate
through new architectural forms and urban planning projects. These spatialized performances of
distinction contrasted with lower status café attendance and tavern gatherings (primarily white,
male spaces); cockfights and Cuna dance balls (of mixed race attendance) or cabildo gatherings
(exclusively black).

Mirroring this complex spatial stratification in his textbook of urbanity, José María de la
Torre included rules for conduct in spaces of privilege—the tertulia, the promenade, the theater,
or public dance balls, without mention of the cockfight, Cuna balls, bodegas (stores) or taverns
(1857). De La Torre’s reader audience, were children who accompanied their middle class
parents to the tertulias. Similarly, Domitila García de Coronado and other authors of female
education manuals omitted dancing altogether from their narratives in spite of the wide
popularity of this practice in Cuban society (1893). In the face of De Coronado’s silencing, the
costumbrista Luis Victoriano Betancourt complained in his characteristic moralist tone that
respectable ladies danced so much that they did not even care to learn their womanly duties,
“aquella niña que no sabe hacer una camisa, ni escribir una carta, pero que baila, y se sabe... el
arte de manejar el abanico... más inspira risa y desprecio que consideración” (“the virgin of the
homeland, that girl who does not know how to make a shirt, or write a letter, but who dances,
and knows...the art to manage the fan\textsuperscript{141} ...inspires more laughter and despise than consideration”) (Betancourt 1985: 366) Thus, costumbrista writers and urbanity pedagogues worked in mutual coordination to produce bodily cultural normativity. De Coronado’s silencing of white middle class women’s dancing and Betancourt’s condemnation of women’s dancing synchronically constructed dancing as a crucial marker of interlocking racial, sexual and moral status. Arguably, different kinds of (classed and gendered) bodies were made up through these differentially ordered urban social venues. As such, privileged spaces of sociability were the sites of creation, learning and reproduction of different aesthetic and moral embodied codes of distinction. In turn, authors of textbooks of urbanity made such sociability spaces the objects upon which an embodied normative spatio-temporal imaginary was built as a kind of material and discursive geography of social distinction.

How social hierarchies were reproduced in this multi-dimensional field of perception and representation was evident, for instance in the daily schedule entertainment offering of a typical Sunday at mid century in Havana: a cockfight in the morning, cabildo celebrations between 11 and 1 pm, two bullfights in afternoon and Opera theater at night, each one with its own dynamics of stratification and class attendance (Riaño San Marful 2002: 56-60). While theaters and bullfights were sites for the exhibition of distinction \textit{par excellence}, cockfights were known for more horizontal forms of social interaction forming, as José Antonio Saco recognized, a “perfect democracy” (Saco 1974, Riaño San Marful 2002). While cabildos were an exclusively black space for (non-creole) Africans, power roles between blacks and whites were momentarily suspended during games and bids at cockfights, and hierarchies were strictly observed in class-coded performances and assigned places at the white dominated theaters and bullfights.

Some locations changed their social “face” over the course of the day, such as Café Escauriza (renamed Louvre after 1844), which chroniclers reported to be populated by “decent” middle classes in the morning, gradually descending in status as it became filled up by “idles” in the afternoon (De La Torre 1857: 64, De las Barras y Prado 1926). Other sociability settings were harder to classify due to the nature of the interactions or to the spatial configurations, affecting the thresholds of social and physical distance between attendees of unequal status. For

\textsuperscript{141} The practice of making signs through different gestures and positions of the fan was a common recourse used by middle and upper class women, highly policed in spaces of sociability, to communicate with suitors or admirers from a distance.
instance, masquerade balls along other venues like religious gatherings at plazas and churches provided opportunities for otherwise interracial and gender inadmissible proximities. Descriptions of these settings read as discourses of elite anxiety. White elites persistently protested the “confusion of classes” to which these spaces lent. In particular, as the quintessentially transgressive practice, dancing made any venue where it was practiced the object of elite’s preoccupation.

Repeated faults to the established social norms at dance settings had motivated measures for regulation by elite society and authorities. “Dance academies” and the former escuelitas were called for regulation upon elite’s complaints that they served as covers for prostitution and for inadmissible inter-racial and gender proximities. Dances related to black religious practices were banned for covering political organizing or conspiratorial gatherings (Mena 2005a). Finally, dances and balls held at residential homes, theaters and street festivals were increasingly policed to avoid interracial contact as well as “confusion” between social classes disguised under masks, costumes or lost in the amorphous urban crowd. Especially scandalous were masquerade balls, often held at Café Escauriza or at the Tacón Theater. Masks and disguises particularly concerned elites as the moral and racial status of the dancers (especially women) was not easily observable. Others took advantage of the symbolic gap to “pass” for lower or higher status people and approach desired Others at both ends.142

Urbanity: ordering and distributing privilege across quotidian space and time

The moral panic created by white elites around the inexactitude of boundaries in “public” spaces of sociability during the 19th century reflected an ongoing representational crisis. Facing up to these “disorders,” ideologues of manners were particularly invested in a project to delineate boundaries intersectionally in spatial and chronological terms. Perhaps one of the best illustrations of the socially stratified distribution of quotidian time and space is José María de la Torre’s short article “Un día en La Habana,” the postscript of his 7th edition of the textbook Nuevo Tratado de Urbanidad, Buenas Maneras y Etiqueta con aplicación a los usos y costumbres de la Isla de Cuba (1857). De La Torre also used this article as postscript of his most

142 Future research will discuss evidence recovered from the Cuban National Archive on several cases of official charges filed against black men for cross-dressing as women and white men for cross-dressing as black men to approach white and black women respectively at public masquerade balls held at theaters during the 1830's through 1850's.
widely known book *Lo que Fuimos y lo que Somos o La Habana Antigua y Moderna* published the same year. In an eloquent ethnographic narrative, this sharp engineer of manners and of space describes activities, sounds, people, and places that make up the everyday landscape of a typical day in Havana. As such, he effectively situates the spectrum of performances of difference and distinction playing out in the chaotic, chrono-topographic, highly sensorial field of the everyday.

For De La Torre, a day in Havana in 1857 starts before dawn with the sounds of church bells when “happy” peasants cross the city wall’s doors bringing provisions to the markets; ships head offshore with produce for far away countries, buses run across neighborhoods, newspaper vendors yell, milk-vendors invade the plazas, churches fill up with pious elderly women, cleaners remove the trash, cooks buy their groceries, and stores open for enslaved and free laborers to drink coffee before going to work. Characteristic morning sounds are cornets, drums and shoot-outs of military training and changing of guards at 7 a.m., the deafening sound of big carriage wheels through the streets transporting aristocratic ladies to their daily apparel shopping at distinguished stores, train sounds and schoolchildren’s journey to school. This is also the time when employees get up and read the newspaper, immigrant sellers announce trinkets and knickknacks (“*aretes, sortijas, dedales, tijeras finas, etc*”), and market sellers set up their produce tables.

At nine, students get out of college producing chaos as they collide with peasants herding cows through the same streets as a multiplicity of horse-drawn carriages. Also at 9 a.m. younger aristocratic girls get up and have their breakfast or take a piano or singing lesson, read poetry or other “article favorable to her sex” in the newspaper, while public employees head out to work. At 10 a.m. “the confusion reaches its crisis” with a different social and perceptive scape filling the air,

*A las diez llega la confusión a su crisis: el aturdidor sonido del martillo en el taller del artesano, el del canto penetrante de los africanos ocupados en entongar, pesar y descargar los carretones de cajas de azúcar, ó café: el de los monótonos temas del ambulante organista: el de la multitud de pianos que tocados por principiantes en cada manzana atormentan a los no diletanti: el agudo pregonar de las fruterías y vendedores de ropa que pululan por las calles; el continuo transitar de más de cuatro mil carruajes y de hombres de todas las edades que circulan en distintas direcciones, forman un cuadro difícil (sic) de pintar.*

(emphasis added, De La Torre 1857: 61)
...the deafening sound of the hammer in the artisan workshop, of the pungent chant of the Africans occupied in weighting, loading and unloading dollys of coffee or sugar boxes: the monotonous tunes of the organ players: of the multiplicity of pianos played by beginners tormenting the non dilletante’s: the acute cry of the fruit and clothes vendors that swarm around; the continuous transit of more than four thousand carriages and of men of all ages circulating in different directions, create a picture difficult to paint.

Moving forward, De La Torre explains that noon is recess time for employees and workers who fill up cafes, ice-cream, soda and pastry shops.

La una. Hora solicitá (en los días de fiestas) del elegante y fino para cumplir con las visitas de etiqueta, y de la encantadora beldad para recibir las de su apasionado, á quien los minutos antes le han parecido años... Las dos. Vuelven ya los obreros á sus trabajos, en tanto van desocupándose las oficinas, cerrándose los bufetes y retirándose éste á los baños, aquel al hotel del Aguila de Oro, y estotro al seno de su familia. (1857: 63)

One [pm is the], appropriate hour (in holidays) for the elegant and fine [men] to pay their etiquette visits and for the enchanting beauties to receive their passionate lover’s visit, to whom the previous minutes seemed years...Two [pm]. The workers return to their workplace and the offices start to empty up while one employee goes to the public baths, another to the hotel Aguila del Oro, and another to his family’s bosom.

Leisure time starts at 5 and the working middle classes populate the sidewalks of theaters and cafes to observe the spectacle at the hour of fine ladies’ carriage promenading. Bells announce prayer time but for the already dressed up middle class Havanans it’s a signal to pay duty calls of different kinds, like going to an open air retreta concert, a musical tertulia or a literary lecture at the artistic Lyceum, or window-shopping in the brilliantly lighted downtown. At nine when the retreta is finished, Havana flaneurs gather at cafes for ice-cream, chocolate, pastries, and various drink options including “orchata” (sic), soda and cold milk (1857: 64).

De La Torre’s bourgeois imaginary sets the end of one typical day in Havana with the withdrawal of middle classes to their homes at 10 pm, after an active and prolonged afternoon of leisure. The carriage-ride back “home” of respectable ladies and the preparation for bed with the cumbersome task of removing their fancy garments creates a picture of privilege, domesticity
and heteronormativity as pillars of markedly racialized and classed urban subjectivities. Speaking to this imaginary, domestic space populated by predominantly white bourgeois girls is the preferred theme of the book’s illustrations (Figure 20 and Figure 21).

Figure 20 - Illustration from *Nuevo Tratado de Urbanidad, Buenas Maneras y Etiqueta* by José María de la Torre, 1857, p 3.

Figure 21 - Illustration from *Nuevo Tratado de Urbanidad, Buenas Maneras y Etiqueta* by José María de la Torre, 1857, p 7.
Overall, De La Torre’s narrative emphasizes the sharp socio-symbolic contrasts of the 19th century urban landscape using privileged white women as key rhetorical device. For instance following candid depictions of impeccable “ladies” in-carriage fashion shopping, he laments the chaos occurring nearby at the bay, customs and the pier from the rapid and continuous movement of ships in all directions forming “all kinds of geometric shapes…disturbing the sight… What a Babylon! (¡Qué Babilonia!)” (62) In another fragment, the classic spectacle of the parade of deified ladies in carriages along the Tacón and Isabel II promenades happens all the while “at the end of the latter paseo a hearse carriage transports to its last dwelling that who has ceased to exist. Such is the drama of life! (“…por uno de los extremos [sic] del último paseo se vé atravesar un fúnebre carro conduciéndo a la última morada al que ha dejado de existir ¡Tal es el drama de la vida!”).

Fluidity and structuredness of the social composition and power distribution across quotidian space and time coexist in De La Torre’s imaginary of Havana. While some venues and times show “confusion and chaos” others have decidedly assigned times, locations and character roles in the urban fragments making up the theater of the everyday which he sets out to “paint”. At tertulias where aesthetic dispositions like “taste” were crafted showed a similar fluidity and contested character. “[at the tertulia] a kind beauty enchants with her brilliant voice or with the prodigious performance of ‘irresistible’ Cuban danzas in the piano” (1857: 63). Only in De La Torre’s romantic/nostalgic narrative could the long demonized “irresistible” Cuban danza figure so close to white “ladies” and pianos, two major symbols of bourgeois respectability and privilege.

Overall, Nuevo Tratado de Urbanidad condenses De La Torre’s exceptional skills to think in combined spatial and performative terms as a reflection of his academic training in two main disciplines: education and geography. De la Torre authored innumerable texts and maps on Cuban geography and history along with a similar number of often-illustrated educational textbooks for school-age children, which formed part of school curriculums.143 According to

143 Titles published include Mapa antiguo de la Isla, con noticias históricas (1837) Elementos de cronología universal y particular de España e Islas de Cuba y Puerto Rico (1853) Mapas antiguo y moderno de la Isla (1857) Mapa emblemático de esta isla; Planos pintoresco de la Habana, con los números de las casas, principales monumentos y la división de 1856; Guía del viajero en los ferrocarriles del departamento occidental. Nueva tabla de cuentas con una completa explicacion (sic) del sistema métrico; El Libro de las Niñas de la Isla de Cuba; El Libro de los Niños (1857) Nuevo Catón metódico y cristiano con láminas. El libro de las Cotorritas, Monitos, etc. para los niños; Libros de muestras de manuscritos y de diversos caracteres de letras para perfeccionarse en la
Mariano Dumás Chancel, author of a curricular and textbook guide for teachers published in 1868, De La Torre was a prolific author of a disproportionately large number of textbooks (totaling 28) used in curriculums, compared to an average of 2 to 5 textbooks each by other 20 authors (Dumás Chancel 1868: 243, 244). De La Torre is also the only author of a textbook on Urbanity. This is significant since Urbanity figures as one of the subjects in the teaching curriculum of 50 to 70% of all schools included in Dumás Chancel’s extensive, nation-wide survey. According to his data, Urbanity was equally taught in private and municipal schools for boys/men and girls/women in provinces all over the island including: Cárdenas, Güines, La Habana, Holguín, Jaruco, Jiguaní, Matanzas, Puerto Príncipe, Remedios, Sagua La Grande, Trinidad and Villaclara (Dumás Chancel 1868).

José María de la Torre y de la Torre was a lawyer and professor at the University of Havana and a member of merit of the Sociedad, as well as of a range of European Royal Academies including the History of Madrid, Geography of Paris and London and Ethnography of New York (Conde San Juan de Jaruco in Cuban Genealogy Club of Miami 2012). His textbook Nuevo Tratado de Urbanidad, Etiqueta y Buenas Maneras was selected in 1860 by Havana’s governor Francisco Serrano to be remitted to the Spanish courts as a sample educational textbook used in Cuba (Huerta Martínez 1922: 324). With respect to his class status, Cuban historian, María Teresa Cornide, a specialist in elite family genealogy studies, examined José María de la Torre’s testament and death certificate dated from 1873. The amount and kinds of assets he left confirmed that his class status was closer to those of the middle-upper professional/intellectuals. His lineage also denies he descended from a class of nobles, although he did marry a woman of noble family (María Teresa Cornide, personal communication 01/06/2012).

Judging by the personal and social background of the author, Nuevo Tratado de Urbanidad is clearly intended to promote and establish middle-class bourgeois values among an ideal middle class bourgeois audience, which was itself under construction. Evidence is the

lectura de letras de mano 1855, Nuevo Manual de las Escuelas Primarias, El Robinson Cubano among many others. (De La Torre 1857, Dumás Chancel 1868)

Curricular programs differed by gender. Women’s programs included role-specific subjects such as sewing, embroidery, “domestic economy”, piano or music. In addition to Urbanity, both men and women’s programs commonly include Religion, Morality, Arithmetic, Spelling, Geography, History, Agriculture, and languages including French, Latin, Italian, and German. Students ages are between 6 and 16. (Dumás Chancel 1868)

This estimate is based on my own broad calculation of the number of schools that include Urbanity in the teaching program of all the schools included in Dumas Chancel’s nation-wide survey.
author’s use of marginal subjects and children as reference points or embodiments of the unacceptable manners, i.e. the anti-norms. For instance rule number 196 under the extensive sub-section on table manners (“De la Mesa”) raises the question whether it is of “good tone” to offer snacks or gifts known as “bocaditos,” “De ninguna manera, y prueba de ello es que su uso está limitado á gentes del campo ó de baja esfera. Cuando se quiera hacer el obsequio de un manjar, debe ser muy escogido y servirse en un plato limpio y en poca cantidad” (“No way, and a proof of it is that its use is limited to country or lowlife people. When a delicacy is to be made as a gift, it should be very selective and be served in a clean plate, in small amount.” 1857: 44).

More generally, De La Torre creates a socio-demographic progression by localizing the bourgeois, good mannered ideal above less developed/civilized subjects aspiring that status, i.e. children and servants (“criados”). In the case of Cuba servants were generally slaves or free people of color. In many instances, De La Torre compares the unacceptable behavior of children to that of domestic servants, the reference point of the lower-end of the civilization scale. At the other end the author refers to “persons of superior character” setting the standards of refinement or “good tone”, who occupy the preferential seats in the table, the theater, and deserve deferential treatment. For instance, rule 88 asks how should the arrival of visitors be announced? The answer is “Si son personas de buen porte, debe decirse: ahi están…ó han llegado unas señoras, ó un caballero; pero no unas mugeres [sic] ni un hombre, como suelen decir los niños y los criados” (“If these are persons of good stature [buen porte], it should be said: there they are… or some ladies have arrived, or a gentleman, but not some women nor one man, like the children and the servants usually say.” Emphasis in original, 1857: 22). Later on De La Torre explains the rules for treating visitors according to their race and class: seats ought to be offered to respectable visitors that are “at the same level” as the reader (“que pueden alternar con nosotros”, “that can relate to us”). If this is not the case they can be made to wait in the hallway or dinner room, “haciéndola sentarse si fuese blanco, á menos [sic] que sea criado ó portero, que se recibirán de piè, aunque con agrado” (“offering a seat if he were white, unless he is a servant or porter, in which case they will be received standing, although with kindness” 1857: 23). As expected, the black slave is the one most notably absent in the courtesy share out to elite home visitors.

One additional example from the rules of conduct in the promenade illustrates De La Torre’s effort of demarcation of hierarchies in space built upon existing ordinances of the
 colonial government for the city of Havana. Rule 154 poses the question:

¿Qué debemos hacer cuando nos encontremos con alguna persona que viene?
No debemos quitarla la acera, sino dejarla pasar conforme viene: á no ser señora, sacerdote ó persona de mas edad, ó superior carácter, en cuyo caso aun cuando llevemos la acera que cae á nuestra derecha, (que es la que por ley nos corresponde), debemos tener la atención de cedérsla. Lo mismo debe practicarse si fuéremos en carruage. (sic) (1857: 37)

What should we do when a running into a person approaching us? We should not take the sidewalk, but rather allow [the person] to pass as [the person] approaches, unless she is a lady, a priest, older or [a person] of superior character, in which case, even when we walk through the sidewalk to our right (which we are entitled to by law), we should have the attention of ceding it over. The same applies if we ride in carriages.

Imagining “the people”

By using a first person narrative, De La Torre’s Nuevo Tratado de Urbanidad creates the sense of unity around a collective subjectivity, an “us” (“nosotros”) that subjectively joins the narrator with the main audience (the children). This collective “us” stands in an interface connecting with others of “superior” status (“de elevado carácter) and of “lower” status (“de baja esfera” – lowlife, “de mala educación,” – of bad education, “de negra índole” – of black kind, 48). An illustration of the swinging positionality of this ample “middle class” is De La Torre’s acknowledgement of their vulnerability to “fall” down to the status of servants. This example illustrates the values of charity and compassion, an important narrative thread in the text. These were key values of the emergent ideological anti-slavery tendencies that elite creoles like Del Monte were promoting through the literary school of costumbrismo. Rule 216 indicates the appropriate treatment that children owe to servants,

Deben tratarles con afabilidad y agrado: no mandarles nunca con tono imperioso ó con aspereza... [deben] comportarse con ellos como quisiéramos que se portasen con nosotros si la desgracia nos llevase

146 Article 22 of the Ordenanzas Municipales de la Ciudad de la Habana for 1855 states: “Cuando se encuentren dos individuos en la calle, cederá la acera el que la llevarse á la izquierda, á (sic) ménos (sic) que sean de distintas castas, en cuyo caso cederá siempre la de color á (sic) la blanca; pena de uno á (sic) tres pesos.” (“When two persons meet each other in the street, whoever is at left will yield the sidewalk, unless they belong to different castes, in which case the person of color will yield to the white person; the fine is one to three pesos.”) I thank Victor Fowler for facilitating this document via email.
á aquel estado... No hay cosa mas vitupera ble que ver castigar á un esclavo por mano de un niño y sobre todo de una muger (sic)... y aun reprender de continuo y sin miramientos de la humanidad... tan grave falta de urbanidad [debe cuidarse mucho] principalmente cuando tengamos visitas en nuestra casa. (1857:48)

They should treat them with kindness: do not ever give orders with imperious tone or with roughness... [they should] behave with them as we want them to behave with us if disgrace leads us to that state... there is nothing more reprehensible than watching a child and especially a woman punish a slave... or continuously reprehend them... without observing humanitarianism... such severe lack of urbanity [should be especially avoided] especially when visitors are in our home.

These writings from an exemplary ideologue of urbanity as De La Torre should be read in the context of the popularization of costumbrismo at mid 19th century (see Chapter 4). From this perspective, two emergent, collective subjectivities were being constructed in parallel. On the one hand, the “subjects of urbanity” envisioned as white bourgeois, urban middle classes, were crafting themselves up through education and conduct manuals like De La Torre’s Reglas de Urbanidad. On the other hand, the members of this emergent bourgeois middle class constructed the “subjects/objects of costumbrismo” through print literature in newspapers, novels, visual artwork and after the 1850’s, significantly through vernacular or bufo theater. Costumbrismo’s primordial subjects were poor, lower class working whites, the emergent colored bourgeois as well as black and predominantly urban slaves. Framed within an oppositional discursive scheme, the marginal subjects of costumbrismo were constructed as symbolically central to the bourgeois imaginary of their own class’ subjectivity (Stallybrass and White 1986). In other words, this developing “popular class” and its respective “popular culture” were the antitheses in discourse of the emergent white creole bourgeois class and culture.

These two simultaneous projects—the construction of the Other as a necessary project to imagine the Self—from part of same cultural endeavor: creole elites’ project of national imagining. Theirs was a fundamentally pedagogical endeavor to educate the developing idealized bourgeois class about how to behave, how to see and how to feel (about and for) the evolving “popular” Others. In this context, costumbrismo and urbanity were two key pedagogic and disciplinary technologies whereby standardized performative repertoires of difference and distinction were hegemonized in an imagined multifaceted (affective, representational and practical) national space.
Print literature in the form of educational textbooks and newspapers, as well as visual and performed artistic expressions, like painting and theater were an important medium in this endeavor. In his classic essay *Notes on deconstructing “the popular”* Stuart Hall provides a framework to understand how cultural technologies of the press worked together with other established institutions like the educational system, the church and the family, as instruments for the (re)production and hegemonization of a dominant culture. Using their power to influence dominated “masses”—the collective receptors of cultural messages—dominant institutions affect systems of perception and feeling to produce and sustain a cultural hegemony.

These institutions conform what he purports “cultural industries” working to establish and legitimize a set of selected and repeated representations of the dominant culture as a particular ideal. “Cultural bureaucracies” managed by a select circle in the elite, concentrate the power and the means to reproduce cultural, aesthetic and moral values and standards. Although this framework is conducive to think of “high” dominant culture and the “low” popular culture as oppositional categories, Hall warns there is no whole, authentic, or autonomous “popular culture” which lies outside the field of force of the relations of cultural power and domination where cultural values and standards are negotiated. Rather than as a mutually exclusive and self-reliant or autonomous, popular culture is better understood in a dialogic and mutually informing framework that recognizes the dynamic orientations of cultural influence and symbolic reference (Hall 2005: 477). As discussed in relation to processes of mimicry and transculturation in Chapter 6, the “high” and the “low” inform each other in multi-directional ways, revealing the symbolic and material dependency of the “high” on the “low” as well as the “low’s” self-conscious appropriation and re-signification of the forms of the “high” (Stallybrass and White 1986).

As subjects of reception of the cultural messages of the dominant cultural industry “the people” (which Hall and other postcolonial theorists associate with subaltern classes) are not “cultural fools,” that is, lacking consciousness or discernment capacity about the pretense of manipulation. Neither are they fully conscious of the ways in which representations affect their own self-perceptions. Rather cultural domination is effected by “occupying and adapting the interior contradictions of feeling and perception in the dominated classes” (1998: 447). In other words, hegemony is produced by the legitimation of standards of value as common sense.

For his part, in *The location of culture*, Homi Bhabha conceptualized “the people” as a
cultural construct that is central to the production of the nation as a historical narrative. Bhabha proposes to read “the people” as a complex “pedagogical” rhetorical strategy through which subaltern classes are created as homogenized objects of a spatialized nationalist discourse. “The people” are constructed through certain “language of culture and community” that is grounded in geographical space. As such, Bhabha views the modern nation as spatial expression of a unitary people (1994a).

Finally, both Bhabha and Stuart Hall have discussed the complex mechanisms of representation by which the very idea of “the people” and the subjects it purports to represent become homogenized and objectified creating in the process a wide spectrum of stereotyped representations of the “Other”. Moreover, there is a representational economy where the objectified images of the Other are made into, consumed and exchanged as cultural commodities in the capitalist cultural mass market that cultural technologies of the press helped crave. As popular culture enters the circuits of power and capital, observes Hall, it becomes the scene, par excellence of commodification.

Using this conceptual framework to interpret Cuban nation building in the first half of the Cuban 19th century, “the people”, popular culture and the nation emerged as key constructs for Cuba’s creole intellectual leaders to open an indispensable cultural hegemonic space to legitimize their embryonic national cultural project. However, at this point, the idea of “the people” was far from absolutely defined or localized in a particular class, ethnic or racial group. Rather, in the early 19th century creole elites were constructing themselves as the subjects of the emerging ideal citizenry in relationship to a range of “Others”. In doing so they used blacks, “Indians” and women as rhetorical avenues to channel their project of cultural hegemonization of bourgeois culture as a national standard of the “high” vs. the “low”. In their own distinctive ways, these subaltern subjects served as symbolic referentials of bourgeois creoles’ normative subjectivity. One way to do this was to frame their images and their bodies as commodities to be commercialized and consumed in an embryonic local and global cultural mass market.

*Consuming blackness*

The commodification of blacks and *mulata/os* was quite evident during the period of the sugar boom in the early to mid 19th century. A surplus of capital from sugar sales flowed into urban development projects around which emergent white creole bourgeoisie defined their status
and identity. As this happened, a surplus of free and enslaved predominantly black labor built this modernized city and sustained its functioning through a wide range of urban services such as tailoring, construction, music, and all kinds of domestic services. While the labor of subaltern subjects was indispensable to the kind of sociality built around modernized Havana, the terms of their belonging in the creole elite’s project of national community growing out of this sociality was not yet resolved.

In particular, people of African descent were not at this time (at least before the 1860’s) part of this ideal. Far from being embraced as subjects, the representational technology of national imagining that was costumbrismo (Lane 2006) made them into objects of a proto-nationalist narrative that circulated in a growing market for cultural products of blackness. Particularly valued in this emergent market were black women and especially *mulatas*. Their stereotyped depictions in Cuban cigar boxes marketed globally by the thriving Cuban cigar industry were exemplary of the 19th century commodification of blackness. Similarly Chapter 7 discussed how images of both black and white working classes were globally commercialized in travel literature, especially at midcentury.

In the second half of the 19th century costumbrismo makes a shift from a primarily textual representational technology through print literature, to a performed and staged representational technology through *bufo* theater. In addition to the stereotypes of blackness dragged from early 19th century costumbrismo, *bufo* brought to the public theatrical stage the idea of mestizaje in its earliest form. *Bufos* created the space to imagine the Cuban “people” and a Cuban identity as made up by a compound of diverse, stereotyped Cuban marginal figures: the black man, the *gallego* (a poor immigrant from Galicia, Spain) and the *mulata*. The *bufos* also brought up stage distinctively Cuban mixed music and dance forms created from the fusion of African and Spanish traditions including *rumba*, *guaracha* and *danzón*. The form of speech of black folk, in the form of parody and satire were also key elements of the *bufo* entertainment repertoire. Even though comedy, parody and satire were the form that these narratives took onstage, historian Laurie Frederik has argued, “their long term effect was to ‘publicize’ and thus ‘popularize’ the non-white character of authentic cubanidad” (Frederik 1998). Thus, the realistic aesthetic that defined costumbrista accounts, focusing on the quotidian and the marginalized had a performative effect in constructing these figures eventually into national subjects. While continuing to be objectified as cultural entertainment objects in vernacular theater during the
1860’s and onward, the actual interpellation of blacks as potential citizen-subjects of the national project only came with the consolidation of independence movements in the 1860’s and onwards, as I discuss in forthcoming sections.

In fact, during the first half of the 19th century Del Monte and his generation could only imagine a white, not a mixed or worse, a black nation. Their most important recourse to whiten this imaginary was their own creative construction of a white-like mythical past. As Bhabha put it, the “the people” in the nation building project must “erase any prior or originary presence of the nation-people…to demonstrate [their] contemporaneity” and simultaneously gain authority from a “pre-given or constituted historical origin in the past” (Bhabha 1994). In the first half of the 19th century Cuban creoles founded a fictional narrative about “origins” through the invention of a collective memory and history: a tradition. As historian Aguilera Manzano notes, this invention of tradition was a necessary discursive and affective anchor for creole elites to secure “a past in the present’s future,” or a past in the national imaginary (Aguilera Manzano 2007).

Constructing origins, inventing tradition

For this aim, creole elites used the space of literature and the urban space to build a mythical tradition of their own, localized, culturally and racially specific origins. In novels and poetry pieces, Del Monte’s literary school used pastoral and cultural elements of the local environment coated with patriotic value and configured as symbols of a distinctive and proper to-be-Cuban identity. The very Caribbean ceiba tree, the sea, the cane-cutting machete, and cultural practices such as dance balls theatrical and musical works consumed by the planter oligarchy and even a collection of colloquial language forms in the form of a Dictionary147 were offered as elements of this proper culture distinct from Spanish forms and those of lower classes.

Simultaneously, costumbrismo rescued the lives of the decimated native indigenous inhabitants during colonial settlement as key symbols of a whitened mythical tradition of origins. One example was the construction of the fountain-sculpture of an Indian woman known as

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147 The writing of a dictionary with the characteristic words of Havana and the island that did not exist in the Peninsula or words that had a different meaning in Cuba was a project started in 1830 by initiative of the Commission of Literature which was part of the project to open an Academy of Literature to channel the literary-identity project led by Del Monte, Saco and their circle at the time. The dictionary was intended to complement the Diccionario de la Real Academia de la Lengua (Dictionary of the Royal Academy of the Language) (Aguilar Manzano 2009: 73).
“Fuente de la India” by commission of the rich creole planter and city intendant Count of Villanueva during his political battle with the Governor Tacón over symbolic preeminence in the city space. The fountain was positioned turning her back on the most important of the four doors protecting the military field, the door of “Tacón.” The figure of the female Indian captures the broader spirit of revival of an indigenous aesthetic led by costumbrismo. The figure bears one on each hand a horn with fruits and Havana’s coat of arms as symbols of Cuba’s natural abundance and the patriotic sentiment (Figure 22). The statue is meant to be an allegory of the city and the nation’s origins bearing the legend of the Indian woman named Habana, the wife of the Indian chief Habaguanex, ruler of the region before the arrival of Columbus.

The efforts to “creolize” urban space through the stamping of myths and legends had a counterpart in efforts to locate tradition in cultural practices. For instance, creole writers created a myth locating the festivities of San Juan in Puerto Principe, or duck fights in Güiness in the carnival celebration dating from the arrival of the first white Spanish settlers in the city (De la Palma in Aguilera 2007: 142). In erasing blacks and pointing towards Indians and white Spaniards as their racial and cultural ancestors, creole intellectuals “dignified” their origins. Del Monte and his group are responsible for the invention of “lo criollo” a measure of authenticity
built through the upholding of a fabricated narrative of local values and traditions rooted in primitivized symbols of culture and environment. While this narrative erased African cultural and racial heritage from its made-up tradition and national imaginary, a fabricated white creole tradition and mythical “Indian” symbols served to whiten it.

Polishing the bourgeois self

As *costumbristas* strove to frame white normative subjects as cultural models in the scope of their project of moral education and cultural imagining, they engaged in a decided critique of members of their own class. *Costumbrista* literary narratives emphasized a set of “defects” of the *criollo* lifestyle and character including lavishness and pretentiousness as measures of their ambition as emergent bourgeoisies; idleness or a lack of interest for work as a vestige of Spanish ethic represented in the figure of the Spanish “hidalgo” (discussed in Chapter 2). Leading creole intellectuals like José Antonio Saco saw different kinds of “social evils” rooted in the immorality of the slavery system in Cuba projecting onto the whole of Cuban society. For Saco, gambling and permissive sexual behavior were byproducts of slavery. Saco and Del Monte developed these critiques alongside their denunciations of the immorality of the slave trade on humanitarian grounds echoing anti-slavery trends current in Europe at the time. Their critiques to the beneficiaries of the slavery system condemned the privilege that came at expense of death and exploitation. Anti-slavery was an explicitly political matter in Del Monte’s school making their writings targets of state censorship and persecution. Opposition to slavery was nonetheless convenient from the perspective of the racial component of their identity project rooted on the ideal of an eventually whitened nation.

Through these critiques creole intellectuals polished the bourgeois cultural ideal and its defining values of charity, humanitarianism, restraint, and modesty. They went even further, setting white, bourgeois creoles as models of a particular “high” cultural standard or aesthetic. As Chapter 6 demonstrated, white creoles “set the tone” in dress fashion which their “mimics,” (i.e. middle class whites and bourgeois free blacks and *mulatos*) followed as they strove a place in Havana’s field of distinction. In addition to being constructed as cultural models, in the context of the thriving consumer culture fostered by the emergent urban lifestyle and dynamism, white creoles produced themselves as model cultural capitalist consumers.

As such, creole elites created a demand for commodified blacks and mythical “Indians”
commercialized in the growing cultural market for print literature and art products, including lithographs, paintings, novels, poetry or travel literature. The meanings of “popular culture” in the context of the first half of the 19th century differ from the Gramscian interpretation of “popular culture” discussed by cultural studies scholars like Stuart Hall (1994) and Néstor García Canclini (1987).\footnote{In Canclini’s historization of the idea of “the popular,” costumbrismo would fit under an early expression of the Latin American realistic and positivist tendencies of what was deemed “folklore,” which he defines as “that collectionist and descriptive passion for the exotic” (Canclini 1987). He notes, in Latin America, folklore studies were tied to the formation of a national consciousness, which served to define the place of the popular classes in the national project. In the case of Cuba, the work of Fernando Ortiz in the early 20th century fits into Canclini’s periodization of folklore studies for Latin America.} Within this framework “the popular” is defined according to the position it constructs \textit{vis à vis} “the hegemonic.” As such, popular culture is defined as the complex set preferences and aesthetic dispositions of marginalized classes \textit{vis à vis} a mainstream dominant culture controlling the mass media of representations. Alternatively, the kinds of “ethnic” cultural products that costumbrismo “popularized” in 19th century Cuba were not “popular” because their subjects/objects were marginal subjects or because they reflected their particular aesthetic. Like in the case of Italian Opera (discussed in Chapter 5), costumbrismo’s “popularity” was defined in terms of their acceptability and preference among dominant classes, particularly literate middle and upper class creoles. White Cuban bourgeoisies, not blacks or least inexistent “Indians,” were consumers of trendy modern “ethnic” cultural products.

\textit{Consuming women}

From a gender perspective, if white male creoles were the normative consumer subjects and ideal to-be-citizens by definition, white creole women were invited to join them in a dual role as consumers and objects of consumption of culturalized literary narratives. More so than blackness, white femininity and domesticity became an avenue and strategic front to channel Del Monte and Co.’s political project of cultural identity (Montero 2012, Aguilera Manzano 2007). Writings about “womanly issues” in periodicals explicitly addressing white female audiences concealed their political intentions. The journal \textit{La Moda o el Recreo Semanal del Bello Sexo}, epitomized Del Monte’s concerted strategy to instrumentalize de-politicized bodies of women and/in literary narratives as the grammar that communicated the “manly” political project of nation building.

Del Monte founded \textit{La Moda} in 1829 upon his return from his networking trip to Europe
and the United States with a concerted plan and a method to achieve it. The plan was to spread his cultural identity project throughout the island using romantic literature as the avenue (Aguilera Manzano 2007). Therefore, beyond its significance as a disciplining tool to crave bourgeois femininity, the historical significance of La Moda was explicitly political.

According to historian Susana Montero (2012) La Moda was one of many similar publications since 1811 whose objective was to teach women their place in a relation of dependency and subordination to men, in their roles and duties as wives, mothers and in Carole Pateman’s words “guardians of morality” (Pateman 1980). These publications read as manuals of instruction of white feminine bourgeois virtues of morality, sexual purity and abnegation. Besides moralistic “sermons,” contents included poems, anecdotes, short stories all of which were considered “light” and “innocent” reading appropriate for “decent” women.

According to Montero, La Moda presents a less restrained, more dare and objectified image of women to be marketed along with the embodied material culture (dresses, shoes, carriages) in the emergent consumer cultural market of early 19th century Havana. Thus, commodification was historically white women’s perhaps earliest door of entry into a developing bourgeois public sphere. Some of La Moda’s first issues included a weekly episode about an elegant Havanian family presented as a paradigm cultural ideal: young, white, heterosexual and bourgeois. The novelist Cirilo Villaverde provided a clue of the dynamics of consumption of these kinds of periodicals in a scene describing the office and living room of the mansion of the Gamboa family. Only two magazines –La Moda and El Regañón sit on the office couch and two oil portraits of Don Cándido and Doña Rosa Gamboa by the mulato Vicente Escobar y Flores hang on the living room wall (Villaverde 2010: 70).

Indeed, the purpose of La Moda was explicitly commercial. It was the place to find the latest Parisian fashions alongside fragments of the latest literary works by European writers, or announcements of the latest arrivals at upscale local fashion stores. In many articles, white female consumers of La Moda were reminded of their role as objects of pleasure of men “A la muger [sic] se le dió belleza con el fin de agradar al hombre…” (La Moda 1840, Issue 4 in Montero 2012). The selection of readings and even of music sheets published in the journal spoke to the authors’ agenda to censor the limits of female respectability. Alejo Carpentier reported that only 2 types of local music genres were considered acceptable for La Moda’s “decent” female readers: the contradanza and the song (Carpentier 2001). On the contrary
danzas and danzones were reproached in the moralizing narratives about white female respectability in 19th century Cuban literature.

Covered under this clearly commercial, morally pedagogic and gender-audience-selective purpose of La Moda was Del Monte’s explicitly political objective. As opposed to the empiricist philosophy of his colleagues Saco and Luz y Caballero, Del Monte espoused what Aguilera Manzano deems a “spiritualist” tendency whereby Del Monte envisioned the formation of cultural identity through literature and especially poetry. Those primitivized, domesticized and culturalized images of Cuba’s natural landscape, industries (tobacco, sugar) and people (Indians and whites) appeared in verse form in La Moda and other publications of the early 1830’s. Interestingly, his bet for poetry as an avenue for identity formation was an inclusive one. Poetry offered a wider audience reach because verses “are the easiest expression to read” (Del Monte in Aguilera Manzano 2007). After 1832, Del Monte continued to pursue his endeavor in a new journal entitled Revista Bimestre Cubana along with José Antonio Saco. Revista Bimestre Cubana shifted from the literary strategy used in La Moda towards riskier and explicitly political matters dealing with denunciations of slavery and criticism to colonial rule. Saco’s Memoria sobre la Vagancia (Memoir on Vagrancy) was published in the first number of the Revista, a publication that paved his way to escalating confrontations with the colonial government and eventually to his exile.

Thus, in addition to being offered entry to the emerging capitalist consumer sociality as consumers and objects of consumption, Del Monte’s project rusticly constructed women as citizen-subjects of the future nation by interpellating them as quintessential poetry-readers. Throughout the 19th century, the debate over women’s education was at the forefront of creole social reformists’ discussions. By the end of the century, a consensus over the need for women’s education was reached and advocated for, but the terms of this education were that it remained limited to traditional gender roles and to the domestic space (Vinat de la Mata 2005). Overall, as Montero reports about La Moda’s articles, women’s intellectual capacity was underestimated and their questioning of authority was sanctioned. Hailing white women as readers of “easy” poetry and banal or unimportant “womanly” subjects like romantic novels, flowers, birds, nature, and other purely domestic matters was to admit them as part of the less deserving, second class “people” / citizens of the future nation.

Outside of this gendered imaginary of “the people” laid those subjects whose place in the
future nation had not been assigned. Those sexualized and racialized, ‘low’ marginal subjects were the matter of the continuous anxiety of white elites from the time of Del Monte until the verge of Cuban independence at late century. The frequent notes of warning by Cuban authors evidences the reach of these anxieties through the complex politics of class and gender at play in the production and consumption of costumbrista literature at the time. In the prologue to his second edition of Cecilia Valdés, Villaverde acknowledges having polished earlier versions of the novel; by editing those scenes and phrases of “doubtful or scarce morality” with advise from his wife (Villaverde [1882] 2010). Some years after Villaverde’s second edition of Cecilia Valdés in 1882, the medical doctor Benjamín de Céspedes directed a similar apologetic note of warning to respectable ladies at the outset of his account on prostitution in Havana, “I request… as a Cuban writer, that our honest women do not read these sad and shameful revelations, or those modest and delicate characters, who are scarcely familiarized with these kinds of readings” (Céspedes 1888: xiii).

As Stallybrass and White have noted, contagion and contamination became tropes through which the city and its “others” where consumed in popular writings. In such reified form, marginal subjects were physically brought inside the safe and neat confines of bourgeois homes. Writers contributed to a labor of regulation that brought low “Others” closer to respectable, domestic domains while keeping them out of reach, and with this, all the disgusting sensory experience that came with these proximities (Stallybrass and White 1986: 277).

**Print or performative, staged or quotidian public spheres?**

The previous section identified costumbrismo and urbanity as two major representational technologies used by the creole intellectual and political elite to create a normative model of national culture. I also discussed the complex negotiations playing out as the designers of normativity defined who and in what terms could take part in their own bourgeois version of a national imagined community. The print press, the educational system and literature were key instruments of a developing industrial cultural complex managed by creole elites to establish bourgeois normativity as cultural hegemony at national scale.

Following Stuart Hall and Homi Bhabha’s conceptual framework to understand the modes of operation of cultural hegemony, there are pedagogical and performative dimensions involved in this process. Hall notes, “Cultural industries have the effective power of constantly
adapting and reconfiguring what they represent; and, by means of the repetition and selection, impose and implement those definitions of ourselves that more easily adjust the descriptions of the dominant or preferred culture” (emphasis added, Hall 1998: 447). Thus there is an element of modeling [“descriptions of the dominant culture’’] which is pedagogic, and an element of repeating [“repetition and selection’’] which is performatively, following Butler’s definition of (gender) performativity as “a stylized repetition of acts” (Butler 1999). Similarly Bhabha observes, “In the production of the nation as narration there is a split between the continuist, accumulative temporality of the pedagogical, and the repetitious, recursive strategy of the performative. It is through this process of splitting that the conceptual ambivalence of modern society becomes the site of writing the nation” (Bhabha 1994). Following this framework, both modes of operation—pedagogy and performativity—were working synergistically to create a discursive space for a normative bourgeois hegemony through print technologies of representation in 19th century Havana.

In fact, during the first half of the 19th century, costumbristas and urbanity pedagogues relied on textual instruments to push forth their model including print literature, periodicals, and educational textbooks rather than performance-based instruments like theater. On the contrary, their successors in the second half of the 19th century, bufo playwrights, shifted to performance-based cultural technologies to communicate their anti-colonial, and more definitively nationalist cultural political project.

In her important book Blackface Cuba, 1840-1895 Jill Lane argued that performance became a crucial alternative technology for white creole intellectuals mobilizing an anticolonial subjectivity with respect to that offered by print culture or print capitalism. The latter two, Lane argues, are key technologies within Habermasian conceptualizations of the public sphere and Benedict Anderson’s concept of the nation. In both models, the privileged and normative male, heterosexual, white and literate subject is incorporated to the national/public body through the act of reading (Lane 2007; 2005).

Bufo playwrights were part of the corporation of creole intellectual elites seeking to create an alternative space for critique and construction of a refashioned model of “embodied subjectivity” through the public theatrical stage. Performance practices like theater served as alternatives to print models largely used by creoles and censored by Spanish colonial rule during the first half of the century. Simultaneously, in response to their exclusion from the peninsular
“public sphere” of colonial citizenship, black upper class educated intellectuals created their own public sphere in the form of print and performance-based cultural instruments and events. Elite “veladas” or soirées organized by black intellectual leaders during the 1880’s and early 1890’s included theater oratory, theatrical, music and dance performances. These spaces and the compound of instruments or as Lane calls them “literate performance media,” were the means black political leaders used to attempt entry into a white dominated literate public sphere.

Jill Lane’s work offers perhaps the best critical analysis in the scholarship on Cuba’s cultural history to understand the role of performance and performativity for the development of distinctively Cuban public spheres in the nation-building process. Her masterful engagement with a wide range of theoretical lines of inquiry cuts across disciplinary boundaries of anthropology, performance studies, history and literature. In spite of these important interventions, Lane’s formation in the field of performance studies is revealed in her particular understanding of performance and performativity limited to staged cultural processes. By focusing on what happens on the theatrical stage, Lane also de-materializes the public sphere, disregarding the specifically physical, political economic and topographic conditions of production of these discourses (Stallybrass and White 1986).

Lane understands the public sphere in terms of citizenship, a measure of inclusion in a politically structured and geographically bounded community. By exploring the parallel between Habermas and Anderson’s concepts of nation and public sphere respectively, Lane develops an analysis that sees the public sphere as the symbolic microcosm of the nation, or a site for measuring inclusion. As such Lane conceives the public sphere simply as a discursive site. The materiality of the public sphere is disregarded. With it, Lane also fails to acknowledge that the delineation of cultural and national boundaries also happens beyond the theatrical stage. For Lane, theater is a discursive stage and a site for performance as drama where subjectivities are represented or impersonated, rather than a public space of performativity where those subjectivities and the power relations where they operate are interpreted, negotiated and enacted. Stallybrass and White have insisted that the public sphere is also a public space, a spatially configured site of production of discourse through social interaction. This definition moves beyond an understanding of the public sphere as an abstract site of circulation of ideas and ideologies about social inclusion or democratization. Viewed from this perspective, the operation of the performative modality of cultural hegemonization through the bourgeois public sphere
started much earlier than the 1860’s with the popularization of *bufo* theater, when Jill Lane sets her analysis. As discussed in the previous section, *tertulias* as part of the broader map of quotidian normative routine spaces and practices were novel sites for the construction of national, normative cultural models and subjects. These quotidian spaces offered a structure to produce and reproduce a specific kind of cultural model within constructed boundaries of difference and privilege.

Jill Lane provided a broad approximation to the study the staging or public representation as performance of a developing, distinctively Cuban “whole way of life” (Williams 2010 [1958]). Lane provided the context to understand the reenactment in the theatrical stage of everyday cultural expressions like dance, music, language and dress within gender, race and national politics. Through her masterful critical analysis of *costumbrismo* she discussed the socio-cultural significance and construction of these expressions by *bufo* playwrights. In spite of her efforts to culturally and discursively localize the study of theater in 19th century society, Lane seems to have sought for performance manifestations and expressions in staged and calculated venues as opposed to those occurring in the quotidian and improvised milieu of Havana’s everyday life (Manalansan 2001).

Using Lane’s framework, where could such a text as De La Torre’s *Nuevo Tratado de Urbanidad, Buenas Maneras y Etiqueta* be situated? Does it fall under the set of printed texts whose dissemination under a rising capitalist consumer culture facilitated the construction of a collective awareness of Cuba as a nation (Anderson 1983)? Was this text part of the set of discourses and discursive sites being assembled in the nascent and heavily regulated Cuban public sphere (Stallybrass and White 1986, Habermas 1989)? As such, was De La Torre’s text an example of a performative *or* (not *and*) a print technology shaping the emerging national consciousness through the Cuban public sphere? Using Lane’s words, does this text form part of the textual *or* a theatrical imagination through which the social body as a collective imaginary was produced?

I argue that De La Torre’s text challenges the separation between a textual and a performative production of measures of social inclusivity represented in the concepts of the public sphere and the nation. Urbanity, like *costumbrismo* (the tradition that gave birth to *bufo* theater), oscillated between the textual and the performative because its textual narratives were essentially performative-oriented. Instructions and prescriptions provided in the manuals
intended to be explicitly followed and enacted in specific settings, at specific times, on certain pre-determined and structured social situations. Indeed, costumbristas and urbanity pedagogues’ had a common locus of scrutiny and of subject construction in the everyday. Their objects of classification were the manners of “the people” ordered into culturalized “types” according to their ways of doing, of living, of speaking, of dressing, and of occupying space. As such, both costumbrista and urbanity authors conveyed a profound simultaneously spatialized and performative sense for elaborating models and critiques of normative subjects and their discursive counterparts in marginal subjects.

Furthermore, manuals of urbanity and costumbrista narratives provide the necessary reference schema to deconstruct the concerted 19th century bourgeois project of construction and “distribution of normativity.” (Fowler 2012) As artists and educators members of a corporation (the Sociedad), costumbristas and urbanity pedagogues worked synergistically to produce the bourgeois white heteronormative subject as the iconic model citizen-subject of the future nation. Urbanity’s explicitly pedagogical format instructed on the ways to be proper by stating must-do rules and norms to the future models—middle class, school-age children. At the other end, costumbrismo’s use of satire, stereotipation and moral censorship framed the necessary antithesis of the normative subject though afro and woman-centric narratives and images of marginal subjects.

Therefore, the study of Manuals of Urbanity provides an opportunity to expand Lane’s valuable framework of performance and performativity to the dimension of the ordinary that plays out outside of the 19th century theatrical stage. In a way, reading a manual of urbanity like De La Torre is like reading a play manuscript of the kind Jill Lane profusely analyzed in her book. In both types of cultural texts, characters are defined, roles are prescribed, scripts are written, settings and situations are set, and times are observed. As cultural historians, we can only imagine how actors actually performed the play in everyday life or in the theatrical stage. Our role is to provide the necessary socio-historical and discursive context to interpret these as ethnographic texts. In doing so we are not only getting closer to picturing these historical enactments as they might have actually happened but also contributing to understand the complex negotiations of power that informed those social dramatizations. The metaphor of drama to which urbanity thinkers like De La Torre resorted is all the more relevant to see the analogy between everyday and staged enactments of social life. For De La Torre, urbanity was
nothing else than a dramatization of everyday life working as a symbolic field to order and
distribute power and privilege across quotidian maps of space and time (see Chapter 6).

Therefore, like bufo performances, books of conduct had an affective structuring power
as textual, pedagogic and performative mechanisms of collective mobilization around an
imaginary community in process of becoming a nation. Like teatro bufo and costumbrismo,
books of conduct and education were practical, experiential and performative pedagogies as well
as discursive and affective sites for envisioning this national community. Costumbrismo and
urbanity created imaginaries that encouraged and supposed the enactment of social scripts on a
multi-dimensional performative stage of literature, drama, educational settings, and other spaces
of everyday living, feeling and social interaction.

As a school textbook directed to children, the text is essentially pedagogic. Underneath
the long title there is a note indicating it is among the textbooks destined to teach reading skills
("De los libros destinados á la enseñanza de la lectura"). The format follows a question-answer
narrative classified and numerically under general themes or topics. For each question there is a
right answer, which ought to be mechanically memorized and gradually internalized and
normalized through repetition. The interlocutor “teacher” asks the students (the children), to
respond to each question conveying a basic principle, often through an example about an
imaginary but realistic, historically and temporally specific local setting and situation: the table,
the promenade, the living room, the dormitory, the dance hall, the theater, at night, in the
evening, in the morning, during visit time, during leisure time, etc. De La Torre’s selection of
situations and venues is a good approximation to the broad map of quotidian pedagogical
techniques and technologies for national imagining. The national normative subjects and bodies
were shaped through the observance of everyday rules of “Personal Cleanliness and Cleaning”
(Del Aseo y la Limpieza, p. 4), “Conversations” during “Concurrences” or Home Visits (p. 7,
19), “Obligations with Family” and “Superiors” and adequate comportment between men and
women (50, 49, 47) containment of “Irregular Actions” and emotions (p. 13) during “Games”,
showing of “Courtesy” and “Etiquette,” in a range of venues and situations including “Letter
etiquette” (De las Cartas, 54) Dress etiquette, (De los Trages [sic], 58) at the “Church” (28), the
“Theater” (29), the “Promenade,” (36) at public and private “Dance balls” (31) “Music” (34)
performances, during “Travel,” (35) and “At the table” (39).
One of the last sections of De La Torre’s textbook is entitled “Rules for serving a dinner of high esteem, that is, extraordinary” (“Reglas para la disposición de una comida de consideración ó sea extraordinaria [sic]”). Here the author wrote a lesson of gourmet catering for a high-class full, five course banquet. In a footnote at the end of this section, De La Torre provides one of the most suggestive of several spare and sublte affective gestures of nationalism that appear throughout his text. The long footnote is a rather creative and bald way of expressing and promoting patriotic sentiment, a radical project for which his De La Torre’s predecessors had faced persecution and exile,

El autor de esta obrita recomienda á (sic) los padres de familia que procuren emplear para la comida de sus hijos juegos de loza con paisages (sic) históricos, sobre todo si los encuentran de historia sagrada ó nacional. ¡Ojalá alguno los enviase á (sic) hacer con cartas geográficas ó paisajes históricos relativos á esta Isla!—Como objeto de curiosidad y de utilidad para los niños, ha construido el mismo un ferro-carril muy ligero, que colocado sobre la mesa de convite, luego que se levante el servicio de los postres, sirve para conducir por medio de un tren impulsado por un locomotor de cuerda, los palitos de dientes, los tabacos y los cigarros al frente de cada convidado, y ha construido también por el mismo sistema de cuerda, y para el mismo objeto un gracioso buque de vapor que se mueve sobre un mar, pasando igualmente por el frente de cada asistente á (sic) la mesa. El humo de las chimeneas es de pebete de que están rellenas, perfumándose así á la vez el local. (1857: 53)

The author of this text recommends parents to use china dinner sets with historic sceneries to serve their children’s food, especially if they find them with themes of sacred or national history ¡I wish someone would order them upon request with geographical maps or historical sceneries relative to this Island!—As an object of curiosity and utility for children, the author of this text has built a very light railway, which upon being placed over the dining table, after the dessert course has been removed, is used to conduct toothpicks, cigars and tobacco sticks through a train driven by a clockwork locomotive, bringing them to each guest; and [the author has] also built by the same mechanism and purpose a gracious steam vessel that moves over a sea, similarly coming in front of each guest at the table. The smoke of the chimney comes from the joss stick filling, which also perfumes the room.

This fragment exemplifies the dialectic between “the imaginary and the real” which Lane observed for costumbrismo and bufo theater, but goes beyond this dichotomy. Instead, the fragment speaks to the interlocking symbolic, material and affective dimensions at work in the Cuban elites’ project of national imagining. De La Torre is describing some extremely creative didactic techniques for “eating an imaginary” and embodying nationality. Visual and symbolic
elements like the historical sceneries in dining plates and the multi sensorial experience of eating from those plates induces a sense of belonging, as a measure of participation in a geographically bound collective unit.

The table becomes a space to perform order and bodily discipline, and simultaneously a space for play and structured improvisation. In this microcosm of the imagined island-nation, demonstrating “urbanity” is a fun and creative exercise to envision oneself as part of an imagined collective and to learn to love the symbols of that collective. De La Torre’s choice to recreate a steam railway is not accidental. Since 1837, Cubans and foreigners alike took pride on the fact that Cuba had the first steam railway line in Latin America at a time when Spain did not yet have its own. This was more than a nationalist gesture. It was an anti-colonial gesture.

Cigars and tobacco were also important symbols of Cuba’s heritage as tobacco producer and of the customs proper to Cuba. By bringing cigars to the national microcosm of the dining table, the author makes an explicitly national connection between a key commodity in Cuba’s economic “progress” and the everyday practice of smoking, extremely common and acceptable among children in the 19th century. Throughout the text, De La Torre describes specific rules of smoking etiquette for male children in different situations, with the implied out ruling of the practice among girls (See Chapter 7). The rules read as a guide to an ongoing culture of tobacco marking everyday relationships of male homosociality and hierarchy. Children were to avoid smoking in front of their parents as a sign of respect, and during certain familiar (not duty) home visits, smoking was allowed only by initiative of the host. Anyone taking out a cigarette case would offer other men, but not women, and at a distance from them as a sign of respect. Light was requested from the last person to light a cigar (“pedir el fuego o candela”), and the one giving light was not supposed to throw out a cigar or tobacco before smoking again, unless asking for permission to do so. (23, 24) Later, in the early 20th century, Fernando Ortiz would suggest the explicit national and anti-colonial symbolism of tobacco to the Cuban labor movement and to Cuba’s struggle for independence. For Ortiz, the “liberated” tobacco made a “counterpoint” with the “colonial” sugar, a symbol of slavery and colonial oppression under Spanish rule. Again, De La Torre’s covert intervention under the language of child pedagogy suggests anti-colonial gestures as well as patriotism.

Questions of audience
Costumbrismo and urbanity also shared a common target audience: white urban middle classes. As discussed in Chapters 2 and 5 costumbrismo as an artistic tradition and school of thought created mechanisms to exclude people of color from being artists and professionals in range of fields. The founding of Academies of Literature, Music, Midwifery, and Painting and Drawing among others during the first half of the 19th century on top of the ongoing legislation preventing blacks’ access to education reflected the active mobilization by members of Sociedad to elicitize the arts, education and health care for the white bourgeois normative subject of their imagined nation. We can only wonder how the members of Havana’s colored bourgeoisie felt about costumbristas’ stereotypical representations of members of their own class. However, we do know that they openly embraced the white bourgeois dominant model of morality and culture, very particularly through their valuing of education.

Under the express administration of the Sociedad, education in the first half of the 19th century acquired a very strong moral and cultural not merely instructional function and significance. Public education was a mission entrusted to the Sociedad by the Spanish Crown at the turn of the 19th century. As such, public education became a major avenue through which creole elites’ articulated their particular vision of a distinctively Cuban cultural identity (Childs 1997). To the extent that education was a measure of Cuba’s “civilization,” creole elites used it to channel a program of moral and cultural pedagogy to a racial and gender specific target audience. In the face of the drastic demographic changes in the 19th century and the related “white” anxieties about Cuba’s possible “Africanization”, the Sociedad envisioned the targets of this educational mission to be white people. Matt Childs’ study on education (1800-1860) reported a sharp decrease in access to education of people of color (free elementary students of color dropped from 25% to 5%) as a result of the active measures of the Sociedad to segregate and restrict education for black children. For them, black people could use free public education to their advantage, placing the white establishment at risk.

Simultaneously, schools for white children in general, but very significantly female public schools increased dramatically in the first half of the century. The Sociedad’s emphasis on white female education served to reinforce the racial imaginary of the Cuban nation that the creole bourgeoisie aspired. “An educated lovely sex is a civilized nation” declared the “father” of Cuban liberalism, Félix Varela (1831, in Childs 1997: 99). Thus, Cuba’s civilization was measured not simply by the education of white upper classes in denial of their African heritage,
but more specifically by the education of “their” women in their important symbolic role as mothers and moral teachers of the collective “us” that the Sociedad was building at the time.

Even if excluded from the sphere of white privilege, people of color were still judged by their standards. Therefore, elites of color promoted education as an avenue for the progress and civilization of their community often expressed in terms of “racial progress.” For free people of color, social advancement through education implied distancing from the stage of “backwardness” represented by slavery and blackness in general. At the same time education implied seeking proximity to white bourgeois culture, which gave the measure of what it meant to be educated. Before the Sociedad launched its segregationist measures against education for black people, informal neighborhood, predominantly female teachers of color known as “maestras amigas” were the majority of teachers at public schools in Havana (Childs 1997, Mena 2005). Thus, while the Sociedad prevented the access to institutionalized education to the black community, socialized and informal education was sought after often accessible even to slaves, as the case of the writer Juan Francisco Manzano testifies.

Born as a slave in Matanzas in 1797, Manzano taught himself to read and write surreptitiously to avoid punishment from masters. In 1836, Del Monte purchased his freedom and along with British abolitionists supported the publication of poetry and autobiography, which is considered the only documented account of slavery in the 19th century (Mena 2005). In addition, apprenticeship was an educational modality that became informally institutionalized in Havana since the 18th and into the 19th century. Mutual aid societies also played an important role in supporting people of color’s education and free voluntary instruction to lower income children, both black and white was often available (Chapeaux 1971, Mena 2005). In the second half of the 19th century, and particularly after the abolition of slavery, equal access to education, as an avenue for racial advancement became a key premise of black intellectuals’ struggle for civil rights.

With education playing such an important role for people of color in a white dominated society, it is only expected that they would take advantage of mainstream educational instruments, i.e. manuals of urbanity, textbooks of female education and other didactic materials written for a white middle class readership. A significant reference in costumbrista narratives gives a clue about the reach of De La Torre’s textbooks outside the bounds of his “hailed” middle class, in the venues of informal education available to poor and black children. The
article “Doña Serafina” by the costumbrista writer Juan Francisco Valerio (writing in the 1860’s and 1870’s) mentions the use of De La Torre’s first readers or primers (cartillas) by informal neighborhood teachers. Valerio narrates the quotidian routine of a 50-year-old white widow (as per the prefix “Doña”), who gives private lessons to two negritos (small black children) between ages 5 and 6 at lunchtime. Doña Serafina uses De La Torre’s cartillas to teach them how to read and write, interspersing her spelling lessons with “morality” lessons based on her minute daily neighborhood gossip (Valerio 1985).

Through didactic instruments like De La Torre’s cartillas or his popular manual of urbanity, people of color were getting closer, although not entering, the white literate public sphere. It would be necessary to investigate other non-textual, oral forms of transmission of the premises of urbanity in alternative “communities of interpretation” such as those Marial Iglesias described for news discussions among illiterate population (2003). Texts like De La Torre’s Nuevo Tratado provided a model of morality and culture based on white, bourgeois standards of value. However, the mastery of these values and more broadly of the systems of appreciation, perception and action of the bourgeois cultural model were a better measure of “education” and thus of black people’s “progress and civilization”, than literacy.

In fact, the term “education” was often used as a qualifier of conduct equivalent “good manners” to indicate a measure of civility or propriety. As Chapter 5 demonstrated, good manners were more than just an indicator of conduct, but also an official credential granted by religious and colonial authorities. A certification of good conduct raised the status of any individual, but especially of free people of color as they negotiated a place in the white, middle class public sphere of morality or respectability. The innumerable petitions of marriage licenses reviewed by Verena Stolcke in her important study on interracial marriage make this clear. Two terms often cited jointly, “good conduct and education” could compensate for the lower status of women of color petitioning to marry white (lower class) men. Uneducated white women were also often extraordinarily allowed to marry educated men of color under the same logic of status compensation (Childs 1997, Stolcke 1989). Thus, the meanings of education in 19th century Cuba extended beyond literacy or the possession of knowledge on a specific skill or subject matter. Education was importantly also a marker of moral status informing an individual’s standing of class and privilege. The notion of “mala educación” (bad education) captures this
moral connotation as discursive counterpart of “good manners”, as in the following quote from a prime *costumbrista*,

*El que se propone estudiar las costumbres para intentar corregirlas, buscarlas debe dondequiera que se encuentren, ya en los misteriosos y dorados salones de la opulencia, ya en la modesta morada de los pobres; ora en los actos y en las conversaciones de las personas mal educadas, ora en el buen comportamiento de las gentes de instrucción, y en todas partes debe penetrar la investigadora mirada del escritor de costumbres para hacer salir de todas partes el gusano de la mala educación…*(Luis Victoriano Betancourt 1929, in Bueno 1985: xxiv)

Who sets out to study the customs to attempt to correct them, should find them wherever they may be, either in the mysterious and golden saloons of the opulence, or the modest home of the poor; or in the acts and conversations of the bad educated people, or in the good behavior of the people of instruction, and everywhere the researcher gaze of the writer of customs should penetrate to make the worm of the bad education come out…

Furthermore, although the creole bourgeois model of moral and cultural education was a yardstick applied to all Cubans regardless of race, the returns of education were not the same for white and black people. Far from being rewarded for their efforts to adhere to white moral educational standards, people of color were at the least ridiculed and at worst brutally murdered. The stereotype of the “black professor” elaborated and perfected by *bufó* playwrights, the victimization of the *mulato* writer “Plácido” and the slave Juan Francisco Manzano as many other educated free men of color testify to the contradictory workings of colonial discourse in 19th century Cuban society.

**Cultural Citizenship, Public Spheres and Counterpublics**

The project of construction of Cuban identity started by Del Monte in the first half of the 19th century experienced drastic shifts in the second half of the century. Fears of a black slave rebellion increased as black population in Cuba continued to grow. By midcentury combined free and enslaved people of color outnumbered those self-identified as white. Amidst white elites’ fears about the dangers of a black national insurgency in the image of the Haitian revolution, 1868 saw the outbreak of national insurgency led by a group of small-scale planters frustrated with the colonial administration (Scott 1983). The revolt was the beginning of 30 years of anti-
colonial rebellions in three separate wars ending in 1898 when U.S. military intervention in the Cuban-Spanish armed conflict, marked Cuba’s transition from colony to republic under U.S. domination.

At the outset of the 1868 war, Cuban independence leader, Carlos Manuel de Céspedes freed his slaves and invited them to participate in the anti-colonial struggle not only as soldiers but also in a large number of leadership positions of the revolutionary army. In an unprecedented move in Latin American history, the Cuban liberation army conformed a multi-racial fighting force, not segregated but racially integrated, featuring a majority of soldiers of color. In this spirit of integration, the Cuban revolutionary leaders employed a strong rhetoric of anti-racism to seek support and legitimacy from racially anxious white Cubans (Ferrer 1999). The movement’s principal intellectual leader, José Martí, professed the equality of all races as the foundation of the struggle for liberation against imperial domination. “Cuban” was constructed as an identity category that erased racial divisions. However, for political leaders of Cuban independence, the idea of cubanness diverted from the Latin American association with mestizaje understood as the product of biological and cultural miscegenation between racial groups. Rather, Cuban independence leaders understood cubanness in terms of the interracial fraternity that united blacks and whites in joint (armed) political action against colonial power (Ferrer 1999).

The Cuban revolutionary’s struggle brought as a result the gradual legal elimination of slavery laws since the 1870 until their full abolition in 1886. A series of laws conceding a series of rights to people of color were passed, although not enforced, in the 1880’s including the right to public roads, public transportation, the right to be served in public establishments and the right to marry persons of any race (Ferrer 1999, Stolcke 1989). However, within the discourse of racelessness advocated by Cuban revolutionary leaders, the terms of the citizenship of people of color was still not agreed upon. For the most part, citizenship was associated with freedom from bondage and Cuban independence propagandists publicized the image of a passive black insurgent and citizen to ease white anxieties surrounding imaginaries of blackness and slave-revolts. It was not until the 1880’s with the consolidation of black intellectual and political activism through an expanded sphere of public opinion that the struggle for the enforcement of race-specific civil rights for blacks was advocated. Their activism clashed with the raceless ideology pushed forth by independence leaders’ (black and white alike) claims that talk about
race was unnecessary under the banner of an inclusive and integrated Cuban national imaginary (Ferrer 1999).

In the context of the profound racial negotiations playing out in the 1880’s and 1890’s in Cuba, it is easy to see why discussions about citizenship in the historiography on Cuban nationalism tend to focus on race in their attempt to capture the urgency of the question of equal rights for a recently emancipated black population. In the ongoing political discourse of the late 19th century, the recognition of blacks as equal citizens of the nation was defined to a large extent on their equal political and social rights to those of white citizens. Perhaps for this reason, particularly since the 1990’s historians on Cuban nationalism have stressed the specifically racial aspects—related to racial adscription and representation— and juridical aspects—related to rights as measures of belonging—over other not specifically racial and more generally cultural aspects or terms of inclusion, such as conduct or moral status (De la Fuente 2000).

As I have argued throughout this dissertation, race as an indicator of skin color or phenotype was only one among many other interlocking cultural criteria by which social inclusion or exclusion were negotiated in 19th century society in general and in creole intellectual’s ongoing project of nation-building of the first half of the century in particular. Embodied measures of difference such as good manners or good customs, gender, education, economic status, and other aesthetic and affective capacities combined in different ways to produce different kinds of unequally positioned subjects in a highly stratified society. In particular, in the 1830’s and 1840’s Domingo Del Monte and José Antonio Saco inaugurated deeply culturalist ideologies of nation building upon which the Cuban revolutionaries of the 1860’s, through 1890’s built a renewed, radicalized discourse. The emphasis on racial equality and rights as somehow radical and distinctive premises of the discourses tied to the struggle for independence obscures those aspects that were dragged along from earlier projects of national identity espoused by Saco, Del Monte and others.

To this extent, it is fair to ask in what ways nationalist revolutionary discourses of a raceless Cubanidad maintained the lines and premises of morality and culture, which defined the

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149 In his review of a large set of works published during the 1990’s dealing with race and racism in Cuba, Alejandro de la Fuente explains the sudden burst on the scholarly production on largely disregarded questions of race as a response to Cuba’s economic recession and the resurgence of social inequalities that were said to have been eliminated with the revolution. (De la Fuente 2000) This still does not explain the disregard for questions of culture and cultural practices to understand questions of identity, citizenship and nationalism in Cuba.
earlier nationalist ideologies developed by Del Monte and his generation? What, if anything, did the progressive anti-racist Cuban liberators like Martí, Maceo or máximo Gómez, owe to moralist bourgeois planters and intellectuals of the first half of the century like Félix Varela, Domingo del Monte and José Antonio Saco in terms of their proposal of cultural identity? Here, a quote from Raymond Williams’ classic essay “Culture is Ordinary” sheds some light. In this essay, Williams defines culture as a “whole way of life” as opposed to the elitist interpretation of “culture” as the possession of educated or privileged classes grouped around a set of aesthetic codes of high “taste.” In reflecting upon the meanings and terms of belonging of working classes to an “English culture”, Williams acknowledges “The bourgeoisie has given us much, including a narrow but real system of morality, that is at least better than its court predecessors” (Williams [1958] 2002: 95). Like Williams, I believe Cuban national identity as it has prevailed even to this day owes much to Del Monte and Saco, not only from a socio-political stance but from a moral and cultural stance.

There is in fact continuity in the discourses of Cubanidad throughout the first and second half of the century from the perspective of the white bourgeois normative cultural model set out by Del Monte. This model was refashioned and incorporated into discourses of racially integrated nationality, which became the foundation of the Cuban nation. Del Monte should then, like Maceo, Martí and other Cuban revolutionary thinkers, be granted a status as founding father of a model of Cuban bourgeois morality and culture upon which Cuban revolutionary leaders built their republican project of a liberated Cuban identity. Under the new, presumably radical and progressive racial –or raceless- model of nationality, the moral national identity model built by Del Monte and 300 years of white western hegemony under colonialism was unquestionably embraced and tacitly incorporated into the revolutionary national project.

Furthermore, Del Monte’s cultural identity model served as founding premise and reference standard in black activists’ struggle for racial equality towards the late century. The white-bourgeois heteronormative model became the discursive ground on which an emancipated black community claimed and fought for equal rights from a racial standpoint. In fact, a normative ideal of blackness was being developed as the necessary cultural-symbolic ground on which to evaluate national belonging by middle class black intellectuals and activists for equality and independence during the 1880’s and 1890’s. This distinctive and normative ideal of black citizen-subjectivity had a strong moral and cultural component founded on the capacity of
resemblance to the white-bourgeois dominant ideal. An examination into the discourses of black intellectuals emerging as important figures in the expanded space of public opinion of the late 1880’s illustrates their complex, culturally oriented negotiations for inclusion.

A series of legal and social transformations opened up spaces for political participation in the aftermath of the first two wars of liberation (1868-1878; 1879-1880) and the concomitant movement for slavery abolition. Aiming to secure consent, and create an atmosphere political stability, the colonial government passed a series of laws and decrees since the late 1870’s allowing the conformation of associations, the freedom of reunions and free press (Barcia 1999). Political parties were formed starting in 1878, which along with the proliferation of associations and periodicals created an expanded space for public opinion in general and for the emergence of a distinctively black public sphere in particular. The range of black associations mirrored the social heterogeneity of the black community in the 19th century. Associations grouped Africans and black crioilos (born in Cuba), lower class and middle class, liberal and conservative, educated and uneducated (although the majority of the black population was illiterate) and divided by color. Although African cabildos had been eliminated, they reemerged under the new legal associative modalities. Associations that grouped blacks only, mulatos only and both reflected divisions along color lines in the free community of color. Other associations crossed ethnic and racial boundaries, and usually grouped individuals of lower economic standing (Barcia 1999).

The Directorio Central de las Sociedades de la Raza de Color (Central Directory of the Associations of People of Color) was created in the aftermath of the abolition of slavery to serve as umbrella for associations of people of color. The very idea of a political collective “raza de color” was mobilized those years within the broader movement led by the prominent civil rights leader and advocate for racial equality and Cuban independence, Juan Gualberto Gómez. The Directorio grouped nearly 70 associations of blacks and mulatos seeking the juridical and social equality for people of color. The journals La Fraternidad and La Igualdad directed and written by men represented the views of the Directorio. The journal Minerva: Revista quincenal dedicada a la mujer de color was published by both men and women of color tied to the Directorio although the articles were written by women of color and expressed their views as women.
La Fraternidad and La Igualdad served as two main instruments of political action for black intellectuals struggling for equal rights in the late 19th century. In particular, since 1878, decrees of Education approved the equal access to all levels of instruction, including university education and the Schools of Arts and Crafts regardless of race. Later in 1885, decrees were issued to authorize free entry to people of color to public spaces like parks and other service institutions, like theaters, restaurants, and public transportation. However, these dispositions went largely unfulfilled stirring the protest of directives of El Directorio through their two main public opinion channels. Their voicing of claims to authorities brought fruits years later in 1864 when Captain General Callejas was compelled to issue new dispositions that would ensure equality for blacks in public services and spaces (Barcia 1999).

Besides serving as an important avenue to claim equal rights on racial grounds, periodicals served as a site to promote the way of life of black and mulato middle classes, which emphasized education as the way to achieve “racial advancement” and social mobility (Barcia 1999). Elite black leaders forcefully critiqued the customs and manners of lower class blacks, including what they deemed “backward” dances and ceremonies of African cabildos and condemned the African religious secret societies of ñañigos. Black intellectuals’ descriptions of cabildo public performances in La Fraternidad used expressions like “savage” and “ridiculous.” Echoing the rhetoric of white elites during 200+ years of colonization, progressive black intellectuals’ of the late 19th century protested that cabildos "disturbed the peace of the neighborhood,"

...ninguna razón legal justifica hoy que se consienta a los mismos seguir verificando sus bailes o tangos (...) con menoscabo de nuestra cultura y en perjuicio del reposo del vecindario. (La Fraternidad 1888 in Barcia 1999: 153)

… no legal argument justifies today permitting [cabildos] to continue holding their dances or tangos…in detriment of our culture and damaging the peacefulness of the neighborhood.

As discussed in Chapter 5, the offense to public “tranquility” was an argument long used by colonial authorities to gradually displace cabildo houses and activities to the outskirts of the city. Furthermore, the expression “our culture” situated next to “the peacefulness of the neighborhood” implies a sense of belonging of black elites on grounds of respectability and of a
higher cultural status to the broader respectable (whiter) community of the nation. The suggestive category of the “neighborhood” as a middle class symbol of an imagined collective geographical and social unit enabled a process of identification on cultural and moral grounds, less so than on racial grounds.

For their part, women of color contributors to the journal Minerva specifically delineated the elements of a normative black and feminine cultural ideal rooted on education, marriage and morality as the grounds of their inclusion to the nation. Takkara Brunson’s analysis of several journal numbers (1888 -1899) revealed that elite black women conformed to dominant notions of female domesticity, marriage, sexual integrity and heteronormative family and rewarded these as avenues to morality, racial progress and the “civilization” of black women and of the black community (Minerva 1888 in Brunson 2006). In the image of white elites, the value of black women as citizen-subjects was measured in terms of their successful role as mothers and wives (Brunson 2006). A key tenet in the contributors of Minerva was their emphasis on the moral education of women in their essential role as moral leaders of their family and of the nation’s citizens. This was the same moral authority that authors of manuals of women’s education or “domestic economy” conferred their white middle class female readers (Coronado 1893, Chaple 1856, Costales 1847, Brunson 2006). The author Chaple illustrated this clearly: “La moral es la verdadera ciencia de las mujeres…por cuyo medio pueden influir en la virtud de los hombres” (“Morality is the true science of women… through which they may influence the virtue of men”) (Chaple 1856: 11). In line with the model of moral/cultural citizenship that Del Monte and his peer ideologues of urbanity created, the authors of Minerva proposed to measure racial progress, social advancement and national inclusion in terms of the moral standards of bourgeois heteronormativity.

As much as this developing ideal of black femininity was aligned with dominant ideologies of female domesticity, Minerva’s contributors were forceful critics of stereotypical ideas about women’s intellectual inferiority and black female sexuality. They also spoke against medical and literary narratives associating black bodies with disease, hypersexuality, as well as of black women with prostitution and concubinage. Furthermore, as “Afro-Cubans strove to counter perceptions of racial inferiority” Brunson notes, “the family emerged as a major site for contesting negative stereotypical images of blackness” (Brunson 2006). The coexistence of elements of resistance and normativity in the discourse of elite black women authors of Minerva...
only confirms the contradictory nature of colonial discourse and the incompleteness and incoherence of cultural systems and relations. Different cultural forms, ideologies and standards coexist, challenging all attempts to confine them into monolithic categories or essentialize them as authentic.

Furthermore, as I argue in pervious chapters, respectability as a social-value system was not confined to the limits of domesticity and the “world” of women. Ada Ferrer’s research on black masculinity in late 19th century Cuba provides additional elements to understand the importance of “manners” and sexuality as measures of emergent constructs of Cuban citizenship for black men. Ferrer examined the case the prominent black leader of the Cuban wars of liberation, Quintín Bandera. Bandera was charged in the court-martial in 1897, among others, with offense of “immorality”. The charges focused not only on his military actions but also on his “social behavior, cultural attainments and political style” (Ferrer 1998: 672). His accusers questioned his standing not only as a military officer but also as a “civilized or cultured (culto) patriot.” The charges were based on the allegation that he had been living openly with his lover (“concubine”) during the court-martial, which had kept him from his duties on the military front and endangered the Cuban cause. Quintín Bandera’s lack of emotional, and specifically sexual self-restraint represented a fault to the “norms of civilized manliness” and in doing so “defiled the nation's purity.” Ferrer’s analysis shows a dimension of normative masculinity in the definition of citizenship that went beyond exclusively racial considerations. Embodied and performed qualities of sexual austerity informed gendered constructions of a morally informed model of cultural citizenship.

In his critique of the binary racial model of citizenship in contemporary United States, Renato Rosaldo defined cultural citizenship as “the everyday cultural practices through which Latina/os claim space and the right to be full members of society” (Rosaldo 2012). Similarly, Andrea Queeley defines cultural citizenship as “the alternative and more respectable way of being black” for black Anglophone Caribbean workers arriving in Cuba in the early 20th century. Their understanding of cultural citizenship was grounded on set of shared values including being well-dressed, soft-spoken, respectful and well-mannered (Queeley 2010: 207). Although Ada

150 Queeley’s Anglophone Caribbean interviewees envisioned their identity as distinctive from Afro-Cuban identity by a shared set of values including “being soft-spoken, reserved, well-dressed, respectful….honest, invested in
Ferrer does not use the concept of cultural citizenship, her analysis of late 19th century black masculinity perfectly exemplifies the concept, “Black leaders were acceptable –indeed desirable—but they had to be black leaders of a particular kind. If race was no longer a rigid standard for inclusion—culture, performance, and civility, now appeared to be quite critical” (Ferrer 1998: 677).

Bandera’s case cannot be isolated from the broader historical and cultural context of 19th century development of shared cultural imaginaries and value systems. The discursive structure sustaining the standards of respectability that guided Bandera’s trial was long established and applied in Cuban society in general and white society in particular. As Ferrer explains, Bandera’s sin was not to have had an affair with a woman, but rather to have openly admitted to it to superiors and subalterns alike. In particular, Bandera was presented as the counter-example of another black officer who also was known to have been living with a woman. The officer’s good deed, as opposed to Bandera’s was to have “kept up the appearance that” his union was “legal” (Ferrer 1998: 681). Thus, the same double standards of respectability that ruled white bourgeois society were transposed onto the Cuban revolutionary morality within which the moral standing of Bandera was gauged. Thus, culture and morality were important grounds whereby the inclusion of blacks and whites as equal citizens of the nation was evaluated.

The affirmation of the values and institutions of the dominant class was only expected on the part of people of color working to secure a better if not equal place in an emerging republic born out right out of a slave society. Many of these values and institutions had long become part of the cultural and social universe of blacks with which they willingly or not complied in order to be recognized as subjects in a white dominated colonial society. Cultural and institutional assimilation was a matter of survival in a world that devalued blackness and the African cultural heritage. For instance, throughout the colonial period, baptism and marriage were social requisites to secure social acceptance and recognition by religious and colonial authorities. Therefore, people of color’s material subsistence and their possibilities of social and economic advancement depended largely on their part-taking in the rites of Catholicism functioning as measures of status and respectability in colonial society. As Queeley points out for the case of people of Anglophone Caribbean origin in Cuba, “establishing an ethnic community that education, frugal, independent, religious, organized, well mannered…and proud of being black” (Queeley 2010: 207).
promoted middle class respectability constituted an attempt to create a buffer against… the anti-black racism” (2010: 204) prevalent in Cuban society. Thus, out of necessity or choice, cultural and moral identification was a significant avenue of negotiation of cultural citizenship for blacks and whites alike on the eve of Cuban republicanism.

At the margins of black counterpublics

Print periodicals were not the only alternative public spheres or “counterpublics” available to the emergent black public opinion. In her important book Blackface Cuba, Jill Lane documented venues of sociability of black elites called veladas (soriees) organized by elite black intellectuals at theaters in Havana between 1888-1895, the years after the official abolition of slavery (1865) and leading to the Cuban independence war (1895). Veladas staged long evening of performance including oratory and political activist speeches, poetry declamation, a three act serious drama, original classical music, and hours of social dance involving about 25 performers. Veladas featured the participation of both white and black performers interpreting European “high art” forms, classical European music and related instruments and dramatic format. A speech by prominent white leaders supporters of the cause of racial equality and independence often introduced the event (Lane 2007).

The black veladas largely resembled the schema of Cuban white aristocracy’s artistic and literary soriees or liceos. The Spanish traveler Barras y Prado described the program of the liceo founded by the famous writer Gertrudis Gomez de Avellaneda held in her honor at the Tacón Teater in 1860. The first part included opera pieces, a the performances by internationally renowned New Orleans pianist Louis Moreau Gottschalk. The second part featured a French drama and the third included an anthem, during which the poet was crowned with a golden crown, followed by more poetry and a final speech. The ceremony ended with dancing, which lasted until the next day. De las Barras y Prado noted that liceos and sociedades were among the leisure activities of high society reflecting “the degree of civilization of the country” (De las Barras y Prado 1926).

By hosting their own version of aristocratic sociability venues, black middle and upper classes were claiming a space long denied to them in the nation that emerged. This claim was made, on one hand, in terms of their performances of class distinction at the veladas. According to Lane, black activists proudly hailed veladas as demonstrations of people of color potential for
integration as citizen-subjects based on their skills and appreciation of highly valued cultural expressions. Mastery of European music, dance genres, literature, or public speech were measures of “progress” and “culture” which “dignified” them as a racially bound entity emerging from a slave society. Lane’s account also highlights the opportunity that veladas provided to “mold” proper speech for which blacks had so long been ridiculed particularly in vernacular theater.

In addition, public performance and opinion in black press and black veladas became venues to advocate for a racially integrated Cuban nation and for people of colors’ equal rights into the “public sphere.” With public sphere, black leaders meant historically segregated establishments and institutions including education, admission to so called “public” spaces of sociability and services like theaters, and transportation.

Lane provided a comparative analysis between white-authored and consumed bufo performances and black-organized and attended veladas as key sites for articulation of emergent national sentiment. At both of these sites, Cuba was imagined and made up through performance. She envisions the two as discursive sites of public contestation through staged theatrical performances, bringing forth two radically different projects of Cubanidad. On the one hand, speaking to a predominantly white segregated audience, bufos proposed to experience a new sense of Cubanness through racialized entertainments including danzón, comic skits, and parodied and satired sexual and racialized black characters (“el negrito” and “la mulata”). Veladas on the other hand, took the racially integrated composition of their theatrical audience as a microcosm of their utopian political aspiration of full participation in the nation. Within this frame veladas offered demonstrations of blacks’ skills of mimicry, so long established as colonial discourse’s false promise of inclusion into the “civilized” world of whites.

More broadly, Lane considers the bufo and the velada as two manifestations within different kinds of mutually constitutive public and counterpublic spheres structured around oppositional agendas of race and nationality. In her analysis, she stresses the ideological overlaps of these public and counterpublic spheres. For instance, the public sphere of the bufos’ followed an essentially creole bourgeois white supremacist agenda. However, as they stood in opposition to the colonial establishment, they formed an “anti-colonial public sphere”. For their part, veladas shared with bufos their anti-colonial agenda, but their anti-white or pro-black stance
distanced them from the bourgeois public sphere of the *bufos*, conforming their own “subaltern counterpublic”.

Taking this analysis beyond Lane’s oppositional schema of race and nationality, studying the boundaries and overlaps of the emergent diverse public opinion in terms of gender, race and class offers new lights. For instance, Minerva was an expression of a subaltern counterpublic operating within the value schema of black patriarchy represented by the black and male dominated anti colonial and anti racist movement led by Gomez’ Directorio. In turn, the “racially integrated” “utopian political imagination” of El Directorio (as Lane described it) did not admit African cultural expressions of cabildos and religious secret societies. These marginalized groups chose to follow forms of resistance operating if not within, at least at the very margins of colonial, white and black normativity, conforming their own “underground” counterpublics.

Visualizing publics and counterpublics under different racialized, and gendered layers allows recognizing the ideological overlap between discursively oppositional public spheres. However, this framework also reveals the inevitable exclusions and marginalizations intrinsic in the conceptual framework of the public sphere or counterpublics. The fundamental function of boundary delineation inherent in the notion of the public sphere will persistently produce and reveal new forms of exclusion.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has explored the process of brewing of a new system of social and political organization in Cuba in the broad time frame of the 19th century. The entire century was a moment of transition for Cuba from colony to occupied territory in transition (1898-1902), to independent republic. This new political system required a new cultural foundation where a different ideal type of modern citizen-subject would stand. This cultural ground was a shared space of values under a whole new system of perception and representation—a habitus—whereby a range of socially and culturally disparate subjects were to relate and coexist.

The descendants of Spanish colonists emerged in the early 19th century as the Cuban bourgeois class leading the project to create this foundation. They concentrated important economic and intellectual resources to push forth the construction of a novel Cuban cultural identity by their own standards. As opposed to the successors of this project in the second half of the 19th century, the pioneer Cubanists Del Monte, Saco, Caballero, Bachiller y Morales did not
envision nation building through an armed struggle. Rather, their strategy focused on literature and education as major weapons for nation building aimed at transforming the substance and form of bodies and subjects, from Spanish colonial to modern Cuban. These ideologues envisioned the new ideal subjects and bodies of their imagined nation to be essentially “proper,” defined and measured by their manners, their affects, and their discriminative aesthetic skills. They implemented a system of cultural difference and social distinction that gave power to the body and its manners to determine the place of individuals in colonial society and in the imagined national community. Bourdieu described this process of reformation of manners as follows,

If all societies… that seek to produce a new man through a process of ‘deculturation’ and ‘reculturation’ set such store on the seemingly most insignificant details of dress, bearing, physical and verbal manners, the reason is that, treating the body as a memory, they entrust to it in abbreviated and practical, i.e. mnemonic, form the fundamental principles of the arbitrary content of the culture. The principles em-bodied in this way are places beyond the grasp of consciousness, and hence cannot be touched by voluntary, deliberate transformation…. The whole trick of pedagogic reason lies precisely in the way it exhorts the essential while seeming to demand the insignificant…the concessions of politeness always contain political concessions (Bourdieu 1984: 94-5)

Echoing Bourdieu, Bhabha grants seemingly insignificant, ordinary or banal everyday practices a power to shape a shared national imaginary and culture. For him, “The scraps, patches and rags of daily life must be repeatedly turned into the signs of a coherent national culture, while the very act of the narrative performance interpellates a growing circle of national subjects” (Bhabha 1994). Both theorists are describing the construction of cultural hegemony and commonsense around everyday and bodily practices.

Like postmodern theorists, early engineers of the Cuban nation recognized the power of manners and of the body in framing their pedagogies of national identity. The ideology of urbanity provided the moral and cultural foundation for their particular project of a Cuban nation. Urbanity is a discourse that gained strength since the early 19th century with the concomitant rise and consolidation of a capitalist bourgeois class in Cuba. Urbanity provided the Cuban bourgeoisie with a necessary alternate system of social classification based on cultivated subjective qualities, bodily practices and economic achievement as opposed to granted markers
of status based on bloodline of the court system. For this reason, the teaching of urbanity was not merely left to the family. Nor was urbanity simply assumed to be commonsensically internalized by observing and practicing forms and social relations in everyday routines and spaces, such as streets, bedrooms, theaters, markets, among others. In addition to these quotidian performative exercises, the creole bourgeoisie institutionalized urbanity in the developing educational system, which they were entrusted to manage.

I have focused my analysis on José María de La Torre’s Nuevo Tratado de Urbanidad, Buenas Maneras y Etiqueta for its uniqueness in terms the mixed-gender audience. Several other texts of the kind appeared throughout the 19th century, including by the pioneer costumbrista Buenaventura Pascual Ferrer El Arte de Vivir en el Mundo (1844 [1830]), another costumbrista José Manuel Costales published Educación de la Mujer (Education of Women) (1847), Francisco Chaple Moral y economía domestica aplicado a las niñas (Moral and domestic economy applied to girls) (1856, 5th edition), Domitila García de Coronado Consejos y consuelos de una madre a su hija (1882). At 1857, De La Torre’s Nuevo Tratado was the 7th edition. This broad approximation to the sequence of publications on urbanity evidences the significance of this ideology to 19th century society. In addition, my choice to focus on De La Torre in this chapter and Buenaventura Pascual Ferrer in Chapter 5 stems from my objective to de-center discussions about respectability, morality and “decency” from the gendered realm of “women.” Urbanity captures a broad range of aspects of cultural life that reach beyond constructions of feminine normativity, as the books by De La Torre and Pascual Ferrer reveal. Although the surveillance over women’s adherence to social norms was definitely stricter, this dissertation demonstrated that the yardstick of “good manners” surpassed racial, gender and class divides.

Overall this chapter offers a contribution to expand understandings of citizenship in Cuba to incorporate the cultural and moral dimensions in the negotiation of the terms of social inclusion into the projected national collective of “Cuba”. Examining the ideology of urbanity makes clear that being proper and behaving properly were critical measures of inclusion in this collective as it was being imagined all along the 19th century. More importantly, this chapter demonstrated that the idea of cubanness owes this cultural and moral foundation to the creole bourgeoisie of the early 19th century. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge that the anti-colonial character of cubanidad as the Cuban revolutionary leaders envisioned and produced it,
drew elements from the white bourgeois establishment and their particular model of culture and morality. In questioning and resisting the colonial system, the Cuban liberators and engineers of cubanidad exchanged colonial value schemas for bourgeois value schemas whereby white supremacy and hegemony in moral and cultural terms went unquestioned.
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